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**The Debate About Eugenics: Eugenics
and Social Legislation in New
Zealand, 1900 -1930.
Four Case Studies.**

A thesis presented in fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Philosophy in History at Massey
University.

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List of Abbreviations

AJHR - Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives.

JPS - Journal of the Polynesian Society.

NZMJ - New Zealand Medical Journal.

NZJH - New Zealand Journal of History.

NZPD - New Zealand Parliamentary Debates.

NA-National Archives

Introduction

The inspiration for this thesis came largely from an interest in population concerns of the early twentieth century. Eugenics stemmed partly from one of these, the difference in birthrate between the lower and middle classes, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which suggested to those who worried about it that the middle classes would be submerged by a rising tide of fecund poor.

What was Eugenics?

Before any discussion take place of literature or of the New Zealand setting it is necessary to explain the some of the background to the worldwide development of eugenics and to attempt to define what is being discussed.

Eugenics is not easy to define neatly. One of the problems is that eugenics had a number of different strands, and its adherents' beliefs changed quite markedly over time. In general though, all eugenicists held to two major tenets: that many physical, social, moral, and psychological features of human beings were inherited; and that by various methods the human race could control its own evolution, correcting what were seen as defects. Beyond this common ground there was a marked diversity of belief.

Eugenics had two major strands, scientific and popular, with a number of common factors. Both sprang from a fairly crude interpretation, by modern standards, of Darwin's theory of evolution, made by Francis Galton¹ in 1883. Scientific eugenics arose first, drawing on evolution and the widely held folk belief that "like begets like". Galton decided after studying family trees that many human characteristics were in fact inherited rather than the result of environmental influences. His ideas provoked much speculation in the scientific community of the late nineteenth century, particularly among those engaged in the study of biology, and the relatively new discipline of statistics. Karl Pearson, one of the founders of modern statistics

¹ Francis, later Sir Francis Galton, 1822 - 1911. Galton was an upper class Victorian scientist who did the initial research on family trees and the transmission of human traits from which eugenics emerged.

became an associate of Galton's, and a eugenicist as did many other important biologists and statisticians.

Briefly, scientific eugenic ideas centered on a number of perceived problems, which varied from country to country, and also over time to some extent. Broadly they reflected the anxieties of the ruling classes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Eugenists all focused mainly on race, class, and disability of one sort or another.

These early eugenists became convinced that the "unrestricted" breeding of the "unintelligent" poor was leading to national deterioration, as the middle classes had begun to restrict the size of their families. The idea of national deterioration was not new, dating back at least to the 1840s, when many believed that urban conditions were responsible². Eugenists however, believed in an hereditary cause rather than an environmental one.

The scientific discoveries of Galton and his disciples became very popular with certain sections of the public in the first decade of the twentieth century, almost exclusively from the upper middle classes, particularly members of the professions. Popular eugenics societies began to appear only in the mid-1900s in Europe and United States, and eventually spread virtually throughout the world. Popular eugenists accepted the scientific assumptions made by Galton and others, about racial degeneration and its causes. Two family case studies came to encapsulate popular eugenic ideas about the results of degeneration. These were the Juke and Kallikak families,³ both from the United States and both supposedly degenerate.

² D. Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder c. 1848 – c. 1918*, Cambridge University press, 1989, p.202.

³ The Jukes were a related group of misfits traceable to a single couple in New York State, the Kallikaks were a pseudonymous "feeble minded" family discovered by H.H. Goddard, a prominent American eugenicist, who published his research about the heritability of feeble mindedness in 1912.

Eugenists continued to use these case studies as evidence of the truth of their beliefs long after scientists had discredited them.

Social Darwinists, with whom eugenists are often associated, saw the solution to the problem of racial degeneration in ignoring the plight of the lower classes, and allowing a high death rate to keep their numbers down. Eugenics however, "... encouraged the scientific and 'rational' management of the hereditary make-up of the human species" ⁴ by using social instead of natural selection to increase the proportion of the "best stock" in the racial group. This was a completely different solution to a mutually perceived problem. This social selection, for eugenists, both scientific and popular, usually involved some form of government interference in people's reproductive behaviour.

This desire for government interference in the genetic improvement of its nationals helps distinguish eugenics from Social Darwinism, which suggested that the government withdraw from the amelioration of poverty to keep down the population levels of the poor and undesirable. Eugenic beliefs stood in contrast to the usual conservative point of view about government interference in general. The idea of government interference is often used today to distinguish eugenics from the genetic counseling at present offered in many countries to people beginning a family, where in theory they are free to choose whether to have a genetically defective child.

The idea that some people were intrinsically and genetically superior to others was central to eugenic thought. For this idea eugenics drew on much of what was taken for granted in Victorian and Edwardian societies, such as its enthusiasm for science, the belief in natural hierarchies of people and of races for (with of course the Northern European "races" the most genetically superior). This led in the United States to an antipathy towards migration to that country of people from Southern and Central Europe and Asia.

⁴ N.L. Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics: Race Gender and Nation in Latin America*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991, p. 2.

Also central was the idea that physical, moral and mental characteristics were mostly inherited. Eugenists assumed that the ruling classes were in their place because of natural inherited abilities, as the poor were in theirs due to lack of them. Oddly enough however, British eugenists did not necessarily admire either the aristocracy (primogeniture was considered dysgenic), or the members of the business community, though individual members of the business community did contribute much in the way of funds. It was very much a movement for professionals, doctors, lawyers, and especially academics.⁵

Eugenic worth was usually seen to be incarnate in oneself and one's associates. In fact, apart from this general feeling, there was very little agreement among eugenists upon which particular traits were worthy and which were not, although it was much easier to agree on unworthy traits. There was general agreement that many of the traits of the lower classes such as poverty, disease, mental deficiency, and unemployment, were not wanted.

In a curious way this both rejected and reinforced the class attitudes of the day. Because genetic worth was seen almost exclusively in the members of one's own class and was basically irreversible, a class system was considered inevitable. However the particular system present in Britain was to some extent rejected, because the evaluation of civic worth did not necessarily rest on the traditional Victorian concept of class. Eugenics could then be presented as progressive.

Eugenists tended to divide people into three broad groups, "...desirables...", "...passables...", and "...undesirables...".⁶ The desirables were almost invariably members of the eugenists' own social grouping, that is members of the academic and

⁵ D.J. Kevles, *In The Name Of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity*, New York, Knopf, 1985, p. 69.

⁶ R. A. Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth Century Britain*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990, p. 65ff.

professional classes. The passables did change slightly over time, but tended to be seen as the upper end of the working class. The undesirables could be people with mental or physical disabilities, the poor, or members of a race lower on the perceived hierarchy. The fact that undesirability was genetically determined meant that there was little possibility of gaining civil worth through hard work or education.

To overcome the problem of degeneration and to improve the race, two broad solutions were proposed: positive eugenics, in which those of higher social worth were encouraged to have more children, and negative eugenics, where those of little worth were somehow restricted in the size of their families. Which of these proposals was the more effective was the subject of some debate.

Most sources emphasise that eugenics meant different things to different people.⁷ It would seem then that eugenicists agreed only on the convictions that society was confronted with racial degeneration, that it should determine individuals' reproductive behaviour, and that government interference in such behaviour was in general quite acceptable. On the questions of how and how far the government should interfere, and in general who should be subject to controls, much was disputed.⁸

Indeed, eugenicists were divided on many of the other important questions they were setting out to answer. For instance they could not agree on what characteristics should be encouraged or discouraged in the population or even on which social groups should be included among the eugenically worthy. There was also disagreement on the most effective form of eugenics, positive or negative. These problems caused endless internal discussion and there were a number of international conferences held where the controversies were aired.

⁷ D. Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity, 1865 to the Present*, New Jersey, Humanities Press, 1995, p. 19f.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 72.

Eugenics became popular among the middle classes in the early twentieth century, when eugenics societies began to be formed in Britain, Europe and the United States. It could hardly be said to be a mass movement, the British and American societies together at an official membership of no more than 3000.⁹ It would seem that no where in Europe, the Americas, or the British Commonwealth was their membership more than a few hundred. The influence of eugenics such as it was, came more from what Kevles calls, "... the advantage of excellent patronage".¹⁰ The membership of popular eugenics societies was fairly solidly professional and academic, although many eugenic ideas seem to have been accepted by members of all socio-economic groupings. Eugenics also attracted support from people of diverse political opinions, which may have led to the conflict and faction fighting, which characterised it in almost every country in which it emerged.¹¹

One important aspect that must be considered when trying to define eugenics is the question of whether it was a science or pseudo-science. A science is defined by these criteria: that its tenets are the result of careful experimentation and/or observation, they are regularly tested, they are amenable to revision as a result of changing evidence, that the data is made freely available so that the results may be replicated by others.¹² It is also important that they are capable, as Popper¹³ said, of falsification, that is not the result of faith. A pseudo-science on the other hand tends to have ideas that are eccentric, personal or cult-like, the result of prejudice rather than observation, held irrationally in spite of evidence to the contrary, the data are often not made available, and the conclusions are not subject to falsification. They

⁹ Kevles, *Name*, p. 59.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 60.

¹¹ Paul, *Heredity*, p.85.

¹² Cyril Burt for instance, a eugenicist interested in the inheritance of intelligence, consistently refused to share his data on the study of intelligence in twins, actually claiming it had been mislaid. In fact it had been forged.

¹³ Sir Karl Popper, philosopher of science, quoted in P. Kurtz, *The Transcendental Temptation, A Critique of Religion and the Paranormal*, Buffalo, Prometheus Books, 1991, p. 47.

can be the result of someone with a strong personality imposing his or her beliefs on followers.

The initial response of this author encouraged by eugenics' more bizarre aspects, was that it is a pseudo-science. (Although Kuhl regards the separation of eugenists into scientists and pseudo-scientists as artificial and simplistic.¹⁴) If eugenics was a science it was influenced to a marked degree by popular belief and by politics.

However both Diane Paul and Pauline Mazumdar¹⁵ however, have decided to treat eugenics on its own merits as a science, largely because legitimate and proper scientific research took place, which was later shown by scientists to be incorrect. Some of these scientists were also eugenists. However popular belief seized upon scientific speculations, and continued even when disproved. Some scientists were also very reluctant to give up eugenic ideas. This attitude is shown by the continued use by popular eugenists and some scientists of extremely unscientific family case studies.¹⁶ The refusal of some scientists to accept that their theories are incorrect does not make a pseudoscience. There are many examples of this type of behaviour in various areas of research. Consensus in science is often a result, after all, of intense debate.

Some the science that was undertaken in the name of eugenics was certainly slipshod or fraudulent.¹⁷ Other scientists and statisticians for instance, constantly ridiculed Galton's early case studies as unscientific. Cyril Burt has been shown to have altered his data in his search for the genetic inheritance of intelligence.¹⁸

¹⁴ S. Kuhl, *The Nazi Connection*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 65 ff.

¹⁵ P. M. H. Mazumdar, *Eugenics, Human Genetics and Human Failings*, London, 1992, Paul, *Heredity*.

¹⁶ Though the scientific debate both within and without the eugenics societies may have had something to do with the eventual abandonment of eugenics, Provine seems to have shown, that at least on one eugenic issue the 'dangers' of race mixing, scientists themselves have changed their minds about this without any regard to the available evidence at all. W.B. Provine, *Geneticists and the Biology of Race Crossing*, *Science*, 182, 1973, p. 790 – 6.

¹⁷ Paul, *Heredity*, p.50ff., Kevles, *Name*, p. 129ff., Mazumdar, p. 96ff.

Similarly, the early research done by the Cold Spring Harbor laboratory in the United States was deeply flawed,¹⁹ particularly the work done on "insanity". It was criticised for its lack of objectivity, as were the US Army IQ tests of 1917 the results of which were taken to support a racial hierarchy of intelligence. The fact that poor work was criticised and fraudulent work was eventually uncovered, (although not for some time) does give weight to the argument that scientific eugenics should be treated as a science.

If science is as self-correcting as the some maintain, then scientific eugenics must be regarded as a science which, as Paul has said, pushed the boundaries too far in an excess of enthusiasm, and later retreated from its more extreme views.²⁰ Scientific eugenics was, after all, largely undermined by scientists often themselves eugenists. Some scientific eugenists rejected many popular beliefs as being without scientific foundation almost from the beginning. Given the debates that have taken place since eugenics lost credibility in the 1940s it would seem that self-correction has taken place. It is also true that as Paul says we must not "... start with the assumption that it was patently absurd",²¹ lest we fail to understand its appeal.

Popular eugenics however, did have some of the trappings of pseudo-science. In particular, as scientists were retreating from the more extreme of its tenets, some at least of those who adhered to the popular form could not adjust to the presentation of new evidence. There was the continuing belief for instance that curbing the fertility of the unfit would have a marked effect on society in a very short time, when statisticians had shown that if anything could be done it would take many generations. There was also a consistent belief that poverty, mental defect, and insanity were all inherited conditions, even though science had shown otherwise. Conflict was sparked on other scientific issues, often between scientists and lay members of the popular societies.²²

¹⁹ Kevles, *Name*, p. 49f.

²⁰ Paul, *Eugenics*, 588f.

²¹ Paul, *Heredity*, p. 21.

²² Kevles, *Name*, p. 104.

Eugenics was a popular scientific belief that had particular political ramifications in that it tended to isolate sections of society and label them as inimical to that society. These tended to be the poor, as in Britain, or people of a different ethnic group or groups, as in the United States and Germany, or those suffering from mental defect. Whether consciously or not, by adopting eugenic beliefs one was making a political statement, even though eugenics was considered to be neutral in this area because of its alleged scientific basis. Indeed, one of the strongest modern debates about eugenics is centered on its compatibility with various political beliefs, notably socialism. (Whatever the politics of its adherents, eugenics was always presented as progressive.)

The Rise and Fall of Eugenics Societies.

Eugenics remained on the margins until the early twentieth century, an obscure science, a concern of biologists and statisticians. It was in the early twentieth century that it became a small popular movement among sections of the middle-class. Eugenics societies began to form in the first decade of the twentieth century, as the subject became somewhat fashionable.²³ The idea was to promote eugenics as a solution to population problems of the early twentieth century, and lobby governments to provide eugenic legislation for these problems. The German Society for Race Hygiene was established in 1905, the English Eugenics Education Society in 1907, the American Eugenics Record Office 1910, (as was the New Zealand society) the French Eugenics Society in 1912. Beginning in 1918, eugenics societies were also established in Latin America. In the United States the American Eugenics Society was formed in 1921, but there were probably local societies formed before this.²⁴

²³ Kevles, *Name*, p. 57.

²⁴ Kevles, *Name*, p. 59-60.

In Britain and the United States laboratories were funded to undertake eugenic research. In Britain, Galton funded a Laboratory for National Eugenics at University College London with Karl Pearson as its first director. In the United States with access to much more funding, Charles Davenport founded the Eugenic Record Office at Cold Spring Harbor, which employed hundreds of researchers, mostly women. (There were almost certainly laboratories devoted to eugenics in other countries, but their names were not able to be traced.)

The influence of political and economic developments on popular eugenics was profound. It seems to have been a reaction of the middle classes to social and economic change that led to them seeing a perceived threat from the groups at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Generally this can be seen in the advent of urbanisation and industrialisation with its consequent disruption. There was class conflict, industrial unrest and the rise of feminism, which many found unsettling. There were also advances in science that seemingly contradicted religious belief. Crucial however, was the birth rate differential between the well off and the poor that seem to suggest that the middle-class would soon be submerged by a rising tide of the genetically unworthy. In Britain in particular, there was concern about the poor quality of recruits in the Boer War and in World War I.²⁵ Both of these latter problems seemed to indicate to some people that a process of racial degeneration was in progress.

Eugenic beliefs did change, although some members could not accept the changes, and left both British and American eugenics organisations.²⁶ In the 1930s and later, these beliefs tended to become more benign,²⁷ in Britain partly at least due to a fear of seeming to be prejudiced against the lower classes, in the United States to a desire among some influential eugenicists to seem less racially biased. Many left wing

²⁵ In the United States it was not the physical quality of recruits that caused concern but their mental ability, as judged by the new IQ tests used on more than a million troops. These seem to suggest that the general intelligence level was low, and that there was a distinct hierarchy of racial intelligence.

²⁶ Paul, *Heredity*, p. 120, Kevles, *Name*, p. 169f.

eugenists began to stress the idea that true eugenics could not work except in a socialist society, with what we would describe today as a level playing field. Eugenists also realised that some of the solutions to the differential birth rate were socially and politically unacceptable. They began to feel that a partial answer could be found in genetic counseling, and the newly established birth control movement which they wished to spread to the lower classes.²⁸

A truncated Eugenics Society, bereft of many scientists and those disillusioned by the Nazi atrocities, lived on in Britain past the 1930s only due to a large bequest by an Australian philanthropist (the Twitchin bequest). In the United States the Eugenic Record Office lost much of its sponsorship and closed in 1939 partly due to the embarrassment caused by the enthusiastic embracing of racism by many of its members. The American Eugenics Society came under more moderate leadership, moving away from race and class bias.²⁹ In Germany of course, the Nazis intensified the German eugenic programme, introducing a law allowing compulsory sterilisation of a wide range of handicapped people two months after their accession to power, eventually becoming the stick with which eugenics was beaten.

Popular eugenics then, was very much a late nineteenth and early twentieth century attempt to solve what were seen as problems by a section of the middle classes. In this form it has largely passed away; in its scientific form the word itself has definite pejorative implications, and the word is rarely used except in this sense.

[Eugenics in New Zealand

The New Zealand experience with eugenics had similarities to that overseas but also a number of important differences. In New Zealand as elsewhere, eugenic ideas were taken up by many members of the middle classes, with an enthusiasm to parallel a

²⁷ Paul, *Heredity*, p. 120.

²⁸ Kevles, *Name*, ch. 11 - 12

²⁹ Paul, *Heredity*, p. 120.

religious conversion. This took place from the 1890s,³⁰ and was reinforced in 1903 with the publication of *The Fertility of the Unfit*, by W.B. Chapple. Chapple was at the time resident in New Zealand and later became a Liberal Member of Parliament in Britain. It is quite possible that eugenics had arrived in New Zealand's scientific community much earlier than this.

However New Zealanders embraced eugenics enthusiastically but briefly in the formal sense, from 1910 when the first society was formed in Dunedin. Societies were later established in Wellington and Christchurch in 1911 and Timaru in 1912. Similar to the overseas experience the members of these societies tended to be middle-class; medical, clerical, or academics. There were also a number of politicians.³¹ Again reflecting overseas experience, a wide variety of viewpoints were held within the societies, but with a basic core of beliefs about degeneration and the fertility of the unfit, and the necessity for government intervention on the issue.³²

These societies agitated for eugenics to be applied to legislation in this country, and began an education programme for schools and other interested bodies. According to Fleming, and like their British counterpart, they tended to dissociate themselves from the more extreme ideas of eugenicists overseas, particularly the idea of sterilisation as a solution to the perceived problems.³³ Instead they lobbied for medical checks before marriage, the segregation of "feeble minded" women and girls, and became interested in town planning.³⁴ Fleming marks the beginning of eugenic influence in New Zealand legislation with the Divorce and Matrimonial

³⁰ P.J. Fleming, *Eugenics in New Zealand 1900 - 1940*, Massey University MA thesis, 1981, p. 9f.

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 27.

³² *ibid.* p17f.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 20.

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 23f. This interest in the environment shows a certain attachment to the theories of Lamarck.

Causes Act Amendment Bill of 1907, which granted divorce is to those married to the insane, thereby in eugenic eyes curbing in a small way, the fertility of the unfit.³⁵

On the eve of World War I the New Zealand Societies all lapsed. Worldwide, eugenics experienced difficulties, in Britain, the United States, and Europe popular eugenics societies weakened because of the war. In these countries though, the eugenics societies became stronger post-war, in New Zealand the formal society disappeared even though the belief remained strong among certain sections of the population.³⁶

Eugenics overseas was at its zenith between the end of the war and the beginning of the depression, while New Zealand lacked a eugenics society. Fleming maintains, in his thesis that eugenic ideas persisted informally into the 1930s, influencing at least the treatment of "mental defectives" by advocating for the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders in 1924, and supporting the Mental Defectives Amendment Bill of 1928.³⁷ Certainly the debate about eugenics was at its height in New Zealand at the time of the committee and the bill, which it might be added was in the forefront of worldwide eugenic legislation. If it had been passed New Zealand would have been the first country in the world officially to sterilise part of its population. (Although this was being done in parts of the US, and unofficially in Germany)

In 1981 Fleming traced the appearance, growth and decline of the New Zealand Eugenics Society, and the lingering of eugenic ideas into the 1930s. Since then there has developed a substantial overseas literature, which has contributed much to the form this thesis has taken. This thesis will endeavour to take advantage of the outpouring of this literature in the last 30 years, of which Fleming was naturally unaware.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 30.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 61.

Eugenics Literature

The literature associated with the study of eugenics worldwide is both large and modern. In the bibliography for this thesis there are nine major works on eugenics. There have also been numerous journal articles written since 1981. Eugenics is also mentioned at some length in the literature on the history of social welfare and the history of medicine and science. Most of the work seems to have been published after 1990. Although much of the literature in English has been written about the United States and Great Britain, there is work available about Australia, France, Germany, Latin America, and Russia. Scandinavian countries are often mentioned in general works, but little else could be found about this very important area for eugenics research, at least in English.

After the collapse of popular and scientific eugenics after World War II, scientists were still engaged in an ongoing debate about the relative merits of "nature" and "nurture" in the formation of character and intelligence, and in the susceptibility to disease. This debate has produced a sizeable literature of its own, not just with academic merit but also with political implications. It must be mentioned that there was also a large and pervasive literature on eugenics in the first 30 years of the twentieth century, both scientific and popular. This ranged from articles in statistical journals, to those in *National Geographic*.

The more modern literature is replete with themes, which were undeveloped at the time that Searle published his work on British eugenics, which are taken up in this thesis. (This seems to have been the only modern work on eugenics available for use in the Fleming thesis.) Modern New Zealand literature on eugenics is almost non-existent, while New Zealand given no more than a passing reference in the international literature. Most of the references are in works about sex, health, and crime, where it tends to be treated in passing except perhaps in the Robertson

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 1.

thesis³⁸ which does go into more detail, but is only concerned with mental defect. All these invariably refer to the Fleming thesis for their eugenic material. There was a reasonable amount of contemporary eugenic literature, but on the whole the New Zealand Eugenics Society relied on foreign material, judging by what is available today, mostly British.

Themes Developed in the Literature.

Eugenics and the Left

This is an area where two researchers, Michael Freeden and Greta Jones are engaged in debate about the extent to which eugenics and socialism were partners. Briefly, Michael Freeden maintains that the eugenics movement and the left was solidly linked by a core of common beliefs, while Greta Jones claims that eugenics was essentially a conservative movement, whose relations with progressives were "... complex and tense".³⁹ In Germany and Scandinavia Social Democratic parties certainly took an interest in the eugenic results of sterilisation, and established some extreme eugenic legislation.⁴⁰

Diane Paul, who has also entered this debate, tends to agree with Freeden that there were some widely shared beliefs, for instance in the application of science to the betterment of the race, in the right of the state to interfere in reproduction for the same end, and that by encouraging the fitter to breed and discouraging the unfit the race could be improved. She agrees however, that relationships between eugenics and the left were complex.⁴¹ There was a group of Anglo-American scientists,

³⁸ S. Robertson, *Production not Reproduction: the Problem of Mental Defect in New Zealand 1900 - 1939*, University of Otago MA history Thesis, 1989.

³⁹ G. Jones, *Eugenics and Social Policy Between the Wars*, The Historical Journal, V.25, No. 3, 1982, p.717-28, p.718.

⁴⁰ S. Kuhl, *The Nazi Connection*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 24.

⁴¹ M. Freeden, *Eugenics and Ideology*, The Historical Journal, 26, 4, 1983, p.959 – 962.

sometimes called reform eugenisists, who wished to "... purge eugenics of class bias...".⁴² These scientists, who included Muller, J. B. S. Haldane, Lancelot Hogben, and Julian Huxley, tended to be famous but few. There was support for eugenics from nonscientists of the political left in Britain, such as George Bernard Shaw, and Beatrice and Sidney Webb. They claimed that eugenics could only work in a truly equal socialist society, where marital choices would be made for the "right" reasons rather than for reasons of economic gain, or family pressure. It would probably be safe to say that a number of eugenists were not typically right wing, and a number claimed with some justice to be Socialists.

Positive and Negative Eugenics

Galton himself, like most eugenists, usually stressed positive eugenics in public pronouncements. Convinced that genius was inherited, he wished to produce a more gifted race by judicious choice of marriage partners among the population.⁴³ Positive eugenics was obviously much less politically controversial. Positive eugenic suggestions included encouraging worthy families to increase their number of children by means of economic aid and social recognition. Suggestions were made for instance in Britain that family allowances should be biased towards people of civic worth. In the United States positive eugenics was popularised by the staging at state fairs of healthy family and healthy baby competitions. These were not necessarily government initiatives, but show that on a local level eugenics was quite readily promoted. (Although these contests were often satirised.) In Germany, approved mothers were given both money, in the form of cheap loans, and social status by way of motherhood medals, for bearing large numbers of children.

M. Freedon, *Eugenics and Progressive Thought: A Study in Ideological Affinity*, The Historical Journal, vol. 22, No 3, 1979, p.665 – 71.

G. Jones, *Eugenics and Social Policy Between the Wars*, The Historical Journal, V.25, No. 3, 1982, p.717 – 728.

D. Paul, *Eugenics and the Left*, Journal of the History of Ideas, 45, Oct. 1984, p. 567 – 90.

⁴² Paul, *Heredity* p. 119.

⁴³ Kevles, *Name*, p.4.

Negative eugenics was sometimes de-emphasised because of the adverse public reaction to it. It was practised however, in both democratic and totalitarian societies. People considered to be of little worth were often sterilised in United States for instance, or forbidden to marry in some states.⁴⁴ In the United States, negative eugenics was practised in many states both officially and unofficially, on a wider range of undesirable people than anywhere except Nazi Germany.⁴⁵

Various German governments unofficially allowed the sterilisation of certain sections of the population, notably those suffering from mental defect. The last Weimar government had a draft law allowing official sterilisation in 1933. The Nazis took this much further, beginning a euthanasia policy that culminated in the extermination of millions of people who did not fit their eugenic mold.⁴⁶ It was the negative eugenics taken to extremes in Nazi Germany that attracted attention, and gave the word eugenics the pejorative connotation it has today. The Scandinavian countries, which tended to follow Germany in their application of eugenics, have recently uncovered a number of unsavoury aspects of eugenics applied to their social policies, particularly compulsory sterilisations.

National Variation

The specific focus of eugenic thought varied from country to country. This meant that eugenicists in different countries reacted in different ways to the perceived eugenic problems. Sometimes the problems themselves were different. In the United States for instance eugenicists were much more active on the immigration question than those in Britain where migrants tended to be much fewer. While in Britain eugenicists tended to concentrate on issues of class rather than race. In the United States eugenics was popularised more than in Britain, and in a different way. There were more eugenic exhibitions for instance, and the competitions to find

⁴⁴ Kevles, *Name*, p. 99ff.

⁴⁵ Paul, *Heredity*, p. 71ff.

eugenically perfect families. In both countries eugenics was taught in schools and universities, but in the United States to a greater extent.⁴⁷ Scientifically the British and Americans tended to be at odds over the methods used to interpret eugenic data. The Americans followed in the main the ideas of Mendel, who was responsible for the discovery of what were later known as genes, while the British took a more statistical approach, known as Biometry.

In Germany, for various reasons including the heavy involvement of the medical profession and the influence of American eugenicists,⁴⁸ the movement concentrated on "racial hygiene" by sterilisation, and later by extermination. As early as 1920 a book was published in Germany promoting the legal euthanasia of people with various handicaps who were concerned "Ballastexistenzen", or burdens on the community. Under the Nazis the "Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Progeny" issued in 1933 mandated sterilisation for a number of physical conditions, and deviation from the "...healthy instincts of the volk".⁴⁹ In the area of positive eugenics, the "Lebensborn" programme subsidised the maternity care of women who could pass a racial test. In general the Nazis went much further than most in their application of rewards for larger, racially sound families.⁵⁰

✱ French eugenicists remained firmly convinced of the correctness of the theories of Lamarck,⁵¹ partly due to "...national pride...".⁵² They believed that the human race was essentially plastic, and heavily influenced by their environment. This belief was

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 86ff.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 8ff.

⁴⁸ Kuhl, p. 15.

⁴⁹ J. Noakes, *Social Outcasts in Nazi Germany*, *History Today*, December 1985, p. 13 - 19, p. 16.

⁵⁰ Noakes, p. 16.

⁵¹ Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, a French biologist who postulated that acquired characteristics, such as the large muscles of an athlete, could be inherited by his or her descendants. Lamarck's theory was popular outside of France for only a relatively short time. Most biologists believed that acquired characteristics could not be inherited.

⁵² W. Schneider, "Towards the Improvement of the Human Race: Eugenics in France", *Journal of Modern History*, 54, 2, June 1982, p. 268 - 91, p. 271.

essentially more optimistic than Mendelian eugenics, but it meant that French eugenisists needed to worry more about degeneration arising from a poor environment. For instance, they needed to reassure the public during the First World War about the non-transmission of mutilation. French eugenisists tended to concentrate on improving the environment in order to improve the health status of those within it, and of their descendants.

These "...neo-Lamarckian..."⁵³ ideals predominated in Latin America for cultural and political reasons. Most of the Latin American cultural elite for instance went for a higher education to France.⁵⁴ There were also doubts about the implied determinism of Mendelism, probably prompted by the prevailing Catholicism. Like the French, they concentrated on what they called preventative eugenics, that is a broad focus on public health rather than merely encouraging the fit to breed or restricting the breeding of the unfit.⁵⁵

In Russia eugenics flourished briefly but was not treated kindly under the Soviet regime, which did not favour the idea of genetic inheritance, particularly of non-physical characteristics for political reasons.⁵⁶

Eugenics and Race.

The question of race and racism and eugenics arises mostly in the United States and Nazi Germany. It is therefore not a constant theme in all literature, but is nonetheless important in the New Zealand context for two reasons. Firstly New Zealand has a large indigenous population that, not being white, might be expected to figure in any eugenics debate, particularly as there had been intermarriage

⁵³ Stepan, p. 69, Schneider, p. 271.

⁵⁴ Stepan, p. 70 ff.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 86f.

⁵⁶ L.R., Graham, *Science and Values: the Eugenics Movement in Germany and Russia in the 1920s*. American Historical Review, 82, 1977, p.1133 – 64, p. 1150f.

between them and the European population. Secondly, New Zealand was a country of migrants, and immigration was of particular importance to American eugenisists. It must be remembered however that even scientists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were a little woolly on the concept of race.⁵⁷

That many eugenisists believed in a hierarchy of races with their own at the top is not in doubt. This was a relatively old belief, reinforced by evolutionary theory.⁵⁸ However it is doubtful if they were greatly more racist than the general population, or indeed than scientists who were studying the question.⁵⁹ While eugenisists' attitudes to race were broadly similar in Britain, the USA, and Germany pre-1933, it would seem that any vigorous support for racial legislation was driven by issues rather than by general racism. Although on the surface as will be seen the New Zealand experience seems to contradict this idea, a more careful analysis rather supports it.

Opposition to Eugenics

There was a great deal of opposition to eugenics almost from its inception. There were debates about its scientific soundness, its moral probity, and its relationship with religion, politics, and economics. Opposition was largely aimed at negative eugenics, particularly any compulsory interference in people's reproductive activity. The external opposition came on the whole from three main groups of people, the political left, members of the scientific community, and the Catholic Church. There was also opposition from what Kevles describes as "Critics of a humanist bent..."⁶⁰ people of an anti-authoritarian nature, not necessarily from the left.

The Catholic Church took a moral position that interfering with people's rights to have children was wrong. In its eyes even the unfit were children of God, had

⁵⁷ Paul, *Heredity*, p. 103 f.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 103f.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 105.

⁶⁰ Kevles, *Name*, p. 120.

immortal souls, and could not be denied the sacraments. It opposed fiercely any legislation that promoted sterilisation or birth control. Kevles also maintains that part of the church's opposition stems from the fact that much of its flock were poor, and it thought that money used to save future generations would be better spent improving the lot of the present one.⁶¹

Liberal or anti-authoritarian opposition seems to have been mostly due to what they saw as government interference in people's private lives, and a suspicion that eugenicists were not fond of democracy or political equality. They also worried about future use of the power given to governments to choose who should and should not be sterilized or segregated. Bertrand Russell for instance "... speculated that eventually opposition to a different government would be taken to 'prove imbecility, so that rebels of all kinds will be sterilized.'" ⁶² Clarence Darrow was sure that "At any time it would mean with men, as it does with animals, that breeding would be controlled for use and purpose of the powerful and intelligent." ⁶³ G. K. Chesterton, who wrote critical essays about eugenics, disliked the elevation of science above ethics, and its application to a strict social organisation.⁶⁴

Opposition from the political left and the scientific community was more complex. Both of these groups opposed eugenics, but they, and individuals within them who opposed eugenics were often ambivalent about it. Paul maintains that, "In Britain, eugenics was effectively opposed by the organised labour movement...". ⁶⁵ Some left wing scientists criticised eugenic beliefs while accepting that eugenics would possibly be quite valid under socialism, or at least a system where everyone started out equal. Lancelot Hogben⁶⁶ for instance did not always reject eugenics out of hand, just the political aspects that seemed to him to be anti-working class.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 121.

⁶² *ibid.*, p. 120.

⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 120.

⁶⁴ Paul, *Eugenics* p. 573.

⁶⁵ Paul, *Heredity*, p. 73.

⁶⁶ Hogben was Professor of Social Biology at the London School of Economics and a committed socialist.

As science advanced however, eugenics was gradually discredited among many scientists. Critics began pointing out in the scientific journals that eugenicists were confused on the meaning of race, and likely wrong about racial deterioration, and the nature of intelligence.⁶⁷

It is quite probable that scientific opposition to eugenic research had some part in its temporary abandonment, beginning in the 1930s. There were, according to Mazumdar, other factors involved, including changing attitudes towards the use of social programmes for improving the human situation, the advent of the welfare state, and of course the Nazi debacle.⁶⁸ Many of the beliefs of early eugenicists were overturned by internal criticism, stemming from scientific developments within the area of genetics. The extent to which many of these critics were eugenicists is the subject of some debate.⁶⁹ Whatever the resolution of these issues might be, it could be said at least that criticism of eugenics from much of the scientific community, was partly a matter of political belief as well as of science.

Impact of Eugenics

The major sources all mention the influence which eugenics had and continues to have on politics and society. These influences must essentially be divided by country, and in the United States by state. There should also perhaps be distinction made between the influence of the actual eugenics societies, and the influence of what might loosely be termed eugenics thought or ideas. Eugenics societies were formed to promote an understanding of human breeding among the middle-class public, but had the advantage of appealing to people who were already influenced by ideas related to eugenics that had been in vogue for some time. This general belief in the degeneration of the race and the heritability of mental and physical traits must have made it easier for eugenics to gain acceptance.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 129f. ff

⁶⁸ Mazumdar, p. 258.

⁶⁹ Kevles, *Name*, p. 126ff.

In the United States it is agreed that eugenics was quite influential at a local level, particularly in the 1920s and '30s, as evidenced by the eugenic family competitions mentioned earlier.⁷⁰ Few of the sources go into great detail about the reasons for this influence, but it is perhaps best attributed to the ease of influencing a rather more fragmented American government, and the desire on the part of reform governments to use scientific expertise to "... shape public policy..."⁷¹ Local interests however, could fight back if threatened. There was at least one setback to eugenics' influence on local government when local legislators and bureaucrats managed to prevent the Ohio Bureau of Juvenile Research from establishing and applying eugenic practices, by denying it finance and accommodation.⁷²

Having said that, on a federal level the American government certainly used eugenics society members, particularly scientists, as experts when considering legislation in a number of areas, notably migration, intelligence testing, and treatment of mental defect, including compulsory sterilisation of various sorts of social misfits. Eugenics certainly gave scientific legitimacy to these laws. Kuhl⁷³ maintains that United States legislation greatly influenced, and legitimated that of Nazi Germany, which also used US legislation as part of its propaganda campaign to promote and excuse their own laws. The United States, Canada and much of Northwest Europe developed policies allowing (sometimes compulsory) sterilisation of those considered eugenically unfit.

In Britain, eugenicists claimed to have been influential in the area of family policy, particularly child allowance legislation and mental health laws. In fact there seems to be very little evidence of this. Most sources claim that eugenic ideas were almost

⁷⁰ Paul, *Heredity*, p. 74ff.

⁷¹ Kevles, *Name*, p101f.

⁷² P.J. Ryan, *Unnatural Selection: Intelligence Testing, Eugenics and American Political Cultures*, *Journal of Social History*, 30, 3, Spring 1997, p.669 – 85, p678f.

⁷³ Kuhl, p. 24.

wholly ignored. Although eugenists eventually did support pronatalist policies, the resulting legislation had little or no eugenic flavour.⁷⁴

Eugenics organisations also lobbied for legislation that took account of heredity in most countries where they operated. There is some disagreement as to the effectiveness of eugenics' lobbying,⁷⁵ but it is probably safe to say that eugenics societies were very active lobbyists, if not always listened to. Certainly where their interests coincided with other lobby groups, as with the United States immigration laws, or with political party philosophy such as the Nazis', eugenic legislation was often implemented.

The influence of eugenics thought as opposed to actual agitation is more difficult to pin down. There seems to have been a broad acceptance among the peoples of Britain, Europe, and the United States of many eugenic ideas. This is not surprising, as many of these ideas pre-dated eugenics, especially its popular version. George Eliot's novel *Daniel Deronda*,⁷⁶ for instance, written in 1876, is about a Jew brought up by Gentiles who feels strangely drawn to Jewish culture. This could not have been influenced by popular eugenics, as it did not exist at the time. (Although the possibility does exist of Eliot being influenced by some of Galton's and others' early work.) The popularity of eugenics also coincided with a rise in peoples' faith in science as a cure for the world's ills.⁷⁷ Perhaps the most that could be said about this acceptance is that it made the passage of eugenic legislation somewhat easier to accept.

⁷⁴ J. Macnicol, *The Movement for Family Allowances, 1918 - 1945*, London, Heinemann, 1980, p. 85ff, G. Jones, *Social Hygiene in Twentieth Century Britain*, London, Croom Helm, 1986, p. 88, Soloway, *Demography*, p. 309.

⁷⁵ Soloway, *Demography*, p. 107, Thomson, p. 180ff.

J.F. Crow, *Eugenics: Must It be a Dirty Word?*, A review of *In the Name of Eugenics*, *Contemporary Psychology* vol. 33, No 1, pp. 11 -- 12, p. 12.

⁷⁶ On a lighter note, F. Scott Fitzgerald's song "Love or Eugenics" seems to have sunk without trace.

⁷⁷ G.E. Alan, *Social Origins of Eugenics*, Image Archive on the American Eugenics Movement, D. N. A. Learning Center, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, New York, www.vector.cshl.org/eugenics. n.d.

War

One of the more interesting aspects of the eugenics movement was its reaction to war. As has been noted already, problems with the condition of British troops in the Boer War and in World War I seemed to confirm the degeneracy of the race. In the United States there was a similar reaction as a result of the intelligence tests given to army recruits, which seemed to show that many of them were in fact feeble minded. These tests were developed partly by Henry H. Goddard, a prominent member of the American eugenics movement.⁷⁸ On the other hand both World War I and World War II tended, in a broad way, to disprove at least one eugenic belief, in that the hereditary residuum, or social problem group, (names used to describe those of little civic worth) tended to disappear when unemployment decreased during wartime.

Eugenists themselves were divided over the effects that war had on the population, some thinking it had positive effects, at least until the mass killings of World War I.⁷⁹ After that, war was considered dysgenic⁸⁰ by most, and World War I a eugenic catastrophe.⁸¹ This war brought forth a number of eugenic ideas for ameliorating the eugenic problems caused by the killing of many young men. Some involved support of conscription in an attempt to dilute the contribution of the middle classes.⁸² Others involved tinkering with conscription in order to make sure that older men

⁷⁸ Paul, *Eugenics*, p. 65.

⁷⁹ Kevles, *Name*, p. 58.

⁸⁰ Dysgenic was a word coined to mean the opposite of eugenic. It is used to describe actions that supposedly aid degeneracy.

⁸¹ Soloway, *Demography*, p. 138ff. There is now some direct statistical evidence that at least in one respect, the decimation of the middle classes, the eugenists were correct, in that research has shown that the middle classes did suffer disproportionate casualties from 1914 to 1918. See J.M. Winter, *Britain's Lost Generation of the First World War*, *Population Studies*, 31, 3, Nov. 1977, pp. 449 – 466.

⁸² R.A. Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question in England, 1877-1930*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1982. P.168 f.

with established families were conscripted before single men. The British Eugenics Education Society in 1914 established a maternity home for the wives of officers to make sure that the children of the genetically valuable received proper care.⁸³

These ideas also included recommendations for repairing the racial damage inflicted by the war, involving incentives for middle-class ex-soldiers, including the maimed, to marry and have children after the war. This included trying to put pressure on the government to grant extra allowances to wounded men of civic worth, in order to make them more attractive marriage prospects. It was also suggested that the officer class receive "... pensions, marital bonuses, child allowances, special tax benefits, and other inducements to marry young and raise large families...",⁸⁴ particularly those brave enough to receive medals. Naturally the correlation between class and rank was played down.

It was in World War I that the uneasy alliance between British eugenicists and pronatalists was born, as eugenicists began to believe that racial survival meant quantity as well as quality. They had long been worried about the survival of the race, because of the general lowering of the birthrate in Britain. According to Soloway the slaughter of young men forced British eugenicists to actually think about the relative contributions of nature and nurture, to become more "inclusive", and promote the need for improved infant welfare.⁸⁵

Eugenics and Women

The relationship between eugenics and women was strongly influenced by the rapid fall in the birthrate around the turn of the century. The problem lay the basic beliefs of eugenicists in controlling evolution, which meant that a higher birthrate among the middle classes was to be preferred. Feminists, although not embracing birth control en masse, did become associated with a desire for smaller families. This meant

⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 173.

⁸⁴ Soloway, *Demography*, p.143f.

women's traditional roles were beginning to come into conflict with the changing nature of beliefs about equality within the family, in education, and in the workplace. Many eugenicists found it difficult to reconcile women's new public life with their private lives as breeders. Karl Pearson for instance, although sympathetic to feminism, thought that "... it was possible that the "penalty to be paid for race predominance [would be] the subjection of women.'" ⁸⁶ Much soul searching and not a little controversy resulted. ⁸⁷

Ironically, eugenics was one of the movements that helped bring women into public life in the early twentieth century. The eugenics movement seems to have contained large numbers of woman, some of whom achieved high office. ⁸⁸ In the United States it has been argued that women gained much in the way of professional qualifications by being associated with the research undertaken by the laboratory at Cold Spring Harbor. ⁸⁹ At the Galton Laboratory in Britain Karl Pearson gave a third of his research jobs to women, albeit only five, and that was partly to save money. ⁹⁰ Professional advancement was particularly noticeable at Cold Spring Harbor, where some women took doctorates, which was apparently not common at the time. Women tended to get the research jobs at this laboratory partly because they were cheaper, and partly because tradition saw them as more suited to working with people.

The more progressive eugenicists such as Pearson believed that only socialism could establish the right conditions for women to fulfil their lives both publicly and privately. Others believed that independent women would make better choices in the matter of mating. ⁹¹ The more conservative, such as Dean Inge, Theodore

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 140, p. 161f.

⁸⁶ Soloway, *Birth Control*, p. 14.

⁸⁷ Soloway, *Demography*, p. 112., Kevles, p. 24f.

⁸⁸ L. Gordon, *Woman's Body Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America*, Penguin 1976, p. 280ff.

⁸⁹ Kevles, *Name*, p. 220 f., Paul, *Heredity*, p. 54 f

⁹⁰ Kevles, *Name*, p. 39.

Roosevelt, and E.G. Conklin,⁹² found it very difficult come to terms with the idea that the most eugenically valuable women would probably wish to delay having children. These people in general tended to oppose the education of women, because of a mistaken apprehension that it led to spinsterhood.⁹³ Part of the answer to this, ironically, was seen to lie in the provision of courses in eugenics in high schools and universities, which became common at least in the United States and Germany. Some eugenisists actively opposed women's suffrage by joining anti-suffrage organisations.⁹⁴ In spite of this half the membership and a quarter of the officers of the British and American popular eugenics societies were women, and some were involved in moderate suffrage activities.

The general attitude towards lower class woman (of less genetic worth) and women who were deemed to be mentally deficient was much more clear-cut. "Mentally deficient" women who were specifically targeted for sterilisation because of their alleged lack of sexual control and inability to raise children properly. They were seen as a large part of the degeneration problem, and impelled some eugenisists to become aligned with the nascent birth control movement.⁹⁵

A Note on the Use of the Word "Movement"

Although this is not a major theme in the overseas literature the word movement is sometimes used to describe eugenics organisations as a whole. This suggests a group of people with a similar objective, taking more or less continuous and organised action towards this common end. British, European, and United States eugenics at least seem to fit this rough definition, as does the eugenics of South and Central America. In spite of the sometimes vitriolic discussions that took place within eugenics organisations, it is obvious that they had a common goal or goals. It

⁹¹ Soloway, *Demography*, p. 130.

⁹² Edwin Grant Conklin was sometime Professor of Embryology at Princeton University.

⁹³ Kevles, *Name*, p. 89.

⁹⁴ Soloway, *Demography*, p. 134.

is also true that at least until the 1930s, most eugenists were working in a fairly coherent manner towards the attainment of either specific or general objectives. There is also in most of these countries, some suggestion of a waxing of interest and influence from the first decade of the twentieth century, until the late 1920s and early 1930s. Whether New Zealand fits this model remains to be seen.

The Focus of this Thesis

This thesis then, will use some of the themes developed in this more modern international literature to try to assess their relevance to the New Zealand situation. It is organised into case studies in areas where eugenic input might be expected, judging by the international experience. These are arranged in chronological rather than thematic order largely because chronology is an issue that would seem to be relevant, particularly if one regards New Zealand eugenics as a movement.

One of the weaknesses of previous New Zealand work in this area, particularly on the debate about eugenics, was the lack of in-depth study. This thesis is an attempt to remedy the situation by studying comprehensively the way particular pieces of legislation were debated in the public sphere. For the purposes of the thesis, the public sphere is taken to include Parliament, Government, major daily newspapers, and other published journals where this legislation in particular and eugenics in general might be expected to be discussed. Particular bills were chosen as case studies because they contained issues that would have been expected to attract the attention of those who were for or against the use of eugenics in social legislation.

The choice of these case studies was determined in part by substantial reading of the overseas literature. It was in these areas that according to British and American studies, one should find eugenic influence and opposition leading to public debate. Part of the inquiry was to see if New Zealand attitudes were influenced by any

⁹⁵ Soloway, *Birth Control*, p. 200.

particular overseas experience, although as most of the literature in English is about Britain and the United States the thesis concentrates on these two.

The specific bills chosen were The Mental Defectives Bill of 1911, The Mental Defectives Amendment Bill of 1928, The Family Allowances Bill of 1926, and The Immigration Restriction Amendment Bill of 1920, and to some extent preceding immigration bills for reasons which will be made clear. The dates of these bills range from 1911, the year after the New Zealand Eugenics Society was formed to 1928, when discussion on eugenics was at its height in this country, partly at least due to the nature of the bill.

The two bills on mental defect were chosen because this was, according to eugenicists among others, a huge problem that was getting worse. These two bills might be expected to have sparked debate along eugenic lines because they were to some extent an effort to control the problem of the fertility of the unfit. The nature of mental deficiency is also the subject of great debate at this time overseas. Psychologists, psychiatrists, educators, biologists, and geneticists had all taken the side of nature or nurture and its various mixtures.

This problem was treated differently in Britain, the United States, and Europe, which gives an opportunity to compare the New Zealand approach to see which if any of these was influencing New Zealand. The American, European, and British approaches to mental deficiency were very different, notably in the adoption by the Americans and some European states of widespread state sponsored sterilisation of people defined as mentally deficient. Britain never came close to sterilising mental deficients, partly at least because it was difficult under British law, but also because there was huge opposition to the ethics of the operation.

There is also the opportunity to compare the reaction of the Parliament and the public to both these bills in the same general area. It is also possible to compare the eugenic influence on Parliament at different points in time on essentially the same

topic, to see if eugenics had gained in acceptance, or if opposition to it had developed or increased.

The question of family allowances was chosen for number of reasons. Firstly according to many eugenicists, giving money to poor people to raise large families is the exact opposite of what they were setting out to do. Various proposals had been put forward in Britain for eugenic family allowances that helped those whom eugenicists described as "of civic worth", particularly towards the end of and just after World War I. This bill then, may possibly be expected to reflect the feelings of New Zealanders about the losses incurred during the war, and the necessity to increase the birthrate of the worthy. Thirdly, at the same time eugenicists were becoming involved both in the birth control movement, and in the various maternalist organisations that had originated overseas which were promoting family allowances, in order to save the race.⁹⁶ Eugenic attitudes towards this bill could easily have been ambivalent. If so it was expected that some of the debate might have reflected this ambivalence.

The immigration bill was chosen because in the United States some sources attach great weight to the eugenic organisations' influence on American immigration restrictions in the 1920s.⁹⁷ American eugenicists considered migrants from Asia and Southern and Eastern Europe to be of inferior stock, particularly with regard to mental ability.⁹⁸ Eugenicists were certainly one of a number of groups that opposed migration to America from these areas. This is an area that, on the whole, remains untouched in the New Zealand eugenic literature.

Immigration was not a problem that British eugenicists had much to say about, but as O'Connor has pointed out,⁹⁹ New Zealand was concerned enough about Asian migration in particular to pass a number of bills trying to restrict it. The 1920 Bill

⁹⁶ Gordon, p. 109.

⁹⁷ Kevles, *Name*, p. 94ff, D. B. Paul, *Heredity*, p. 97ff.

⁹⁸ Kevles, *Name*, p. 82 -- 3,

⁹⁹ P. S. O'Connor, *Keeping New Zealand White, 1908 – 1920*, *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol. 1, no. 2, April 1968, p. 41-65.

was put forward at a time when there was serious concern about non-Anglo-Saxon migration into the United States, and it was considered possible that American influence on the New Zealand public debate could be established. This bill was also passed soon after the First World War, and could possibly express some of the concern felt about casualties and who was replacing them.

A certain amount of time is spent on preceding immigration bills, because these bills span a great deal of the period in which people were interested in eugenics. It was thought that if there was an upwelling of feeling about eugenics during this time, then it might be reflected, if not changing attitudes towards migrants, then perhaps in a change in the way that unwanted migrants were condemned, and a change in the evidence used to condemn them.

Similarly, the case studies as a whole are arranged in chronological order partly at least to test the idea that eugenics in New Zealand was a movement, and to see if there was a chronological progression, a waxing or waning of enthusiasm and ideas. If so eugenic ideas expressed in legislation might be expected to become more common, and perhaps more complex as the movement grows.

A number of questions arose from a preliminary reading of the secondary literature and have helped to shape this study.

1. Was eugenics a hot topic during the debating of any of these bills, and was it used by parliamentarians to attempt to give scientific legitimacy to social legislation in this country?
 2. Was there any public debate about the bills' eugenic content, as shown for example in letters to the editor of major daily newspapers?
 3. Was pressure for and against the eugenic content of these bills expressed in public by any particular groups, if so could this group be identified by its class, profession, or religion? Did the groupings in the debate show any
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similarity with those in similar debates overseas? For instance Thomson has suggested that in the area of mental deficiency, British educators tended to be pro nurture, and those who worked in prisons or mental hospitals, tended to be pro nature. There is some evidence for a similar split in the United States. Some consideration should also be given to religious groups who opposed or supported eugenics, such as the Catholic Church, and it could perhaps be seen to what extent this is took place in New Zealand. Then there is the question of support or opposition from the left, from union groups, and to what extent this was based on their understanding of eugenics or on other considerations.

4. Was the evidence or argument presented in the discussion of eugenic content of these bills American, British, Scandinavian German, or a mixture?
5. If influence was shown, was there any relationship between the type of influence and the area influenced, such as the American concern with immigration reflecting in the immigration bill debate?
6. What general direction did the debate take? For instance was it positive or negative eugenics or some mixture that was being debated, perhaps varying with the type of legislation being discussed?
7. Did New Zealand in fact have a Eugenics movement? Did eugenics ideas begin in a small way, increase their impact with the passage of time, and perhaps decline in a measured way.

To investigate these questions it was decided to use sources mainly dedicated to the public debate. Initially, extensive secondary reading was undertaken to establish any useful comparisons. The primary sources tended to be published, and were chosen for their expression of public debate and opinion.

It seemed particularly necessary to thoroughly investigate the major daily New Zealand newspapers. The major dailies from New Zealand's largest cities were used. From Auckland, the *Auckland Star* and *New Zealand Herald*, from Wellington, the *Dominion* and the *Evening Post*. From Christchurch, the *Christchurch Star*, from

Dunedin, the *Otago Daily Times*. Other newspapers used, included the various religious publications from the major Protestant denominations, the *Outlook*, the *New Zealand Baptist*, the *New Zealand Church and People*, and particularly the *Catholic Tablet*. The *Maoriland Worker*, (later the *New Zealand Worker*) was included as a representative of left-wing opinion.

Of course the parliamentary debate surrounding the various bills were also considered necessary as were reports from the government departments involved. The documents surrounding the investigations undertaken by the government of the day into mental defect were also studied. Not all of these were available but various health department files were available, such as the replies of medical practitioners to a government questionnaire, the Procedure of the Committee of Inquiry into mental defect, and some documents relating to the general treatment of mental defect. These all gave inside into the attitudes prevalent at the time. Unfortunately files on immigration were destroyed in a fire and not available for investigation, but some relevant material was found in Internal Affairs files.

Of the eugenic literature published at the time not a great deal could be found, but there were some few books and articles available. Other published sources, such as the medical and scientific journals (although few) were used, because a thorough investigation of these sources had not yet been undertaken in New Zealand. This country had very few scientific journals before the 1960s. Used were: the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, the *Transactions of the New Zealand Institute*, the *New Zealand Journal of Science and Technology*, and the *New Zealand Medical Journal*.

The place of eugenics in the New Zealand context could perhaps be clarified by an intensive study of the particular pieces of legislation and the sources mentioned above. Not all of the above questions were fully answered by this study, but this is intended to fill some of the gaps in the few New Zealand references, rather than be the last word on the influence of eugenics in this country.

Chapter 1.

Immigration Legislation, Concentrating on the Immigration Restriction

Amendment Bill of 1920.

Immigration was a problem that in particular concerned American eugenists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Migrants to the United States, (and for that matter to New Zealand) were often from ethnic and cultural groups that were anathema to the majority group of white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Immigration was an important topic in New Zealand at about the same time, but unlike the United States, this is an area almost totally unexplored in the New Zealand literature on eugenics. Given that American eugenists were among the groups that agitated in the early twentieth century for an end to migration from Asia, and eastern and central Europe, it would seem reasonable to look at the immigration question in New Zealand to see if eugenists had any influence on immigration legislation in this country.

Mention must be made for the sake of comparison and context of the attitude of anti-immigration Americans, the possible influence of eugenists on American legislation, the American propaganda that was available to New Zealanders about the racial inferiority of migrant groups, and legislation passed in the United States.

American eugenists and many so-called "native" Americans feared that the supposed high birthrate of inferior non-Anglo-Saxon migrants would eventually swamp them. This was a variation on the fertility of the unfit theme, one of eugenics' central tenets. American eugenists were one of a number of groups that were against migrants from Asia, and Southern and Eastern Europe, lobbying to restrict their access.¹ The extent of eugenist influence on American legislation is the subject of some debate, but given that, it certainly gave restrictionists scientific legitimacy. (It should be emphasised that the issue was not that America was becoming overcrowded, but that it was a "dumping ground" for the wrong kind of people.)

There was much contemporary American literature about immigration, little of which was used in New Zealand's own immigration debates. In 1910, an American government-appointed committee, the Dillingham committee, produced a forty-two

volume report on immigration, claiming that new migrants mainly of southern and eastern European stock, were inferior to those of Anglo-Saxon descent. In 1916 Madison Grant² produced what Paul refers to as the anti - immigration " bible", *The Passing of the Great Race*, in which new migrants were stigmatised as "hereditary cripples".³ This book emphasised many eugenic concerns, such as fertility decline, in this case among the native born. Scientific legitimacy for the idea of migrant inferiority was reinforced in 1917 by the US Army IQ tests, which purported to show that non native-Americans' mental age was very low. All of these examples could have been used as eugenic evidence to promote the exclusion of Asians and other minorities from New Zealand.

In a series of laws and international agreements from 1882 to 1924, American governments managed to restrict Asian immigration in particular, but also that of people from Southern and Eastern Europe, convicts, paupers, and idiots into the United States. The debates surrounding these laws and the laws themselves were often reported in the New Zealand press.

There was in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a great deal of legislation in this country relating to immigration, leading to the last, perhaps New Zealand's major piece of immigration law, the Immigration Restriction Amendment Bill of 1920. While it was decided to concentrate on this Act in this chapter, the fact that so much legislation spans the period of time when eugenics was emerging, both in New Zealand and overseas meant that for the sake of context, some little time should be spent those preceding it.

The background to migration restrictions in New Zealand goes back as far as the 1840s, when selection and exclusion of migrant groups was present if not enshrined

¹ Paul, *Heredity*, p. 99.

² Grant was apparently one of a number of influential eugenic figures in government and academic circles, particularly within the administration of Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt was an ardent eugenicist, who apparently socialized with Grant.

³ Grant, quoted in Paul, *Heredity*, p. 104.

in law.⁴ Many New Zealanders had problems accepting Asian and other ethnic minority group migration to this country, and the migration of those who due to illness could be considered inferior stock. For forty years or more, New Zealand parliaments considered the restriction of immigration on the grounds of race or health, sometimes both. There were immigration bills of one sort or another for instance in 1881, 1888, 1895, 1896, 1898, 1899, 1907, 1910, 1914, 1919, and 1920.

A brief background to the pre-1920 bills is necessary. It should be remembered that these bills were passed almost invariably with very few dissenting voices. They dated from 1881 when the numbers of Chinese who could be landed from any one ship were restricted, and a poll tax was imposed. These restrictions were tightened in 1888 and 1896. The bills tried, by various methods tried to restrict the numbers of migrants particularly from India, China, and Japan, but also others of non-British descent such as those Dalmatians migrating from what was then part of the Austrian Empire. Nor were New Zealand parliamentarians enamoured of what was seen as attempts to foist on this country undesirables from Britain such as the poor and sick, and attempts were made to restrict the entry of paupers, and those suffering from disease who were not coming to New Zealand for treatment.

In 1907 and 1908 bills were passed which proposed to make it more difficult for Asians to memorise the literacy test (introduced in the 1899 Act) in order to gain entry to this country. The 1908 Act forced Chinese leaving the country to leave behind a thumb print for identification on re-entry, on the grounds that as they all looked the same, a photograph would not guarantee that the same person was reentering the country. This procedure was the subject of protest from the Chinese government.

In 1910 an amendment was passed which made it easier for non-migrant Chinese to land in this country, mainly the few students, businessmen, and tourists who wished

⁴ W.H. Oliver, B. R. Williams, eds. *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, Auckland, O.U.P., 1981, p. 114

to visit. By 1913 the focus seems to have shifted to Indian indentured labourers taking ship to New Zealand at the end of their contracts in Fiji. The feeling was that the existing legislation contained too many gaps, and Massey came under political pressure to act in an election year.⁵ The result was, after consultation with London, a bill whose aim was to fill these gaps, which was dropped largely because of the advent of World War I. In 1919, the Undesirable Immigrants Exclusion Act was concerned mainly with the exclusion of political undesirables. This was described by O'Connor as "... a long step towards the simple if potentially dangerous technique used to deal with the Asian problem in 1920."⁶

After the First World War, with the number of Indians and Chinese attempting to migrate to New Zealand increasing, it seems that organised labour, the Auckland Star, and the R.S.A. were all at least partly responsible for putting pressure on Auckland Labour MPs to agitate for further restrictions.⁷ The Immigration Restriction Amendment Bill introduced in August 1920 gave the Minister of Customs the sole and arbitrary right to allow or refuse entry to New Zealand to anyone not of British or Irish ancestry. It also shifted the test for migrants from education, which had proved of dubious value, to "... suitability...". It shifted the testing of the migrant from this country to his or her own, and it required anyone desiring to settle in New Zealand to inform the Minister of his "... birth and parentage."⁸ This was the main thrust of the bill as regards Asian immigration, although there were other clauses designed to keep out those considered to be disloyal. This is the bill which O'Connor describes as "... the logical end of a chapter."

O'Connor has shown that the immigration question reveals very clearly the racial attitudes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Stereotyping of Chinese and Indians was rife, even in Parliament. This was despite the fact that in 1871, a

⁵ O'Connor, p. 50f.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 52.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 52ff.

Parliamentary Select Committee on Chinese Immigration had dismissed most of the stereotypes prevalent about Chinese, finding that they were not dirty, promiscuous, or reservoirs of disease.⁹ It also shows a somewhat obsessive attitude towards what was clearly a numerically very small problem, as there were never more than a few thousand Asians in the country during these years. Anti-Asian and obsessive attitudes however do not necessarily derive from eugenics.

None of these bills in their wording contained any eugenic content, but they operated in what seems to have been a racially charged climate, where many New Zealanders felt that allowing Asian migration to this country was dangerous. For instance, in 1905 there occurred a most bizarre incident of racial antagonism, when Lionel Terry,¹⁰ described on the flyleaf of his biography as, "...a young poet-philosopher...",¹¹ murdered an elderly Chinese man in Wellington.

His writings epitomised the more extreme New Zealand attitudes towards other races, and contained beliefs, which might very loosely be described as eugenic. These included a dislike of mixed marriages, a belief in degeneracy, the need to ascribe lower moral standards to people of other races, and advocacy of the "lethal chamber".¹² These beliefs however, do not specifically ascribe racial inferiority to genetics. It is just possible that Terry may have been influenced by popular eugenics, as it was emerging overseas.¹³ (Although given the dates of the formation of overseas eugenic societies, probably not by 1905.) Terry, an auto-didact could possibly have read scientific eugenic literature, but if so it was not mentioned in his biography as one of his influences.

⁸ Immigration Restriction Bill, 11 Geo.V., p. 78-83.

⁹ O'Connor, p. 41 – 65.

¹⁰ Terry, after being found guilty of murder, was then sentenced to death, commuted to life imprisonment in 1906. He was soon found to be legally insane and incarcerated in mental hospitals until he died in 1952.

¹¹ F. Tod, *Lionel Terry: The Making of a Madman*, Otago Foundation Books Ltd., Dunedin, 1977.

¹² O'Connor, p. 53

He gave in his publication "The Shadow" his reasons for maintaining the purity of the race, among which were:

1. That the natural hatred existing between the various races of the world can never be eradicated by civilisation or by any other means without the sacrifice of racial purity.

2. That in cases where this natural hatred has become in a measure smothered by unwholesome social conditions in circumstances brought about by careless and corrupt legislation, and have resulted in the intermarriage of white with black and coloured people, the punishment exacted by nature has been securely severe, as is evidenced by the moral, mental and physical ill-health of cross-bred people throughout the world.

3. That the morals, methods of living, religious beliefs and general customs of black and coloured races are totally strange, and in many cases revolting to the white man, and therefore alien immigration into British possessions has a tendency to produce degenerate habits and lower the moral standard among the white inhabitants.¹⁴

While few would have gone as far as to endorse what Terry did to draw attention to his beliefs, his actions focused public opinion on the perceived problem of Asian immigration, and helped to convince the government that legislation was necessary.¹⁵

As part of this public fear of Asian immigration, the Anti-Asiatic League¹⁶ had been formed in Wellington, with the intention to "... combat evils arising out of the presence of Asiatics in our midst, and to approach the government from time to time in reference to Asiatic immigration...".¹⁷ One of their intentions in lobbying government was "To prevent the intermarriage of Chinese and Europeans."¹⁸ Although many eugenisists would probably have agreed that miscegenation was deleterious, the dislike of interracial marriage was widespread at the time, and many

¹³ Fleming maintains that eugenics ideas arrived in New Zealand in the 1890s. Fleming p.9.

¹⁴ Tod, p. 22.

¹⁵ O'Connor, p. 44.

¹⁶ An Anti-Chinese Committee had been formed in Nelson as early as 1857.

¹⁷ Tod, p. 50.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 51.

biologists in fact thought it was inimical.¹⁹ The league also deplored "...unfair..."²⁰ competition from Chinese in business. This as will be seen, probably constitutes the major reason for the dislike of Asian migration to New Zealand, rather than any eugenic fears.

The Parliamentary Debate

Of the bills that preceded the 1920 bill, the Asiatic and Other Immigration Restriction Bill of 1895 the Asiatic Restriction Bill of 1896, and the Immigration Restriction Bill of 1899 show some of the popular beliefs that formed the core of the eugenic belief system. These themes tend to be those associated with the belief in a hierarchy of races and distaste for those considered to be lower in the racial hierarchy. It is possible, but unlikely that these beliefs were influenced by eugenics as such, which was not yet a popular movement.²¹

However what might be expected in some of the later bills, if influenced by eugenic ideas, would be reference to the genetic inheritance of racial and ethnic cultural differences, and perhaps reference to eugenics or the Eugenic Society. One might also expect reference to the desire that the government should forbid immigration to New Zealand by Asians to prevent these traits becoming part of the New Zealand population's genetic inheritance and the eventual swamping of the superior European traits.

Reeves, who is described by O'Connor as a "...quite savage racist...",²² did deliver a diatribe against "Asiatics" when arguing for the 1895 Asiatic and Other Immigration Restriction Bill, in which some of these general beliefs are mentioned. With regard to non-Asiatic undesirables he did say that they tend to breed true:

¹⁹ Kevles, *Name*, p. 75.

²⁰ Tod, p. 51.

²¹ Kevles, *Name* p. 57f.

²² O'Connor, p. 42.

"... unquestionably paupers will breed paupers, criminals will breed criminals, lunatics will transmit lunacy, just as a man diseased will hand down disease to his children and his children's children". This of course, is one of the beliefs upon which eugenics was founded but not necessarily specific to eugenics. He later went on to express his disgust at the cultural habits of the Chinese, but does not ascribe these to genetic inheritance. He did however say, that they would "... taint this nation for generations to come".²³ He also quoted extensively from American evidence to show the cost of the increasing numbers of paupers, criminals, and the insane.²⁴ This was also a fear held by most eugenists, but again one that pre-dates the formation of eugenic societies and the science of eugenics itself. Reeves attitude towards migrants however, possibly owes much to his sense of nation building as to racism.²⁵

Some few other references could possibly be ascribed to these shared beliefs. Typical of these is one made by Dr Newman, who insisted that he wanted to, "elevate our race...".²⁶ Mr. Mills expressed the view that we should allow our "... kith and kin..." to come to New Zealand even if they may be a little sick or poor, but that Chinese "... handicap better men...".²⁷ Mr. Russell believed it was our duty to exclude Asians on the grounds that we should be "... maintaining the purity of our own race.",²⁸ quite a common idea at the time, but only incidentally eugenist.

There was no mention of heredity of Chinese cultural traits, or any damning of racial admixture in the 1896 Asiatic Restriction Bill. There was however much general prejudice against Asian migrants. Even those who defend the Chinese as performing a much-needed service in selling cheap fruit wished to restrict their numbers.²⁹ The Chinese were castigated for moral lapses, economic competition, for not allowing

²³ NZPD, vol. 89, August 1895, p. 346.

²⁴ *ibid.*, vol. 89, August 1895, p. 351.

²⁵ D. Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals: The Years of Power, 1891-1912*, Auckland, A.U. P., 1988, p. 52f.

²⁶ NZPD, vol. 89, August 1895, p. 354.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 369-70.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 370.

²⁹ *ibid.*, vol. 92, June 1896, p. 255.

Europeans into China, compared with American Negroes, and damned with faint praise, all within two pages of the debate.³⁰ One argument by Seddon centered on the "immorality" caused by this lack of suitable marriage partners for Chinese migrants.³¹ However none of these statements mentioned even loose eugenic beliefs.

The debate on the 1899 Immigration Restriction Bill contained very little that could remotely be considered eugenic. There were scattered references to the protection of racial purity,³² and some few to the importation of idiots, insane people, people suffering from contagious diseases, at least those which are "... loathsome or dangerous...".³³ There is also a reference to the unsuitability of Chinese to be migrants to New Zealand.³⁴ None of these refer in any way to the heritability of mental or other diseases, or of genetic unsuitability for migration to New Zealand.

The 1907 Chinese Immigrants Amendment Bill debate also contains very little that would lead us to believe eugenics was a factor in any part of the discussions. The arguments basically reflect those of the 1895 and 1896 Bills, although subjectively perhaps a little less severe. These bills are also designed to tidy up weaknesses in older bills, and it may be assumed that much of the argument has already taken place. However, there is typical reference to the "...purity of our race..."³⁵ by Prime Minister Ward, and other catchphrases such as "...best stock..."³⁶, and keeping New Zealand white.³⁷ There were the usual arguments about "...vice..."³⁸ ascribed to members of inferior races.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 254 -5.

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 253.

³² *ibid.*, vol. 106, July 1899, p. 530.

³³ *ibid.*, vol. 105, October 1899, p. 161.

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 160.

³⁵ *ibid.*, vol. 142, November 1907, p. 838.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 838.

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 840.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 840.

There were two intriguing references, one by the member for Wellington Central Mr. Fisher, who mentions the "...astonishing..."³⁹ number of Chinese in mental asylums. Mental degeneracy was a eugenic concern, but the member does not mention any genetic inheritance. There was also a reference to "...racial deterioration..."⁴⁰ by the leader of the opposition, Mr. Massey. This latter is language that was very common to those who believed in eugenics, but again, this issue existed before eugenics, and are considered part of the probable causes of the rise of eugenic theory.

The 1910 Immigration Restriction Bill (considered in the year that the New Zealand eugenic society was formed) contained very little if any discussion of the character inherited or otherwise, of the Chinese "race". It did mention however the perceived problem of economic competition of Chinese with "... our people...",⁴¹ in the context of trying to find a way to allow Chinese students to enter the country without the hindrance given to the "competitors". There was also a reference to the exclusion of those "... afflicted with a contagious disease, ... idiots or perverts..."⁴² but not to the genetic inheritance of these problems.

The possibility of eugenic influence in both these bills does theoretically exist, as eugenics was becoming quite fashionable among the middle classes Britain and America in the early 1900s, and of course scientific eugenics had existed long before this. Both bills were amendments to procedures, and consequently the debates were quite short, which could account for the lack of any reference to eugenics ideas. It may well be, however, that eugenic involvement in the American anti-immigration coalition did not reach its full potential until after these bills have been discussed. Certainly much of the eugenic literature which is regarded as both inspiring and giving scientific legitimacy to the anti-immigration cause had not been published at this time.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 839.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 838.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, vol. 152, October 1910, p. 258.

The Immigration Restriction Amendment Bill of 1914 is where one would perhaps expect to find more eugenic language, as this is the time when popular eugenics societies had been formed in Britain, America, and New Zealand, and some foreign literature had become available, notably the Dillingham Report. Yet the debate surrounding the bill contained no eugenic content, possibly because it is merely an amendment to close a loophole and shut out Indians who were being coached for the language test, or possibly because of the date, 4 August 1914, the day that Belgium was invaded by Germany. There was certainly little or no discussion of the character of Indians in particular or Asians in general, except in so far as they represent unfair economic competition.⁴³

There were some very general references to the undesirability of Asians, and those with contagious diseases, but no reference to the heritability of either undesirable Asian traits or disease. There were also no references to the ideas that pre-dated and influenced eugenics. Ward, the leader of the opposition said for instance, "I desire to do all in my power to keep this country " white" and to prevent the importation of any coloured people from beyond our shores." ⁴⁴ As the member for Wairarapa (Sir W. C. Buchanan) said about America and Canada, it is more that "... competition in regard to labour and some lines of business was very much resented". ⁴⁵ There were no direct references to eugenics, or the Eugenics Society. Indeed, there had been more racist and "eugenic" references in some of the 19th-century bills.

The Immigration Restriction Amendment Bill of 1920 is more interesting, for a number of reasons. It was being discussed at a time when eugenics' popularity worldwide was probably reaching its zenith, as was its influence on governments in the United States, Britain and Europe. In the United States pressure was building for restrictions on unsuitable migrants in the United States, culminating in the Johnson /

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 258.

⁴³ *ibid.*, vol. 169, August 1914, p. 392.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 393.

Reed Act of 1924 which severely restricted non-Anglo-Saxon migration to the United States. Eugenists were allegedly prominent in the push for the Johnson / Reed Act, although it must be admitted that so were organised labour, capital, and other interest groups.

The arguments against migration of Asians to New Zealand in the debates of this 1920 bill were not particularly eugenic, and neither was a very great deal of American eugenic evidence presented in support of the bill. The language does not change greatly from that heard during previous debates. There were numerous references to racial purity, and maintaining the white race's social and economic standards, and the evils of race mixing. Downie Steward, the member for Dunedin West, Malcolm the member for Clutha, McNicol the member for Pahiatua, and Harris the member for Waitemata all mentioned the necessity for a "white New Zealand". Harris, Mitchell the member for Wellington South, and Sullivan the member for Avon were all advocates of racial purity.⁴⁶

There were however, moments when it would seem that eugenics came to the fore. Hanan, the member for Invercargill, in the middle of stock phrases about purity of race and so on, said "Let us keep out undesirable immigrants, having regard to the great idea of race culture and the attainment of a higher civilization."⁴⁷ References to race culture, hygiene, and fitness were relatively common in eugenics literature. The idea that the white races had attained a higher civilisation is one that has also contributed to the development of eugenics (but of course is not exclusive to it.)

There was a confused reference by Kellett, the member for Dunedin North representing the fear of being out-bred by those of lesser worth, where he said, "One has only to read of what has happened in America as the result of bringing a few slaves from Africa. At the present time the progeny of the slaves out numbers

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 394.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, vol. 187, August 1920, pp. 908, 916, 919, 920, 924.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 923.

the white race by three to one, which is a very serious position." ⁴⁸ The fear of some sort of differential birthrate, class or race based, was a fundamental eugenic tenet, but it is difficult to imagine how he arrived at his figures for the relative proportions of the races in United States, assuming this is what he means. He also mentioned the problem of race mixing, which by now had largely been fixed in the scientific and popular mind as creating problems. He said " We saw evidence in Samoa of the evil of mixed breed, we see it here in the City of Wellington, and we see it all over New Zealand; and it is time we stopped it absolutely, and the only way you can do so is by restricting the entry of even one Asiatic." ⁴⁹

As might be expected, where evidence of the evils of migration is used it is often American, but the influence of Chinese intermarriage with Samoans does crop up more than once. Interestingly, New Zealand evidence of the evils of Asiatics is confined to the economic sphere. It is obvious that Labour members in particular are worried about the lowering of living standards. Savage, Holland, and Sullivan, the member for Avon all mention economic competition. ⁵⁰

Atmore, the member for Nelson does refer to evolution resulting in better and inferior races, and mentioned that those belonging to the "...progressive..." races should not marry those belonging to the more "...backward...". He maintained that people of colour, or even Bolshevists should not sully the "...finest blood..." from the old country. ⁵¹ But again these references could come from eugenic ideas or those from which eugenics sprang. Very little in this bill constitutes concrete evidence of the influence of eugenics on immigration legislation.

Newspaper and Public Response

In this chapter, and indeed the others, a comprehensive survey of major daily newspapers, and other newspapers and journals was undertaken in order to see if

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 926.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 926.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 912f., p. 918, p. 924.

there were eugenic references in editorials, articles, or letters. In particular references to the genetic inheritance of racial characteristics, (especially mental traits) were looked for. Of course so were references to eugenics, and New Zealand branches of eugenics societies. In this chapter, unlike the others, simply because they were so many immigration bills a general survey was made of major daily papers of a considerable period of time from the 1880s to 1920, but concentrating particularly on the time of the 1920 bill. Largely but not solely for reasons of time, religious publications were ignored, as was the New Zealand Medical Journal although these figure prominently in later chapters. It was assumed that they would have less interest in immigration, than in the other areas studied.

Very little was found in newspapers and other publications to suggest any eugenic influence in the country at large. Some evidence was found in government records, from the Department of Internal Affairs. Records pertaining to immigration are sparse, due to the destruction of Customs Department records in a fire. According to the evidence that could be found, most of the concern with Asian immigration in this country seems to have been economic.

It would seem that most of the general public were not necessarily worried about the racial aspects of immigration or those pertaining to illness, idiocy, or perversity, possibly because so few non-Europeans were visible in most of the country excepting Maori. There was a constant if patchy stream of articles and letters in the major daily newspapers about the general subject of Asians living in New Zealand, but with little or no eugenic content. The whole tenor seems to have been economic. It is difficult to see any relationship between these letters and articles and the various bills if the bills are not directly referred to, as from 1895 onwards there was also a constant stream of legislation.

In 1896 for instance the *Christchurch Press* carried a series of short letters complaining about the Chinese, and their monopoly of fruit growing and cabinet

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 936ff.

making in Wellington.⁵² The *Evening Post* and the *Dominion* carried small articles in January 1917, denying that the government was about to import coloured labour.⁵³ On the 9 August 1918 the *Post* had a rather larger article complaining about the monopoly that Asians allegedly had of fruit growing and bottle gathering. O'Connor quotes many similar letters of concern, particularly from the R.S.A.⁵⁴ It is obvious that in some circles Asian immigration was receiving much attention, mostly again not for eugenic reasons but because of the fear of economic competition. Letters from trade unionists to the Minister of Internal Affairs for instance suggest that unions as well as the R.S.A. were afraid of the importation of low wage labour.⁵⁵ But there was little in the way of editorial comment on any of the bills.

There was in all the papers surveyed coverage of the bills in those pages devoted to proceedings in the House of Representatives or the Council. The *Post*, for example in common with the other dailies, carried almost nothing at all about any of the immigration debates except for this. In 1910 the *Post* of 9 September, two days after mentioning a proposal for a eugenics society branch to be formed in Wellington, mentioned the debate about the Immigration Restriction Bill without comment. There was in fact more concern about purity of the milk than the purity of the race, if we judge by the amount of space and comment devoted to each.

The 1920 Immigration Restriction Amendment Bill received somewhat more coverage than the earlier bills. Some of the 1920 papers such as the *Evening Post*, merely followed the debate in the parliamentary column, without comment in editorial form, and without any letters expressing an opinion on either side of the

⁵² *Christchurch Press*, 4 March 1896, p. 6, 6 March, p. 57 March, p. 5.

⁵³ *Evening Post*, 29 January 1917, n.p., *Dominion*, 31 January 1917, n.p., A.A.A.C., 6015, 158/15, Box 139.

⁵⁴ O'Connor, p. 54f.

⁵⁵ Letter from United Federation of Labour to Minister of Internal Affairs, 12 September 1916, A.A.A.C., 6015, 158/15, Box 139.

Letter from H. Hunter, secretary of the U.F.L. to Minister of Internal Affairs, 7 December 1916, A.A.A.C., 6015, 158/15, Box 139.

debate. There was however, a constant supply of small articles and a few letters in most of the major dailies showing that immigration and race were at least on some people's minds, perhaps just the minds of newspaper editors.

These letters and articles reflected either protests within New Zealand about migrants from Asia, or an awareness of Japanese migration to California and the "White Australia" policy, but no justification of an anti-Asian attitude on eugenic grounds, or even with the more common ideas shared by eugenicists. The awareness of a perceived problem is not particularly surprising considering the general anti-Asian feeling in those parts of New Zealand where Asians were visible, and the emergence (according to Kevles)⁵⁶ of ethnic denigration and anti-migrant feeling in the United States at this time.

There seems also to have been some fear of Japanese expansionism in 1920, as expressed in a *Post* editorial on 13 September.⁵⁷ The *Post* for instance, although it has no editorial opinion on the bill, had an article on the 21 September about "White Australia",⁵⁸ one on the Japanese-US "... race problem..."⁵⁹ on the 28th and on the 29th an article outlining negotiations between Japan and the United States on the exclusion of Japanese migrants. Similarly, the *Otago Daily Times* mentioned the California 'problem' on the 23rd and again on the 25th.⁶⁰ The *Dominion* and *Christchurch Press* had a number of similar small articles. None of these articles had any eugenic content.

The *Dominion*, the *New Zealand Herald* and the *Auckland Star* had editorials covering the bill, but only the *Star* used remotely eugenic arguments. The editorial noted that immigration "... imperils the purity of the race...", and criticised the evils of race mixing, but used much of its space to stress the economic argument against

⁵⁶ Kevles, *Name*, p. 94-5.

⁵⁷ *Evening Post*, 13 September 1920, p. 6.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 21 September 1920, p. 5.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 28 September 1920, p. 7.

⁶⁰ *Otago Daily Times*, 23 September 1920, p. 5, 25 September 1920, p. 9.

Asians.⁶¹ The *Dominion* editorial said "The government and Parliament should be eager to demonstrate that the measures now proposed are not inspired by prejudice or hostility, but are taken largely on economic grounds and in the interests of those to whom the Dominion is an unsuitable field of settlement as well as in the interests of its white population." ⁶² This statement is hardly a model of clarity, but suggests that opposition to Asian migration to New Zealand is more based on economic grounds than any other. (Or it is just possible that the editor did not wish to seem racially biased.)

This is supported by articles published in the various publications surveyed, which were almost unanimous in their economic concern. The tone is extremely anti-Asian, but not in a eugenic way. There are very few statements to be found which mention miscegenation, although W.B. Matheson in a letter to the *Dominion* does admit to New Zealand's anxiety to "... safeguard her people from admixture with Asian races".⁶³ There is little direct mention of inherited or even actual inferiority, although inferiority is usually implied.

The *Auckland Star* may accuse Asians of excess frugality, but there is no suggestion that it is genetically inherited. In an article on 15 April about Indian and Chinese migrants, it is suggested that they "... conspire to drain the country..." as they tend to send money to their families in India and China. The only consolation according to the *Star* is that they eventually go home.⁶⁴ Similarly, a report on the demonstration in Carterton contains a reference to the need for a "white" New Zealand, but no eugenic content.⁶⁵

The *Star* contained numerous articles that stress the importance of the economic factor in the dislike of Asian migrants. These articles often report protests to

⁶¹ *Auckland Star*, 20 April 1920, p. 4.

⁶² *Dominion*, 16 September 1920, p. 4.

⁶³ *ibid.*, 15 September, p. 5.

⁶⁴ *Auckland Star*, 12 April 1920, p. 4.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, 8 July p. 5.

government about competition in business from Asians. For instance, on 16 June it reported an R.S.A. protest about unfair competition by Asians in the greengrocery trade and in furniture making. It also quoted speeches from MPs worried about bosses importing "...coloured labour...".⁶⁶ It was said that Asian migration would not be a problem if equal pay was given for equal work,⁶⁷ although Labour it has been suggested was in two minds about this.⁶⁸ However on 20 April three Auckland Labour MPs, in a letter to the Prime Minister expressing their disquiet at the economic consequences of Asian immigration (that is cheap labour) are quoted as saying that they do not like the "...indiscriminate..." mixing of the races because it "...could not fail to do harm...".⁶⁹

There were also private protests, but again not eugenic in form. Both the Soldiers' Mothers' League and the R.S.A. wrote letters to the Minister of Internal Affairs, the first suggesting a boycott of Indian traders, the second asking for shipping restrictions to be eased, on Asians wishing to return home.⁷⁰ Returned soldiers and the R.S.A. appeared quite often in protests about Asian migrants, but almost always concerned about economic competition from Asians. Organised labour had a similar view, although O'Connor maintains that at least some leaders of the Labour Party had to cope with "... qualms of conscience..."⁷¹ over their theoretical devotion to racial equality.

By way of contrast, although economic competition from Asians and other migrants was a major factor in the Alliance of left and right to restrict immigration, there was in the United States much "expert" comment about the (wrongly assumed) high fertility of immigrant groups compared to native - born Americans.⁷² Of course this

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 6 July 1920, p. 4.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶⁸ O'Connor, p. 58.

⁶⁹ *Auckland Star*, 20 April, p. 4.

⁷⁰ A.A.A.C., 6015, 158/15, Box 139, NA.

⁷¹ O'Connor, p. 54.

⁷² Paul, *Heredity*, p. 100.

theory was almost impossible to apply to New Zealand Chinese, as there were so few Chinese women present in the country. If any sort of debate had taken place along the lines of that which developed in reaction to the Mental Defectives Amendment Bill, it would be expected that these so-called experts would have been quoted and attacked. There is no sign of this at all in the debate surrounding immigration in this country.

For instance the Dillingham Committee report, which had been available for ten years, was never quoted as far as could be seen.⁷³ Other evidence that might have been used in the 1920 debates about Asian immigration included Madison Grant's book *The Passing of the Great Race*, which is regarded by Paul as very influential for the American restrictionist movement.⁷⁴ Although this book is quoted in New Zealand in other contexts it makes no appearance in the immigration debates, neither does the other major polemical work about "race suicide" as a result of migration. This was Edward A. Ross's book *The Old World in the New*, which asserted "The fewer brains they have to contribute, the lower the place immigrants take among us, the faster they multiply."⁷⁵ Nor does any evidence appear from the highly publicised American army intelligence tests, which purported to show that migrants were less intelligent than native - born Americans. (Much of this work though, was used later in the debate surrounding the Mental Defectives Amendment Act of 1928.)

Paul claims that, in the United States "Evolutionary claims and images suffused debate on many issues of socialist tactics and strategy and were particularly marked in the debate over Asiatic exclusion."⁷⁶ They did not do so in this country, even though this was one area where New Zealand and America were quite similar, and where it might be expected that New Zealand would follow an American line on eugenics and immigration. However America's large non-Anglo-Saxon migrant

⁷³ Paul, *Heredity*, p. 103.

⁷⁴ *ibid*, p. 103.

⁷⁵ E.A. Ross, *The Old World in the New*, New York, Century, 1914, quoted in Paul, *Heredity*, p. 102.

⁷⁶ Paul, *Heredity*, p. 107.

population, and New Zealand's much smaller proportion of these migrants could easily account for this. While the American left could produce a report that characterised racism as part of natural selection,⁷⁷ New Zealand trade unionists, while many may have been anti-Asian, consistently opposed Asian migration on economic rather than scientific or eugenic grounds.

In the entire public debate about the perils of Asian immigration there is very little mention of Maori. The only reference in the 1920 Act was a reassurance by Massey to Ngata that Maori would be considered "... European for our purposes..." in administering the Bill. Other references which will be explained later suggest that for reasons unknown (but to be speculated on later) Maori were simply ignored by New Zealand eugenicists.

The report of the Committee on the Employment of Maoris on Market Gardens is interesting in that it does connect Maori with both eugenic ideas and immigration of Asians. This report, dating from 1929 and therefore a little outside the scope of this chapter, is nonetheless illustrative. The committee was set up to investigate the employment of Maori, particularly Maori women, by Chinese market gardeners. There seem to have been concerns about wages paid, and the possibility of interracial sex and marriage. It dealt partly with the morality of female Maori cohabitation with Chinese men, but some of the report reflects not just a moral concern but a racial one concerning the deleterious results of miscegenation. The latter part of the report contains this opinion about race mixing.

The indiscriminate mingling of the lower types of the races -- i.e. Maori Chinese Hindu will, in the opinion of the committee, have an effect that must eventually cause deterioration not only in the family and national life of the Maori race, but also in the national life of this country, by the introduction of a hybrid race, the successful absorption of which is problematical. There is also the very real danger that in so far as the offspring of Chinese fathers are concerned such miscegenation may

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p. 108.

eventually result in the submergency of the Maori race similar to what has occurred in Hawaii.⁷⁸

It had obviously used evidence from American and other anthropologists on the situation of racial mixing in Hawaii, possibly because this evidence was closer to the Chinese - Maori situation than other studies, for instance those undertaken in Jamaica, which of course did not involve Polynesians.

Unfortunately it is not possible, on the evidence presented in this report or other evidence of eugenic thinking, to arrive at a conclusion as to why this sort of argument is used on a similar topic in 1929, but not in 1920. There was of course more eugenic research available on this topic in 1929, and it may have been more widely known, but the essential "facts" about miscegenation and racial inferiority were known well before the 1920 Act. And of course, an antipathy towards miscegenation was an attitude not confined to eugenicists.

While some eugenicists believed that miscegenation could provide racial benefits similar to those gained by hybrid plants, most thought along with Madison Grant, that intermarriage of widely disparate groups leads to "...debilitating 'mongrelization'⁷⁹ and disharmony". There was an ongoing academic debate in the United States about this topic during the 1920's, which seems to have been completely missed by the Committee here.

There was for instance, a 1928 report by two American anthropologists on Hawaiian race crossing that found no evidence of disharmonies, which was not mentioned by the committee.⁸⁰ Obviously as Paul says, "... scientific studies did not prompt anyone inclined in another direction to countenance race mixing ... scientific criticisms had little impact on attitudes toward miscegenation since the technical

⁷⁸ *Report of the Committee on Employment of Maoris on Market Gardens*. I.A., Series 1, 13/621.

⁷⁹ Kevles, *Name*, p. 75.

⁸⁰ Paul, *Heredity*, p. 113.

arguments against it could always be replaced with social ones".⁸¹ One would have to believe that the same criticism could be directed at the New Zealand bureaucracy. There is little here to pinpoint eugenic influence on the debate about race and the immigration question.

The report the main tenet of anti-Asian feeling in general, but particularly post World War I seems to have been that neither white men nor Maori, especially ex-soldiers should have been working for Asians especially if the Asians were making a good profit. There seemed to be a feeling that this was in some way humiliating. There is also evidence of economic rivalry, especially between Asians and ex-soldiers and O'Connor feels that there is genuine economic concern on the part of the RSA.⁸² There was a feeling among many that Asians, by not spending, by selling cheap, and by taking most of their money out of the country when they leave, are somehow doing the country a disservice.

It is possible that the other issues such as economics were used as a blind for more racial, eugenic opinions. It would have to be said though, that both in the Parliamentary debates and in the various newspaper articles, letters, and editorials there are few problems evident in the expression of anti-Asian sentiment. This is especially evident in some of the R.S.A.'s anti-Asian polemic, which talked of "... outcast mongrel breeds from Calcutta ... that worships sacred cows knee deep in filth on the Ganges banks".⁸³ In this particular milieu one would have thought that there was no real reason to be afraid of being considered anti-Asian on a purely racial or cultural basis. There was simply no need to hide the feelings.

It is obvious that Asians were seen to cause problems, cultural, economic, and racial, but they were not necessarily seen as a eugenic problem. In the United States eugenists and their ideas were prominent if not crucial in the passage of immigration

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 114.

⁸² O'Connor, p. 54.

⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 54.

restriction legislation,⁸⁴ but in New Zealand little evidence can be found in the public sphere at least of eugenics influencing this type of legislation.

There are few of the markers that perhaps one would expect in the discussion dominated or even influenced by eugenics. There are numerous newspaper stories about immigration, a topic that did not cease to excite interest after the 1920 Act. In the stories devoted to opposing immigration there is much resentment of Asian economic competition,⁸⁵ but little or no comment on race mixing, mental inferiority, racial weakness or strength in any hereditary shape or form, or even evolutionary racial competition.⁸⁶ There is no mention of eugenics or the eugenic society in these articles or any of the debates on any of the bills studied for this chapter. All these did play a large part in the opposition to migration to the United States of people from Japan, China, or Eastern and Southern Europe.

Nowhere, in any of the discussions that took place in the public arena on any of these bills was the eugenics society or eugenics mentioned at all, neither was eugenic research used to condemn Asian migration, in spite of the opportunity to do so. It is possible to conclude then, that eugenics had little influence on this particular issue, in spite of what would seem to be ample opportunity to make a eugenic case against it.

⁸⁴ Paul, *Heredity*, p.97ff.

⁸⁵ e.g. *New Zealand Worker*, 3 October 1928, p. 1. This article stresses the replacement of White with Chinese Labour.

⁸⁶ There was some feeling that many migrants from Britain were mentally defective expressed in the evidence presented to the Committee of Enquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders. For instance evidence given by Dr T.G. Gray, Superintendent of Nelson Mental Hospital. H. 3, 3/13, p. 790f.

Chapter 2
Mental Defectives Bill 1911

The problem of mental deficiency was central to eugenic theory, as mental defect was supposedly on the rise due to the differential birth rate. Eugenists, like many others in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, believed that the natural checks on those of little social worth had become inoperative resulting in an increase in the proportion of unworthy to worthy. Most of the unworthy were deemed to be mentally defective. Allied with this is the presumption that mentally deficient people are sexually promiscuous. This presumption was almost universal and was difficult to argue against, as sexual promiscuity was taken as evidence of mental deficiency in women, as was much other behaviour that was contrary to middle-class standards of the time.¹

Britain, Scandinavia, Germany, and the United States all considered or instituted eugenic solutions to the mentally defective. In Scandinavia and parts of United States they could be sterilised. In Britain, although sterilisation was considered, segregation was the accepted answer. Mexico authorised a eugenic sterilisation law, although it is probable that no actual sterilisation was undertaken.² In New Zealand the increase in those suffering from mental problems had resulted in overcrowding in the country's mental hospitals, which became the subject of a campaign by the *New Zealand Herald* from August 1911. This increase was a general concern of eugenists and is strongly reflected in both the debates in Parliament and in the newspaper record.

New Zealand therefore also responded to the "problem" of the growth in numbers of those afflicted with mental defect. Two bills were introduced to cope with this, both of which seem heavily influenced by eugenic thought: the Mental Defectives Bill of 1911, and the Mental Defectives Amendment Bill of 1928.

The Mental Defectives Bill was introduced the year after the first New Zealand Eugenics Society was formed (in Dunedin in 1910). Given this and the general

¹ Kevles, *Name*, p. 109.

² Stepan, p. 131.

seemingly worldwide concern about mental defect, one would expect the debate to be of great interest from a eugenic point of view. The controversial nature of some of the overseas debate on mental defect adds to this interest. This bill and its subsequent amendment provide the opportunity to compare New Zealand's responses to what was considered to be a major eugenic disaster with those of other countries, to examine the extent of eugenic influence on this legislation, and to come to some conclusions about the nature of the eugenic debate in this country.

This bill itself is an area of legislation that shows some eugenic influence in the various debates, which both Fleming and Robertson³ have pointed out. However neither did a comprehensive survey of the sources where influence, support, or opposition might be expected to appear. Both have relied primarily on the parliamentary debates, and one or two daily newspapers, seemingly cuttings collections from various government departmental boxes much of the time.⁴ There was no survey of much of the other published material, which might suggest, support, or opposition to eugenics or any influence from it.

This thesis is partly concerned with remedying the lack of a comprehensive study of the public debate. For this bill a study was made of the parliamentary debates, of five of the major daily papers, weekly publications from the major religious denominations, the major trade union newspaper, and what New Zealand scientific and medical journals existed at this time. It was considered particularly important to study both the Catholic and the left wing, according to the overseas experience, consistently opposed eugenic legislation. Also considered important were the scientific publications, which might have been expected at least to take an interest in this area, and to discuss its scientific validity.

³ Fleming, p. 31f, S. Robertson, *Production not Reproduction: the Problem of Mental Defect in New Zealand 1900 - 1939*, University of Otago BA Hons. Research assignment, 1980, p.37ff.

⁴ A surprising number of newspaper references in both these theses contain no page reference, suggesting that the original newspapers had not been sighted.

The Mental Defectives Bill arose partly out of concern about the treatment of the feeble minded, which was considered by many to be unenlightened. The concern arose from a number of paradigm shifts in the area of the perception of mental defect in the latter part of the 19th-century and in the early 20th-century. According to Robertson,⁵ the major shift was, in developed countries, from considering mental defect as a private problem to considering it as a social problem, a change resulting partly from the development of universal education. Other shifts included mental defect moving from a moral to a scientific plane, and, because of eugenic influence, a move to regard mental defect as an hereditary problem. It had become, as Noakes said, "... fashionable to attribute many social ills to heredity...".⁶ The definition of mental defect also expanded to encompass sexual deviation in women.⁷

These changes in the concept of mental defect obviously came not just from eugenics supporters, but were the result of pressure also from groups within the bureaucracy, and groups concerned with melioration. Some of these were either associated with the Eugenics Society or sympathetic to its aims.⁸ Eugenics also gave apparent scientific legitimacy and a spurious objectivity to a concern about the increasing problem of mental defect that had existed for some time.⁹

The British Royal Commission on the Care and Control of Feeble-minded 1904-8 also influenced the bill.¹⁰ Fowlds, the Minister in Charge of Mental Hospitals in his introduction, spent some time explaining what this commission did, and how much it had helped in the formation of the bill.¹¹ The report, which the Minister described as "... most opportune..."¹² was itself heavily influenced by British eugenicists. The commission it seems, had allowed itself for tactical and other reasons to be

⁵ Robertson, p.5f.

⁶ Noakes, p.16.

⁷ Robertson, p. 7ff.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 37ff.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 31f.

¹⁰ The commission was appointed in 1904, its report was presented in July 1908.

¹¹ *NZPD*, vol. 154, 1911, p. 188.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 188.

influenced by the British Eugenics Society, and others who shared their beliefs about mental defect. According to Thomson the Commission was dominated by lay members, many of whom were eugenicists. This domination did not Thomson says, comprise a "... packed jury..."¹³ but represented the views of the establishment on this question.

The Bill seems to have been a complete reorganisation of the way these people were treated, and is therefore not small. Much of it was concerned with the segregation, classification, and control, of mental defectives and the insane. The main objectives of the Bill however, were to use the new methods of classification, coupled with methods of treatment rather than punishment, to rehabilitate the mentally ill, and to lessen the charge on the state of the mentally deficient. These were to be classified, educated if possible, segregated from society and the opposite sex, and their behaviour controlled.¹⁴ Indeed, in the section on "Care and Treatment of Mentally Defective Persons", there is much about care but little if anything about treatment. The education of mentally defective children for instance actually took place under the Education Amendment Act of 1910, and did not take place within the mental health system.¹⁵

A great deal of the Bill, (clauses 45 to 63, nineteen out of a hundred and thirty-nine clauses) is concerned with the licensing of institutions housing the mentally deficient. This is in keeping with the idea of proper scientific treatment, although it must be noted that a licence did not become invalid if an institution did not fulfil all of the requirements of the act.¹⁶ The scientific emphasis in the treatment of mental defect however, brought complexity, demanding much more precision in classification, which the Mental Defectives Bill was supposed to provide.

¹³ Thomson, M., *The Problem of Mental Deficiency: Eugenics Democracy, and Social Policy in Britain c. 1870 – 1959*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. 24f.

¹⁴ Robertson, pp. 34 - 86

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁶ *Mental Defectives Act, 1911*, 2 Geo. V., 1911, No. 6, p. 31, p. 33.

In the Interpretation of the Bill, the section where terms are defined, some care is taken in the definition of a mentally defective person. Mental defectives, were defined by this Bill, in general terms as people whose "... mental condition requires oversight, care, or control for his own good or in the public interest...". There were created six classes of "Mentally defective" persons, ranging from "Persons of unsound mind", the mentally ill, through "Idiots", the intellectually challenged, to "Epileptics".¹⁷ By recognising that mental defectives were an heterogeneous group, appropriate treatment could be given and proper disposition made of those within it.

The Bill then, distinguished between those who were capable of some form of education or rehabilitation and those who were not. The Education Department would be responsible for those who would gain some educational benefit or who were merely backward, and the Mental Hospitals Department would deal with those who were ineducable. It did not however, distinguish between adults and children making less clear the boundaries between the treatment and education of people with mental deficiency. If possible these people were to be made into productive members of society, by engaging in gardening, farm work and so on, subject to their abilities.

The protection of female defectives from predatory males, and particularly the protection of society from promiscuous sex and reproduction of all mental defectives, were important parts of the Bill. G.M. Fowlds, introducing it to the House, and J.G. Findlay the Attorney General who was moving the second reading, both make a point of stressing the increasing numbers of people with mental defect, and their prolific, uninhibited sexual nature. This was of course, one of the major eugenic concerns. The Minister pointed out that one of the problems faced was the

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.14. (Epilepsy tended at this time, to be considered evidence of mental deficiency.)

"... fertility of the unfit...".¹⁸ Findlay, quoting the eugenicist Karl Pearson, stressed that "These people are strikingly prolific."¹⁹

Thus the "...carnal knowledge..." of mentally defective females became an offence under this Act, and consent of the female was not considered to be a valid defence in these cases, although the offender's ignorance of her mental defect was.²⁰ Of course both male and female defectives were to be segregated from society and each other, in order to stifle their ability to procreate and produce children with similar defects.

The Parliamentary Debate

The language of the second reading of the Bill conforms markedly to what one would expect if eugenics were directly influencing, or at least giving legitimacy to this piece of legislation. Of the 11 speakers who were interested enough to speak at length, four directly mentioned the Eugenics Society, and W.F. Massey, the leader of the opposition, claimed membership in his speech. (Fowlds was also a member.) Almost all of the eugenic references take place in the House rather than the Council.

The Bill obtained support from both government and opposition, although the opposition scored political points on the condition of mental hospitals, and the pay and conditions of their attendants. The debate provides little in the way of argument or opposition against the ideas contained in this legislation, and the very lack of argument suggests that the ideas promoted by supporters of the Bill were widely accepted. This does not necessarily mean that MPs actively supported eugenics, but could mean possibly that the ideas upon which eugenics had developed were commonly accepted.

¹⁸ *NZPD*, vol. 154, p. 189 f. (The fertility of the unfit was a eugenic catchphrase, and the title of a New Zealand book proposing eugenics)

¹⁹ *NZPD*, vol. 155, p. 300.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 54.

Important proponents of the Bill in Parliament however, were obvious eugenists in the broad sense if not members of the Eugenics Society. Fowlds, Findlay, W.F. Massey, F.M. Fisher the member for Wellington Central, Thomson the member for Dunedin North, G. Laurenson the member for Lyttelton, J.A. Hanan, the member for Invercargill, G.H. Clark the member for Chalmers, and J. Bollard the member for Eden, all make it abundantly clear that they were members of the New Zealand Eugenics Society or support its ideas. Others such as W.H. Field the member for Otaki, also use language, which suggests eugenic sympathies. They were primarily concerned about the hereditary transmission of both mental illness and lack of mental development.

It is interesting to note that Fowlds in his introduction to the Bill, described people with mental defect in evolutionary and eugenic terms as, "... persons who cannot take a part in the struggle of life...".²¹ It is notable that he preferred segregation to contraception or sterilisation, at least partly because public opinion would almost certainly be against what he called "... surgical or other artificial measures".²² Like Fowlds many eugenists rejected these measures either for ethical reasons, or because public opinion was considered to be against them.

Fowlds stressed the central eugenic fear of "... the fertility of the unfit... Evidence has been submitted to us to the effect that probably, in the case of the feeble minded, there is a larger birth rate than the normal, combined with a death rate which, though large, allows of a considerable survival of mentally defective persons."²³ After explaining some of the workings of the Bill he goes on to say, "...society is being protected and the propagation of the unfit is receiving a check."²⁴ Much of the literature of the time on eugenics including Chapple's book, (written in New

²¹ *NZPD*, vol.154, 1911, p. 189. This statement is echoed in the Council debate, by the Attorney General.

²² *ibid.*, p. 190

²³ *ibid.*, p. 189.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 193.

Zealand) was concerned with checking the fertility of the unfit,²⁵ and the Minister emphasised that this is one of the main aims of the Bill.

Hanan quoted the work of Mrs. Ellen Pinsent, a prominent British eugenicist and one of the members of this commission, as an authority in his speech. She had put forward a number of points that eugenicists took for granted. These were the cost of and the increasing numbers of "degenerates", the differential birth rate, and the physical transmission of insanity and mental defect from parents to children.²⁶ Hanan himself believed that there was danger of "... a legacy of moral defect that runs through generations of families addicted to crime or tending to absolute insanity".²⁷ What was extremely important from the eugenic point of view, was the necessity for society to intervene in its own interests, to prevent the spread of degeneration.

All of these points are mentioned in Hanan's speech as problems faced by New Zealand. He urged Parliament to deal with these problems by segregating the mentally defective to prevent their proliferation, in case they "... transmit to posterity a helpless irresponsible race that breeds degeneracy, poverty, and crime".²⁸ The member also commended the work done by eugenic societies in educating people about the necessity for racial improvement. There is no doubt of his firm belief in the precepts of eugenics and their application to New Zealand society. Other speakers constantly repeated these themes.

Allied with this was the presumption in the parliamentary debate that mentally deficient people are not just prolific but sexually promiscuous. This presumption is a recurring theme in eugenics overseas, but a commonly held belief also. It was difficult to argue against it, as sexual promiscuity was taken as evidence of mental

²⁵ W.A. Chapple, *The Fertility of the Unfit*, Melbourne, 1903.

²⁶ *NZPD* vol. 154, August 1911, p. 205.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 206.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 206.

deficiency in women, as was much other behaviour that was contrary to the middle-class standards of the time.²⁹

Several speakers gave examples of the sexual irresponsibility of the degenerate though some mentioned it in a very roundabout way, presumably to spare the feelings of the more delicate. Fisher was not one of the latter, as he put forward two rather bold examples of this propagation and promiscuity. He mentioned one man who was intermittently discharged from a lunatic asylum "and during the periods when that man was at large he had become a father of ten children, every one of whom is a charge upon the state at the present time."³⁰ He claimed that a number of men have done the same and "...during these periods had become the fathers of offspring who in turn have inherited this insane tendency and become a charge upon the state and inmates of asylums".³¹ This process he maintained, had resulted in,

... 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 - that is, because of inherent pauperism short of actually defined neurosis, likely to become a charge on the State.³²

This statement stressed the eugenic belief that poverty was genetically transmissible, and reinforced the common belief that promiscuity among the mentally deficient was resulting in an increase in various diseases of the mind.

This type of reference to case studies is quite common among early eugenicists, as early eugenic research used them extensively. Taylor, the member for Thames, provides a similar example in which he alluded to "... the methods by which the propagation of insanity is continued".³³ He also provided a case study showing that the unfit are prolific breeders. A number of other members, including Field, the member for Otaki, also mentioned the increase in numbers of the insane and

²⁹ Kevles, *Name*, p. 109.

³⁰ *NZPD*, vol. 154, September 1911, p. 198.

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 198.

³² *ibid.*, p. 198.

mentally deficient. This member obviously expected the bill to be effective in preventing the breeding of the unfit, and provide some form of offset of costs for the state, by providing useful and productive farm work for the inmates of various institutions.³⁴

The eugenic stance on the prevention of the transmission of hereditary disease was summed up by Laurensen who was worried not only about the increase in insanity, but the decrease in those recovering. He fell back on the specifically eugenic idea of marriage health certificates.

I believe the day will come when men and women will not marry until they have a clean bill of health on both sides - when they will have the wisdom to see that there are no hereditary influences at work on either side which will injure future generations. That will have to be done if we are to keep our race pure and produce in this country what we want to produce -- a high, clean type of men and women.³⁵

This statement was almost immediately followed by one from the member for Invercargill, who also told of some of the eugenic ideals that he thinks should be bred into the race.

The true test of national progress is, to my mind, what kind of men do we produce or are we producing? Are they physically strong, intellectually developed, and have they a high standard of moral and humanitarian conduct? In this connection, with this ideal, and in order to preserve our race and prevent it from degenerating, it behoves us to see that all those factors and agencies which make for physical strength, intellectual development, and moral progress are promoted to the fullest extent.

... we neglect certain facts of heredity, and are not doing enough in the direction of promoting race culture. For instance, what is being done in the way of segregation of those persons whose reproduction lowers the average quality of the nation and handicaps posterity?³⁶

Various members often referred to the cost of these hordes of mental deficient, and it loomed large in overseas eugenic literature of the day. Fisher, quoted Mrs. Pinsent as pointing out the mentally deficient were paid for by, "... good citizens with small

³³ *ibid.*, p. 202.

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 200.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 204.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 204 - 5.

incomes..."³⁷ This was a worldwide eugenic worry. New Zealand MPs were also concerned about the huge expense to the public who were obliged to support the victims in mental institutions, and the increasing number of those "... likely to become a charge on the state."³⁸

MPs generally eschewed the more "drastic" solutions to the problem, such as sterilisation or even contraception at a time when these were in use overseas. There was not however, a great deal of overseas support for these solutions in 1911, so New Zealand is generally in line with overseas experience in this area. (It must be said also, that while surgical sterilisation was being undertaken unofficially in some American states as early as 1899, by 1911 only six of these had laws on their books. In Germany and the rest of Europe sterilisation was not legal until the late 1920s and early 1930s. It is interesting that sterilisation was included in the 1927 amendment to this bill after much research.

However it is more probable that the New Zealand reaction to sterilization in 1911 was due to British influence, rather than any lack of examples to follow. Unlike the immigration debates, little appeal to American evidence is present in the second reading of the Mental Defectives Bill, except indirectly through the British Royal Commission of 1908.³⁹ Sterilisation was almost certainly regarded as politically dangerous in New Zealand, as it was in Britain.

Although primarily concerned with question of heredity of mental defect, there were numerous references to the environment in the parliamentary debates. This should not necessarily be a surprise, as most eugenicists believed that the environment had some influence on human traits, although the exact amount had been, and was to be debated for some time.⁴⁰ Early eugenics, of course, drew on the ideas of Lamarck, and the French and South Americans remained Lamarckian. There was no direct

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 205.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 198.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 188.

⁴⁰ Kevles, *Name*, p. 70 - 1, p. 86 - 7, p. 136 - 7.

mention of Lamarck, or the inheritance of acquired traits, and unlike the debate on the 1928 Amendment Bill, the science behind eugenics was taken for granted. Given this, environment is probably not meant in a Lamarckian sense of something that could be improved in order to transmit the resultant physical and mental improvements to future generations through their genetic inheritance.

It is also difficult to judge whether the environment is introduced in a Mendelian eugenic sense, that is as a minor influence on the problems of mental defect, or just from a repository of common belief. As eugenicists often disagreed as to the actual proportion of influence from genes as opposed to the environment, although consistently considering genetic influences to dominate, it is probably not an important issue. Although Laurensen did suggest that insanity was caused as much by addiction to alcohol (that is environment) as by genetic inheritance, addiction to alcohol was considered to be hereditary by many eugenicists.

There were other references to environmental influences by a number of other speakers who obviously believed also in mental defect's essential hereditary character. The member for Northern Maori Dr. Rangihiroa, although stressing that Maori were less subject to mental defect because they were not too "... civilized..."⁴¹, was still much concerned about hereditary mental defect, and provided an example from his own experience.⁴² He also expressed concern about the marriage of "... the unfit, the mentally defective..."⁴³, and the production of "... offspring who have a nervous system which is liable to break down".⁴⁴ There seem to be no other references specifically to Maori mental deficiency in this debate, or the later debate on the amendment.

The member for Wellington East D. McLaren, referred to a country which has

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 210.

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 210.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 210.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 210.

"... adopted far too much of that rush and ambition of civilization which the honourable member for the Northern Maori district deplures; and one of the results of the struggle for existence and extreme rush to possess wealth... is that nervous breakdown is common among the people...". He also recognised that mental disease can be caused by "... toil in special industries, and where there may be an excessive strain".⁴⁵

The leader of the opposition, concerned about conditions within mental hospitals, did say that conditions are so poor for some new patients that "... if they were not hopelessly mad at first they are often so at the end of the probation".⁴⁶ None of this is necessarily inconsistent with eugenic ideas; as has been said it is a complex and sometimes conflicting set of beliefs that sometimes needed a little work to avoid contradiction.

What is perhaps more interesting is that in comparison to the 1928 amendment of this bill, there was no real opposition to eugenic aspects of the bill. The Bill passed both houses would hardly a dissenting voice, but as some of the sources have said the shortage of money, partly due to the war, hampered efforts at improvement.⁴⁷ However by 1923 a number of factors, prominent among which were alleged rises in the rates of V.D. and sex crimes⁴⁸ led to the establishment of the Committee of Inquiry and the 1928 Amendment.

There are a number of possible reasons for this acceptance. It may be that at this early stage criticism of eugenics had not yet become prominent in Britain, Europe or the United States. Indeed there is little mention in the overseas sources of any

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 210. McLaren, a Labour member, was the only person to speak at any length on the bill and not mention heredity at all.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 196. (Massey)

⁴⁷ W.H. Oliver, B.R. Williams, (eds.) *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, Auckland: O.U.P, second edition 1992, p. 267. W. Hunter Williams, *Out of Mind Out of Sight: The Story of Porirua Hospital*, Wellington: Porirua Hospital, p. 63.

⁴⁸ Fleming, p. 31ff.

critique of eugenics much before the 1920s.⁴⁹ It is also true that many critics of eugenics shared some of the defining beliefs of eugenic organisations,⁵⁰ leaving their criticisms a little muted. Potential critics also lacked the focusing element of forced sterilisation, which was present in the 1928 bill. It seems probable that all three of these contributed to the lack of direct criticism, particularly scientific criticism of eugenics at this point. Judging by the later debates however, the controversy lay in the clauses rather than the philosophy.

Newspaper and Public Reaction

Considering the number of eugenic references in the second reading debate, there seems to be almost no reaction in the newspapers from the general public, or editorially. Editors however, are certainly aware of the claim of the proliferation of the unfit and its consequences, including the degeneration of the race.

The *Evening Post* in its editorial of 5 August 1911 mentioned nothing of the eugenic aspects. The closest it came at all is a hint that perhaps something should be done about the prevention of mental deficiency, and the statement that it was "...for the good of the race...".⁵¹ It was also noted that the number of mentally deficient people was increasing.⁵² A lively debate developed in the days following the bill about the conditions faced by those who worked in mental hospitals. This and the problem of overcrowding in mental hospitals seemed to occupy the public mind much more than the fertility of the unfit.

This type of coverage is generally reflected in the other major dailies. It was by no means saturation coverage, and hardly referred to eugenic problems at all. For instance in the *Auckland Star* a small article on 7 August, paralleled and sometimes quoted the *Evening Post*, in that it stressed the need for better facilities at Tokonui,

⁴⁹ Kevles, *Name*, chapter 8, Paul, p. 17.

⁵⁰ Paul, *Heredity*, p.17.

⁵¹ *Evening Post*, 5 August 1911, p. 4.

⁵² *ibid.*, page 4.

and again said that this bill was for the "... good of the race...".⁵³ There were two other brief articles on page 4 and page 7, neither of which mentioned eugenics in any way, concentrating instead on the environments of the mental asylums.

It would seem that there were few correspondents who thought that the Mental Defectives Bill let alone the eugenic aspects, was worth a mention. There was little reference on the letter pages to the increase in mental deficiency, the need for segregation as a means of improving the race, or the genetic inheritance of mental defect. However, in the parliamentary debates overcrowding, conditions of work for nurses, and the physical environment took second place to eugenics.

The *Christchurch Press* showed it was aware of the fertility of the unfit in its parliamentary report, but this was merely reflecting what was said in the House.⁵⁴ The editorial of 2 August expressed the need for more "... humane and enlightened treatment of the mentally weak."⁵⁵ and for more early treatment, but did not mention heredity or even the increase in mental deficiencies. There was a letter on 1 August which showed approval of the bill, as a means of controlling the mentally deficient, especially those women who were "... sexually degenerate...".⁵⁶ However this letter was written by H. W. Bishop S.M.,⁵⁷ a member of the Christchurch Eugenics Society. This letter sparked little if any public debate at all on the matter, and indeed eugenic aspects of this bill were scarcely treated in this paper.

The *New Zealand Herald* devoted more space to the Bill than most. It was mentioned on 3 August,⁵⁸ when overcrowding was stressed and eugenics not mentioned at all. There was a brief paragraph and a large article on the 5th,⁵⁹ which

⁵³ *Auckland Star*, 7 August 1911, p. 2.

⁵⁴ *Christchurch Press*, 5 August 1911, p. 6.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 2 August, p. 8.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 1 August p. 8.

⁵⁷ Bishop was a stipendiary magistrate and member of the Christchurch Eugenics Society. He appears more than once in the eugenics debate.

⁵⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 3 August 1911, p. 6, p. 9.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 5 August, p. 5, p. 7.

again confronted the problem of overcrowding. On page 8 of the same issue there was however, an article, which expressed the opinion that the numbers of the unfit need to be reduced. An article followed on 7 August, without any reference to eugenics at all although the increasing numbers of mental patients were considered a problem.⁶⁰ In the same issue there was an editorial concerned only with overcrowding, and a separation of mental patients from the prison system.⁶¹ There was also a brief mention of overcrowding on page 7.

In a detailed article on 8 August, Doctor Beattie, the medical superintendent of Auckland Hospital, covered the treatment of mental patients at some length, with some mention of the inheritance of mental illness and deficiency. The problem of fertility was only hinted at.⁶² A number of letters were found, none of which seemed aware of the fertility of the unfit in any way. The *Herald* seems to have claimed the credit for beginning a campaign against overcrowding of mental patients, which may explain why it devoted more space to the topic than did most of the other dailies.

The *Otago Daily Times* referred to the Bill three times between 5 and 17 August, but not too differential fertility or any other eugenic concerns.⁶³ On the 16th however there was an article about the annual report of the Eugenics Society, in which Fowlds, the Minister of Education at the time was described as sympathetic to eugenic claims.⁶⁴ In world news on the 17th there was an article in which the British eugenicist Pearson figured, but neither of these were related in any way to the Bill in question.

Neither the *Maoriland Worker* nor the *New Zealand Tablet* showed any interest in the Bill let alone its eugenic aspects. The *Tablet* mentions it not at all, the *Worker* contained less than 10 lines of two quotes from "Doctor Rangihiro" (sic) in a section

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 7 August, p. 5.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶² *ibid.*, 8 August, page 7.

⁶³ *Otago Daily Times*, 5 August 1911, p., 9 August, p., 14 August, p. 3

entitled "Political Pellets" which encapsulates the size of the articles within. These quotes were pro-nurture and taken directly from the House debate. Protestant newspapers however showed no awareness of eugenics or the Bill. No reference to it at all was found in Outlook, (the Presbyterians weekly) the New Zealand Baptist, or New Zealand Church and People (the Anglican paper). There is a general indifference to this whole area in these publications.

The attitude of the Catholic and left wing Press is in direct contrast to that taken by them later to the Mental Deficients Amendment Bill of 1928. This legislation was attacked because it contained particular aspects of eugenics that offended their respective constituencies. This would suggest that their opposition was not to eugenics as such, but that something extra was needed for opposition to be made manifest. It also suggests acceptance or indifference to eugenics was not confined to the general public and the daily newspapers, but was also present in the organs of those organisations which should in theory, have stood out against it.

The *New Zealand Medical Journal*, with the *New Zealand Journal of Science & Technology*, the *Transactions* of the Institute and Royal Society, were treated as a special case for considering eugenics, particularly the eugenics of mental deficiency. These journals along with that of the Polynesian Society, were at the time the only significant scientific journals native to this country. (On the whole New Zealand academic journals were not founded until the 1960s.) If, as did happen overseas, the science of eugenics was to be meaningfully discussed, that discussion should have taken place in one or more of these. In fact no references to eugenics at all could be found in the *Transactions*, the *Journal of Science and Technology*, or the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, up to 1928.

It was decided to approach to the *New Zealand Medical Journal* in a different way to daily and other newspapers. A general perusal looking for letters and articles would

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, 16 August, p. 2. (Fowlds introduced the Mental Defectives Amendment Act as Minister in Charge of Mental Hospitals, in 1928.)

have been unproductive. It was decided to look at six areas where comment on eugenics would have been expected. Obviously if eugenics aroused interest it should show in both letters and editorials, but also presidential addresses, minutes of meetings, book reviews. A sampling of articles, which might be considered to have some relevance to heredity, mental illness, or theories of nature and nurture, was also undertaken. Technical articles on surgery, and midwifery for instance were not examined.

The journal was surveyed from 1908 to 1915 in order to get a rounded view of the lead up to the bill and its aftermath. No actual reference to the Mental Defectives Bill was noted, but some relevant material was discovered. Much of this material is difficult to separate from the general prejudices of the day. For instance the editorial of November 1908⁶⁵ displayed typical racial beliefs of the time, coupled with an awareness of the nature / nurture debate. The editor said that we come from the "... finest race the world has ever produced..." but that our "... hereditary tendencies" are "increased by improper feeding" and "... crowding in unhealthy rooms ...". Not only can this not be separated from common belief, but it seems to be a fairly moderate position for the time on the nature - nurture debate.

Similarly in his presidential address of February 1910, Doctor J.R. Purdey said, speaking of the New Zealand branch of the British 'race', "As in native races Maoriland evolved the highest type of savage, so enthusiasts hope that it will develop the highest type of the Anglo-Saxon variety."⁶⁶ He also showed awareness of scientific development in the area of statistics, and of the public fear of racial degeneration when he said in the same speech "here I might mention that it would be worthwhile in the interests of the race, ... to impose an anthropometric test for aliens to prevent the admission to the Dominion of people with degenerate physique...".⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *NZMJ*, vol. 6, no. 28, p. 21.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, vol. 8, no. 33, p. 2.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 3.

Other parts of the address were quite environmental in tone, especially with regard to sanitation and the environment of schools.⁶⁸ The idea was put forward that supposedly unhealthy people often contribute much to society, the poet Swinburne was used as an example of this type.⁶⁹ A role was seen for doctors in combating race degeneration, by giving advice to couples intending to marry. Caution was urged about interfering with the marriage bond however.⁷⁰

The 1911 presidential address, also by Doctor Purdey expressed alarm at another population fear, the increase in the "... mentally affected".⁷¹ It went on to be more overtly eugenic by stating that the state should forbid the marriage of individuals with a hereditary disease, and segregate those with a mental disease, or they will become a "... serious menace to the state".⁷²

In March 1912 a new president, H.V. Drew, adopted a somewhat more environmental approach, as much of the address was about preventable childhood illnesses, but again reference was made to the prevalence of insanity and the differential birthrate.⁷³ Degeneracy was mentioned in conjunction with prohibition, which was opposed because it was being introduced for the sake of a few who were "... from a racial standpoint... far better out of the way...".⁷⁴ It is obvious from reading this speech that in Drew's eyes the mentally unfit, the feeble minded, and the criminal are lumped together, and the feeling is that they should be controlled.⁷⁵

On the other hand the editorial of the same issue struck a note of caution with regard to the inheritance of mental characteristics. The editor was of the opinion that those possessing the quality of genius "... with rare exceptions have sprung from neurotic

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 8. This is possibly a reference to Swinburne's homosexuality and \ or alcoholism.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 10ff.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, vol. 9, no. 37, p. 33ff.

⁷² *ibid.*, p. 35.

⁷³ *ibid.*, vol. 11, no. 41, p. 4.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p. 4.

stock...",⁷⁶ and that the "... noblest and most characteristic of human facilities do not appear to come under Darwinian law".⁷⁷ Both Shakespeare and Milton were quoted as talented people who came from "... a short-lived and unhealthy stock...",⁷⁸ the implication being that while eugenics should be used for mental selection it should not take place in the physical sphere.

Three book reviews also show that books about the general areas of genetics and mental illness were available to influence discussion in these areas among the medical profession. *The Mind and its Disorders* by A.H.B. Stoddart contained the by now usual theory that mental illness is on the increase and leading to "... the degeneration of the race".⁷⁹ *Heredity and Disease* (no author cited) is considered "... very racy and instructive reading".⁸⁰ *Mentally Deficient Children: Their Treatment and Training* by G.E. Shuttleworth and W.A. Potts, was cited as evidence that feeble mindedness is "... as a rule hereditary and abundantly transmissible...".⁸¹

There were scattered references in articles to heredity of diseases such as TB,⁸² but nothing directly on eugenics. There were, as far as could be ascertained, no letters pertaining to eugenics, heredity, or genetics. There was also little if any mention of eugenics in the minutes of the various meetings, but the general topic remained of passing interest until the debate on the Mental Defectives Amendment Bill of 1928. This is shown by a number of references including a satirical anti-eugenist article entitled "Eugenitis AD 1953"⁸³ There was also reference to French "...race

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p. 4.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 51.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p. 52.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 53.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, vol. 7, no. 29, p. 63.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, vol. 7, no. 31, p. 54.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, vol. 9 no. 36, p. 58 - 9.

⁸² *ibid.*, vol. 10, no. 39, p. 31, vol. 11 no. 40, p. 4.

⁸³ E. Whitaker, "Eugenitis", A.D. 1953, *NZMJ*, Vol. 12, no. 47, p. 564-6, p. 564.

suicide..." as a result of the women of the "... most prosperous classes..."⁸⁴ refusing to reproduce enough in June 1915.

On the whole the *New Zealand Medical Journal* showed interest in eugenics rather than obsession with it. It took a fairly consistent editorial line with regards to eugenics claims, and constantly urged caution on the scientific findings, such as they were. It did naturally enough, show evidence of the general racial and class prejudices of the day, knowledge of popular fears, such as that of the increase in mentally deficient people, and some acceptance of eugenic ideas about racial degeneration.

At this time there were also in circulation, a number of eugenic pamphlets, some reprinted from the *Eugenics Review*, and some local. One was reprinted from the *Eugenics Review* and written by a New Zealander.⁸⁵ One could possibly have been an anti-eugenics pamphlet, but was so confused as to be almost incomprehensible.⁸⁶

The most interesting is one by a stipendiary magistrate H. W. Bishop, entitled simply *Degeneracy*.⁸⁷ Bishop, a member of the judiciary rather than a biologist, geneticist, or even a scientist claims special knowledge of the "... growing existence of an evil".⁸⁸ because of his court work. He went over the old ground, of the rising number of degenerates, criminals, mental defectives and the like, and introduced eugenic solutions to this growing problem. Bishop made specific references to the Education Amendment Act of 1910, which required notification by teachers to the Ministry of mental defective children, and the setting up of special schools for their treatment. He also referred to the Mental Defectives Bill, which he regards as an

⁸⁴ *NZMJ*, vol.14, no.61 p. 142.

⁸⁵ A.N. Field, *Medical Marriage Certificates: A suggestion from New Zealand*, *Eugenics Review*, January 1912, pp. 306 -311.

⁸⁶ H. Hill, *Evolution and Heredity*, no publisher, 1914. (An H. Hill is described in the 1908 *Who's Who* as the Chief Inspector of schools in Napier, and as a luminous contributor to the *Transactions of the Institute*. The pamphlet was indeed printed in Napier)

⁸⁷ H. W. Bishop, *Degeneracy*, Eugenics Education Society, Christchurch, 1911.

"... important advance".⁸⁹ He was a steriliser, although not of the compulsory sort. He claimed that segregation is probably not the most humane way to deal with the unfit, and used examples from United States to back up his argument that sterilisation is, "... kinder and more humane..."⁹⁰ - a typical eugenic sentiment.

An article by A.N. Field was also reproduced from the *Eugenics Review*. In spite of the assertion that "Human beings are not to be bred like farms stock and it is not the object of this paper to advocate the placing of any legal restriction on the marriage of degenerates."⁹¹ Field went on to advocate the gathering of statistics on degenerates and marriage so that this actually could be done.

Other pamphlets that commented on eugenics were found, one of which ascribed Polynesians to the "... maritime branch of the Armenoid race",⁹² a rather ridiculous comment, showing the typically loose ideas about race held even by scientists at this time. This came from a professor of anatomy who might be expected to be more scientific in his assertions. Another had a rather standard explanation of eugenics ideas reprinted from the *Birmingham Daily Post*.⁹³ No doubt if anyone wished to find out about eugenics, there was more information available in pamphlet form than has been found by this or other authors.

Public reaction to eugenics in the end 1911 however suggests that what we know about other eugenic societies overseas is true of New Zealand. They were small, middle-class pressure groups. The general public seems to have had very little interest in eugenics as applied to this bill. The fertility of the fit was not thrashed out in the newspapers or journals of New Zealand on this particular issue, where it might

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p. 1.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 8 - 9

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 11 - 12.

⁹¹ Field, p. 306.

⁹² G. Elliott Smith, *The Influence of Racial Admixture in Egypt*, reprinted from *Eugenics Review*, October 1911.

⁹³ *What is Eugenics: A Plea for Racial Improvement*, reprinted from *Birmingham Daily Post*, n.d. 1911.

have been expected. Indeed there is lack of anything much in the way of public comment about this topic in contrast to other issues of the day.

It is impossible to say if this is a reflection of active agreement with eugenic sentiments, passive acceptance of the ideas based on folk belief, or merely in difference to the subject of eugenics in general or mental defect in particular. In contrast to the later Amendment this subject is hardly discussed at all by those who might be expected to take an interest in it let alone the general public.

There is also little or no mention of any Maori dimension in any of the debates surrounding this bill. Perhaps New Zealand eugenics supporters were following the lead of British eugenicists, who tended to ignore the racial question. However it may be, that the New Zealand attitude was in some way similar to that expressed about Maori in the *New Zealand Medical Journal*, that they were in their own way a superior type. This is an area that would almost certainly reward further study.

As far as this legislation is concerned the promotion of eugenic views remained the prerogative of enthusiasts, with some influence, and some little success. There was however, widespread acceptance among some sections of society, of the problems that eugenics purported to solve, and some of the suggested solutions.

Chapter 3.

The Family Allowances Bill 1926.

Family allowances were a central eugenic issue internationally, in that they were seen by some to increase the birth rate amongst those who received them. If given to those considered eugenically unworthy, they were considered dysgenic. The Family Allowances Bill of 1926 was not necessarily chosen for this study because of the existence of overseas legislation, although there was some, in France and Germany for example. It is here with this Bill that New Zealand eugenicists had the opportunity to debate an issue of positive rather than negative eugenics. It is here also that the broader concerns of some eugenicists about depopulation and the survival of the race rather than that genetically worthy group within it, might be expected to arise. It is here to that the terrible losses of World War I, and the necessity for replacements might have been discussed.

The matter of child allowances needs some background to put it into context. Overseas there was a somewhat mixed reaction within the eugenic community to policies that encouraged the birth of more children or even to some extent with policies which encouraged healthier children among the lower orders.¹ British eugenicists for instance, had strong opinions on the matter of child allowances, which led to conflict within the British Eugenic Education Society.²

Although eugenics was touted as a humane philosophy, many within the movement were perhaps closer to Social Darwinism. Pearson for instance thought that many infant deaths were due to "...innate frailties...", and that even maternal ignorance was inherited.³ The British eugenicist R. A. Fisher⁴ maintained that the "...temperament which made for infertility..."⁵ was genetically determined, as were the traits which determined success. He thought that modern society therefore selected for people of high ability, but low fertility. It was for this reason that he put forward his ideas on eugenic family allowances. Some within the societies

¹Soloway, *Birth Control*, p.150.

²Soloway, *Demography*, p. 300.

³ibid., p. 150.

⁴Fisher was not only a eugenicist, but also a well-known statistician.

⁵Kevles, *Name*, p.182.

maintained that the unfit would become less fertile if they were better off, which was a good reason for giving everyone an allowance.⁶

From the beginning eugenics societies favoured some sort of selective method of reducing the birth rate differential between the fit and unfit. There was among British eugenicists and others a fear in the 1930s of a population decrease of up to a quarter within one generation, due to a generally falling birth rate.⁷ They were also acutely conscious of the huge losses of eugenically "fit" young men in World War I. These factors eugenicists thought, might lead to whites being out-bred by the more prolific coloured races, again a fear not confined to eugenicists. Prudence at least dictated that quantity as well as quality should be encouraged.

Many eugenicists then hid their fears and tended to support pronatalist policies, as they were an immediate political and social reality.⁸ It was also realised after the First World War that the environment was responsible for at least some of the unfitness of the social problem group. It seemed that racial survival might have needed a fitter poor. That is not to say that in the long-term they did not realise that restocking of the middle classes was necessary, and some of their suggestions would reflect this.

In Britain in 1909, Lloyd George had introduced a form of income tax child allowances, which benefited those who paid tax, largely the middle-class. There had also been a well-publicised system of proportional family allowances granted to the teachers and senior administrators at the London School of economic in 1925.⁹ In the early 1930s in Britain, Fisher was promoting a preferential family allowance scheme for "eugenically desirable sectors of the middle-class",¹⁰ where the government would provide a family allowance proportional to the family's income.

⁶ Soloway, *Birth Control*, p.199f.

⁷ Soloway, *Demography*, p. 297.

⁸ Soloway, *Birth Control*, p. 199-200.

⁹ Soloway, *Demography*, p. 295.

¹⁰ Soloway, *Birth Control*, p. 183.

This would mean that "Regardless of the number of children, parents would thus be enabled to provide each child equally with whatever social and economic advantages befitted the family's station in life."¹¹ This sort of thing was the model to which British many eugenisists looked, until at least 1949.¹²

There was in the United States some agitation for similar schemes, by eugenists such as Frederick Osborn, described by Kevles as a "...reform eugenist...".¹³ Later on there was much more compromise in favour of more general and environmental solutions.¹⁴ In Germany the positive eugenic model was put into practice by the Nazi regime, which subsidised the births of children to poor but racially "sound" families in the 1930s.¹⁵ Eugenic family allowances however did not find much favour with most governments, perhaps because they were too politically sensitive.

The New Zealand Family Allowances Bill was introduced in August 1926, one of a number of benefits or pensions that came at a time of concern about poverty. There was worldwide, some support for the idea of a living wage, protection of workers from hazard or indigence, and a desire to keep the race pure. There was also a desire to increase the birth rate,¹⁶ as many, both overseas and in this country, saw a reduced birth rate as the road to race suicide.

It came into being, partly as a result of political accident arising out of the election of 1925. A contributory scheme for a form of family allowance had been included in the annual report of the Labour Department, which had led to the Reform Party being accused of reducing wages. Although the report did not commit the party to any such scheme, publicity forced Reform to reply to these accusations by the Labour Party. Reform placed advertisements that suggested a scheme would be put

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 183.

¹² G. Jones, "Eugenics and Social Policy Between the Wars", *The Historical Journal*, vol. 25, no. 3, 1982, p. 717-728, p. 718.

¹³ Kevles, *Name*, p. 173.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 183ff.

¹⁵ Mazumdar, p. 46.

¹⁶ J. Macnicol, *The Movement for Family Allowances*, London, 1980, p.89.

into place paid out of general revenue.¹⁷ Pressure from Labour, which advocated its own scheme of family endowment, must have also played a part in the adoption of child allowances.¹⁸

The question of a living wage was possibly influenced by the research of European economists, such as Piotr Prengowski who argued that a living wage was necessary to keep workers out of the clutches of extreme revolutionary groups.¹⁹ There were also British and American economists and social scientists who argued for the living wage concept in terms of social justice and national efficiency.²⁰ These concerns were influenced not just by international experience, but within New Zealand by organised labour and other pressure groups, and by individuals within the public service who were pushing these particular types of social policies.²¹

The bill was too provide 2 shillings a week for every child after the third under 15, for those whose family income did not exceed 4 pounds a week. It was also decided to exclude certain types of people regarded as undeserving. No allowance was to be paid to foreigners, neither was there any allowance for Asiatics, even if they were British subjects, except at the discretion of the Minister. Neither was one to be paid to parents of illegitimate children. The allowance was not necessarily to be paid to those parents who were considered to be of bad character. However the bill did, at the discretion of the Minister, allow the Child Allowance to be paid to those over 15 who were by way of, "... physical or mental defect totally incapacitated from earning a living..."²²

¹⁷ W. B. Sutch, *The Quest for Security in New Zealand, 1840 to 1966*, Wellington, O.U.P., p. 151.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 155f.

¹⁹ Macnicol, p. 8.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 7ff. National, or social efficiency were phrases beloved of eugenisists.

²¹ M.M. Stenson, *Social Legislation in New Zealand 1900 -- 1930*, MA thesis, Auckland University, 1967, p. 100 ff., B. Martin, *The Family Allowance Act 1926*, BA Honours research exercise, Massey University, 1990, p. 2 ff.

²² *Family Allowance Act*, 17 Geo. V. p. 468-72, p. 469.

If there were any eugenic opposition to this bill from eugenicists, it would almost certainly be on the grounds that it was dysgenic, causing an increase in the groups with less genetic worth. One would expect that they would point out that to encourage the poorest to breed was bad eugenic policy, as there was already a large difference in the birth rate between the prolific underclass and their genetic betters. It would also be logical in eugenic terms to propose that any allowances that encourage large families should be given to those of civic worth. In fact although some of these points come up, most of the debate is political and economic.

The Parliamentary Debate

The family allowance was not considered particularly generous by many, and in fact much of the debate in the second reading centered on the amount to be paid. The payments were often described as a " ...pittance..." by members of the Labour Party.²³ Some conservative MPs regarded it with "...grave suspicion...", as did some captains of industry (see below). The Reform Party for instance had on three occasions refused to accept a form of family allowance suggested by Labour.²⁴ While there was some eugenic content to the debate, and some quite lengthy speeches explaining the benefits of a more eugenic approach, it cannot be said that any more than a small minority of members of the House or Council spoke from a eugenic point of view.

There is only one speech from the second reading debates in the House which could be considered comprehensively eugenic in flavour, and a number of scattered references, which one would have to say are probably merely common belief. The eugenically influenced speech is by H. Atmore the member for Nelson, whose speech is worth quoting at some length. It is typical of the fairly informed popular eugenic position. He said, in response to the government proposition that the empire needed more children, "...there is another aspect of the question, and that is that it is

²³ Sutch, p. 152.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 151, Stenson, p. 110.

not population per se we require, but we do need able-bodied men and women in this Dominion".²⁵ He also quoted H. G. Wells, who was a member of the British Eugenics Education Society, as saying about overpopulation:

... we cannot go on giving new health, freedom, enlargement, wealth, if all our gifts to you are to be swamped by an indiscriminate torrent of progeny. We want fewer and better children who can be reared up to their full possibilities in unencumbered homes, and we cannot make the social life and the world peace we are determined to make, with the ill bred, ill-trained swarms of inferior citizens that you inflict upon us.²⁶

He later launched into a full fledged, old-fashioned eugenic attack on the Bill.

I repeat that, in the words of Wells, we want "better children." I am sure on all members have given thought to the fact that the burden of the unfit upon the fit throughout the world have become an increasing burden. While the Plunket society is doing a remarkably good work in the main, it is also doing something, as all such societies are, to make it possible for the unfit to propagate their kind.²⁷

He then went on to mention the cases of the Kallikaks and the Jukes, stressing the cost to the government of such indiscriminate breeding.

The progeny of those two couples -- Kallikak and Jukes -- have cost the United States Government \$2,700,000. These are only two cases where the family history has been traced out. All over the world there are cases in minor or greater degree. Consequently, it is not so much a question of encouraging the breeding of larger numbers, but primarily a question of breeding a better class, and anything that helps to make it possible for a man and woman to give their children full development of their powers should be encouraged. I am sure that the greatest burden the world is carrying today is that of the unfit, which burden is increasing year by year.²⁸

However at the end of rather lengthy speech he not only supported the Bill but also an increase in the allowance "... when times improve..."²⁹. This was typical of many eugenicists who had come to terms with the fact that class-based aid to large families was a political impossibility.³⁰

²⁵ *NZPD*, vol. 210, August 1926, p.625.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 625.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 625.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 625 - 626.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 626.

³⁰ Soloway, *Birth Control*, p. 295f.

In the Council's third reading, there is proportionally much more about eugenics. Stout for instance, attacked the bill on exactly eugenic grounds and devoted much of his speech to explaining eugenics to the Council members. He maintained:

"We have given the go by to the doctrine of eugenics. We are not making any provision to encourage the best people to marry early and to breed. We have by all our customs allow people to imagine that the more children are family has the better, and have discouraged the well taught and well endowed from having children. I say that is a matter that should be considered in dealing with this Bill."³¹

He also gave some indication of the direction he considered eugenists should be taking on issues of social selection. "If you are to have a great race you must have an educated race, a race with the ideal of the simple life, a race living the simple life, doing what is right and just, saving its money and saving its means, and not seeking for aid, not seeking for doles."³² This illustrates some of the qualities that eugenists thought should be bred into the race, particularly thrift and independence, but also the idea of simplicity. Some eugenists were prepared to abandon city life and become self-sufficient on a smallholding.

Stout used American evidence, largely a book by George Barton Cutten, president of Colgate University,³³ to illustrate his ideas on the fertility of the unfit, the disparity in the birth rates, and the alleged intellectual decline of the West. He expressed the opinion that New Zealand was following United States in a decline in intelligence. In fact Stout points out the findings of the American army IQ tests of 1917, when they "... found a large number of people-apparently educated Americans-who had not the intelligence of children of 12 years of age.... and so it was among ourselves".³⁴ He also points out to the Council the rather full research that allegedly showed the lack of fertility in university graduates. "... Harvard graduates average

³¹ *NZPD*, vol. 210, August 1926, p. 834.

³² *ibid.*, p. 835.

³³ G. B. Cutten, *The Mind: its Origin and Goal*, np, nd.

³⁴ *NZPD* vol. 210, August 1926, p. 834.

only seven tenths of one son, and Vassar graduates-college ladies-one half of a daughter. 1000 of the leading scientists in America will have only three hundred and fifty grandsons to marry".³⁵

Stout tended to equate mental deficiency with criminality, as was usual for eugenicists at this time, although this was a belief that pre-dated eugenics.

What is to be the future of our race? Is our race progressing intellectually? As a matter-of-fact it is not.....The intellectual condition of many in America was very low, and so it was amongst ourselves. We have in our midst a great number of defective people. We see this result appearing in our gaols. I venture to say that perhaps a fourth or fifth of the prisoners in our gaols are mentally defective. I do not say that they ought to be sent to some asylum or other institution, but they are not really mentally efficient. What has happened amongst us has happened also in America, and the result has been commented upon by several writers in that country.³⁶

He again quoted Cutten, (someone who, according to Kevles had used the American army IQ test findings to question the viability of democracy in United States,³⁷) as saying:

There is only one way to produce brains, and that is to breed them. Are you breeding brains in America? We have been careful to breed animals on this principle. There has been no improvement in the human race during historic times in any way comparable to that in domestic animals, yet there is every reason to think an equally great improvement would have been possible if selective breeding had been tried.³⁸

The comparison between humans and domestic stock animals was typical of some eugenicists from a rural rather than a scientific background, who considered that breeding humans was as simple as breeding cattle or horses.

The attempts of Stout and Atwood to influence this legislation are the only substantial eugenically based speeches arising in either the House or the Council.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 834.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 834.

³⁷ Kevles, p. 83.

³⁸ *NZPD*, vol. 210, August 1926, p. 834.

There was in the debate surrounding the bill more concern with both increasing the population by encouraging large families, and with increasing the quality of care given to children of large families who have poor parents. Much of the debate reflected this, and could possibly be considered as part of a wider eugenic concern with the low birth rate of the white races in general, and New Zealand in particular. The falling birthrate amongst the white races was a eugenic theme similar to the differential class birthrate, but it also occurred in the broader contexts of older racial and social beliefs.³⁹

Howard, the member for Christchurch South gave voice to this concern, to which he had applied some little research.

Like the right honourable gentleman I have also turned to my Year book. I am not in the habit of turning up the income tax returns, but I find on page 112 of the 1926 Year book a table which causes me some concern at times. It shows that New Zealand's birth rate has fallen rapidly, until today we occupy the unenviable position of the lowest in the Australasian colonies. ... any one who looks ahead must realise the dangers with which the Empire is faced in connection with the loss of the children.⁴⁰

Yet while the need for a bigger population was generally accepted there was still resistance to giving money to the poor. Other Council members, such as the Honourable Mr. Cohen, attacked the bill on grounds that eugenists would certainly approve of, but that are not specifically eugenic. Cohen for instance, disliked the idea of giving money to the poor, on the grounds that they were poor managers, and their children would gain no benefit, but does not say as eugenists perhaps would, that poor management is genetically inherited.⁴¹

The Honourable Mr. Barr attacked the bill on similar grounds, as he did in the second reading debate, that it was "... an inducement to the improvident man to

³⁹ Mazumdar, p.35ff.

⁴⁰ *NZPD*, vol. 210, August 1926, p. 623.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 836.

continue improvident." ⁴² In the midst of a mostly economic criticism of the bill he said,

There is no encouragement whatever in it, because it is not the thrifty who will receive this benefit - it is the thrifless and the shiftless; it is those who even if they get it, will misuse and illuse it. I saw in the newspaper the other day of a well-known lady in Christchurch who does a tremendous amount of work among the poor, and those whom I would call the shiftless. It would be a terrible thing, she said, to hand this to many of the women in the families it is intended to deal with, because they do not really know how to handle money. ⁴³

The reference to the inability of the poor to manage money was a common concern among eugenisists, but to be considered properly eugenist this speech should make some reference to heritability of poverty, or at least of a permanent genetically determined social problem group. Barr made no reference to either, and his attack on the bill cannot be considered eugenist. The attitudes he expressed were part of the general belief system of the 1920s. On the other hand, most eugenists considered that poverty, being genetically inherited, would be difficult to cure by giving people money. They would have maintained that because the lack of thrift was inherited, there was room for only superficial improvement by environmental reform.

The eugenist assumptions of some of the speakers do not seem to have provoked a great deal of reaction against them, but there was some. At least one speaker in the Council seemed to be against the eugenists' assumptions of middle-class superiority. The Honourable Mr. Craigie, while he had little time for the anti-reproductive behaviour of the middle classes, (he characterised them as "... too selfish..." ⁴⁴ a good eugenic point) maintained that as the working class is doing the reproducing, its members should be supported in their efforts. "The best thing we can do is to enable these people to be good citizens, to be well clothed, well fed, and well educated; and they will be a great asset to this country." ⁴⁵

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 843.

⁴³ *NZPD*, vol. 210, August 1926, p. 765.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 842.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 842.

There was also however, some specific and considered opposition to the eugenists' position on this bill. The beneficiaries of the bill were defended, against Stout's attack, in particular, by the Honourable Mr. Carrington who attacked the eugenic basis of Stout's speech.

He said,

"With all due deference to Sir Robert Stout's American writer, I think history has proved that there are some very good brains among the working classes. I would refer to Gray's elegy. I need not quote it. We all know it. There are many brilliant men among the workers who have not had the opportunity of showing their brilliancy. I think that we are, by this Bill, helping one of our valuable assets."⁴⁶

The leader of the Council, Sir Heaton Rhodes, injected a note of commonsense in his summing up, in a rebuke to Stout's views.

"The honourable gentleman spoke of breeding brains. Now where is the nation that is breeding brains? No nation can produce an instance of the breeding of brains in the family. Take the greatest men in history, and consider the position of their descendants. Take families in our own Mother country. We can trace the descendants of great men, but where you find one family which produces a man with brains there are hundreds of cases where the sons are of small calibre compared to their fathers."⁴⁷

This discussion, which might loosely be considered to be about the science behind eugenics, is relatively brief. It was to be fair, more than was undertaken during the debate on the 1911 Mental Defectives Act, in which eugenics seemed to be almost universally accepted. Compared with the vigorous and somewhat more intellectual debate that occurred two years later about the controversial 1928 Mental Defectives Amendment Act, it is minor. Perhaps the debate about eugenics was driven more by the issues concerned in the legislation than eugenics itself.

The main concerns about the family allowances act, as reflected in the debate and in later comment outside the House or Council seem to be more with the amount to be paid, and the concomitant cost to the public. The discussion of eugenics as such is confined to just a few speakers, at least one of whom supports the bill in spite of his

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 841.

obvious eugenics beliefs. Certainly while there was some eugenic content in the parliamentary debate, there was in general little in the way of eugenic philosophy in the arguments surrounding this legislation. The eugenic remarks in Parliament, although strong and straightforward worth generally few and far between. By far the greater part of the discussion on this legislation was concerned with the amount to be paid. There does seem to have been general agreement that some form of child allowance, even though it may be dysgenic, was necessary to increase the birth rate, and raise the standard of childcare.

Newspaper and Public Response

The attitudes of the major daily papers towards this bill were mixed. Some were cautiously in favour and some were cautiously against. On the whole if there were any major criticisms they were not at all eugenic but concentrated on the charitable nature of the exercise. There was not one mention of the theoretical dysgenic properties of encouraging poor people to have children by giving them money.

The Family Allowances Bill was covered fully by the *Evening Post* both editorially,⁴⁸ and in an article featuring a fairly detailed summary of the debate.⁴⁹ There was also a brief reference to a *Christchurch Star* editorial condemning the principle of the Bill.⁵⁰ The main concern seemed to be that state responsibility is replacing private responsibility. This concern is also mentioned on 20 August,⁵¹ and in both cases it is obvious that the *Post* and the *Star* prefer private responsibility to public. There was also an opinion expressed in the *Post* by a J.B. Condliffe presumably the historian, that small farmers might lose out because they owned enough property to disqualify themselves from the allowance while their income

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 845.

⁴⁸ *Evening Post*, 18 August 1926, p. 10.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 6.

might otherwise qualify them.⁵² P.J. O'Regan, in an article on 30 August expressed the opinion that the Family Allowance might become an excuse not to pay a living wage.⁵³ The only other concern mentioned is the perceived problem of a bidding war between parties increasing the cost of the allowance. The *Post* did allow that the spirit of the Bill was "commendable" but the principle was wrong.⁵⁴ The principle being that the state should not be taking over a private responsibility. The eugenic aspects of the Bill were never mentioned

The *Dominion* generally followed the *Post* and the *Star*, both in space allocated to this Bill and in editorial content. There was cautious approval of the Bill given in an editorial in the Saturday magazine section on 28 August. There was also an opinion piece, fairly prominent, from the Employer's Federation, the main argument of which being that it was expensive and undermined thrift and enterprise. It was also considered un-British.⁵⁵

The *New Zealand Herald* devoted about as much space to this bill as most other dailies. The editorial attitude tended to approve. The bill was described as a "... pioneer measure...", and as "... welcomed even by those who have criticised its details most". The contribution of the experience from other countries was acknowledged, the main concern being a worry about the establishment of an arbitrary "... standard family...".⁵⁶ A large proportion of the section on the business of the house was devoted to the bill and its critics.

Two critical letters were found in the *Herald*, both against the bill. They disliked its method of implementation, that fact it was a dole, and that it would discourage thrift and independence.⁵⁷ The first letter was from a Mr Bishop, secretary of the New Zealand Employers' Federation and the second from H. W. Hudson, a representative

⁵² *ibid.*, 25 August, p. 9.

⁵³ *ibid.*, 30 August, p. 9.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 18 August, p. 10.

⁵⁵ *Dominion*, 19 August 1926, p. 8.

⁵⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 24 August 1926, p. 8.

of the Chambers of Commerce. Neither letter contains anything of eugenic import, but both share the common belief that the poor should not be indulged by too much government charity.

These criticisms were echoed in the editorial comment of the *Otago Daily Times*, which in two editorials decried the "...eleemosynary..."⁵⁸ nature of the method of collection and redistribution. On 19 August, it expressed the opinion that there are other social and economic problems inherent in the distribution system, including the difficulty of ascertaining if the money was actually spent on the children, and the promotion of disunity within the family if the money was paid to the mother. It also noted that the amount of money to be spent on family allowances meant that there would be no tax reductions in the near future.⁵⁹ On 21 August the paper referred to general acceptance of the bill by MPs except for the amount to be paid. It was against the principle of direct payment, although not forthcoming on the detail of what would be preferred.

On 25 August there was a letter by E.M.F. Matthewson, which did express the opinion that moral and eugenic issues should be considered, as the fitness of fit children should be conserved.⁶⁰ It is obvious however that either eugenic issues did not catch the attention of the readership of this paper, or editors were choosing not to publish letters on the subject. This was the sole example that could be found of a eugenically motivated letter on this particular topic in any of the major dailies.

In fact all the major daily newspapers devoted at least as much space if not more to bills concerning daylight saving and religion in schools. The subject of religion in schools attracted far more letters than family allowances, of which only three could be found (unless the Employer's Federation piece is counted.) The religious bill also inspired a fairly lively debate on the nature of God and religion, while family

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 19 August, p. 12., 20 August, p. 8

⁵⁸ *Otago Daily Times*, 19 August 1926, p. 8., *ibid.*, 21 August, p. 10.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p.8.

allowances attracted no such related digressions. It would seem so far that family allowances did not attract a great deal of public, let alone eugenic comment.

It might be expected that the *New Zealand Medical Journal* might have something to say about family allowances, as the health of children is well within its ambit, but this is not so. In 1924 the Journal carried at least two articles which could have touched upon this subject, both on maternal and infant mortality, which might be expected to improve among the poor if they had more money. The first an editorial, mentioned nothing at all about eugenic concerns,⁶¹ the second an article entitled "Maternal Infantile Mortality"⁶² merely seemed content to claim the credit for the medical profession for the decline in infant mortality.

There is one interesting hint that people with eugenic ideas were trying to influence policies. It comes from a contemporary academic source, an article in *The Economic Journal* by R. M. Campbell supporting the introduction of child allowances. Campbell was obviously in favour of family allowances, but did put up some of the arguments against them as straw men. One of the arguments put forward, and therefore presumably anticipated, was a eugenic one.

... one may well question the wisdom of endeavouring to increase the birth rate among the relatively unsuccessful members of the community, for under the New Zealand family allowance scheme at any rate these alone are beneficiaries..... The point to be stressed is that to accelerate the rate of reproduction by the least successful section of the community must tend to the increase of less desirable types. Even if the country is short of population -- and this is questionable -- it is not easy to see that any commendable services rendered either to the community or to the individuals directly concerned. Further children are brought into existence by parents who already have more than the average number of children to support on less than a basic wage. Why should such parents be encouraged to have still more children to share the already inadequate family resources? Does anyone imagine that the more children a family has the better?⁶³

⁶¹ *NZMJ*, vol. 23 no. 114, October 1924, p. 411.

⁶² H. E. A. Washbourn, "Maternal Infantile Mortality", *NZMJ*, p. 395.

⁶³ Campbell, R.M., "Family Allowances in New Zealand", *The Economic Journal*, 37, 46, September 1937, P. 369 – 383, p. 374-5.

As so often happens with critics of eugenics, Campbell seemed to accept part of the eugenic argument, in that he countered it by maintaining only that increased material conditions would tend to decrease family sizes.

He said,

"...indeed that improved conditions are reflected in a reduced birth rate is the most encouraging fact that social investigation has revealed, since it entitles us to hope that any substantial improvement effected in economic condition of the masses will tend to ensure its own continuous and will not be cancelled out by an increased birth rate."⁶⁴

This is indicative that either a eugenic argument against family allowances had already been put forward or perhaps that one was expected, but not necessarily in all respects disagreed with. With some exceptions, he agreed that among other things "... existing social stratification does reflect merit...".⁶⁵

Eugenic influence in the area of family allowances then, would seem to be minimal. This is not at all surprising, because with the exception of Nazi Germany few if any eugenic family allowances developed anywhere in the world. What is perhaps a little surprising, given the debate in England surrounding class based family endowments, is the paucity of letters by eugenicists about this (and other) legislation. Even Ms Baughan⁶⁶ seems to have been silent on this matter. It is quite probable, in line with overseas experience, that eugenicists had managed to come to terms with the idea that increasing the general birthrate was better than persevering with the differential birthrate, in the light of the supposed competition from less developed "races", which were purportedly more fertile.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.375.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p. 374.

⁶⁶ Blanche Edith Baughan, founder of the Howard League, poet, author, eugenicist, and prolific letter writer.

Chapter 4.

The Mental Defectives Amendment Bill 1928.

Again, this bill reflects the central eugenic concern of the fertility of the unfit. It is a useful comparison not only with the original 1911 bill, but also with the Family Allowances Bill which was passed only two years before. The comparison with the 1911 bill helps us to ascertain if New Zealand eugenics had in any way gained momentum in this area, particularly in light of the absence of a formal eugenics society. Comparison with the 1911 bill also allows us to see if opposition to eugenics had increased at all, as by 1928 this was beginning to appear in other countries. A comparison with the Family Allowances Bill is important because if eugenics gained momentum from its inception until 1930 as generally happened overseas, one would expect more influence of eugenics in the later bills.

This bill cannot be studied only in the few years preceding its adoption. Much of the debate surrounding it took place at least from 1923 onwards, with the establishment of the Committee of Inquiry to investigate the whole question of mental defect and sexual offending. Robertson in fact, sees the debate as beginning after World War I, which was instrumental in causing a harsher attitude to mental defect.¹

The bill is also important because it brought up in the one real sign of organised resistance to eugenic ideas, and gives us a chance to see the form the resistance took, where it came from, and the arguments and evidence used against eugenics. To this point there had been little public or parliamentary opposition to the idea that certain traits, particularly mental defect, are inherited genetically rather than the result of environmental influence. On the part of the general public, neither had there been any great enthusiasm for this idea. The Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders and the subsequent Bill were the source of a rather vitriolic debate, caused almost certainly by the legislation taking eugenic ideas too far for various pressure groups to stomach. This debate though, overlays the general acceptance of many eugenic ideas by many of the participants. While Robertson and

¹ Robertson, p. 37.

Fleming have acknowledged the debate, neither has followed it to its conclusion or thoroughly researched its ramifications.

Agitation for something to be done about the growth in numbers of those with mental defect again came from eugenicists, bureaucrats, and various melioration societies such as the Society for the Protection of Women and Children, the Prisons and Industrial Reform Society, and the North Canterbury Hospital Board among others.² These groups had begun to associate promiscuity, prostitution, and crime with mental defect. The eugenicists had been pointing out for some time, that people with mental defect were reproducing at a faster rate than the fit, and passing the defects on to the children, making this a problem for the future generations. There was something of a moral panic it seems, among certain groups.

Government officials were also in the process of refining the classification and treatment system to make it more sophisticated, leading to the need for further legislation to encompass these changes.³ After much vacillation, the government decided to hold a commission of inquiry which reported in 1925 and the Inspector General of Mental Hospitals, Doctor T. K. Gray, undertook overseas research resulting in a further report on treatment of mental deficiency. Both of these were influential in what was to appear as the 1928 amendment bill.⁴

Some of the debate surrounding the eugenic treatment of the mentally deficient took place during the investigations sponsored by the government. Of these, the commission seemed to have been a particularly thorough and large-scale exercise. A questionnaire was sent to every GP in the country, asking about numbers of mental defectives, and suggestions for treatment. Even the government balneologist was solicited for an opinion. The commission's report was sought by a great number of organisations, from the expected women's organisations, through all major churches to the Theosophical Society. The list of organisations to which the report

² *ibid.*, p. 27, Fleming p. 38.

³ Robertson, p. 27ff.

was sent runs to five pages, and the print run for the report was also very large.⁵ Overseas governments and organisations as far apart as Australia, the United States, and Germany⁶ also showed interest in the report. The government then waited for the Inspector General to return from a trip to Britain, the United States and Europe to present a report on his findings about their treatment of mental defectives, before it introduced a bill. Both reports were in favour of some form of sterilisation of "degenerates".

The bill had a number of uncontroversial clauses relating to the classification and treatment of mental defectives. Like the preceding act of 1911, much of the bill was procedural, relating to payment methods, transfer procedures, annual reports, and so on. It did establish a special Board, with powers to supervise certain types of mentally defective people. The composition of this Board became somewhat controversial. However, most of the controversy centered on certain clauses relating to the sterilisation of mental defectives, the prohibition of their marriage, the new classification of social defective, and the classification as mentally defective, of children who were two years behind in the school work. The clause relating to the sterilisation of mental defectives attracted more opposition than anything else in the bill. Some background therefore may be necessary to set the sterilisation clause in its international context.

The idea of sterilisation was being introduced here when enthusiasm was gaining ground for the measure in the United States and parts of Europe. However in Britain it had been rejected in 1908 for a number of reasons both legal and ethical, including the possibility of the operating surgeon being sued, and the fear of spreading

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 58f.

⁵ Copy of list, Health Department Files, H1 54/79/1,NA.

⁶ Letter from Department of Public Health - Berlin, letter from A.J. Gray Clinical Psychologist Sydney Teachers' College, letter from E.E. Free, Science Editor, *The Forum*, New York, letter from H.H. Laughlin, Eugenics Record Office, Cold Spring Harbor, H1 54/79/1, NA. It is interesting to note that the German government introduced legislation in 1932 for voluntary sterilisation of various groups. Possibly the reaction in New Zealand to compulsory sterilisation influenced their legislation.

venereal disease if those who had been sterilised were then released.⁷ Truby King's assertion in his 1927 Report on the Mental Hospitals of the Dominion, that "...enthusiasm for ' extreme measures' was waning in the United States..."⁸ is arguably incorrect, although probably subjective.

The actual number sterilized in the US was in fact increasing, as was the number of states with sterilisation laws, and those practicing it without them.⁹ The *Buck v. Bell* case, in which the state of Virginia tested and validated its sterilisation laws, was decided in April of that year, to little public opposition in that country.¹⁰ This case allowed compulsory sterilisation only of "...inmates of state mental institutions whose disabilities were judged to be hereditary".¹¹ Sterilisation had become more popular since 1899, when castration and ovariectomy had been superseded by vasectomy and tubal ligation.¹² These new operations and their advantages had apparently been discussed in the medical journals from about 1909, and provoked much public discussion overseas.¹³

There was apparently in Britain, more obviously in America, Germany, and Scandinavia, considerable support for these measures.¹⁴ In fact the first eugenic sterilisation laws in Europe were introduced in 1928 by the Swiss government, and in 1929 by the government of Denmark. It would seem incredible if the Inspector General of Mental Hospitals had not been made aware of this support for sterilisation on his overseas travels.

⁷ G. Jones, *Social Hygiene in 20th Century Britain*, Croom Helm, London, 1986, p. 88 - 9.

⁸ Fleming, p.48n.

⁹ Stepan, p. 31.

¹⁰ H.H. Laughlin, the American eugenicist was consulted about the supposed mental defect of Carrie Buck, and her daughter Vivian and classified them as a case of hereditary feeble mindedness without actually seeing either.

¹¹ Kevles, *Name*, p. 116.

¹² D. Barker, "How to Curb the Fertility of the Unfit", *Oxford Review of Education*, 9, 3, 1983, p. 197 - 211, p. 201.

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 202.

On the other hand there was also considerable opposition, especially in Britain. There, eugenists it seems were strongly influenced by what they imagined the public would tolerate.¹⁵ This is one possible reason why the concept of sterilisation was introduced in New Zealand at this time. It may have seemed that public opinion was ready for this measure, or perhaps it was thought it could be tested without too much controversy.¹⁶ Certainly judging by the evidence given to the commission, which was overwhelmingly in favour of sterilisation,¹⁷ for mental deficient, sexual offenders, or both, there may have seemed to be considerable support.

The Parliamentary Debates

The debate during the second reading is remarkable for its liveliness. Although the New Zealand Eugenics Society had been defunct for at least ten years, it is obvious that its ideas were very much alive. There was vigorous and informed debate on the possibility of sterilisation, and on the definition of that group most likely to be sterilised. There was also great opposition to the other three controversial clauses.

This debate is important for number of reasons. Firstly it was almost solely about eugenics. Secondly some of the participants on both sides of the question show that they are remarkably well informed on those aspects of eugenics amenable to scientific proof or debate. Evidence is quoted from a variety of sources, mainly British and American, but examples are given on both sides of the argument from Denmark. There is considerable reference to expert opinion, although if one was forced to make a judgement, those opposed to eugenics had better taste in experts than those who favoured it. Peter Fraser for instance, quotes De Vries, a Dutch geneticist, and Burbank, an American geneticist and eugenicist, both leaders in their field. J. Mason the member for Napier, in support of the bill quotes Whetman,

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 202

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 202.

¹⁶ Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, Evidence, H. 3, 3/13, NA.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

(presumably W.C.D. Whetham, author of *An Introduction to Eugenics* a physicist); A.F. Tredgold, a neurologist described by Soloway as "...virulent...";¹⁸ and H.H. Laughlin who, according to Kevles "...twisted..."¹⁹ facts and indulged in "...blatant prejudice..."²⁰ against migrants. Tredgold was allegedly a "...passionate advocate..."²¹ of sterilisation.

On the government side, the arguments were fairly familiar, almost identical to those put forward in the act of 1911. Young, the Minister of Health, in introducing the bill emphasised the cost to the state of the increasing number of mental defectives, illustrating with case studies the "... fecundity of the feeble minded".²² This, according to the Minister necessitated restraint on the marriage of, restrictions on providing alcohol to, and possibly the sterilisation of, the mentally deficient. The opposition to this bill was much fiercer than had been in 1911, and its arguments used evidence not necessarily available then.

Typically, case studies were liberally supplied as evidence of the differential birth rate, this time vigorously refuted by the opposition. Peter Fraser for instance, took a sceptical look at the Jukes and Kallikaks,²³ and made a scathing attack on case studies in general. He explained that in general, the traits one inherits from once parents are a bit of a lottery,

We find, for instance, that Luther's son was insubordinate and violent; William Penn's son was a debauched scoundrel; the son of Scipio Africanus was an imbecile; the son of Cicero was a drunkard.... and so on, right through the ages we have instances of the greatest social disappointments coming from good parents and vice versa.²⁴

¹⁸ Soloway, *Demography*, p.15.

¹⁹ Kevles, *Name*, p.108.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 108.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 108.

²² *NZPD*, vol. 217, July 1928, p. 611.

²³ *ibid.*, p. 631.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 632.

Fraser's speech would have to be considered the best informed of the opposition speeches, and quite probably the best argued. He had obviously gone to some trouble to research the science behind eugenics, and has found it wanting. He said "... sterilization is not based upon scientific or proved fact, but is simply the outcome of uninstructed propaganda carried on by people whose doctrines are mainly charlatanism".²⁵ He also found fault with the administrative content of the bill, and of course with the definition of "socially defective", as did many trade unionists. He suggested the inclusion of psychologists on the Board, and regarded the classification of schoolchildren behind in their work as "...a matter for perturbation".²⁶

Holland, the leader of the opposition, also went to some trouble to research the science behind the eugenic arguments. Concentrating largely on the sterilisation clause, he made use of evidence from the British Medical Association, the Deputy Physician - Surgeon at the Royal Edinburgh Mental Hospital, and Major Leonard Darwin, prominent British eugenicist and author. Like Fraser he used the enemy's sources against them. Holland quotes from Darwin's book *The Need for Eugenic Reform*, in which Darwin maintained

Public opinion is said not to be ripe for the authorisation of sterilisation by legislation. As far as this is true, it constitutes a most serious objection to the enforcement of sterilisation by legislation at the present time; for any such action would be liable to arouse that type of controversy out of which the truth would be unlikely to emerge.²⁷

Holland attacked sterilisation on number of scientific grounds, including that it would have little or no effect on the eradication of unfitness, that many of the unfit are related to very competent if not famous people, and that unfitness may be caused by environmental factors.²⁸

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 508.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 629.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 681.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 680ff.

Others opposed to the bill had similar objections to Fraser and Holland, but unfortunately without making the effort in research. Forbes, the member for Hurunui, for example thought, "The ' propagation of the unfit' is a very glib phrase..."²⁹ and was distinctly perturbed about the definition of the social defective, but he had little else to say about the eugenic aspects of the bill. John A. Lee, the member for Auckland East felt that the environment may contribute greatly to children's apparent mental deficiency, and that not enough information was available about the reasons for mental deficiency in children,³⁰ but again had little to add on the more technical aspects. The member for Invercargill Sir Joseph Ward, placed on record the opinion of Doctor Shaw Bolton, who it will be seen had written to New Zealand newspapers opposing the idea of inheritance of mental deficiency. However he spent the rest of his speech complaining about the proceedings in the house, where he believed that the bill was pushed through " ... by a process of exhaustion".³¹ Of those that opposed the bill, Fraser and Holland largely carried the scientific debate.

The government on the other hand, seemed determined to show that they have science on their side. The Minister of Health for instance claimed to have searched "... the world's best literature on the subject..."³² and attacked the evidence of opposing experts given before the Public Health Committee, "... professors of psychology and philosophy at the universities..."³³ He also appealed to expert evidence, quoting Lombroso, (as had Fraser) to justify the definition of social defective, and insisted that "...most authorities contend that the union of two feeble minded persons cannot produce a normal child".³⁴ The Minister did tend to use case studies to illustrate the fecundity of the unfit although he claimed that the

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 638.

³⁰ *ibid.*, vol. 219, p. 493.

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 500.

³² *ibid.*, p. 512.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 511.

³⁴ *ibid.* 217, p. 697, 701.

"... particulars are supplied by experts".³⁵ He admitted the importance of the environment, but on the whole he felt that no matter how long it might take, preventing the "... purer streams from being tainted..."³⁶ would be of benefit to future generations.

Of other supporters of the bill, few ascend to the intellectual level of the Minister. H.S.S. Kyle, the member for Riccarton in his speech in favour of the bill used the animal kingdom to support the idea that like begets like, likening humans to Clydesdales, a typical response from a eugenicist who has little knowledge of science.³⁷ Buddo the member for Kaiapoi, who regarded the bill as a "... well-meaning attempt to grapple with a serious problem". had an each way bet on the recognised ability of subnormal parents to have eminent children, and the horrendous expense of the Jukes family's hereditary problems.³⁸ Most of these were old eugenic favourites, if not very scientific.

Given that not all members had a grasp of the intricacies of scientific eugenic ideas, it would still have to be regarded as a eugenic debate of a reasonably high standard. Those who opposed eugenics at length had a grasp of the detail, the science, and to some extent the ethics of eugenics that was not present in other debates, particularly that surrounding the 1911 bill. Almost certainly the preparation and research that went into these debates was a result of the rather extreme measures in the bill, which were eventually withdrawn. If this debate is compared with that surrounding the original bill, there appears to be much less acceptance of eugenic ideas. This of course may have had something to do with the growth of the Parliamentary Labour Party, who seem to have solidly opposed the eugenics' more extreme aspects, at least as they affected their constituency. But overseas experience of the growth of opposition to eugenics should also be given some credit if only for providing the evidence upon which the Labour Party based its arguments.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 609.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 701.

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 639.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 641.

Newspaper and Public Response

Fleming describes some of the reaction to this bill in his thesis, as does Robertson. They tend to concentrate on a few major daily papers, and the *New Zealand Tablet*. Although public reaction to the bill seems to have been muted Fleming noted a great deal of editorial comment, especially in the *Otago Daily Times*, and of course the *Tablet*. It should be said however, that the *Otago Daily Times* did not cover the bill as much as some others, notably the Auckland papers. In the context of other issues it fades somewhat into the background in some other papers. A more thorough culling of the major dailies was needed to add depth and complexity to Fleming's comments on the editorial and public reaction.

Most of the editorial comment found was cautious in tone, especially on the matter of sterilisation, and not every major daily regarded this bill as a matter of primary importance. That is not to say that the problem of mental deficiency was not recognised. Most editors accepted that there was a growing problem, and agreed that something should be done about it, perhaps even sterilisation, though it was recognised that the public was probably not ready for this. Some recognised that sterilisation was not a very scientific solution. Most papers covered the bill in editorials at least twice, once when the bill was introduced, and again when it was about to be passed and the controversial clauses were removed.

The editorial reaction from the *Evening Post* was cautiously in favour. The bill was almost certainly considered fairly important, in that it received an editorial on 18 July, although the primary editorial was concerned with foreign policy. This was generally favourable to the bill, but suggested deferring the clauses about sterilisation in case they were misunderstood.³⁹ The comment was a mixture of eugenic concern, (in case more generations of lunatics and criminals were bred) and

³⁹ *Evening Post*, 18 July 1928, p. 10.

a touching belief in the "... wholesome, sanity promoting conditions..."⁴⁰ of New Zealand society.

Towards the end of September, just before the bill was passed in its amended form, there was another outbreak of interest in editorial and article form. An editorial on the 27th, (again not a major one) approved the dropping of the controversial clauses and other amendments, commenting that it is "... wise..." to do so especially as public opinion is "... not educated..." on the subject.⁴¹ It is noticeable that the *Post* did not necessarily oppose sterilisation as such, but recognises that public opinion would probably be against it.

The *Otago Daily Times*, in its editorial of 10 August 1928 was also cautious, mentioning religious and psychological objections to parts of the bill. It also stressed the effects of the environment. It concluded by saying that too little was known about the science behind the bill, and that patience was needed before the bill is passed.⁴² On 19 August there was another editorial showing approval of the bill's amendments, but still disapproving of sterilisation, maintaining that there is "... no consensus of scientific opinion in favour of them..."⁴³

The *Auckland Star* seemed more opposed to the bill than many other papers at least in its editorial language. In the editorial of 25 September it mentions "... grave dangers to personal and social liberty..."⁴⁴ a subject which tended to be ignored in other newspapers' editorials.

The *New Zealand Herald* followed the cautious editorial line of most other dailies in favour of the bill, but worried about provoking "... reasonable opposition..."⁴⁵ The

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, 27 September, p. 12.

⁴² *Otago Daily Times*, 10 August 1928, page 8.

⁴³ *ibid.*, 19 August, p. 6.

⁴⁴ *Auckland Star*, 25 September, p. 6.

⁴⁵ *New Zealand Herald*, 18 July 1928, p. 10.

editorial noted "...the world-wide problem..."⁴⁶ of the fecundity of social defectives, and in an article stressed that this is "Advanced Social Legislation."⁴⁷ The eugenic content is muted but noticeable, as obvious references were made to the typical problems of allowing mental deficientes to reproduce themselves. However the reference to reasonable opposition was almost certainly concern with the question of sterilisation, about which most other dailies seemed a little less coy. Nowhere else in the major dailies, is there to be found such a lengthy debate about the pros and cons of this operation. On 27 September in a final editorial the *Herald* stated that with the dropping of the controversial causes the bill was finally acceptable, and criticised opponents both in and outside the house, for delaying the answer to what it saw as a pressing problem.

Editorial comment from the *Dominion* at the time of the Bill stressed that this was an "... important and advanced piece of social legislation..."⁴⁸, a repeat of the subhead from an article the day before, taken from a speech in the house. It was generally approving, describing the bill as a "...courageous attempt..."⁴⁹ to deal with the problem of mental deficiency. It also appealed to expert opinion and "... social efficiency...".⁵⁰ The editor was well aware of the dangers of the propagation of the unfit. The editor was obviously influenced by eugenic beliefs, and just as obviously in favour of them.

This was followed on the 21st by another editorial that stressed the propagation of the unfit and the cost to the public.⁵¹ The major note of caution was sounded on the subject of registration. It recommended as did the *Post*, that registration of mental deficientes take place first to find out the extent of the problem before going any further. As the bill was being read for the third time the *Dominion* devoted a final editorial to the problem, in which it maintained that a cautious approach is justified,

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, page 10.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 19 July 1928, p. 8.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 8. Social efficiency was a phrase much used by eugenicists.

because the public is "... uneducated in regard to eugenic measures".⁵² This note of caution is repeated on 29 September when the bill had passed the house, in a small opinion piece contained in *Echoes of the Week*, in which Dr Sutherland of Victoria College is quoted as saying much the same.⁵³

The *Press* paid less attention to this bill than most of the other major dailies. There was an editorial which seems less cautious than most, maintaining that "... restraint in New Zealand has been too long delayed,"⁵⁴ and that there were "... adequate safeguards in place...".⁵⁵ The paper urged caution with regard to sterilisation suggesting that it would be unwise to release sterilised mental deficients into society for moral reasons.⁵⁶

There was in general substantial coverage of the debate on this bill on the parliamentary pages of all the major newspapers studied, which was reported without comment. They were also other articles giving background on eugenics, which may or may not have been connected to the bill. There were a number of articles directly commenting on aspects of the bill, which could be considered part of the general debate surrounding it. In few of the papers studied was this coverage remarkable. As far as column inches go there was in general more space devoted to the progression of the bill promoting daylight saving than the Mental Defectives Amendment Bill. In fact, except in the Auckland papers, the defeat of summer time was treated as a matter much more important than the treatment of the mentally ill.⁵⁷

In the *Evening Post*, there was a small article on 19 July about opposition to the bill by the Australasian Association of Psychology and Philosophy, on scientific

⁵¹ *ibid.*, 21 July, p. 8.

⁵² *ibid.*, 29 August 1928, p. 10.

⁵³ *ibid.*, 29 August 1928, p. 29.

⁵⁴ *Christchurch Press*, 19 July 1928, p. 8.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵⁷ In general, the subject of prohibition also received more space in most major daily newspapers.

grounds.⁵⁸ On the 20th the debate was reported at some length, and topic was mentioned in a letter on the 21st.⁵⁹ The reading of the bill was described as happening on an anticipated "...quiet..." day in the House,⁶⁰ whereas the debate on daylight saving was described on the 26th as galvanising the House "...into life...".⁶¹ On the 25th there was the most comment. There was a large article reporting the bill, and another by Archbishop Redwood giving the Catholic point of view, in which the eugenic aspects of the bill were heavily criticised.⁶² However, if we are to judge the importance of the bill in the public mind by what is in the *Evening Post*, it does not seem to have been at all at the fore, at least until September.

As the bill was about to be passed however, two articles written by Peter Fraser appeared, against the grain of the paper's general interest in this bill. Both would seem to be well thought out and well researched critiques of eugenics and sterilisation. In the first he quoted Professor J. Arthur Thomson, a well-known anti-eugenicist mentioned in several texts;⁶³ T.H. Morgan a 1933 Nobel laureate; and W.E. Castle of Harvard University, whose pro- eugenics book *Genetics and Eugenics* is characterised by Kevles as "... the most widely used college text in its field...".⁶⁴ This shows again Fraser's penchant for using the opposition's authorities against them, as he often did in the House. In this article he mounted an attack on the science (or rather the biology) of eugenics and sterilisation rather than its ethics. In his conclusion he said "... there is neither science nor sense in the assertion of the eugenicists who demand laws embodying sterilisation".⁶⁵

⁵⁸ *Evening Post*, 19 July, p. 13.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 21 July, p. 8.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 12.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, page 10.

⁶² *ibid.*, 25 July, p. 10.

⁶³ Soloway, *Demography*, p. 51, Kevles, *Name*, p. 89 -- 90.

⁶⁴ Kevles, *Name*, p. 69.

⁶⁵ *Evening Post*, 28 September 1928, p. 11.

In the second article on 22 September Fraser explained that psychiatrists tended to differ on the question of sterilisation, again using some interesting expert opinion. He quoted Arthur F. Tredgold, a London neurologist and eugenicist, used as an authority in a speech in the House. Tredgold was a signatory to a British report by the Central Association for Mental Welfare which was quoted as saying that "... while sterilisation might be appropriate and applicable in certain particular cases, it would have very little effect in the prevention of mental deficiency; it would certainly lead to serious social evils, and it would be inimical to the defective and community were it to be adopted as a general policy".⁶⁶ Both articles occupied much space, but did not seem to spark anything in the way of debate from those on the opposing side, or the general public. Apart from the debate in the Auckland newspapers, this was the only really substantial coverage of the eugenic argument.

The *Herald*, on 21 September, contained a very small article quoting the view of a French specialist who claimed that mental deficiency was not necessarily inherited, but that drunkenness was.⁶⁷ This may or may not be related to the debate on the bill. On the 24th it devoted quite some space to an article attacking the bill by an English Professor, D.J. Shaw-Bolton, Professor of Mental Diseases at Leeds University. Professor Shaw-Bolton attacked the bill on scientific grounds, and was quite dismissive of the bill's social defective classification.⁶⁸

In the *Auckland Star*, the *Christchurch Press*, and the *Otago Daily Times*, there was little or nothing by way of articles about eugenics in general, or the Mental Defectives Amendment Bill in particular, beyond the usual coverage of the activities of Parliament. The *Press*, which devoted less attention to the bill than most of the other daily papers, did mention that the Women's Branch of the Political Reform League had sent a telegram to the Prime Minister congratulating him for introducing the legislation. Again, in all of these papers substantially more space was devoted to the other issues of the day.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 22 September, p. 10.

⁶⁷ *New Zealand Herald*, 21 September p. 11

There was a marked dearth of letters from the public on the topic of mental deficiency. In fact only a very few could be found that could not be traced in some way to people or groups with some sort of professional interest, either eugenists or those with anti-eugenic views. The number of letters about other important topics of the day far exceeded those written about the bill. It would seem then, that the general public was not at all interested in the treatment of those with mental defect, but that people involved in some way, either academic or through their work, were often passionate about it. The Mental Defectives Amendment Bill was greatly controversial among these groups. The number and content of the letters and articles published in the daily papers by these people tends to show this. Any debate about public involvement in the debate surrounding the bill therefore, becomes a matter of definition.

In the *Evening Post* there was a letter on 21 September which was generally in favour of the bill, but did not mention eugenic concerns at all.⁶⁹ Indeed in this paper there were more letters about summer time, and quite a lively debate about whether to seal Wellington's roads with concrete or bitumen. In the *Dominion* only two letters from individual members of the general public could be found.⁷⁰ One was practically incoherent and against the bill, the other supported the bill except for compulsory sterilisation. Again, if the numbers of letters on this subject is any indication of public interest, the public was far more concerned with daylight saving and licensing reform. One letter in the *Auckland Star*, by a Walter F. Darby accuses the bill of being "... sinful and dangerous...",⁷¹ but there was very little in the way of informed debate.

They were of course, letters from individuals and groups concerned with the care and treatment of those with mental defect, which contain the opinions of these

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, 24 September, p. 11.

⁶⁹ *Evening Post*, 21 July, p. 8.

⁷⁰ *Dominion*, 24 July p. 10.

⁷¹ *Auckland Star*, 26 September, p. 9.

groups about the bill. Apart from the Auckland papers these letters were few and tend to be identical to some of those published in Auckland. For instance in the *Otago Daily Times*, on 21 August a letter by a W. Anderson, chairman of the Australasian Association of Psychology and Philosophy, who explained much of their opposition.⁷² This letter seems to have been sent to a number of newspapers, sparking a public response in the *Dominion*, where a letter by R.M. Thomson criticised the bill, and one by R.L. Laing criticised those academics who opposed it. There was a reference to racial poisons in the Thomson letter, but no specific eugenic content in either. (No identification could be made of either letter writer, and they may indeed have been members of the general public.)⁷³ There was also on the 31st a letter from officials of the N.Z.E.I., who postulated that not only did the bill need revision, but also that consultation should be undertaken with teacher psychologist and social worker representatives.⁷⁴

These letters suggest a debate amongst academics and bureaucrats. They also show the possibility of conflict between interest groups, in the demand for consultation with teachers, psychologists, and social workers. This theme was elaborated in the Auckland papers, and echoes research by Thomson and Ryan who note that this split took place both in Britain and the United States, and that sectional interests and politics often determined one's position in the nature - nurture debate⁷⁵

In the Auckland papers, there was an intense debate between advocates and opponents of the bill. It must be stressed that this was not a debate in which the general public in any way took part. It took place mostly between R.A. Fitt,

⁷² *Otago Daily Times*, 21 August, p. 13. Professor Anderson was with Professor Fitt, a witness at the commission of inquiry. He was, again with Professor Fitt, a vehement opponent of much of the bill. W.H. Triggs 1855-1934, who started life as a journalist, was a member of the Legislative Council from 1918.

⁷³ *Dominion*, 27 August 1928, p. 15, 30 August 1928, page 9.

⁷⁴ *Otago Daily Times*, 31 August, p.10.

⁷⁵ Thomson, p. 29ff., Ryan, P.J., *Unnatural Selection: Intelligence Testing, Eugenics and American Political Cultures*, *Journal of Social History*, 30, 3, Spring 1997, p.669 – 85, p678f.

Professor of Education at Auckland University College,⁷⁶ with W. Anderson, Professor of Philosophy at the same institution; and W. H. Triggs, chairman of the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders. Neither were any of the other contributors to this debate members of the general public, for they tended to be academics or educators. The debate suggests two things, firstly that some form of scientific debate similar to that overseas was taking place in New Zealand, and secondly that this debate was possibly taking place between those whom actually worked in the mental health system who tended to favour eugenics, and those outside the system, that did not.

In this newspaper debate there are also indications of the typical ambiguous relationship between eugenics and its critics. Professor Fitt was aware that there was a "... biological side..." to the problem,⁷⁷ and seemed to accept quite a lot of contribution to mental deficiency from nature rather than nurture. He quoted the old case of the Jukes,⁷⁸ suggesting that the environment brought out their latent genetic problems. He did however have some fairly trenchant criticisms of the science that the bill was based on. His main objection was that there was not adequate scientific knowledge as yet, on the measurement of mental deficiency, or enough work on interpreting the causes of mental deficiency. He quite rightly criticised Triggs' reliance on case studies as evidence in this area, and called this a bill for "... the fervent hopes of social workers, eugenicists and others".⁷⁹

Fitt obviously felt that evidence was gathered in a biased fashion, because the government had already made up its mind on the issue.⁸⁰ As a psychologist he believed that the psychiatrists who were to be put in charge of the classification of mental defectives were not properly competent to do so. He thought that scientific

⁷⁶ Professor Fitt also had qualifications in experimental psychology.

⁷⁷ *New Zealand Herald*, 24 July, p. 11.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 11.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p. 11.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p. 11.

testing should be used instead of the method that was about to be adopted, which was to use the intuition of the psychiatrist in charge of the classification board.

Triggs, defending the government's position on the bill, stressed typical eugenic ideas about the "... unrestricted multiplication..."⁸¹ of the unfit, and its cost to the taxpayer. He also suggested that society could not delay until "... psychologists have made up their minds as to what is a perfect solution of the problem."⁸²

This debate continued into September, in the form of letters and articles from the main protagonists and others, including the Controller of Prisons B.L. Dallard,⁸³ and a group of Auckland academics, and educationalists, including the headmaster of Kings College.⁸⁴ Triggs was attacked by the latter, both on scientific and ethical grounds, and replied on 4 September to this and other criticisms, claiming disingenuousness on the part of his critics.⁸⁵ The Aucklanders accused him in their turn, of bias and rudeness.⁸⁶ If as Fleming says, a large number of academics were sympathetic to or members of the Eugenic Society,⁸⁷ there were also some few willing to put their name to a letter criticising its ideas.

There are also contributions to the newspaper debate from social worker organisations, which seemed to have had mixed feelings, but would be more able to accept the bill if more social workers were represented on the classification board. The Education Department rather than the Department of Mental Hospitals should, in their eyes, have controlled the mobile clinic which was to assess schoolchildren for mental defect.⁸⁸ Again this possibly indicates friction between those involved in education and those in charge of the incarceration of patients. The Auckland Council

⁸¹ *ibid.*, 23 July, p. 11

⁸² *ibid.*, p. 11

⁸³ *ibid.*, 30 August, p. 11.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, 27 August, p. 11.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, 4 September, p. 14.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, 5 September, p. 14.

⁸⁷ For a discussion of the membership of the New Zealand Eugenics society see Fleming page 17ff.

of Christian Congregations urged caution,⁸⁹ although this is not reflected in the specialised Protestant publications as no published articles on this subject were found in those.

There are a few individual and group letters, contributing to this debate, one from the ubiquitous Ms Baughan. These other contributors hardly seem members of the general public. Apart from A. S. Wilson who claimed to have been a mental patient, they seem to be typical of the groups of people who became involved in eugenics, members of the medical profession, or people engaged in melioration.

Towards the end of September, when the bill was again being debated there was another rash of letters and articles. Again these were confined to members of the academic and bureaucratic establishments. A new name appeared, that of Doctor Ada Paterson, the Director of School Hygiene. She quite firmly drew the line between academics, and those " ... witnesses who had had experience of the problem, both educational and socially... ",⁹⁰ among whom she presumably included herself.

More interesting however is a very long letter, written by A.B. Fitt and W. Anderson on behalf of the "Auckland Committee to Watch the Progress of the Mental Defectives Bill" which seems to reinforce the idea of antagonism between officials and some academics. The letter castigated Doctor Paterson for attacking critics of the bill while being a government official. It went on to say "We feel that the attitude of Doctor Paterson's amply justifies the fears we have expressed as to the high handed proceedings to be expected of the officials who would be appointed to carry out the provisions of a measure such as this point".⁹¹ The debate had obviously become heated.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, 27 August, p.11.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, 30 August, p. 11.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 20 September p. 17.

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p. 14.

Later in the letter some indication is given of not only the heat, but also the gap between the two sides' opinions. Professors Fitt and Anderson state:

That those who call attention to the scientific and moral futility of these (*i.e. the registration, segregation, and sterilisation of mental deficient*s) the fundamental provisions of the bill, should, by implication, be accused of lack of interest in, or obstruction to, measures for the care of such unfortunate, is a piece of gross misrepresentation and suppression of fact to which we have unfortunately become only too well used at the hands of the defenders of this bill. Doctor Paterson states that all the witnesses with 'experience of the problem' were in favour of the bill. The main provisions of the bill are based on theories about heredity and of the possibilities of race improvement by certain 'eugenic' methods, which have not only been shown to be unsound, but on which the only possible authorities are scientific students of heredity or of the ethical conditions of social life. On these questions the unsupported opinions of 'practical social workers' are worthless⁹²

This criticism also occurred in the *Auckland Star*, where Professor Anderson in a series of articles attacked both the science of eugenics and the bill itself. In the first of these he quoted Walter Lippmann,⁹³ the New York columnist and intellectual, who pointed out environmental and cultural flaws in the American army IQ testing programme, which was used to bolster the bill.⁹⁴ He also quoted T. H. Morgan, described by Paul as "... the most prominent critic of the eugenicists...".⁹⁵ In a later article Anderson specifically criticised deficiencies in the bill, particularly those of definition. He suggested that it was based on a British act, which he claimed has broken down because of disputes over how to judge who is mentally deficient.⁹⁶

This debate did to some extent overshadow the other issues debated at the time, but it was present only in the Auckland newspapers, and presumably the result of the passion of the people involved. All this failed to capture the imagination of the general public, which stubbornly refused to get involved, even to the extent of the daylight saving or roading questions. In fact Professor Anderson attracted much more interest by way of letters when he wrote to the *Star* defending Chinese

⁹² *ibid.*, p. 14.

⁹³ Kevles, *Name*, p. 129 - 130.

⁹⁴ *Auckland Star*, 1 September 1928, p. 20.

⁹⁵ Paul, *Heredity*, p. 117.

⁹⁶ *Auckland Star*, 13 September 1928, p.20.

immigration, which prompted a number of quite heated replies on either side of this controversy.⁹⁷

Evidence given to the New Zealand Committee of Inquiry also supports the idea of deep divisions on some aspects of eugenics between the two sides, revealed in the newspapers. The two academic biologists consulted are both supporters of the inheritance of mental deficiency, if not eugenic sympathisers. The others, mostly non-academics, teachers, headmasters, probation officers, doctors, nurses, religious, and others were overwhelmingly of the opinion that mental deficiency is hereditary, that it is easily identified, and that people with this problem should be segregated and/or sterilised if not desexed.

Of those that supported Fitt and Anderson, one was Professor J. S. Tennant, Professor of Education at Victoria University College, and the other was Professor James Shelley, Professor of Education at Canterbury University College. This gives another indication of the possible nature of the split, that is between psychologists and educators on the one hand and biologists and those who worked within the prison, court, and mental hospital systems on the other. However the public debate at least abruptly ceased once the bill had been passed in its amended form.

One might have expected a great deal of opposition in the organ of the Catholic Church, the *New Zealand Tablet*. The overseas literature does mention marked Catholic opposition to sterilisation and to eugenics in general, in Britain, the United States, and South and Central America.⁹⁸ In December 1930 Pius XI issued an anti-eugenic bull, *Casti Connubii* which prohibited eugenics, among other things for being against Catholic principles. Certainly, Catholic hostility in Britain as noted by Thomson seemed both widespread and well organised.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, 3 September, p. 6, also 4 September p. 6.

⁹⁸ Thomson, p. 68 f, Kevles, *Name*, p. 118 – 9, Stepan, p. 112 f.

⁹⁹ Thomson, p. 68.

Opposition of the Catholic Church to eugenics is also mentioned in Fleming,¹⁰⁰ and while this is in the main true, the Church's attitude is not as markedly opposed as one might expect. Neither coverage in the *Tablet* nor comment in secular newspapers occurred as frequently as might be expected. Opposition existed mainly to the clauses on sterilisation and the prohibition of marriages although there was some comment about eugenics in general. There is however some evidence that the Church also accepted some of the tenets of eugenics, both in its newspaper coverage and in the evidence given to the Committee of Inquiry.

The only substantial coverage in the *Tablet* occurs on three occasions. The Church did not restrict itself to moral arguments but also investigated the science behind the bill. On 25 July 1928 there was an editorial condemning the bill on both ethical and on scientific grounds. This editorial used strong language to condemn the bill, maintaining that it was a "... stockyard school of morality".¹⁰¹ It equated the 'mutilation' associated with sterilisation with murder, and wondered if voluntary sterilisation would not soon give way to compulsory euthanasia. It also condemned the lack of scientific evidence about the differential birthrate, and heritability of mental deficiency.

There was an article in the same issue, which criticised the state's efforts to punish the morally innocent.¹⁰² On 1 August 1928 there was reportage of the debate in the House, which quoted Holland at some length. There was also an article containing the text of Archbishop Redwood's speech, taken from the *Dunedin Evening Star*.¹⁰³ There was reference to the "... enormity..." of this bill on the 26 September, after the bill had been amended, but prior to its final amendments.

There were at the same time, references in the paper to the commonly held perception of problem with the increase in degeneracy in society, an idea also held

¹⁰⁰Fleming, p.55ff.

¹⁰¹*New Zealand Tablet*, 25 July 1928, p. 3.

¹⁰²*ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁰³*ibid.*, 1 August 1928, p. 42.

by eugenists. An article on 11 July talked at length about the "... prevalence of unnatural crimes..." and the general "...decay..." in society leading to the need to increase the "standard of intelligence".¹⁰⁴ This would seem to be sign that the Church itself was not immune to the moral panic of the day, or less than receptive to some eugenic ideas. The ambiguity is reinforced by evidence given to the commission of inquiry by Father McGrath, on behalf of Archbishop O'Shea, who seemed to leave open the possibility of sterilisation.¹⁰⁵ The Church's opposition to sterilisation and the prohibition of marriages was not nearly as clear-cut as might be expected.

Catholic comment was sometimes quite positive regarding eugenics as such, and seemed to accept the general idea of race improvement. Archbishop Redwood said "The Catholic Church... does not blame any reasonable efforts to improve the race provided such efforts will be on the right lines...".¹⁰⁶ The words "race suicide" were sometimes used, with reference to declining fertility. There was also a reference in an article from the previous issue, which claimed that there are right and wrong ways to "...approach these studies...",¹⁰⁷ and that in Belgium priests were helping the "... official society for the pursuit of these investigations...".¹⁰⁸ All of this suggests a certain acceptance of general eugenic practice by the Church hierarchy, at least when it was not attacking sterilisation or prohibition of marriage. Evidence of the reasons for this seemingly contradictory attitude could not be found.

This would seem to be the sum total of the *Tablet's* reference to the Mental Defectives Amendment Bill. Admittedly, there was in that year a Catholic Eucharistic conference being held in Sydney. Much space was devoted to this at the expense of other features. However, if column inches are any indication of the

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, 11 July 1928, p. 6.

¹⁰⁵ Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, Evidence, H. 3, 3/13, evidence of Kevin Izod McGrath, p. 93ff, NA.

¹⁰⁶ *New Zealand Tablet*, 1 August 1928, p. 42.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, 25 July, p. 5.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p. 5.

importance of a topic to a paper's editorial staff and readership, Catholics were far more concerned with the possibility of prohibition than with sterilisation. Not only were more column inches devoted to prohibition, but large and regular advertisements were taken out in the paper opposing it. The Church did warn its members about voting for "... bigots or fanatics..."¹⁰⁹ in the forthcoming election, and gave them several warnings about voting carefully, but the warnings were deliberately ambiguous and could refer equally to the dangers of sterilisation, prohibition, or socialism.

Another group that might be expected to oppose eugenics and sterilisation would be the left, specifically the trade union movement. Much is made in many sources of opposition from this area. However as with the intellectual opposition to eugenics, so the political opposition seems to have been ambivalent. In Britain for instance, the labour movement in its various guises both supported and opposed eugenics and sterilisation.¹¹⁰

If any conclusion can be drawn about the New Zealand left it would be that it was more united, at least against the controversial aspects of this bill, but like the Catholic Church, accepted some eugenic practices and beliefs. The Parliamentary Labour Party seemed united in its opposition to sterilisation, a unity not shown in Britain. Thomson ascribes the British attitude to the middle-class backgrounds of some British Labour MPs, and a feeling among some that sterilisation was progressive, a method of applying science to social problems, and opposed by many religious moralists.¹¹¹ The "progressive" nature of sterilisation seems to have escaped the New Zealand Labour Party and the union movement.¹¹² Certainly, Fraser had investigated the science and thought it by no means proven.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, 10 October 1928, pp. 3 and 5.

¹¹⁰ Thomson, p. 64 ff.

¹¹¹ Thomson, p. 62.

The union movement, if we are to judge by its organ *The New Zealand Worker*, was definitely against sterilisation, but more tellingly against the definition of social defective as put forward in the bill. On 25 July there was an editorial that gives a clue as to why labour should oppose aspects of the bill. It described some of these as "...positively dangerous...", going on to explain that the definition of social defective could include members of trade unions and political activists. Sterilisation was characterised as an "...abomination..." due to the lack of certainty about the laws of heredity.¹¹³

On 1 August, though, there was a letter from the J.E. Howard, Labour member for Christchurch South, which showed typical acceptance of some eugenics ideas among its critics. The member agreed that the eugenics board should be set up, but stressed the advantages of environment.¹¹⁴ In the issue of 8 August there was a long article in which the bill was analysed by H. G. R. Mason, the Labour member for Eden. He tended to attack the idea of eugenics rather than just the controversial clauses, showing a grasp of the subject equal to Fraser's.

Other contributions later include a letter by Professor Anderson,¹¹⁵ and an article by T. Bloodworth, a prominent trade unionist, linking the bill to historical schemes to get rid of the poor rather than the causes of poverty.¹¹⁶ It may be co-incidence, but there are also several articles of an environmentalist nature on health. One of these is by Truby King,¹¹⁷ and there is another on backward children from the Department of Health.¹¹⁸ There are two other brief mentions of the bill where the Labour Party claims the credit for substantially altering its final form.¹¹⁹ Certainly this paper was

¹¹² The *Maoriland Worker* was happy to have sexual offenders sterilised or otherwise operated on, but not necessarily on the grounds that their affliction may be inherited. *Maoriland Worker*, 15 December 1920, p. 1

¹¹³ *The New Zealand Worker*, 25 July 1928, page 4.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, 1 August 1928, p. 4.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, 22 August 1928, p. 8

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, 12 September 1928, p. 4.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, 26 September 1928, p. 2.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, 8 August 1928, p. 16.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, 3 October, p. 1, 31 October, p. 3.

one of the few that devoted more space to eugenics than to the summertime or prohibition bills. The articles about the Mental Deficients Amendment Bill tended to be both substantial in size, and serious and detailed in nature.

The attitude of the Protestant churches also bears examination to see if they supported this type of eugenic legislation. The role of the Protestant churches overseas does not seem to have been clear-cut. In Britain and America elements of the Protestant churches both supported and condemned eugenics at different times, and for different reasons.¹²⁰ Dean Inge of St. Paul's for instance was a well-known British advocate of eugenics. In Germany however, according to Kuhl, the Protestant churches were active supporters of eugenics.¹²¹ In New Zealand Protestant churches' opinions about eugenics or the bill are not made obvious by reading the official Protestant press. In fact in those papers studied, no mention of these topics could be found. Neither were the opinions of their parishioners reflected in editors' letter pages, in that no letters about eugenics or the bill were found in any Protestant publication. Every major Protestant church however, did ask for a copy of the committee of inquiry's report.

The official organ of the New Zealand Presbyterian Church, the *Outlook* does not seem to have discovered either eugenics or the Mental Defectives Amendment Bill. A perusal of other Protestant publications leads to similar conclusions. The *New Zealand Baptist* also contains nothing about eugenics or the bill. It does however contain articles about the other issues of the day, such as compulsory military training, and prohibition. In fact, as with the Catholics, the Presbyterians and Baptists seem much more concerned with prohibition than eugenics, albeit from a different perspective. The Anglican paper *The New Zealand Church and People* had nothing to say about this bill, although the Anglican Archbishop, Averill is said to

¹²⁰ Kevles, *Name*, p. 118.

¹²¹ Kuhl, p.XIII.

have criticised it on several occasions.¹²²

What is evident from the opposition of the Catholic Church and the left is that, although comment in the *New Zealand Tablet* could be considered a little muted compared to that on other issues. Both papers took considerably more interest in the Mental Defectives Amendment Bill than in the previous Mental Deficients Bill. There would seem to be no great opposition to eugenics in general, even with respect to the former bill, but particular and specific opposition to those clauses in the latter bill that had direct reference to self-interest, or to religious concern. These concerns are certainly supported in some cases by well thought out scientific and ethical arguments.

Bishop Redwood's comments tend to reinforce this idea so far as it related to the Catholic Church. It is difficult to tell exactly how much eugenics he accepted, but he and the Church were obviously happy to accommodate some of the ideas about racial degeneration and some of the solutions to them, as long as they did not conflict with Catholic beliefs about marriage and procreation.

Similarly the *Maoriland Worker* is happy to print an article accepting of aspects of eugenics, but is particularly opposed to those parts of the bill which are seen as a threat to its constituency. It would seem again that the general idea of trying to improve the race, or to solve the problem presented by the 'proliferation' of mental defect is not a huge issue with the left, but the threat of being labeled a social defective, and of possibly being sterilised because of it, certainly was.

The Protestant journals present somewhat of a problem in that Fleming notes ministers of religion, presumably Protestant as an "... important component of the

¹²² Robertson, p.119. Averill himself seems to have been a little ambiguous in his attitude as he is quoted in a letter from Triggs to the Minister of Health as supporting "drastic" action with regard to "sexual perverts", but again not necessarily to prevent them from passing on their propensity to offend genetically. H. 1, 54/79/1, N.A.

movement...".¹²³ If this is so, their eugenic beliefs were not expressed to any extent in the official church publications, although the churches and indeed some individuals had asked for copies of the commission of inquiry's report.¹²⁴ Fleming may have gained this idea from the evidence given to the committee of inquiry, where much evidence was given by religious of one sort or another. It should be remembered however, that many of these were active in dealing with people with mental defect, working for melioration agencies. (Many clerics seemed to be involved in areas of social work, such as probation, or youth work.) Their evidence would not reflect all Protestant clergy any more than that of the scientists working in various institutions would reflect that of scientists in general. Fleming does not seem to have investigated the Protestant press in any great detail.

Again, it is as instructive to look at the scientific journals' comments on the Mental Defectives Amendment Act as it was on the earlier Mental Defectives Act. These by no means reflect the evidence given to the commission of inquiry by doctors or scientists, which was with some exceptions wholly in favour of even the most controversial clauses of the Act. The *New Zealand Medical Journal* reflects rather more the answers to questionnaires sent out by the committee to all the doctors in the country, which tend to be rather a mixed bag. (It must be remembered of course, that almost all the doctors who gave evidence before the committee were connected to some sort of institution, rather than being GPs.)

The *New Zealand Medical Journal* does contain a reasonable amount of eugenically influenced material. Some of this coincides with the debate on the act and its preceding investigations. There is enough material to show that the *Journal* and its contributors were at least aware of not only the general population fears such as the increase in mental deficiency, but also of eugenics and its more specific applications.

¹²³ Fleming, p.76. Evidence of Protestant religious to the commission of inquiry however tended to be heavily in favour of both the inheritance of mental defect and sterilisation. This was mostly from those who worked with sexual offenders and the mentally deficient.

¹²⁴ e.g. letter from R.A. MacDonald, letter from Rev. Percy Revell, H1 54/79/1, N.A.

Stoddart's¹³³ great book 'The Revolt Against Civilization' ".¹³⁴ The unfit were referred to as "...weeds...",¹³⁵ a fairly common agricultural eugenic metaphor.

In the same issue there was an article entitled 'The Magnitude of the Mental Hygiene Problem in New Zealand' in which the author used statistics to show the extent of the problem in New Zealand. He also quoted figures from the New York juvenile courts, and Sing Sing prison to associate mental deficiency with crime,¹³⁶ a common eugenic belief of the time.

There are enough passing references in other volumes at about this time to show that at least among some of the medical community, the control, and prevention of proliferation of mental defectives by means of eugenic methods was an important issue.¹³⁷ There was also a general belief in those moved to write about this that there was a definite problem, and that something should be done about it. Approaches to the problem however were generally cautious about the science behind eugenics, and tend to be against sterilisation, similar to the approach taken by the *British Medical Journal* at this time.

The *Transactions of the New Zealand Institute* certainly had nothing to say about the science surrounding this issue which is intriguing as many other people made such a point of it. However though this may be due to the institute ceasing to print articles of a medical nature, one might wonder, why eugenics was not perhaps assigned to the anthropology or biology sections. *The New Zealand Journal of Science and Technology* also contains nothing in the way of articles of eugenic nature, although

¹³³ Presumed to refer to Lowthrop Stoddard, *The Revolt Against Civilization: The Menace of the Under Man*, Scribner's, 1922.

¹³⁴ *NZMJ*, vol. 126, no.136, p. 268.

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 268.

¹³⁶ S. Moore, "The Magnitude of the Mental Hygiene Problem in New Zealand", *ibid.*, p. 256 -- 9.

¹³⁷ See *NZMJ*, vol. 24, no. 121, p. 172, no.123, p. 313 vol. 26, no.131, p. 34 -- 6.

there is at least one article about sexual delinquency, in which eugenics might have been expected to have a mention.¹³⁸

Some interesting points arise from comparison of the bills dealing with mental defect in 1911 and 1928. First and most important is that the language of eugenics permeated the parliamentary debates in both cases, and there was widespread acceptance of eugenic ideas both within and outside of Parliament. However, either eugenics was less acceptable to many by the time of the 1928 bill, or the arguments against eugenics were used as ammunition in the opposition to the controversial clauses of the Mental Defectives Amendment Act. In the course of the 1928 debates, much is said about eugenics, both pro and con, whereas in 1911 there is fairly general acceptance of eugenic ideas.

Second, it is obvious that although eugenic beliefs were common in some sections of society, at least in relation to the 1928 bill some thought had been given to a reasonably structured, thoughtful philosophical opposition to eugenics using the results of overseas and New Zealand research. Although considering that this opposition was not applied to the original Mental Defectives Bill, it could be suggested that some of this opposition was adopted because of an antipathy to those particular clauses rather than deeply rooted opposition to eugenics. Particularly as some of the critics of eugenics seem to accept broad eugenic ideas about degeneracy, the need to improve intelligence and so on.

Third, public reaction to both these bills was, minimal as far as can be seen. The eugenic aspects of the bills could hardly be said on the evidence above to have caught the imagination of the general public. There was no "Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells" in the letter pages, and very little debate on the issues concerned. What is surprising is that other topics, such as summertime, religion in schools, life after death, and a number of others sparked some reaction from the general public and in

¹³⁸ E.P. Neale, "A New Zealand Study in Sex Delinquency", *New Zealand Journal of Science and Technology*, May 1924, p. 19 -- 24.

Conclusion

This in-depth study of the public discourse on these particular pieces of legislation was intended to investigate the impact of eugenics on legislation where it might have been expected and its impact on public sphere debate. Perhaps the main point arising from this study would be that eugenics did not necessarily influence the chosen legislation at all, even though overseas experience has suggested that it could have done so here. The 1911 Act indicates a certain uncritical acceptance of eugenic ideas with relation to the mentally deficient, the others, the acts about immigration, family allowances, and particularly the Mental Defectives Amendment Act, for reasons of indifference or opposition, show much less. Overseas experience however, has shown that these areas of social legislation; have all shown quite marked eugenic influence in Northern Europe and North America.

Eugenics is generally credited for instance, with some influence on United States immigration legislation. It would seem that in this respect, in spite of a similar antipathy towards certain types of migrants, this country's legislators did not take advantage of American eugenic arguments against their entry into this country. There was, in the debates surrounding the immigration issue in this country, a complete lack of reference to any eugenic material which was nevertheless available from the United States and used to support eugenic arguments in other legislation. That the issue was important to many people is beyond doubt. The existence of the legislation and the constant references in the newspapers show this. It seems to have been of particular importance to returned servicemen, who saw Asians as economic competition. On the whole, however, while racist arguments and language were used to oppose Asian migration, eugenics, while able to give scientific legitimacy to anti-Asian sentiment, was nowhere used, despite its availability and its ability to give scientific legitimacy to anti-Asian sentiment.

The fact that the migration of Asians to New Zealand was nowhere near the scale of "undesirable" migration to the U.S., in the hundreds rather than in the millions per

year, probably accounts for the lack of influence of eugenics on immigration legislation. It does not necessarily account for the almost total failure to use American eugenically influenced literature as evidence against Asian migration. This is a question that has remained unanswered, at least by this thesis.

The answer could be, and this of course is speculation, that immigration legislation was so uncontroversial that evidence to support it was not needed. (although a little non-eugenic anti-Asian evidence was presented in Parliament.) Certainly, almost everyone who expressed an opinion on this issue, both in and out of Parliament, was in favour of restricting the rights of Asians to migrate to New Zealand. (Also the public debate was so uninhibited, it would seem that eugenics was not needed to screen anti-Asian sentiment.) The New Zealand arguments against Asian migration tended to be economic, social, and emotional, rather than eugenic. It is also true that overseas anti-migration evidence was used in the debate surrounding other bills used for this work, by those who both supported and opposed eugenics. However, the reasons for leaving eugenic arguments out of the available arsenal remain obscure from the evidence available for this thesis.

Similarly, it seems eugenics did not much influence the legislation on child allowances, which most eugenic sympathisers must have considered blatantly dysgenic. What is interesting is not so much that eugenics ideas failed to influence the legislation, but that so little opposition to this sort of indiscriminate melioration was registered either in Parliament, the press, or relevant journals. With a few notable exceptions, the opposition to family allowances came from those who resented its charitable nature, and those who thought the amount was derisory.

This perhaps shows the melioration of eugenics ideas in response to a difficult problem. In Britain and the United States, the problem of the reproduction of the unfit tended to be eventually subsumed by the general principle that it was better for the race to give a certain quality of life to those unfortunate enough to be living in poverty, on the assumption that the environment was at least responsible for some of

their unfitness. A fear of being swamped by less civilised, more fertile races also existed to which New Zealanders were not immune. However in Britain, the United States, and Germany, there were attempts at least to suggest eugenic solutions to this problem, which were largely absent in this country.

The two bills about mental defect well illustrate that eugenic influence was present in certain types of legislation. This is not surprising as the theme of the genetic inheritance of mental defect and prolific nature of those suffering from it was central to eugenic thought. In the Mental Defectives Bill of 1911, eugenics permeates the whole of the debate in Parliament. There is broad acceptance in the newspaper coverage of the perceived problem of the increase in those suffering from mental defect, that mental defect is probably inherited, and that something should be done to prevent its spread. The Bill was presented at least partially, as a solution to this problem, as mental defectives once classified would be segregated.

The Mental Defectives Amendment Bill of 1928 was certainly a fairly extreme piece of eugenic legislation. Unlike the 1911 Bill it struck much opposition almost certainly because the eugenic aspects had gone too far for many. This may also reflect the growth of overseas scientific criticism of eugenic ideas, and opponents of the Bill used these criticisms with telling effect.

The Mental Defectives Amendment Bill not only created similar reactions to the original amongst all the relevant groups, but also sparked off an intense debate among the political and intellectual elite of this country about some of the more controversial aspects of eugenics, later applied in Germany and Scandinavia. The opposition to various aspects of the Bill, coming from the Catholic Church, the Union Movement, and academic psychologists, was illustrative of the emotions which were aroused by the threat that some felt from particular eugenic ideas, and the lack of scientific backing for them. It also shows that opposition from some of those in academia is reflected in the overseas experience, particularly that of Britain.

Opposition however did not grow in a neat curve, if it had one would have expected more in 1926. The lack of opposition to eugenics in some of the case studies, and the vigorous opposition in the case of the Mental Defectives Amendment Act, shows that it is almost certainly driven by issues, rather than reflecting the growing opposition to eugenics as such.

The acceptance of some eugenic ideas by those opposed to a eugenic view reflects overseas experience. In particular they were worried about racial degeneration, and tended to accept that there was the genetic component in mental defect, including mental illness. However the local Catholic Church seems to have been at odds with expectations generated by studies abroad, which assume a monolithic antipathetic response. It may be that detailed study of Catholic reaction to eugenics has not been done, but at the very least the Catholic Church in New Zealand accepted that there was a problem of racial degeneration, and may have left open the door for sterilisation. The New Zealand union movement seems to have been if anything more united than its British counterparts in its opposition to those aspects of eugenics which threatened its members, while accepting at least part of eugenic argument. However, the extent to which some eugenic ideas were accepted, even amongst its fiercest critics, is a little surprising. It shows that not even they were unaffected by folk belief, a misplaced respect for the science involved, or simply moral panic.

The reaction of the medical and scientific establishments to eugenics ideas was often supportive although there was opposition from psychologists and some educators, (who usually had some common ground with those who they were criticising.) What is most surprising about the academic reaction is that very little of this was captured in what few academic journals were in New Zealand at the time. What was brought out, notably in the *New Zealand Medical Journal* was a certain caution, not just about the more extreme ideas such as sterilisation, but also about the science upon which eugenics was based. This may reflect the fact that most support for eugenics ideas seem to come from those scientists either involved in the biological

sciences, or in the incarceration, classification, and to some extent treatment of those with mental defect. Other journals had little or nothing to say on the subject of eugenics, which is interesting considering the controversy it caused within the scientific establishment in 1928.

The general public seems to have been unaware or uninterested in eugenic ideas if letters to the editor were an indication of how they felt. Other issues, such as daylight saving, prohibition, the purity of milk, and the resurfacing of roads certainly stirred up much more of a public debate and the combined issues of mental defect and eugenics. Few letters could be found written by uninterested parties on any of the legislation in this study, except on the topic of immigration, and of those that were found very few mention eugenics at all, even for the most controversial of the bills.

In terms of the themes that were produced by the overseas literature, not all were apparent in New Zealand. The themes of eugenics and its relationship to World War I and to women, in particular did not arise. While the appearance or nonappearance of themes, naturally may be a result of the choices of case studies, at least one of these themes were expected to crop up in relation to child allowances, where the losses incurred in World War I might have been mentioned. In the debates surrounding the legislation on mental defect in 1928 women did take some part on both sides, but apart from Ms Baughan, few prominent women eugenicists emerged in the debates surrounding these bills. Those that did tended to be working in the area of mental defect. There was also very little Maori dimension, for there was little or no mention of Maori in relation to eugenics at all. Why this should be so, while interesting remains largely unanswered on the evidence found in these case studies.

Comparisons with Britain, the United States, and Europe invite speculation, particularly on the influence of New Zealand's sterilisation legislation on Germany. The timing of the legislation, and the interest shown by Berlin could well be illustrative. That eugenics could influence the introduction of legislation in this

country without a formal lobbying organisation, contrasts with most of the rest of the world, where these existed, and were very active. However the actual influence of eugenic ideas on social legislation as shown by these case studies is certainly insubstantial and sporadic, similar to the British experience, but somewhat different to the American, Scandinavian or German. The New Zealand experience seems to have been a moderate acceptance of certain eugenic principles among the influential, but only up to a point. The issues that established how far eugenics ideas would be allowed to influence this country were obviously those associated with the more extreme proposals for the 1928 Mental Deficients Amendment Bill. It was here that opposition crystallised, showing that eugenic ideas could go so far but no further.

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