

30 October 1930.

Maj. L. Darwin, B.C.D.,
Cripps's Corner,
Forest Row,
Sussex.

Dear Major Darwin,

Thanks for your letter and enclosures; I will only answer now some points of your letter.

I think I agree with your view entirely that family allowances will tend ultimately though perhaps very slowly to exert a direct effect towards increasing fertility in all classes. As you know I also believe that ultimately though slowly it will increase the innate fertility of the well-to-do, and diminish that of the poorer classes. At what point these ultimate effects would balance, if at any point, must depend on a host of different circumstances. What I want to say now is that the effect I am inclined to stress about prudence is a much more immediate one, though a permanent one, to be considered in relation to the initial changes introduced by family allowances.

The general economic prudential motive for birth limitation is I believe wholly dysgenic in its effects, but there are prudential motives which I think are eugenic. Most notably concern for the health of the potential mother. These motives are, I believe, at present much more active and effective among

the well-to-do than among the poor. This contrast is dysgenic, although within each class the action is beneficial. I submit that family allowances would greatly affect the poor, not perhaps much in prudence as you use the term, but in a greater sensitive-ness to small differences ^{in comfort} and standard of living, and thus introduce a definitely eugenic motive for birth limitation among the poor, and abolish largely or wholly the dysgenic contrast between the effectiveness of these motives among the poor as contrasted with the well-to-do. This is all quite distinct from any general, and I believe much slower effect upon the general fertility of different classes.

The important contrast in this respect is between the more and the less healthy; but I believe a beneficial effect would also supervene as between the more or less competent. No one doubts that the management of a family makes calls on general competence, and I cannot doubt personally that the difference in standard of living between couples at different levels of competence is much greater when there is a family than when there is none. If that is so, and family allowances were paid at a rate which on the average allowed an equal standard of living to parents and non-parents, it follows that the standard of living of the competent will rise, and that of the incompetent will fall with increasing size of family; this supplies a generally eugenic motive which would become effective among the great mass of the population, if they were at all keenly sensitive to differences

in standard of living.

I do not object in theory to discussing such proposals as that before the Trades Union Congress, although I am opposed to them. What I do feel is that if the idea of family allowances is introduced to the English public as a political means of catching votes by relieving poverty out of taxation, then we have lost the first round. Perhaps it is inevitable that we should lose this round, but you must excuse me for fighting against it. What I fear is that both its supporters and its opponents will be prejudiced against its proper uses. If on the contrary a non-class scheme could be made familiar to the public in the first instance, it would have done much to prevent the adoption, or even the advocacy, of the more ignorant and ineffective variants.

It is insurance which deals inadequately with those rising or falling in the social scale. Either State or occupational schemes seem to meet here with no difficulty. Consider a group of 10,000 people drawing salaries of from £200 to £2,000 a year; you could pay them family allowances with a fixed percentage increment for each child, by three operations.

(a) To the nominal salary of each worker, which depends only on the supposed value of his work, add 12 per cent. for each child under 21.

(b) Add up the nominal salaries and also the enhanced salaries of the whole pool, and express the former total as a percentage of the latter, (say 90.12 per cent.).

(c) Pay all workers this percentage, determined annually or half yearly, of their enhanced salaries. Institutions which then pay more than the total of their nominal salaries draw ~~from~~ the balance from the pool; while those which pay less pay into the pool.

The percentage will fluctuate, but very little from year to year. It will tend to fall if the birth rate rises, or becomes more equal in different grades; it will also change annually according to the age distribution of the employed, rising when many young appointments are made.

Promotion ^{and} or demotion work~~s~~ automatically to carry with ^{them} ~~it~~ the appropriate standard of living for the whole family.

Such an arrangement might be established, without any State action, by such bodies as the University^{ies}, and the only obstacle I can see to their doing so is the prejudice of their teaching staffs.

About birth rates: Stevenson does make them more equal in the past, though his data ^{are} is not good enough to bear the conclusion. This, is, however, quite consistent with a simultaneous fall in birth rate. It only implies that the fall in the upper class has been the more rapid. The peerage may really have been earlier; I have no data for or against. The fall in the body of the people in Census and Registration seems to have been, as near as our foggy data go, quite simultaneous.

Yours sincerely,