

You asked me to return this.

I have slightly corrected it. J.D. Oct. 1903

Cripps's Corner. Forest Row. Sussex

Aug 4 - 30

My dear Fisher.

Here are my first inducive thoughts on the very difficult psychological problem which you set me. I agree that anything which makes the future more clearly foreseen, also makes for rational conduct; and that family allowances (f.a.) will have some effect in this direction. This is an immediate beneficial result which I had not thought of.

In trying to estimate the effects of f.a., it seems to me legitimate to consider them in two stages; 1st the immediate results before any psychological effects of custom have been produced, & 2nd all the secondary results arising from psychological and other ^{subsequent} changes. Now I see no reason whatever why the sudden introduction of f.a. should reduce the size of families, and good reasons for anticipating some increase. And this increase will be greater in proportion to the forethought of the individual - a beneficial differential result tending to obliterate the existing differential birth rate.

Passing on to the second stage, the psychological changes due to f.a. will tend to make all be more guided by future consequences in the way you suggest. But again this result will be

proportional to the powers of forethought of the individual. Will it not tend to reestablish the previous differential birth rate in some measure? Or conceivably even to increase it?

But under what circumstances will these prudential considerations make for fewer children as assumed above? It will do so when an increase in the family would be felt to be injurious in spite of f.a. It would do so when a larger family would create discomfort. It is not ^{so} certain that bad housing accommodation would ~~have~~ ^{be accompanied by} this effect, because the increased ^(due to a larger family) allowances might make for better accommodation. And if the f.a. was on a flat rate, the ^{lower} ~~power~~ the wages, the more likely would the allowance be to make for better accommodation. F.a. would ^(or might) have the beneficial effect, ^{in question (in reducing families)} when poverty was due to bodily ailments, accidents, or out of employment; this being a very valuable result on the whole.

Forethought will be increased ^(by f.a.) all round, but it will be increased in proportion to the innate power of forethought. Here I want to put in what may be irrelevant. Supposing that average rational considerations as to future prospects really point to two children as the largest family conducive to ^{immediat} well being, will not such rational

. eg when poverty was due to an accident

Considerations always tend to stamp out by selecting the innate powers on which they are founded? That is, if rational considerations are only so far developed as to take account of individual and not of racial results. Again can we rely on ^{such} rational considerations to outweigh the instincts making for procreation? And, if they do, is the result certain to be beneficial?

I believe that the fall in the birth rate has been largely due to an increase in social ambition, this increase being due to greater opportunities for promotion and greater knowledge about the lives of those in ^{the} higher social strata. I fear that ^{children} families will ^{attempts} hinder social promotion in spite of family allowances, and that social ambition would continue to some extent to make for racial deterioration; because it will always act most where innate rational powers are greatest. This thought is in some degree analogous to what I feel about your psychological effect. Beneficial results will be produced ^{by} ~~in~~ ^{f.a} ~~the~~ ways, but we must not assume that ^{they} family allowances could be counted on to counteract the differential birth rate to any great extent. ~~It~~. When we turn we see that innate

not to completely wipe it out

tends to be
inferiority \propto correlated with a higher birth rate.

Some time ago I sent you some notes on
these and similar points, and then I gathered from
your notes that you differed from me on some
points. At the moment I wanted to turn my
attention to something else - Twitchin's affairs probably -
so I put my notes aside for later consideration,
and have never looked at them since. I had been
reading Pigeon's Economic of Welfare, or some of it,
and I think it had influenced me. It is a
terribly big masterpiece, but the result of vast care
and thought. He is admirable, I believe, as a pure
economist, but I do not think him a good judge of
human nature. I shall return to my notes some
day probably, but not till I feel my mind to be
fairly free.

The Twitchin estate is still very trouble.
What a screw!

Yours sincerely

Leonard Darwin