

5th March 1934.

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My dear Ford,

Many thanks for your letter of Thursday night, which I have read this morning with the subsequent note on Saturday. I think we ought to postpone the meeting, especially as it is only for a few days.

I want you to get what is in my head in stressing the economic inequality of the burden of parenthood, not that you may not well feel the same after seeing fully what I am driving at, but on the chance that you may feel that properly put the point is worth making. I find I touch on it, though rather incompletely, at several points in my book on "Natural Selection". On page 224, referring to the taxation of the rich in the attempt to relieve poverty I venture the assertion "An important factor, if not the whole cause of the need for this continual redistribution of national wealth, evidently lies in the disparity with which the burden of parenthood is

distributed and in its peculiarly heavy incidents upon the poorest class". In the summary of the same chapter, page 227, referring to the Social outlook of men who remember their Mothers being over-worked and underfed, possibly to the extent of breaking their health, I say "By extendency to make the rich richer and the poor poorer, and, especially, to inflict hardship upon the parents of the next generation, the inversion of the birth rate is an important cause of social discontent". Then on page 258 speaking of the effects of a redistribution of births I say "Extreme poverty would certainly be mitigated, and a more even distribution of wealth insensibly brought about. There would be less need for the process of transferring wealth from the rich to the poor by direct taxation, and this should be welcomed by those who believe that this process is in practice extremely inefficient, in that the real wealth transferred to the poor is much less than the loss incurred, directly and indirectly, by the rich."

You see that I have a notion that both those who object especially to the poor being extremely poor, and those who object to the direct taxation of high incomes as a means of relieving the poor have reasons to regard the present distribution of births

as economically objectionable. In fact the present distribution is merely equivalent to a tax which the poor pay more heavily than the rich. Such a tax could not I think be defended on either economical or political grounds, especially as to counteract its effects, it has as I believe been largely instrumental in bringing into existence other taxes aimed at having opposite effects, which are in my view wasteful and inefficient for their purpose and is also an important contributor through that economic class hatred, which threatens to be a serious bar to the efficient co-operation of wealth.

I quite agree that this is a non-eugenic argument, but we must not forget that politicians and most of their supporters think that economics are much more important than Eugenics, and that they will not make any modification of the economic system unless it can be supported by strong economic as well perhaps as Eugenic arguments. In this mood the only aspect of Family Allowances which can enter their heads is the direct relief of poverty which they are accustomed to do by adding direct taxation. This aspect the Family Allowance Society unduly emphasises and will I think in time get the support of the Labour party.

Our really critical business is to obtain non-Socialist support for Family Allowances as a means of diminishing or reversing the differential birth rate, and not merely of mitigating the poverty which it causes. I don't see how we can do this without stressing the effect of the differential birth rate as a cause of poverty.

This is a very complicated business and I am writing this long letter rather to elicit your further views than for anything else.

Yours sincerely,