

Thursday night.

DEPARTMENT OF
ZOOLOGY AND COMPARATIVE ANATOMY,
UNIVERSITY MUSEUM, OXFORD.

[Early March 1924]

My dear Fisher,

I was very glad to get your letter, for it stimulated me to write to you about the Family Allowances leaflet, which I have been meaning to do ever since the last Committee. As a matter of fact the week ~~ending~~ ^{following} it I was forced to go up to Edinburgh to have my injections, and you can imagine the rush I have had to make up time after being away for three days in the middle of the term. I had so hoped to be able to put it off until the end of March, but it could not be. Anyway the rush has made me put off writing before; please excuse me.

I have been through the leaflet in detail and I regard it as a most extraordinarily able exposition of the subject. You must have put a lot of work into it, but it has been worth while. Parts of it are not easy reading, but I do not see how they could be made more lucid than they are. I have also been through McDougall's paper on the subject, but was not as impressed as I expected. You must allow me to say that I think it clearly inferior to this production of yours, which I hope to see adopted

practically as it stands.

There is only one passage which I questioned, and that only a few lines. Indeed it is so small in relation to the whole that it seems almost trifling with the issue to raise it. None the less I personally think it of importance. It occurs on p.11 of (the later) script, under the head What kinds of family allowance systems would be eugenically effective. [from] "The distribution of births by which the poor bear more----- [down to] to make the rich richer and the poor poorer".

Now I am in real doubt if it well advised to raise this economic issue (which some would take as bordering on politics). There are many whose support might be valuable who believe that the process of making the rich poorer has already gone far enough or too far. (I think it myself, strongly; but I am not in any way regarding that as more than a purely private opinion). But what concerns me is that I know well that there are people who would form a favourable opinion from reading the article to that point, but would have nothing more to do with the matter after reading this passage. Now they may be quite wrong: ~~they~~ the point is that they exist.

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What I wonder is, are we wise at this stage to raise that issue?

You see it might well be said that the discussion of anything "apart from its eugenic consequences" (I quote the words) is not the business of a Eugenics Society. When by doing so we (as I think) turn away possible supporters, there seems to me a case for cutting out the passage.

Now I am doing no more than state what is at present my personal opinion. It is nothing beyond that, for I am perfectly prepared to be convinced to the contrary if need be. But that is how I see it so far.

I have raised the matter instead of taking the easier course of letting so small a passage pass, because I am so much impressed by this article, and I really don't want anything, however small, to be included which seems to me damaging.

I hope you will feel I have put the case fairly, and I am sure you will give the passage a moment's reconsideration. I have written quite frankly, because I know that if you still think it better included you will not do anything so unwise as to allow what is nothing

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more than my personal opinion to affect your judgment!

Excuse an intolerably long letter on a very small point. You will be tired of reading it, but I wanted you to have my opinion for what it is worth — and for the article, I think it splendid.

In great haste,

Yours sincerely,

J. B. Ford
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