

29th January 1934.

Professor Ruggles Gates,  
King's College,  
Strand.

Dear Ruggles Gates,

I am very glad you wrote to me on the Family Allowance programme, since our time on the Committee has been so much wasted in merely wrangling, that our real job of constructive thought has been much neglected.

The point I have made in the draft is, that all who understand the matter are agreed that allowances would be beneficial in professional and skilled occupations, but that there is room for divergence of opinion as to its effects in the large unskilled and semi-skilled sections, who are on the whole below the national average in ability. At our last meeting I was urged by Mrs. Hubback and Huxley to leave this last out, on the ground, I think, that divergence of opinion should not be had unnecessarily. I do not agree with this on principle, and think with you that

we should be cautious in giving a Eugenic blessing to portions of the scheme which are really debatable.

There is a good deal to be said on both sides. As I understand, it must be admitted that in so far as allowances act in increasing parentage, this action will be on the whole, dysgenic in classes below the national average of ability.

I should like to see the validity of this argument quite frankly accepted. On the other hand the effects on social promotion do seem to be definitely beneficial, for at the present time promotion, let us say among the children of semi-skilled occupations, gives a rather strong preference to the members of the smaller families, whereas, with family allowances the group promoted would contain their fair share of the more fertile strains. There can be no doubt as an observational fact, that fertility measured by the actual number of children is quite strongly heritable. Whether this is due in part to purely physiological causes, or, as I am inclined to think, principally to temperamental differences, expressing themselves in celibacy late marriage, or contraception to an unnecessary degree, and merely on the observational fact it is clear the preferential promotion of children from small families must

lower the fertility of all class into which they rise.

I myself believe that this is the most important cause of the differential birth-rate, and that Family Allowances would, in time, cumulatively exert a much more important effect through the re-distribution of innate tendencies to fertility, that it would as a direct stimulus to parenthood, but as I urged to the Committee at the last meeting, I do not think we ought to speak as though my opinion in this matter was universally accepted, though it should be put forward as a possible and rational point of view.

Yours sincerely,