

August 20, 1941

Dear Dr. O'Brien,

I am writing in the hope that you may find some means of helping my Department in the very great difficulty in which it is now placed. The College authorities, i.e., the Provost, Sir Allen Mawer, propose to dismiss, or as they say, "to suspend the employment of" my secretary, Miss Simpson, from the end of September. Various excuses have been made for this step, as you will see from the letter dated July 22nd which I wrote to the Provost on the subject.

If I can find no remedy, this change practically puts an end to my own scientific work, for I have not been without a personal secretary in my Department for 20 years or more, and my eyesight is so bad that eye strain would certainly force me to relinquish most of what I can now do, including the issue of the Annals of Eugenics, which has, up till now, been winning a steady increase of support from scientific subscribers to compensate for its loss of sales in Europe.

In my Department Miss Simpson has not only been doing secretarial work, but all the internal organisation, and much of the enumeration, required in the blood group counts which we have been carrying out for the last two years, in association with G.L. Taylor at Cambridge,

for the Blood Transfusion Service. This Summer we have been classifying forms for blood-group, sex and age, often at the rate of 7,000 a week. This is not only being done nowhere else in this country, but in the whole literature of the subject sex data are very inadequate, and age data are, so far as I know, non-existent. The opportunity of securing the frequencies actually observed must be seized at once, before sorting and selection - which ordinarily supervenes for administrative use - has destroyed the evidence.

I believe I can count on the support both of the Medical Research Council and of the Agricultural Research Council in endorsing the value to them of the work which my Department at present is able to do. I enclose copy of a letter from Dr Landsborough Thomson, Medical Research Council, which I asked him to write in order that the College should have no excuse for saying that Miss Simpson could do "more important war work" elsewhere.

Of course it is arguable that these Government supported agencies should, if it is worth their while, support my Department from their own funds. I have nothing to say against this, and indeed would be willing to give my whole time to appropriate war work. So far, however, I have been left to do my former scientific work under difficulties which, up to the present, have not proved insuperable, and it may be that the continuance of my Department is the kind of scientific salvage work in which your Committee is interested.

Yours sincerely,

Copy of letter to the Provost, July 22

Copy of letter from Dr Landsborough Thomson, July 25