

**STRIVING FOR NATIONAL FITNESS
EUGENICS IN AUSTRALIA
1910s TO 1930s**

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Abstract

Striving For National Fitness: Eugenics in Australia, 1910s to 1930s

Eugenics movements developed early this century in more than 20 countries, including Australia. However, for many years the vast literature on eugenics focused almost exclusively on the history of eugenics in Britain and America. While some aspects of eugenics in Australia are now being documented, the history of this movement largely remained to be written.

Australians experienced both fears and hopes at the time of Federation in 1901. Some feared that the white population was declining and degenerating but they also hoped to create a new utopian society which would outstrip the achievements, and avoid the poverty and industrial unrest, of Britain and America. Some responded to these mixed emotions by combining notions of efficiency and progress with eugenic ideas about maximising the growth of a white population and filling the 'empty spaces'. It was hoped that by taking these actions Australia would avoid 'racial suicide' or Asian invasion and would improve national fitness, thus avoiding 'racial decay' and starting to create a 'paradise of physical perfection'. This thesis considers the impact of eugenics in Australia by examining three related propositions:

- that from the 1910s to the 1930s, eugenic ideas in Australia were readily accepted because of concerns about the declining birth rate
- that, while mainly derivative, Australian eugenics had several distinctly Australian qualities
- that eugenics has a legacy in many disciplines, particularly family planning and public health

This examination of Australian eugenics is primarily from the perspective of the people, publications and organisations which contributed to this movement in the first half of this century. In addition to a consideration of their achievements, reference is also made to the influence which eugenic ideas had in such diverse fields as education, immigration, law, literature, politics, psychology and science.

Acknowledgement

I found valuable archival material in the Marie Stopes Papers at the British Library, the Eugenics Society Archives at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, the Galton Papers at the University College London, the Margaret Sanger Papers at the Library of Congress, and the American Eugenics Society Archives at the American Philosophical Society. I have also made use of material from British collections now available in Australia as a result of the National Library of Australia's Joint Copying Project which was undertaken in 1989. I am particularly indebted to the librarians who produced the four volume *Bibliography of Australian Medicine and Health Services to 1950* and the NSW Parliamentary Library's extensive *Newspaper Index 1910-1975*. These sources listed relevant books, speeches, conference papers and newspaper items and, as well as revealing the presence of 'gems', indicated where they were located. Most of the material was available in either Sydney's Mitchell Library or in the Fisher Library at the University of Sydney.

I am indebted to Frances Lovejoy, who encouraged me to begin the thesis, and to my supervisors, Professor Roy MacLeod and Dr Judith Keene, who skilfully guided me to its conclusion. My employers, the Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services, generously granted me studies assistance for six years.

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Abbreviations

AA	Australian Archives
AAAS	<i>Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science. Report</i>
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research (Melbourne, Vic)
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ADB	<i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i> , vols 1-2 (1788-1850), vols 3-6 (1851-1890), vols 7-12 (1891-1939) and vol 13 (1940-1980)
AGPS	Australian Government Publishing Service (Canberra, ACT)
AJPP	<i>Australasian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy</i> (Sydney), 1923-1947
ALP	Australian Labor Party
AMCT	<i>Australasian Medical Congress. Transactions</i>
AMG	<i>Australasian Medical Gazette</i> (Sydney) 1895-1914
AMJ	<i>Australian Medical Journal</i> (Melbourne) 1856-1914
ANU	Australian National University
ANZAAS	Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science
ARHC	<i>Australian Racial Hygiene Congress. Report</i> (Sydney, 1929)
BMJ	<i>British Medical Journal</i> (London)
CPD	Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates
CPP	Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers
comp.	compiler
CUP	Cambridge University Press
ed.(s)	editor(s)/edited
edn.	edition
EES	Eugenics Education Society (London), 1907-1926
EESNSW	Eugenics Education Society of NSW (Sydney) 1912-1922
ER	<i>Eugenics Review</i> (London) 1909-1968
ESL	Eugenics Society (London) 1926-1989, then the Galton Institute
ESV	Eugenics Society of Victoria, 1936-1961
FPA	Family Planning Association
Govt. Pr.	Government Printer
ICMJA	<i>Intercolonial Medical Journal of Australasia</i>
IFR	Institute of Family Relations (Sydney), Director Marion Piddington

Johns	<i>Johns's Notable Australians</i> , 1906; <i>Johns's Notable Australians and Who is Who in Australasia</i> , 1908; <i>Fred Johns's Annual</i> , 1912, 1913, 1914. followed by <i>Who's Who in Australia</i> (Sydney) 1922 +
LD	<i>Labor Daily</i> (Sydney) 1922-1940
MJA	<i>Medical Journal of Australia</i> (Sydney) 1914 +
ML	Mitchell Library, Sydney
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council, 1936 +
MUP	Melbourne University Press (Parkville, Vic)
NLA	National Library of Australia (Canberra, ACT)
NSW	New South Wales
NSWPD	New South Wales Parliamentary Debates
NSWPP	New South Wales Parliamentary Papers
OUP	Oxford University Press
Pers. comm.	Personal communication
Qld	Queensland
RCDBR	<i>Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth-Rate and on the Mortality of Infants in New South Wales</i> (Sydney: Govt. Pr., 1904), 2 vols
RHA	Racial Hygiene Association of NSW
SA	South Australia
SAPD	South Australia Parliamentary Debates
SANSW(IG)	State Archives of NSW. Inspector General of the Insane. From 1876-1917 it was IG for the Insane, changing to IG of Mental Hospitals from 1918-57
SUP	Sydney University Press (Sydney, NSW)
trans.	translation, translated by
UNSWP	University of New South Wales Press (Kensington, NSW)
UQP	University of Queensland Press (St Lucia, Qld)
UWAP	University of Western Australia Press (Nedlands, WA)
Vic	Victoria
WA	Western Australia
WEA	Workers' Educational Association
WWW	<i>Who Was Who</i> , + cumulated index 1887-1990 (London: Black, 1991)
<i>Who's Who</i>	<i>Who's Who in Australia</i> (Melbourne), <i>Herald and Weekly Times</i> , 1922 +

Preface

Between 1905 and 1930, eugenics movements developed in more than 20 countries. However, for many years the vast literature on eugenics focused almost exclusively on its history in Britain and America. While some aspects of eugenics in Australia are now being documented, the history of this movement needed to be written.

In the years from 1911 to 1932, when eugenics blossomed in Australia, a loosely-defined collection of eugenics-related goals for increasing the nation's fitness were accepted as the norm. The respect inspired by these goals was widely shared, in much the same way as the expectations that citizens would honour God, king, country, the British Empire and the White Australia Policy. However, while eugenics flourished in this period - and its aims were considered scientific, worthwhile and achievable - the idea of producing biologically better people had become suspect by the 1930s.

The positive aura surrounding eugenics early this century was replaced by a shadowy and sinister memory. After the demise of eugenics, it underwent extensive documentary cleansing, with studies of the subject entering a historical hibernation until the 1980s. Since then, an awakening interest in eugenics has been stimulated both by the expanding possibilities of genetic engineering and reproductive technology and by the resurfacing of theories about race and intelligence. Much of this recent historical writing has been cursory, inaccurate or dismissive and these factors influenced me to write this thesis.

In my association with the Family Planning Association of NSW, first as an employee and then as a Board member, I knew that the Association had been called the Racial Hygiene Association until 1960, and that its earlier name was synonymous with eugenics. I discovered more about eugenics in 1987 as part of my research for a Bicentennially-funded project on the history of birth control in Australia. Eugenics featured only peripherally in the book which resulted in 1990, but I decided to begin a study in which it would be central because I was fascinated by the importance of eugenics in the history of public health and because a history of family planning requires an examination of its eugenic underpinnings.

I have drawn on medical and other archives in an attempt to understand the social, political and economic background of the period, to place the study in context, and to analyse eugenic thinking. The list of successful doctors, lawyers, academics and politicians who espoused eugenics reads like a *Who's Who of Australia* for the first half of the 20th century. However, when their obituaries were written, in almost all cases their interest in eugenics was not mentioned. Although eugenics is no longer publicly advocated, its history has relevance for the genome generations of the 1990s and beyond.

Introduction

- I -

The word 'eugenics', from the Greek *eugenes* meaning well-born, was first used in 1883 by the English scientist Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911)¹, who was 13 years younger than his 'half first-cousin' Charles Darwin.² Drawing on ancient ideas and stimulated by the writings of Thomas Malthus, Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, Galton expressed eugenic beliefs as early as 1865.³ Astutely however, he waited many years until he felt that people would be receptive to his plan for race improvement.⁴ He launched it in 1901, the year after Mendel's laws of heredity were rediscovered, and at a time when the Boer War was causing widespread panic about Britain's national efficiency, its racial health and the Empire's future.⁵ Gratified by a positive response, Galton elaborated on the plan in 1904, advocating a new 'science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race; also with those that develop them to the utmost advantage'.⁶ For the rest of his life, Galton zealously promoted eugenics, invoking both the authority of religion and the sacred aura of science.

Eugenics had a short but spectacular heyday. Initially it was widely endorsed as a scientific means for achieving the utopian goals of human betterment, even perfectibility. The Australian Prime Minister sent top-rank representatives in 1912 to attend the First International Eugenics Congress in London, and by the 1930s eugenics was being promoted in more than 20 countries. However, by the 1940s, few people were prepared to advocate it openly. The changing fortunes of eugenics in one generation is suggested by the move, beginning in the 1930s, in which eugenic-oriented organisations and journals began distancing themselves from eugenics by adopting new names.⁷ The extent of this invisibility

¹Francis Galton, *Inquiries Into Human Faculty and Its Development* (London: Macmillan, 1883), 24-25.

²Milo Keynes, *Sir Francis Galton, FRS: The Legacy of His Ideas*. Proceedings of the 28th annual symposium of the Galton Institute, London, 1991. Keynes, ed. (London: Macmillan in association with the Galton Institute, 1993), 4. Galton had a particular interest in family trees and was obsessed with measurements and precise details.

³Galton, 'Hereditary talent and character', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 12 (1865), 157-66 and 318-27, quoted by Edgar Schuster in *Eugenics* (London: Collins, 1912), 44-45.

⁴G R Searle, *Eugenics and Politics in Britain 1900-1914* (Leyden: Nordhoff, 1976), 20.

⁵Galton, *The Possible Improvement of the Human Breed, Under the Existing Conditions of Law and Sentiment*, the second Huxley Lecture at the Anthropological Institute, 29 October 1901, reprinted in Galton, *Essays in Eugenics* (London: EES, 1909), 1-34.

⁶Galton, 'Eugenics: Its definition, scope and aims', read before the Sociological Society at the London University School of Economics and Political Science, 16 May 1904, reprinted in Galton (1909), 35-43.

⁷In America the journal *Eugenics: A Journal of Race Betterment* changed to *People* in 1931, and the *Eugenics Quarterly* became *Social Biology* in 1954. In Britain the *Annals of Eugenics* became the

suggests, if not a conspiracy, at least a convenience of silence.⁸ Surprisingly, almost all of the recent studies of this social, political and scientific phenomenon have focused exclusively on Britain and America. In 1986 Mary Cawte reported that in Australia 'the history of eugenics ... largely remains to be written'.⁹ These research gaps prompted Mark Adams to report in 1990, that 'a number of important movements throughout the English-speaking world and the former British Empire remain to be studied. Generally unpublished research has been done on eugenics in Canada and Australia'.¹⁰

As Nancy Leys Stepan has observed in her study of eugenics in Latin American countries, 'ideas do not keep fixed identities' as they move geographically and over time, 'nor do they occupy previously empty social or intellectual spaces'.¹¹ Her comments are applicable to eugenics in Australia which reflected the historical circumstances which shaped its development. Adams suggested that 'because eugenics is an extraordinarily well-documented, temporally limited but geographically pervasive phenomenon, it may serve as a kind of international tracer or marker for approaching broader historical issues'.¹² The following analysis contributes to this history by tracing the impact of the movement on Australia.

Annals of Human Genetics in 1954, the *Eugenics Review* was incorporated into the *Journal of Biosocial Science* in 1969, and in 1989, the Eugenics Society became the Galton Institute for the Study of Biology and Society, finally the Galton Institute. In Australia the Racial Hygiene Association became the Family Planning Association in 1960 and in the 1990s the NLA's *Australian Public Affairs Information Service* uses 'see' reference from 'eugenics' to 'biology' for articles on eugenics.

⁸The 'conspiracy of silence' cliché has been attributed to a mediocre poet, Sir Lewis Morris (1833-1907), to the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1885, and to Thomas Huxley's comments about some scientific societies' silence after Darwin's theory of evolution was announced.

⁹Mary Cawte, 'Cranio-metry and eugenics in Australia: R J A Berry and the quest for social efficiency', *Historical Studies*, 22 (April 1986), 35.

¹⁰Mark Adams (ed.), *The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil and Russia* (New York: OUP, 1990), 225.

¹¹Nancy Leys Stepan, *'The Hour of Eugenics': Race, Gender and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), 33.

¹²Adams (1990), 226.

Eugenics plays an important role in the history of white settlement in Australia. For example, a proposal which would later have been considered eugenic was suggested by Governor Arthur Phillip within the first five years of settlement. He wrote 'as I would not wish convicts to lay the foundation of an empire, I think they should ever remain separated from the garrison, and other settlers that may come from Europe and not be allowed to mix with them, even after the seven or fourteen years for which they are transported may be expired'.¹³ A century later, at the time of Federation, many politicians also wished to create a new, better Australia that would outstrip the achievements but avoid the poverty and unrest, of the industrialized northern hemisphere.

In the nineteenth century, Australian anthropologists reported that 'the type [of Europeans] produced by a thousand years of inter-breeding, that seemed unalterable, appears to have become radically changed in the course of two or three generations'.¹⁴ To optimists this shift foreshadowed an Australian utopia. To pessimists these changes indicated that Australia's white population was declining in quantity and quality - twin perils which they called 'racial suicide' and 'racial decay'.¹⁵ Both groups responded by combining notions about efficiency and progress with eugenic ideas in their attempts to boost the white population, fill the continent's 'empty spaces', improve national fitness and avoid Asian immigration or invasion. For these reasons many Australians embraced the imported ideas of social Darwinism and eugenics almost as soon as they were advocated.

This thesis considers the impact of eugenics in Australia by examining three related propositions: that from the 1910s to the 1930s eugenic ideas in Australia were readily accepted because of fears about the declining white Australian birth rate and the threats of Asian invasion; that, while mainly derivative, Australian eugenics had distinctly Australian qualities; and that eugenics has a legacy in many disciplines, particularly family planning and public health.

¹³*Historical Records of New South Wales*, vol 1, *Phillip 1783-1792* (Sydney: Govt. Pr., 1892), 53.

¹⁴William Ramsay Smith, *On Race-Culture and the Conditions that Influence it in South Australia* (Adelaide: Govt. Pr., 1912), 10.

¹⁵These and other terms in the thesis are discussed in the terminology Appendix.

This thesis begins by examining the political and cultural precursors to eugenics which, from the 1880s, contributed to its subsequent acceptance in Australia. In Britain, from the 1780s, dreams of progress fuelled the industrial revolution. After witnessing the material improvements which machines had facilitated, it is not surprising that in the 20th century some people dreamt of producing better people or even entertained fantasies of human perfectibility. This thesis examines these eugenic endeavours and, while it is mainly devoted to the golden years of eugenics from 1911 until the early 1930s, it extends until 1961, the date by which the two main Australian eugenics organizations had ceased operating or had changed their focus.¹⁶ Eugenics was seriously considered in only the first three decades of this century but the ideology had imbued the thinking of many people at the outset of their careers which reverberated throughout their working lives.

This influence was felt by many prominent members of the medical profession. The apparent symbiosis of eugenics and health is suggested in a response Margaret Spencer gave to my questions about Dr Howard Cumpston, Australia's first Director-General of Health:

I wonder about my father being called a eugenicist. Perhaps he was in a public health sense, meaning that community and individual good health, freedom from disease, give progeny the best start in life.¹⁷

Cumpston would qualify as a quintessential 'medical' eugenicist,¹⁸ a category described by Geoffrey Searle as containing doctors and health workers who considered eugenics not a political belief but a branch of public health which, with government support, could improve people's health or reduce disease and suffering.¹⁹ I am most interested in these medical experts who rapidly endorsed eugenics and formed the largest category of eugenicists in Australia. Undeniably, the medical profession, collectively and as individuals, exerted influence²⁰ on national life, and eugenics helped to shape this influence. Health services

¹⁶The RHA became the FPA in 1960 and the Eugenics Society of Victoria was finally disbanded in 1961. The two organizations had not been very active from the 1940s.

¹⁷Margaret Spencer, Pers. comm., 1 February 1992.

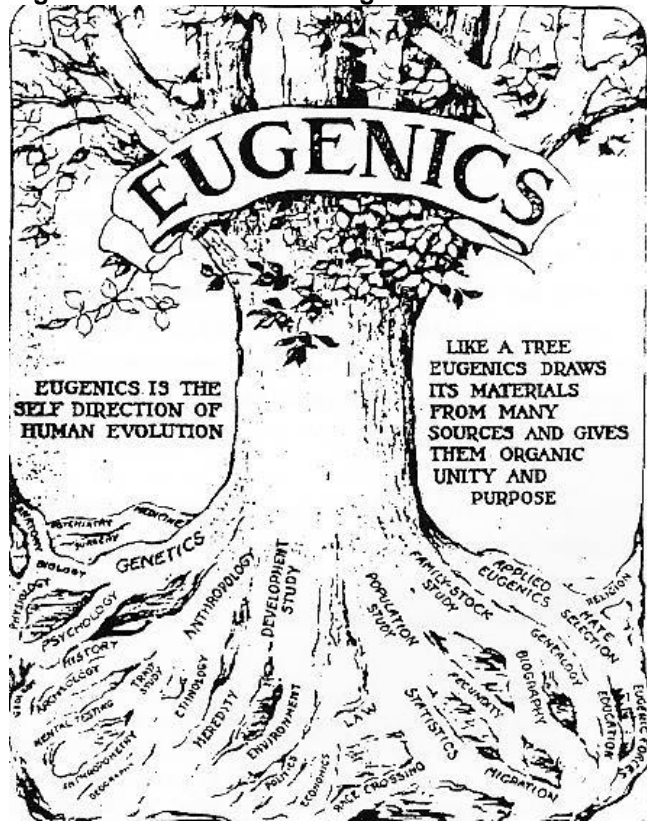
¹⁸Reasons for using the term 'eugenicist' (rather than 'eugenicist') are in the Appendix.

¹⁹Geoffrey Russell Searle, 'Eugenics and class', in Charles Webster (ed.), *Biology, Medicine and Society, 1840-1940* (Cambridge: CUP, 1981), 239-40. Other 'medical' eugenicists include Richard Arthur, James Barrett, Mary Booth, J H L Cumpston, Lillie Goodisson, W Ernest Jones, Charles Mackellar, John Macpherson, E Sydney Morris, Thomas Anderson Stuart, W Ramsay Smith, Harvey Sutton and Victor Wallace.

²⁰William A Verco, 'The influence of the medical profession upon the national life in Australia', *AMG* (20 July 1910), 339-44. As George Palmer noted in *Public Policy in Australia*, Roy Forward (ed.) (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1974), 184, the Australian Medical Association (known as the BMA until 1961) has always had a strong political influence, usually with support from the majority of the electorate. Because of the AMA's 'vigorous political and legal action', Palmer considers that it could 'rightly take some of the credit' for thwarting the Federal Labor government's attempts to introduce a

which were pioneered before World War II also bear the stamp of these beliefs. While many doctors opposed birth control, the Catholic Church was totally opposed to eugenics and contraception and both groups influenced the histories of these two movements.

Figure 1: The relation of eugenics to other science²¹



comprehensive system of social welfare in the health field before 1949.

²¹Introductory wall panel, "The Relation of Eugenics to Other Sciences", based on a paper by Dr Harry H Laughlin, Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, New York', Plate 1, in *A Decade of Progress in Eugenics* [1934], Scientific Papers of the Third International Congress of Eugenics, 21-23 August 1932 (New York: Garland, 1984).

Curiously, contraception is not one of the 34 'sources' listed in Figure 1, which was used in 1932 at the Third International Eugenics Congress to illustrate the relationship of eugenics to these numerous other fields of social science and science.

Such diversity made it essential to set boundaries for this study. Some topics I have excluded (or mentioned only briefly) as they require expertise in a specialised field, were only peripherally relevant, or occurred outside the period considered in the thesis. For this reason I have not considered post-1960 developments such as genetic engineering and reproductive technology, although they have generated intense interest with some calling them the quest for 'the perfect baby' and 'racist, ableist and sexist new eugenics'.²² One critic described the Human Genome Project as a 'gene genie',²³ demonstrating the resilience of eugenic influence on the popular imagination. I have considered anthropometric measurements and intelligence-testing techniques only when they related directly to eugenics, such as testing for mental deficiency in children.²⁴ I have not considered phrenology's role, which some eugenists favoured,²⁵ or craniometry, a similar but rather more scientific technique of measuring skulls and their contents in an attempt to determine intelligence.²⁶ In marked contrast, I have paid considerable attention to the nature-nurture debate as it was vitally important to eugenists and continues to stimulate fierce debates.²⁷

I have examined the eugenics-influenced work of child welfare reformers such as Catherine Helen Spence, Alice Henry, Edith Onians and Sir Charles Mackellar, and the related town planning and urban 'betterment' schemes promoted by eugenists Professor Robert Irvine, Dr Richard Arthur and Sir James Barrett. Similarly, there were many links between education and eugenics. Educators holding social Darwinist or eugenic views include Charles Pearson, Meredith Atkinson and Archibald Grenfell Price and I have examined attempts such as theirs

²²Patricia Spallone, *Beyond Conception: The New Politics of Reproduction* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 134 and Ruth F Chadwick, 'The Perfect Baby', in Chadwick, (ed.), *Ethics, Reproduction and Genetic Control*, 2nd edn. (London: Routledge, 1992), 93-135.

²³Quoted in the *Economist*, 19 September 1992, 115, in a review of two books: *The Code of Codes: Scientific and Social Issues in the Human Genome Project*, Daniel J Kevles and Leroy Hood (eds.), (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992) and *The Human Blueprint*, by Robert Shapiro (London: St Martin's Press, 1992).

²⁴Two men who promoted these schemes in Australia were Alan Carroll and R J A Berry.

²⁵For example, Brettana Smyth, a Melbourne campaigner for women's rights. See also M John Thearle, 'The rise and fall of phrenology in Australia', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 27 (September 1993), 518-25.

²⁶From 1910 to 1920, Berry was Australia's most energetic advocate of craniometry.

²⁷See for example, Richard J Herrnstein and Charles Murray, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (New York: Free Press/Simon and Schuster, 1994) and Steven Fraser (ed.), *The Bell Curve Wars: Race, Intelligence, and the Future of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

to teach the community to think and act eugenically. For example, during the 1920s the Workers' Educational Association sponsored eugenics tutorials and ran sex education classes given by Marion Piddington, Australia's most energetic eugenicist. Eugenics also played a central role in the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) which was founded in 1930.

There were also eugenics links with the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry. This is evident in the work of psychologists such as professors Henry Tasman Lovell, Edmund Morris Miller and John Bostock, Dr Lorna Hodgkinson, and many of the ACER researchers. The same is true of psychiatrists John Fishbourne, William Cleland, William Ernest Jones, William Dawson, Ralph Noble, Reginald Ellery, Paul Dane, Andrew Davidson and Sir John Macpherson.

The way in which eugenics fed into genetics is clearly demonstrated by Daniel Kevles in his account of their histories in Britain and America.²⁸ Similar connections between these disciplines occurred in Australia, particularly in the work of the geneticist Wilfred E Agar. The relationship of eugenics with statistics is also clear: in Britain, the purpose behind the creation of a social class classification in the 1911 Census was the eugenic wish to test assumptions about heredity.²⁹ The contributions by British eugenicists Francis Galton, Ronald Fisher and Karl Pearson to statistical theory have been acknowledged.³⁰ In Australia, three statisticians played major roles in stimulating debates about eugenics: Sir Timothy Coghlan, NSW's first government statistician, and the Commonwealth Government's first and second statisticians, Sir George Handley Knibbs and Charles Henry Wickens. While scholars of the history of eugenics have studied the contributions which eugenicists have made to statistics, I am unaware of this link being acknowledged by statisticians.

²⁸Kevles (1985), x.

²⁹Joan Austoker, 'Eugenics and the Registrar General', *BMJ* (August 1985), 407-08. Britain's pioneering fertility inquiries for this Census were by the Registrar General, Sir Bernard Mallett, who from 1929 until 1932 was the President of the Eugenics Society.

³⁰See Donald MacKenzie, *Statistics in Britain, 1865-1930: The Social Construction of Scientific Knowledge* (Edinburgh: EUP, 1981) and A W F Edwards' chapter, 'Galton, Karl Pearson and Modern Statistical Theory', in Keynes (1993), 91-107.

A catalyst for much scholarly work on eugenics was a pioneering PhD thesis, 'The Origins and Growth of the English Eugenics Movement, 1865-1925', written in 1969 by an Australian, Lyndsay A Farrall.³¹ He argued that English eugenists shared certain characteristics which Frank Parkin defined as 'middle-class radicalism'.³² Farrall considered the eugenics movement provided a case study of the interaction between science and society in which 'political and ethical matters are very closely interwoven with biological and medical matters'.³³

Popular and academic interest was galvanized in 1985 by Daniel J Kevles' comparative history of eugenics.³⁴ His book, *In The Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity*, included a 25-page 'essay on sources', in which he noted that despite the vast literature which had been produced during the 1970s and 1980s, 'an important history remains to be written of the general relationship among eugenics, demography, and population control'.³⁵ This gap is now starting to fill. For example, in *The Fear of Population Decline*, Michael Teitelbaum and Jay Winter used a demographic perspective in 1985 to consider the eugenic responses by a number of countries to this fear³⁶ and, since 1990, several national and comparative studies of eugenics have appeared.³⁷ My thesis builds on these foundations.

³¹A facsimile of Farrall's thesis was published in New York by Garland Publishing in 1985.

³²Farrall (1985), 290-91. According to Frank Parkin, middle-class radicals were generally well-educated members of the welfare and creative professions who participated in many organisations. Farrall's thesis, which focused on the period from 1900 to 1920, described the Galton Eugenics Laboratory and analysed leadership and activities of the Eugenics Education Society (EES).

³³Farrall in a letter to me on 20 December 1990. However, he later expressed doubts about the applicability of Parkin's radicalism model, Pers. comm., 24 June 1991.

³⁴Kevles (1985).

³⁵Ibid, 392. See also Samuel J Holmes, *A Bibliography of Eugenics* (Berkeley, Ca: University of California Press, 1924) which consists of a 514-page classified list of works from many countries and Farrall, 'The history of eugenics: A bibliographic guide', *Annals of Science*, 36 (1979), 111-23.

³⁶Teitelbaum and Winter, *The Fear of Population Decline* (Orlando, Florida: Academic Press, 1985), 45-58. See also Teitelbaum's, *The British Fertility Decline: Demographic Transition in the Crucible of the Industrial Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) and Teitelbaum and Winter (eds.), *Population and Resources in Western Intellectual Traditions* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989). In *Demography and Degeneration* (1990), Soloway examined links between British fears about fertility decline and eugenics.

³⁷The most significant of these recent studies are Adams (1990); Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990), Stepan (1991) and Stefan Kuhl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism and German National Socialism* (New York: OUP, 1994); Saul Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995) and Edward J Larson, *Sex, Race and Science: Eugenics in the Deep South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

Many Australian psychologists and psychiatrists were eugenists and both disciplines' relationships with eugenics have been studied: psychology by Alison Turtle, Milton Lewis and David McCallum³⁸ and psychiatry by Milton Lewis and Stephen Garton.³⁹ I have added to and reinterpreted many of their findings, particularly those relating to feeble-mindedness and the attempts to implement eugenic sterilization. I have not responded to the claims made by Grant Rodwell in 'Clitoridectomies in glasshouses: Eugenics in our kindergartens: 1900-1939'.⁴⁰ He found that 'data on clitoridectomies in Australia' was 'particularly allusive' (sic).⁴¹ I have concentrated on the nature-nurture debate, a central concern for eugenists and the focus of Carol Bacchi's 1981 article which stimulated interest in the history of eugenics in Australia.⁴² I have engaged with Garton and Rob Watts over their criticism of Bacchi's emphasis on the importance of environment for Australian eugenists before 1914 and her emphasis on the nature-nurture debate.

I have not attempted to produce an exhaustive history of eugenics in Australia as the literature of this amorphous topic harbours a mass of kaleidoscopic fragments. To find a path through this maze of material, I have concentrated on the 'race suicide' stimulus for the acceptance of eugenics, and on the health-related aftermath. This method was adopted in 1990 by Richard A Soloway in *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain*. My analysis suggests that the cultural and social consequences of this birth-rate decline were

³⁸See Alison Turtle's chapter, 'Education, social science and the "Common Weal"', in MacLeod (ed.) (1988), 222-46. This discusses Australia's pioneering days in education and psychology, including anthropometry and mental testing. See also Turtle's 'The first women psychologists in Australia', *Australian Psychologist*, 25, no. 3 (November 1990), 239-55; Milton Lewis, *Managing Madness: Psychiatry and Society in Australia 1788-1980* (Canberra: AGPS, 1988), 109-11, and McCallum (1990).

³⁹Lewis (1988) and also Stephen Garton, *Medicine and Madness: A Social History of Insanity in New South Wales, 1880-1940* (Kensington: UNSWP, 1988).

⁴⁰Rodwell's paper was given at the 21st Annual Conference of the Australian and NZ History of Education Society, October 1992 (Adelaide: St Marks College, 1992), 475-90.

⁴¹Rodwell, *ibid*, 488, footnote 1 and Abstract: 'Evidence is advanced which contends that female and male circumcision was practised on "precocious masturbators" in Australian kindergartens'.

⁴²Carol Bacchi, 'The nature-nurture debate in Australia, 1900-1914', *Historical Studies*, 19 (October 1980), 199-212.

even greater in Australia than in Britain. This is understandable in a new sparsely populated country which was attempting to establish itself on the fringes of the British Empire.

Early this century many Australians claimed that 'selfish' women were causing the birth rate decline by their use of contraception and abortion. Neville Hicks has examined the work of the 1904 NSW Royal Commissioners who investigated this decline in the birth rate, and placed this work in perspective by considering medical, religious, popular and statistical opinions.⁴³ In 1984 Michael Roe provided an analysis of nine Australian progressives - William Jethro Brown, James William Barrett, John Simeon Colebrook Elkington, John Howard Lidgett Cumpston, Richard Arthur, George Augustine Taylor, Albert Bathurst Piddington, Robert Francis Irvine and Edmund Morris Miller - most of them eugenisists.⁴⁴ James Gillespie, in his analysis of the medical profession's attempt in the interwar years to implement state-regulated 'national hygiene' to help build a superior race, criticised Roe's notion of 'progressivism' as 'rather vague and all-embracing'.⁴⁵ Geoffrey Searle has warned of a similar lack of precision in many scholars' use of the label 'eugenist'.⁴⁶ To avoid this, I have applied Searle's classification system to my examination of Australian eugenists.

Several contributions of particular relevance for the history of eugenics are included in the book which Roy MacLeod edited, *The Commonwealth of Science: ANZAAS and the Scientific Enterprise in Australasia 1888-1988*, which examines the political and economic contexts of scientific development. These studies of pioneers in various fields are by John Mulvaney (anthropology), Alison Turtle (education and psychology), Joseph Powell (geography and environment) and John Powles (hygienists and health).⁴⁷ I have used such sources to gain insight into the thoughts and actions of some of the main medical and lay protagonists. However, my aim is also to examine Australian eugenics in a global context, in order to consider its derivativeness, the extent to which it was shaped by factors which were uniquely Australian, and what consequences it may have had for the generations which followed. This thesis takes issue with those writers who subscribe to beliefs, catalogued by Adams as 'four interconnected myths' in which it was asserted that:

⁴³Neville Hicks, *'This Sin and Scandal': Australia's Population Debate 1891-1911* (Canberra: ANUP, 1978).

⁴⁴Michael Roe, *Nine Australian Progressives: Vitalism in Bourgeois Social Thought, 1890-1960* (St Lucia: UQP, 1984).

⁴⁵James A Gillespie, *The Price of Health: Australian Governments and Medical Politics, 1910-1960* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), 33.

⁴⁶Searle, in Webster (1981), 239-40.

⁴⁷Roy MacLeod, (ed.), *The Commonwealth of Science: ANZAAS and the Scientific Enterprise in Australasia 1888-1988* (Melbourne: OUP, 1988), xi; Mulvaney, 196-221; Turtle, 222-46; Powell, 249-71 and Powles, 292-307.

- 1 eugenics was a 'single, coherent, principally Anglo-American movement with a specifiable set of common goals and beliefs
- 2 Mendelian eugenists (supporting nature/heredity) were harsher than the Lamarckians (who favoured nurture/environment)
- 3 eugenics was a pseudoscience and
- 4 eugenics was right-wing politically and supported racism, sexism, anti-Semitism and exploitation of the workers, leading inexorably to Hitler's death camps.⁴⁸

I argue that there is little to support Garton's claim that Labor governments 'on the whole' were 'more wary' of passing legislation which proposed segregation of the 'unfit'.⁴⁹ In Australia such proposals were frequently non-party political or had bipartisan support.⁵⁰ Kevles has also emphasized the political diversity among British and American eugenists who were united only in being largely 'middle to upper middle class, white, Anglo Saxon, predominantly Protestant and educated'.⁵¹ Anthea Hyslop has noted that early this century, Australian liberals, radicals and conservatives had surprisingly similar views, all of which agreed on the 'need for a larger, healthier, racially pure population, and for the preventive and scientific treatment of social problems'.⁵² My findings strongly support those of Adams, Kevles and Hyslop.

For the committed, eugenics was an all-encompassing philosophy. In 1923 an enthusiastic academic described it as being 'carried out in many ways and embrac[ing] all those legislative and municipal measures which aim at good housing and drainage, better conditions of labour, pure food regulations, general hygiene, the abolition of dangerous drug habits, and increased facilities for early and efficient medical and surgical treatment to those in need of them'.⁵³

The causes which many Australian eugenists endorsed ranged from censorship, sex education, temperance and prevention of venereal disease, to pure food regulations and the

⁴⁸Adams (1990), 217-24.

⁴⁹Stephen Garton, 'Insanity in New South Wales: Some Aspects of its Social History, 1878-1958' (PhD thesis, UNSW, 1994), 337.

⁵⁰Federal Labor politician Billy Hughes introduced a Marriage Certificates Bill in 1913 and still favoured such legislation in 1929. In 1930 the NSW Mental Defectives Bill was introduced as non-party legislation.

⁵¹Kevles (1985), 64.

⁵²Anthea Hyslop, 'The Social Reform Movement in Melbourne, 1890 to 1914' (PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 1980), 12.

⁵³Sir John Macpherson, *MJA* (7 June 1924), 407.

health and happiness of babies. Many people calling themselves eugenists were muddled or mischievous. Some used eugenic arguments to validate special pleading; for instance, in support of a woman's right to refuse a husband's sexual demands,⁵⁴ or by suggesting that cars served a eugenic purpose by enabling country people to widen their marriage choices.⁵⁵ Some non-eugenic policies had unintended eugenic consequences, and some eugenists joined in unrelated causes, making it difficult to apportion credit to any particular cause.⁵⁶ This was also true in other countries because the diversity and complexity of eugenic arguments increases the difficulty of measuring their influence.⁵⁷

The Catholic Church was opposed, politicians were tentative, workers were distrustful, the press often treated it as a fad or joke, and many people did not know what the word 'eugenics' meant.⁵⁸ Germaine Greer claimed that it was 'more barbarous than cannibalism and far more destructive'.⁵⁹ After hearing the title of my thesis, some people stared, or angrily commented about Hitler or 'designer' babies⁶⁰ and some confused the goals of pronatalism (to increase all births) with those of eugenics (to increase eugenically desirable births).

During the initial eugenics fervour in 1912, a Sydney newspaper speculated that eugenists in London were as numerous as angels in heaven,⁶¹ and an Australian visiting America reported finding that 'the study of eugenics [was] warmly advocated everywhere'.⁶² The vast and rapidly expanding literature on the topic also prompted scepticism, which might explain the *Sydney Morning Herald* warning in 1914 that only 'the serious-minded' were invited to

⁵⁴Scott, quoted by Judith Allen, in '"Our deeply degraded sex" and "The animal in man": Rose Scott, feminism and sexuality, 1890-1925', *Australian Feminist Studies* (nos 7 and 8), Summer 1988, 73.

⁵⁵An anonymous source quoted in *Australian Highway* (1 March 1924), 6.

⁵⁶One such unintended consequence was discussed by Dr Richard Granville Waddy, who said in a paper on eugenics, in *ARHC* (Sydney: RHA, 1929), 63, that 'unconsciously, the White Australia Policy was one of the greatest eugenic laws ever passed in Australia'.

⁵⁷John Macnicol, 'Eugenics and the campaign for voluntary sterilization in Britain between the wars', *Social History of Medicine*, 2, no 2 (August 1989), 15.

⁵⁸Macnicol, *ibid*, quoting the Eugenics Society Secretary, Dr Carlos P Blacker, who acknowledged in the 1930s that only 1% in Britain knew the meaning of eugenics, with much of the population confusing eugenics with eurythmics (rhythmical body movements).

⁵⁹Germaine Greer, *Sex and Destiny: The Politics of Human Destiny* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), 347.

⁶⁰The contentious view proposed by Herrnstein and Murray (1994), favouring the support of a 'cognitive elite' by withdrawing welfare and providing custodial care for the genetically-ordained 'pauper class' indicates that legitimacy is once more being given in some quarters to old and discredited eugenics ideas which fuel class and race wars.

⁶¹'The eugenists' dream', by B M, *Telegraph*, 29 April 1912, 14 (f). 'B M' described eugenics as 'wholesale slaughter of the young and defenceless'.

⁶²Onians (1914), 69.

join Sydney's new Eugenics Education Society.⁶³ In 1919 another newspaper quipped: 'if eugenics had been the rule, some of us wouldn't have been here to study it'.⁶⁴

This study examines numerous examples of the medical profession's endorsement of eugenics: in Presidential addresses to medical congresses, to various Australian branches of the British Medical Association, and in editorials and articles in medical journals. As well as this collective influence, it was also made by distinguished individuals such as Sir Thomas Anderson Stuart at the University of Sydney, Dr Richard Arthur as the NSW Minister for Health, and by Dr Howard Cumpston in his position as the Commonwealth Director-General of Health.

Sometimes the medical links with eugenics were explicit; for example, the 1909 launch of the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Townsville which was associated with plans to settle the north, 'the great experiment of white Australia', and the British Eugenics Society's use of Australian medical informants in 1912 and 1936 to check the credentials of infant Australian eugenics societies. Sometimes the links were implicit, in medical courses taught by eugenists and in intelligence tests devised by educational psychologists. In the case of the Racial Hygiene Association, eugenics was a useful 'umbrella' which sheltered their attempts to provide birth control.⁶⁵

There are records of seven Australian attempts to start eugenics groups. There was also a continuing rivalry between individuals and between the two main eugenic

⁶³'Race culture', Woman's (sic) Page, *SMH*, 11 March 1914, 7.

⁶⁴George A McKay, 'The squatter and the dingo', *The Soldier*, 27 June 1919, 7.

⁶⁵This claim was made by Ruby Rich, a founding president of the RHA in a 12 December 1976 interview with Hazel de Berg (Canberra: NLA Oral History Unit), tape 994 and 995.

organisations in Sydney and Melbourne.⁶⁶ For example, in 1935 the General Manager of the Australian Broadcasting Commission rejected a script by Sydney's RHA on the grounds that it was unsuitable, and because the ABC had already broadcast three talks on eugenics by Professor Agar from Melbourne.⁶⁷ In reply, a member of the RHA Advisory Board scoffed that Agar's talks were out of date and irrelevant to the Association's interests.⁶⁸ The only time that Australian eugenisists met in one place and reached consensus occurred in 1929, at the Australian Racial Hygiene Congress, where delegates unanimously passed seven pro-sterilization resolutions. This harmony was short-lived and did not result in legislative action. Attempts to pass laws requiring pre-marriage health checks also failed.

For many years the RHA had hoped to form an Australian Federation of Racial Hygiene that included Victorian membership. However, a separate Eugenics Society of Victoria (ESV) was formed in 1936, with Agar as President, an action which the RHA General Secretary described as 'shockingly bad taste'.⁶⁹ Neither organisation attracted a large financial membership and, as late as 1946, Dr Victor Wallace, the force behind the ESV, conceded that 'as a people we have not yet developed a eugenic consciousness'.⁷⁰ It never developed.

In 1950 Dr Edith How-Martyn, a pioneering British contraception campaigner who had retired to Australia, expressed disappointment about the lack of interest in eugenics in Sydney.⁷¹ The RHA showed scant interest in eugenics by this time, perhaps because 'eugenics can wait; birth control cannot'.⁷² Dr Wallace's 1962 valediction for the Eugenics Society of Victoria applies even more strongly to the RHA: 'we were pioneers in this country and the

⁶⁶Professor Richard Berry and Sir James Barrett hated each other. Dr Wilfred T Agar, who, with his family, lived next door to Berry in the University of Melbourne, said that Berry would read the newspaper obituary columns each morning to see if Barrett had died, Pers. comm., 20 October 1992. Berry's obituary mentions he told a colleague he was prepared to 'bury the hatchet' in a University Council dispute with [Barrett]. The colleague said Barrett would have probably preferred to 'hatchet the Berry', *MJA* (23 March 1963), 448. McCallum (1990), 77 quoted sources citing a dispute with 'that Bigger Barrett' which precipitated Berry's abrupt resignation from the university.

⁶⁷Charles J A Moses to Goodisson, 15 November 1935, AA/NSW, SP 1063/1, Item 635.

⁶⁸Letter from Sutton to Goodisson, 12 December 1935, *ibid*.

⁶⁹Goodisson's letter to Wallace, 18 November 1936, Wallace Papers 2/3/1, University of Melbourne Archives, quoted by Grant McBurnie in 'Constructing Sexuality in Victoria 1930-1950: Sex Reformers Associated with the Victorian Eugenics Society' (PhD thesis, Monash University, 1989), 93-94. Although McBurnie called the Society by this name, it was in fact called the Eugenics Society of Victoria.

⁷⁰Victor Hugo Wallace, *Women and Children First!* (Melbourne: OUP, 1946), 76.

⁷¹Dr Edith How-Martyn letter to Miss Schenk, Eugenics Society, London, 12 September 1950 (London: ES Archives, SA/EUG - C176). A microfilm copy, reel M2565, is in ML.

⁷²John Maynard Smith, 'Eugenics and utopia', *Daedalus*, 117 (Summer 1988), 90. Originally published *ibid*, (Spring 1965), 487-505.

subject which we presented to the public stimulated discussion and aroused controversy'.⁷³ The RHA, which in 1933 changed its emphasis to birth control, survived while the ESV, which remained eugenics-oriented, did not. These two groups, and others wishing to promote 'good' births and discourage 'bad' ones, helped to legitimise discussions about sexual matters including contraception. Eugenics played an important role in fostering this openness and the emphasis of eugenists on heredity also influenced the development of research into genetics.

- III -

The thesis is arranged in two broad sections, the first dealing with ideas, people and organizations associated with eugenics, and the second considering the practice of eugenics. It is impossible to gauge the precise extent of its impact but the assessment which Roy MacLeod has made of a similar 'ginger group' has relevance: even when reformers' efforts did not result in government action, in Australia individual 'gingery' eugenists helped to 'create a climate of enquiry, and a culture of accountability'.⁷⁴

In the following analysis, I have used terms which were acceptable during the period studied, such as 'unfit', 'feeble-minded' and 'mental deficiency', rather than terms currently in use. As many words in this thesis can be variously interpreted, I have included a terminology Appendix of significant words and terms which are either ambiguous or poorly defined, or which have a particular meaning in the context of eugenics. I have examined the subject primarily from the perspective of the people, publications and organizations that were identified with eugenics. This exercise has been supported by examples from archival sources and by such indicators as the popularity of eugenics courses; eugenists' visits, correspondence with overseas counterparts, and the extent of eugenics in academic and popular writing.

⁷³ER, 52-53 (January 1962), 218.

⁷⁴Roy MacLeod, 'Science for imperial efficiency and social change: reflections on the British Science Guild, 1905-1936', *Public Understanding of Science*, 3 (1994), 169.

Chapter 1 considers the precursors to eugenics in Australia, such as the widespread acceptance of 'survival of the fittest' theories, which influenced the eager endorsement of eugenics before 1914. These influences included fears that inhabitants were undergoing racial decay and that Australia would not be able to prevent Asian invasion. The news of the declining birth rate sparked fears about racial suicide. Such anxieties contributed to the White Australia policy and stimulated campaigns for national fitness and attempts to increase white settlement, even in the tropical north. These early debates provided the foundations upon which eugenics developed. For example, the 1904 Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth-rate and of the Mortality of Infants in New South Wales publicised the issue of infant mortality, making it 'a respectable, even pressing public issue' and 'cleared the way for state involvement', a basic tenet of progressivism and eugenics.

Chapter 2 sketches the lives of four eugenists with very different backgrounds and political persuasions and who represent four distinctive groups of eugenists, following the classification proposed by Geoffrey Searle. Marion Piddington, one of only two people described as a 'eugenicist' in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, after orchestrating the establishment of the Racial Hygiene Centre ran a rival organization, the Institute of Family Relations. John C Eldridge, a public servant, union official and Labor politician, from 1912 to 1922 was the Honorary Secretary of the Eugenics Education Society of NSW. Lillie Goodisson, the *ADB's* other 'eugenicist' was the initial driving force behind the RHA. The pastoralist Henry Twitchin, by leaving his fortune to the Eugenics Society in London, facilitated the preservation of its history and that of kindred Australian societies. This chapter considers why some Australians became eugenists, what motivated them, and which types of eugenists became most influential.

There was extensive pre-1914 eugenics activity in Australia, and this and the seven attempts to establish eugenics organizations are explored in Chapter 3. It is prefaced by an examination of language and eugenics, and of Australia's links with the three international eugenics congresses. It also considers the vetting of the Racial Hygiene Association (RHA) and the Eugenics Society of Victoria (ESV) by the British eugenics society, and the impact which eugenics had on health services. Many eminent members of the Australian medical profession were eugenists or supported the movement's goals, but many doctors and the Catholic Church opposed birth control, which the RHA promoted. This conflict is examined through archival material that complements the histories of birth control, the RHA, and the ESV.

Part 2 of the thesis deals with the practice of eugenics. It begins with Chapter 4 which examines post-Federation plans for boosting the population. Motherhood and migration

have always been important to Australia, and both were promoted by governments in the belief that a large, steadily increasing population was vital for the country's wealth and progress. This chapter briefly considers those few plans which were suggested for 'positive' eugenics, and the many public health measures which were taken to reduce infant and maternal mortality and to increase national fitness. It also considers attempts to boost the population by increasing births and immigration - including child migrant schemes - and examines the relationship between feminism and eugenics and recent criticisms of these two movements.

Chapter 5 examines definitions and concepts of degeneracy theory, acquired inheritance and negative eugenics, and the campaigns that were intended to reduce or eliminate diseases and 'racial poisons'. These 'poisons' included venereal diseases, tuberculosis, prostitution, alcoholism, criminality, pauperism, and inherited weaknesses, all of which were considered to threaten healthy parenthood. It also engages in the nature-nurture debate and argues that this was and continues to be important.

Finally, Chapter 6 examines Australian attempts to gauge the extent of the nation's unfitness from the 1880s until the 1940s, and eugenists' attempts to reduce this by implementing negative eugenics by detecting unfitness and proposing marriage restrictions and legislation for the care, control or sterilization of mentally defective people. While eugenics ceased to be openly advocated from the 1940s, at present the subject is being raised again in controversial debates about inherited differences; the frequent description of genetic engineering and reproductive technology as 'new eugenics' is a reminder that the subject may not have vanished.

Overall, the thesis argues that before and between the two world wars, an all-embracing, if ill-defined, concept of eugenics was propounded by many eminent Australians. As well, while it was largely derived from Britain and America, a variety of specifically Australian circumstances contributed to this acceptance. Before 1914 many members of the medical profession were eugenists who, as well as having immediate influence on national health, exerted a long-term influence as their illustrious careers laid the foundations of Australia's public health services. Pioneers of the Racial Hygiene Association and, to a lesser extent, the Eugenics Society of Victoria, also made their contribution to family planning in Australia.

PART 1

IDEAS, PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS

Chapter 1

Preserving Australia's National Stock

The role of eugenics in Australian history might have been forgotten, as happened in the case of many other special interest affiliations which emerged early this century. However, two things distinguish it from the ephemeral groups which left no trace: the eugenics movement left written records and a legacy which is recognizably embedded in current health services. The reasons for the early endorsement of eugenics are easy to find. Eugenics offered respectable solutions to problems troubling the new and isolated nation. There was a need to reverse the trend towards a shrinking and supposedly degenerating populace, to maintain British 'stock' and to avoid national collapse or invasion. Eugenics built on the earlier 'survival of the fittest' theories and also meshed with hopes that science could assist Australia to become a new-world utopia. Indeed, Richard Hofstadter has argued that eugenics proved to be the most enduring aspect of social Darwinism⁷⁵ by continuing the earlier approach and merely switching from natural to artificial means of limiting the reproduction of the unfit.⁷⁶ Australian evidence supports this claim.

Before examining the people and professions which promoted eugenics before World War II, it is necessary to set the scene by considering the colonial circumstances which were conducive to the acceptance of eugenics, particularly the fears about the declining birth rate. This chapter also analyses ways in which eugenics ideology is embedded in national goals for improving the 'stock', keeping Australia white, boosting the population, and filling the 'empty spaces', including the tropical north, with healthy white families. As the timing of these attempts overlapped and varied in length, I have examined them thematically, rather than chronologically. Attempts to settle the tropical north roughly coincided with the golden years of the eugenics movement, from around 1906 to 1930, but the development, decline and demise of the White Australia policy lasted from the 1850s to 1975. The themes examined in this chapter recur throughout the thesis.

⁷⁵Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, 2nd edn. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), 161. Social Darwinism is defined in the Appendix to the thesis.

⁷⁶Hofstadter, quoted by Peter J Bowler, in *The Mendelian Revolution: The Emergence of Hereditarian Concepts in Modern Science and Society* (London: Athlone Press, 1995), 157.

Racial vitality or racial decay? The calibre of colonists and Aboriginals

Concern about national fitness surfaced decades before it became a preoccupation of Australian eugenisists. When convict transportation ceased, fears about the taint of convict blood merged with fears about the physical quality of the 'Australian race'.⁷⁷ For example, an 1871 article in the *Australasian* commented on the numbers of short people in Melbourne and worried that this might indicate a tendency to 'resort to the Aboriginal type', causing 'the Anglo-Australians' to become 'as stunted in their growth as the former possessors of the soil'.⁷⁸ Concerns about racial decay⁷⁹ were prompted by the writing of two men, Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) and Charles Darwin (1809-1882). In 1852 Spencer coined the terms 'survival of the fittest' and the 'struggle for existence'.⁸⁰ They were adopted by Darwin who indicated in his 1859 *Origin of Species* that he accepted these phrases as being 'more accurate' than his term 'natural selection'.⁸¹

Debate still continues about what constitutes social Darwinism and whether eugenics is a form of this ambiguous structure of ideas.⁸² While the notion is now often disparaged, social Darwinism was influential in America, Britain and Australia and was used to denote any policy justifying struggle and competition.⁸³ Whites were considered to be superior and the 'fittest' who deserved to survive and prosper, regardless of the consequences this might have for the 'unfit'. John Laurent has illustrated that in Australia a range of social Darwinist ideas had 'gained currency' by about 1910⁸⁴ and indicated the role played by free-thinkers, particularly one of their lecturers, the British eugenisist Karl Pearson (1857-1936), in providing

⁷⁷Alison M Turtle, 'Pearson, Porteus and the Pacific Islands Regiment: The beginnings of cross-cultural psychology in Australia', *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 27 (January 1991), 10.

⁷⁸Cited by William F Mandle in 'Cricket and Australian nationalism in the nineteenth century', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 59 (December 1973), 234. Mandle also quoted from the *Australasian*, 28 September 1872, which declared with alarm that 'even the Aboriginal population had undergone physical degeneration'.

⁷⁹Racial decay is defined in the Appendix.

⁸⁰Herbert Spencer, 'A theory of population, deduced from the general law of animal fertility', *Westminster Review* (1852), 468-501, quoted by Lyndsay Andrew Farrall in *The Origins and Growth of the English Eugenics Movement, 1865-1925* (New York: Garland, 1985), 14.

⁸¹Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species* [1859], Richard Leakey, ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), 66.

⁸²See Peter J Bowler, 'The role of the history of science in the understanding of social Darwinism and eugenics', *Impact of Science on Society*, 40 (1990), 273-78; Hofstadter (1955), and Roy MacLeod and Philip Rehbock (eds.), *Darwin's Laboratory: Evolutionary Theory and Natural History in the Pacific* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

⁸³Christopher Shaw, 'Eliminating the Yahoo: Eugenics, social Darwinism and five Fabians', *History of Political Thought*, 8 (Winter 1987), 521-44.

⁸⁴John Laurent, 'Varieties of social Darwinism in Australia, Japan, and Hawaii, 1883-1921', in MacLeod and Rehbock (1994), 485.

those ideas with scientific respectability. Pearson stated in an 1888 National Secular Society pamphlet that 'the replacement of the aborigines throughout America and Australia by white races' was a cause for satisfaction.⁸⁵

Such racist views were widespread and they were proselytised in Australia by Henry Rusden, who in 1870 founded the Sunday Free Discussion Society⁸⁶ and 'was conclusively shown' to have edited an Australian edition of Charles Knowlton's famous birth control pamphlet, *Fruits of Philosophy*.⁸⁷ Rusden wrote in 1876:

The survival of the fittest means that might - wisely used - is right. And thus we invoke and remorselessly fulfil the inexorable law of natural selection (or of demand and supply), when exterminating the inferior Australian and Maori races, and we appropriate their patrimony ... though in diametrical opposition to all our favourite theories of right and justice - thus proved to be unnatural and false. The world is better for it.⁸⁸

Critics have called social Darwinism 'the great nineteenth century fetish'⁸⁹ and anthropologist William Ramsay Smith complained that 'biological laws, to a modern sociologist, are too much like "Thus saith the Lord to an ancient Israelite"'.⁹⁰ This dogma was employed in an 1888 Melbourne *Age* leader to justify Aboriginal deaths from 'the readily contracted vices of the Europeans', as an inevitable 'law of nature' in which 'the inferior race is doomed to wither and disappear'. Although 'it may clash with human benevolence, it is clearly beneficial to mankind at large by providing for the survival of the fittest'.⁹¹ The author was probably George Barton (1836-1901), NSW's 'first purely literary man' and a 'potent preacher of social Darwinism',⁹² who made the much-quoted suggestion that whites

⁸⁵Ibid, 476. Pearson's pamphlet was available from the Society's Australian branches. William H Tucker, *The Science and Politics of Racial Research* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 236-242, revealed flaws in the more recent research of psychologists Raymond B Cattell, Hans J Eysenck and Arthur R Jensen. Cattell (in 1938) and Eysenck and Jensen (in the 1970s) were adding a 'scientific' gloss to 19th century social Darwinian arguments that Australian Aborigines were 'backward'.

⁸⁶F B (Barry) Smith, 'Henry Keylock Rusden (1826-1910)', *ADB*, vol 6, 73-74. Smith indicated that the Society debated such issues as freethinking and eugenics.

⁸⁷Frank Forster and Nigel Sinnott, 'Joseph Symes, H K Rusden and the Knowlton pamphlet', *Atheist Journal*, 8 (1980), 10. Knowlton's pamphlet was initially published in America in 1832.

⁸⁸Rusden, 'Labour and capital', *Melbourne Review*, vol 1 (1876), 82.

⁸⁹Saleeby, in Arthur Mee (ed.), *Harmsworth Popular Science* (London: Educational Book Co, [1913], 1734.

⁹⁰William Ramsay Smith, *The Practical Aspect of Heredity and Environment* (Adelaide: Whillas and Ormiston, 1899), 21.

⁹¹*Age*, 11 January 1888, 4. Evidence that such views continued into the 20th century is contained in Knibbs' comments in *ER*, 19 (1927-28), 275, 281.

⁹²See William Wilde et al., *Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* (Melbourne: OUP, 1991), 74.

should 'smooth the dying pillow' of the Aboriginal race.⁹³ He also influenced his brother Sir Edmund Barton, who was to play a leading role in developing the Commonwealth's Constitution and, as Prime Minister, became the 'principal architect of the White Australia Policy'.⁹⁴

Barry Butcher demonstrated that such views, and anthropological data, provided the roots for Darwin's theory of evolution. Darwin then gave 'scientific credence to an ideological position that had for decades been the basis of European and Aboriginal relationships in Australia'.⁹⁵ Professor (later Sir) Walter Baldwin Spencer (1860-1929) provided the 'most fruitful' work for European theorists including Darwin.⁹⁶ Spencer's endeavours, as a zoologist, anthropologist, collector and art patron 'shed a lustre upon his university, and won for himself a world-wide reputation'.⁹⁷ He was an entrepreneur of Australian science, a Fellow of the Royal Society and, from 1887-1919, Professor of Biology at the University of Melbourne where he was the first to employ female lecturers and associate professors. By 1919 all his departmental colleagues were women. This liberalism contrasted with his 1913 Report to Parliament, signed as Special Commissioner and Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory.⁹⁸ Spencer's Report included plans for farming along the remote Daly River, although he was aware that:

⁹³George Barton, quoted by Alexander Yarwood and Michael Knowling, in *Race Relations in Australia: A History* (Ryde: Methuen, 1982), 44.

⁹⁴Yarwood and Knowling (1982), 44 and in Johns' *Notable Australians* (1914).

⁹⁵Barry Butcher, 'Darwinism, Social Darwinism, and the Australian Aborigines: A re-evaluation', in MacLeod and Rehbock (1994), 389.

⁹⁶*Ibid*, 386.

⁹⁷Robert Francis Irvine, *The Place of the Social Sciences in a Modern University* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1914), 9.

⁹⁸Mulvaney, 'Sir Walter Baldwin Spencer', *ADB*, vol 12, 34.

This will absolutely necessitate driving the Aboriginals off the country, will prevent them having access to water holes and will effectually destroy their natural food supplies. Under no other conditions can the land be held and utilized by white settlers.⁹⁹

Spencer proposed moving Aboriginals to compounds and reserves for their 'betterment'. He was using a term favoured by eugenicists, which he may have learnt from Dr John Kellogg, a founder of the breakfast cereal company, who in 1906 established the Race Betterment Foundation in Michigan.¹⁰⁰ John Mulvaney has described Spencer's Report as a 'comprehensive but costly blueprint for Aboriginal welfare' which was 'tabled' and forgotten. 'His concepts were paternalistic, authoritarian and reflected social Darwinism, yet they were innovative and advocated the creation of extensive reserves'.¹⁰¹ Failing to grasp the political significance¹⁰² and positive aspects of the scheme, one writer commented, if this was the policy of the Chief Protector of Aborigines, 'God save them from such friends!'¹⁰³ Such criticism would have been appropriate in the case of medical administrator Dr (later Sir) Raphael Cilento (1893-1985), who stated in 1933 that 'coloured groups' should be 'eliminated' from the neighbourhood of towns either by 'absorption' or by transfer to an Aboriginal settlement.¹⁰⁴

In 1905, Western Australia's Aborigines Act contained a clause designed to limit the growth of part-Aboriginal populations by taking the children from their parents. NSW adopted an Aboriginal protection policy in 1909 making it illegal for part-Aboriginal people to live on reserves. Amendments to the Act in 1915 and 1918 gave the NSW Aboriginal Protection Board increased powers to remove children and train them as servants. There was widespread concern in the 1930s that America's 'greatest problem' was racial strife fermented by a mixture of the 'worst' (poorest) blacks and whites.¹⁰⁵ This may have

⁹⁹Preliminary Report on the Aboriginals of the Northern Territory', W Baldwin Spencer, 20 May 1913, CPP (1913), 277.

¹⁰⁰Spencer is likely to have known about Dr John Harvey Kellogg (1852-1943) whose books were republished in Melbourne as most were in print for many years in numerous editions. Kellogg's *Ladies' Guide in Health and Disease* appeared in Melbourne in 1904. All were originally published in Des Moines, Iowa or Battle Creek, Michigan in the 1880s.

¹⁰¹Mulvaney, in *ABD*, vol 12, 35.

¹⁰²In Roy MacLeod and Richard Jarrell (eds), *Dominions Apart: Reflections on the Culture of Science and Technology in Canada and Australia 1850-1945*, *Scientia Canadensis*, 17 (nos 1 and 2), 1994, 173, Mulvaney stated that Spencer's position was important for being the first government appointment of an academic anthropologist to formulate policy.

¹⁰³Yarwood and Knowling (1982), 252.

¹⁰⁴Note of Cilento's report to the Home Office, *Daily Standard*, 12 April 1933, 4, in the Racial Hygiene Centre and FPA Papers, ML MSS 3838. Subsequently called RHC Papers.

¹⁰⁵Emily Scott, quoted by Stuart Macintyre, in *A History For A Nation: Ernest Scott and the Making of Australian History* (Melbourne: MUP, 1994), 132.

influenced Australia to segregate the 'best' (tribal) Aboriginals on reserves and assimilate the others.¹⁰⁶

From 1937 the mandatory assimilation of part-Aboriginals into the white community became official Commonwealth policy. Mary Montgomery Bennett (1881-1961) claimed this would cause 'the disappearance of the native race'. For many years this British woman observed the hardships suffered by Aboriginals in Western Australia, taught them and crusaded on their behalf.¹⁰⁷ She was supported in Western Australia by the Women's Service Guilds and the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and in NSW by the Racial Hygiene Association (RHA).

Ruby Rich (1888-1988), an Australian feminist and founding co-president of the RHA, read Bennett's paper in London at the British Commonwealth League Conference in 1933.¹⁰⁸ Bennett claimed that policies of the Western Australian Government were extreme, unjustified and designed to 'separate the half-caste man from the girls and send the girls out amongst the whites and so breed out colour by adultery and prostitution'.¹⁰⁹ To divert attention from her accusations, she was discredited as a woman who 'suffered from ill health, sometimes severely' and had an 'obsession' about Aboriginals.¹¹⁰ The RHA was rebuked in the *Daily Telegraph* which claimed that Australians were indignant because the country's honour had been 'blackened' (sic) in the eyes of the world by the 'exaggerated slanders' of 'Miss Rich and her missionary friends' who 'paint a startling tableau coloured by their fervid sympathies'.¹¹¹

A Northern Territory Administrator's encouragement in the 1920s and 1930s for institutionally reared 'half-caste' Aboriginal women to marry Europeans was described in 1990 as 'an ultimate eugenist solution'.¹¹² Government policies of 'breeding out the colour',

¹⁰⁶Scott, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷Mary Bennett was 76 when she wrote *Human Rights for Australian Aborigines: How Can They Learn Without a Teacher?* (Brisbane: Truth and Sportsman, Printers, 1957). Faith Bandler kindly lent me her copy of Bennett's book.

¹⁰⁸Bennett's revelations were denounced in the *Telegraph*, 19 June 1933. RHC Papers.

¹⁰⁹Chief Secretary's Department. Aboriginals. 'Allegations of Mrs M M Bennett in Regard to Native Slavery, Inadequate Reserves and Traffic in Native Women', quoted in Kay Daniels et al. (eds.), *Women in Australia: An Annotated Guide to Records*, vol 1 (Canberra: AGPS, 1977), 73-75.

¹¹⁰In 'Memo from the Commission of Native Affairs, Western Australia, to the Minister for Native Affairs, 21 February 1938', Government officials claimed that as a result of Bennett's 'ill health' they were reluctant to publicly object to her remarks. This memo is quoted by Kay Daniels and Mary Murnane (comps.), in *Uphill All the Way: A Documentary History of Women in Australia* (St Lucia: UQP, 1980), 89.

¹¹¹'The white and the black', editorial, *Daily Telegraph*, 19 June 1933.

¹¹²Tony Austin, 'Cecil Cook, scientific thought and "half-castes" in the Northern Territory, 1927-1939',

which were implemented by government officials and missionaries, contributed to detribalisation and sometimes to the extinction of Aboriginal people.¹¹³ Paradoxically, in view of its eugenics education mandate, the RHA strenuously opposed any such eugenic solution'. From the early 1930s, the RHA supported Aboriginal rights and vehemently opposed white men's abuse of Aboriginal women.¹¹⁴ The RHA's decision to take this unpopular stance was influenced by Mary Bennett and others including a pioneering overland motorist, Francis Birtles (1882-1941), and the son of Albert and Marion Piddington, anthropologist Ralph Piddington, who was granted a Rockefeller Fellowship while he was in his early twenties.¹¹⁵ With this assistance he completed two Western Australian field trips in 1930 and 1931, then publicised his experiences in a Sydney newspaper under the heading, 'Aborigines on cattle stations are in slavery'.¹¹⁶ He blamed pastoralists, police and a 'callously indifferent' Western Australian government, for creating this 'plague spot of European oppression', which was 'a national disgrace'.¹¹⁷ Officials retaliated and ultimately banished him from Australia in a shameful episode which Mulvaney described as the 'first of several blatant denials of academic (and civil) freedom to anthropologists'.¹¹⁸

'Survival of the fittest' theories were applied not only to white and non-white peoples but also to individuals and various white national groups. For example, Bill Mandle analysed the importance of sport in the 19th century as a comparative measure of British, American and Australian racial fitness, citing a *Sydney Morning Herald* editorial on 24 January 1874 which used colonial cricketing victories to reassure the national psyche that British blood had 'not yet been thinned by the heat of Australian summers'.¹¹⁹ Mandle explained that sporting prowess was important because sport was played against England. Added to the feeling that Australians might be Britain's cast-offs, was the fear that the climate might do to whites what it had done to Aborigines. Questions about colonists' intellectual status may have prompted the University of Sydney to adopt a motto which can be translated as 'the same mind under different skies'.¹²⁰

Aboriginal History, 14 (nos 1-2) (1990), 113.

¹¹³Adolphus Peter Elkin, 'The practical value of anthropology', *Morpeth Review*, vol 9 (September 1929), 39.

¹¹⁴See 'The Aboriginal question' in RHA Annual Report (1932), 8 and 'Racial Hygiene Association work among Aborigines', *SMH*, 16 February 1932, 4 (e).

¹¹⁵The RHA was supportive of Aboriginal rights and the RHC Papers include articles by Birtles in the *Sun*, 16 September 1923, *Railroad*, 10 February 1932, 12-13 and the *Daily Standard*, March 1932, and the previously mentioned articles by Piddington and Bennett.

¹¹⁶*World*, 14 January 1932 and 7 July 1932.

¹¹⁷Mulvaney, in MacLeod and Jarrell (1994), 182.

¹¹⁸*Ibid*, 178-182.

¹¹⁹Mandle (1973), 234.

¹²⁰The Latin motto, *Sidere Mens Eadem Mutato* adopted by the University of Sydney Senate on 13

Satisfied that Australians possessed 'the manhood and the muscle of their English sires', the Australian press contained a diminishing number of references to the theme of colonial degeneration.¹²¹ Indeed, in the early 1870s, London's *Daily Telegraph* published a series of articles by Anthony Trollope (the 'Antipodean') extolling the virtues of 'colonial-born' Australians. He 'had no doubt whatever' that these men and women were 'superior' to those who came from England.¹²² Ten years later Richard Twopenny, another visitor from Britain, was particularly impressed by the 'levelling' (democratic) qualities he observed in Australian society.¹²³ Ken McNab and Russell Ward have suggested why 'currency lads and lasses' (the children of convicts) were described by contemporary colonial writers as 'self-respecting, moral, law abiding, industrious and surprisingly sober'.¹²⁴ Some argued that the 'lusty and vigorous' virtues of the convicts were passed on while their faults were bred out.¹²⁵

Good food and a healthy climate helped to develop a 'superior', distinctly Australian type, larger and fitter than the British.¹²⁶ Visitors commented on this even in the convict era and it was probably more noticeable from the 1840s after choice became possible. American eugenicist Ellsworth Huntington attributed this to a threefold form of natural selection: the sick would not consider the long, hazardous journey, the timid might make a shorter journey to a more assured future in America and the poor could not afford the trip.¹²⁷ This selection process and environmental influences suggest why Australians appeared to be and probably were more homogeneous, prosperous and healthy than their stay-at-home counterparts.

Declining birth-rates and pronatalist responses

December 1856 with the coat of arms, was meant to signify that under the Southern Cross, university traditions were identical with those of the older universities of the northern hemisphere, University of Sydney Archives, 1856.

¹²¹Mandle (1973), 237 and 244, footnote 42, quoting *Australasian*, 14 December 1878.

¹²²Peter D Edwards and R B Joyce (eds.), *Anthony Trollope: Australia* (St Lucia: UQP, 1967), 441-456. This is based on Trollope's 1873 book, *Australia and New Zealand*.

¹²³Richard Twopenny, *Town Life in Australia* [London 1883] (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin Colonial Facsimiles, 1973), 90.

¹²⁴Ken McNab and Russell Ward, 'The nature and nurture of the first generation of native-born Australians', *Historical Studies*, 10 (1962), 289.

¹²⁵Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity, 1788-1980* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1981), 75, quoting educationalist Percival Richard Cole (1879-1948).

¹²⁶Gordon Greenwood (ed.), *Australia: A Social and Political History* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1955), 92.

¹²⁷Ellsworth Huntington, in *West of the Pacific* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), 370-71. See also Donald T Rowland, 'Population growth and distribution', in *Population of Australia*, vol 1 (Country Monograph Series no 9) (New York: United Nations, 1982), 18, who indicated that from 1841 to 1850, 77% of the 140,000 British emigrants paid their fares. Migration soared during the 1850-1860 gold rushes.

After overcoming the initial difficulties in providing sufficient food for the colony, the next challenge was to produce a large and healthy population. As colonial authorities believed that a steadily increasing population was an indication of a country's prosperity, the rapid decrease in the population was seen as a calamity - the country was committing racial suicide.¹²⁸ Many people blamed birth control for this.¹²⁹ Fearfulness caused by this birth rate decline, and news that the Japanese population was increasing, both played a pivotal role in the history of eugenics in Australia.

In 1832 a visitor claimed that the salubrious climate increased the fecundity of almost all women who came to Australia below the age 42. Even previously infertile women would produce a child each year and 'beget a large family', although he conceded that 'females of a higher class [were] less affected by the climate'.¹³⁰ Early views were often unsophisticated, colonial population records were inaccurate, and the population bulges of the 1840s, which were intensified by the

¹²⁸Racial suicide is defined in the Appendix.

¹²⁹For example, Victor Wawn, who operated Wawn's Institute of Health in Sydney and manufactured Wawn's Wonder Remedies, also wrote *Birth Control* (Sydney: Luxton and Hooper, [192?], 33, in which he disputed the 'crudely observed objection to contraception as a racial poison'. He blamed the sterilizing and detrimental effects of VD as the 'most potent factors as race destroyers'.

¹³⁰John Henderson, *Observations on the Colonies of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land* [1832] (Adelaide: Libraries Board of South Australia, 1965), 21-22. Watkin Tench had attributed the high birth rate to the climate in *1788: Comprising A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay and a Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson* [1789], Tim Flannery (ed.), (Melbourne: The Text Publishing Co, 1996), 235.

gold rushes and the boom times of the 1880s, were seen as being the norm.¹³¹ Later, pessimism was fostered by industrial unrest in the eastern states between 1890 and 1894 and increased by the national drought from 1895 to 1903. Prosperity vanished after 1900 because, in addition to these disasters, there was a massive withdrawal of British capital, accompanied by extensive unemployment.¹³² Anxiety was intensified by the rapid technological developments which transformed the western world in the 1890s and early 1900s.¹³³

In the 1900s Australian commentators were alarmed about the reduction in family size, although it was not then apparent that this phenomenon was experienced almost universally in western industrialized countries, or that the steady decrease continued from the 1870s to the 1930s.¹³⁴ The alarm increased in 1904 following the publication of statistics on births in Australian states and overseas which showed that the decline in births had been greatest in Queensland, where the birth rate per 1,000 population had been reduced by 23.9% between 1891 and 1900, compared with an 8.6% reduction in England.¹³⁵ This demographic trend was made clearer in 1920 by the statistician George Udny Yule who, in a paper given to the Cambridge University Eugenics Society, noted that the fall in the birth rate in

¹³¹Elsie F Jones, in 'Fertility decline in Australia and New Zealand, 1861-1936', *Population Index*, 37 (October-December 1971), 305, commented on the variation in the quality and quantity of statistics held by the seven colonial governments who were responsible for these records until 1906. Colin Forster, in 'Aspects of Australian fertility, 1861-1901', *Australian Economic History Review*, 14 (1974), 122, pointed out that the shifts to smaller family sizes in England which contraception made possible, were accelerated in Australia by the depression in the 1890s and the drought. In response there were fewer births from 1898 to 1906 and more departures from Australia than arrivals. See also Charles Archibald Price, in *Population of Australia*, vol 1 (1982), 46-48.

¹³²Joan Rydon and Richard N Spann, *New South Wales Politics, 1901-1910* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1962), 2, 7.

¹³³Examples of these developments are the Overland Telegraph Line which in 1872 provided Australia with a telegraphic link with Britain, the telephone which Bell invented in 1876, electric light which Edison introduced in 1879, radio was developed by Marconi in 1895, cars which Ford began producing in 1899, and aviation which was also developing.

¹³⁴Commentators in the 1870s to 1930s lacked the expertise or perspective to understand the complex reasons for the reduction in family size. The Australian transition was called 'the most momentous event of our times' by Lado Ruzicka and John Caldwell, in *The End of Demographic Transition in Australia* (Canberra: ANU, 1977), 1. This was echoed by Peter McDonald and Patricia Grimshaw who called it 'the most significant change in the history of Australian families', in G Aplin et al. (eds.), *Australians: A Historical Dictionary* (Sydney: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon, 1988), 147

¹³⁵*Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth-Rate and on the Mortality of Infants in New South Wales* (Sydney: Govt. Pr., 1904), vol 1, Appendix, 61, 'Exhibit no 1: Births - Rates per 1,000 of Population - Countries of the World'. Subsequently cited as RCDBR.

Britain (23%) was only exceeded by that in Australia (27%) and in New Zealand (34%). Table 1 provides a summary of Yule's statistics using data from *Statistique Internationale*, which indicates that the birth rate decline was 'almost universal'.

Table 1: World wide decline in the birth rate, 1871 to 1910

Country	Average annual births per 1,000 at all ages		Decrease % of the rate in 1901-10 on 1871-80
	1871-80	1901-10	
New Zealand	40.5	26.8	34
Australia	36.1	26.5	27
England	35.4	27.2	23
Scotland	34.9	28.4	19
France	25.4	20.6	19
Netherlands	36.2	30.5	16
Germany	39.1	32.9	16
Ireland	26.5	23.3	12
Italy	36.9	32.7	11
Denmark	31.4	28.6	9

In contrast, Japan had had a 'conspicuous [population] increase' in the 1871 to 1910 period he investigated, and there was a 'steadiness or slight increase' in some American states and South America, probably related to immigration.¹³⁶ It was the combined news about the Japanese increases and Australian decreases which from the 1890s fuelled Australian anxieties about 'yellow peril' and 'race suicide'.

The medical profession shared the concerns expressed by statisticians and politicians: an 1898 editorial in the *Australasian Medical Gazette* warned that Australia's declining birth-rate was 'a problem which legislation must deal with soon unless we are content to become a weak and degenerate country'.¹³⁷ This was also the view of physician Sir James Barrett (1862-1945), Vice-Chancellor, then Chancellor at the University of Melbourne, who was 'always prominent in movements with an Empire ring about them'.¹³⁸ He was described as a 'pioneer in all things that one could think of by which the human race might be bettered

¹³⁶George Udny Yule, *The Fall of the Birth-Rate: A Paper Read Before the Cambridge Eugenics Society, 20 May 1920* (Cambridge: CUP, 1920), 11-12.

¹³⁷Arthur, 'The decreased birth-rate in NSW', *AMG* (21 November 1898), 503.

¹³⁸Entry for Barrett, in Johns' (1914).

and improved'.¹³⁹ However, Barrett did not consider that educating women was one of these improvements. In 1901 he claimed that women's education and their knowledge about contraception were having serious consequences for the future of the British Empire and the Anglo-Saxon race, warning 'it is not possible to cheat God Almighty without paying a heavy penalty, both personally and racially - personally if the cases be few; racially if the cases be numerous'.¹⁴⁰

In 1903 the NSW Government Statistician, Sir Timothy Coghlan (1856-1926), stated that Australia, despite its size, would never become 'truly great' unless conditions changed because, with the virtual cessation of immigration, the population size was solely reliant on the 'seriously diminished and still diminishing' birth-rate. He added that the 'satisfactory solution' to this problem was 'a national one of overwhelming importance' which would determine whether Australia would ever take its place 'amongst the great nations of the world'.¹⁴¹ Coghlan's pessimism in 1903 contrasted with the euphoria he had expressed in *The Wealth and Progress of NSW 1886-87*, in which he boasted that the 'colony' and 'all the provinces of Australia' compared favourably with any other country', that no Australians were 'born to poverty' and that the 'hereditary pauper class' had 'no existence here'. Australia was free of old world hatreds and strife 'and thus, happy in its situation and most fortunate in its wealth, it may await its future in calm confidence'.¹⁴²

His 1880s confidence may have vanished when he began compiling and publishing statistics.¹⁴³ These were described by Havelock Ellis as being 'specially valuable' because they contained such details as parental age, 'period since marriage' and number of children, details which were not given in English or 'most other' records.¹⁴⁴ The census material which Coghlan presented, and news of the increasing strength of Asian countries, stimulated the government to hold the Royal Commission on the Decline in the Birth-rate and on the Mortality of Infants in New South Wales - the world's first such inquiry. Coghlan's evidence and concerns about the 'teeming millions in Japan' were cited in the resumé of the Commission's Report which blamed women's love of luxury and selfishness, and their use of contraception and abortion for the diminished population.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹Lord Horder, quoted in *MJA* (14 July 1945), 59.

¹⁴⁰Barrett, *ICMJA*, 1 (20 January 1901), 2.

¹⁴¹Coghlan, *Childbirth in NSW: A Study in Statistics* (Sydney: Govt. Pr., 1900), 69.

¹⁴²Coghlan, *The Wealth and Progress of NSW 1886-87* (Sydney: Robertson, 1887), 491-92.

¹⁴³Coghlan, *The Decline of the Birth Rate in NSW and Other Phenomena of Childbirth: An Essay in Statistics* (Sydney: Govt. Pr.), 1903.

¹⁴⁴Havelock Ellis, *The Task of Social Hygiene* (London: Constable, 1912), 147, footnote 1.

¹⁴⁵*RCDBR*, vol 1 (1904), paragraphs 53, 83, 173 and 174.

Rose Scott (1847-1925), a feminist, pacifist and anti-imperialist who opposed both 'enforced motherhood' and contraception, refused to appear as a witness and denounced the Report as a 'whirlwind' of 'superficial comment' by the 'men only' commission which 'very contentedly' told the public that women were at fault. In her 1904 Presidential Address to the Women's Political and Educational League, Scott considered:

So long as men keep up the demand for a supply of thousands and thousands of women in every city, who are to lead degraded lives, apart from the sphere of wife and mother [they should blame themselves for the evils which influence the birthrate by] disease, selfishness and immorality. ... Quality should be placed before quantity, for population as population can be of no benefit to a country. ... It is not a question of many people or few people, but a question of what sort of people, and what sort of environment.¹⁴⁶

The Commission's findings were widely reported in Australia¹⁴⁷ and some reviews were published in Britain and Germany. Dr Norman Himes noted 'there is more opinion than science in the verbose, bulky report'.¹⁴⁸ Havelock Ellis contrasted Coghlan's conclusion, that the reduced birth-rate was due to 'the art of applying artificial checks to conception', with that of William McLean, the Government Statistician of Victoria, who argued that the population's rate of increase was 'perfectly satisfactory' and that the decline was 'due mainly to natural causes'. McLean had mentioned the fact that births were reverting to the norm after being abnormally high during the boom years of the 1880s. He, like Scott, pointed out that there was no advantage in having a high birth-rate if that was accompanied by a high infant mortality rate. He wrote that 'clearly, it is no satisfaction for any community to have a high birth-rate in order to achieve in a few years, results which are accomplished by communities with a low birth-rate at no such sacrifice of human life'.¹⁴⁹ A similar point was made by the final speaker at the 1912 Eugenics Congress, that 'the greatest problem of the world is not how to bring better babies into the world, but how to take care of such as come. The tragedy of the world is spoiled babies'.¹⁵⁰ Allied tragedies are illustrated in Figures 15 and 17.

¹⁴⁶Scott, quoted in Daniels and Murnane (1980), 131-32.

¹⁴⁷See 1904 articles in *SMH*, 4 March, 3 (f), 7 March, 7 (h) and 8 (a), 26 March, 10 (e), 31 March, 10 (b), 21 April, 4 (c) and 27 April, 12 (f).

¹⁴⁸Norman Himes, *Medical History of Contraception* [1936] (New York: Schocken Books 1970), 326-27.

¹⁴⁹Havelock Ellis (1912), 161-62 quoting *ICMJA* (20 March 1904), 125.

¹⁵⁰Samuel G Smith, 'Eugenics and the new social consciousness', in *Problems in Eugenics: Papers communicated at the First International Eugenics Congress* (London: EES, 1912), Appendix, 486.

Edith Onians, an Australian who attended the Congress, concluded from charts in an accompanying exhibition, that as New Zealand (a country with a low birth rate) had the world's lowest infant mortality, it provided 'an ideal we can reach in all countries by lowering the birth-rate sufficiently'.¹⁵¹ Similar conclusions were reached by Dr Charles Vickery Drysdale (1874-1961) in his 1912 birth control pamphlet *Neo-Malthusianism and Eugenics*.¹⁵² He attacked the spreading of 'ridiculous fallacies' about the declining birth-rate' by people such as 'ex-President Roosevelt' who claimed that the 'Australian population would not double once in a century' and complained that 'several English writers' had also 'frequently made similar errors', by confusing birth-rates with survival-rates. Drysdale believed that Australia's population would increase '4.8-fold in a century'¹⁵³ and that in 'every country in the world except New Zealand and Australia', birth control advocates wished to limit the size of the population. He explained that in Australasia, fertility was 'sufficiently restricted', food was plentiful and the death-rate was so low that 'the question of quality is now of first importance'.¹⁵⁴ Drysdale was indulging in propaganda: although infant deaths declined from the 1900s, this related to improved public health, not birth control or eugenics. White supremacist Lothrop Stoddard was clearly wrong in his 1923 statement that in a few 'enlightened countries' including Australia, birth control was 'welcomed' and knowledge about it was 'freely imported to all classes'. He said that as a result 'social and racial results' had been 'excellent' in 'minimizing the differential birth-rates and thus

¹⁵¹Edith C Onians, *The Men of To-morrow* (Melbourne: Thomas C Lothian, 1914), 258.

¹⁵²Neo-Malthusianism is defined in the Appendix.

¹⁵³Charles V Drysdale, *Neo-Malthusianism and Eugenics* (London: William Bell, 1912), 14.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid*, 3-4. The author was the Malthusian League's President and the son of Charles R Drysdale, who had been its first President from 1878 until his death in 1907.

averting sudden group shifts in the population'.¹⁵⁵ Following the introduction of compulsory education, Australians were becoming increasingly literate towards the end of the 19th century; however, few could have had an opportunity to read birth control literature, as little was either produced or imported. The authorities most definitely did not 'welcome' such material and made strenuous efforts to restrict it and to discourage birth control.

A scathing attack on Australia's 1904 Report was made by Neo-Malthusian advocate Johannes Rutgers, who Sheila Faith Weiss described as a 'leading member of the international birth control movement'.¹⁵⁶ In 1923 he criticised the Commission's Report for maintaining that birth control had undermined the morality of the nation and for 'its fanaticism' in maintaining that there had been an *increase* in infant mortality, while at the same time quoting statisticians from the various Australian states as witnesses, including McLean, who had declared that there had been a 'distinct *decrease*' in the infant death rate.¹⁵⁷ Jessie Ackermann, an American journalist, traveller and reformer who claimed to be the first woman to have written a book about Australia, made a remarkably accurate assessment in 1913:

Although marriage has decreased and the birth rate per family is on the decline, the increase in the population among the white race is greater than it has ever been. This is due to the diminished percentage of mortality among children, especially infants during the first year of their lives. ... The greatest advance in any science of modern times is that directed towards the conservation of infant life.¹⁵⁸

Judith Allen has noted the patchy analysis of pronatalism in Australian politics and the virtual absence of any consideration of the influence of the women's movement.¹⁵⁹ The likelihood that women's gains influenced a pronatalist reaction is suggested by the fact that the Royal Commission began their 'pronatalist theatre' in 1903, the year after women became eligible to stand for office or vote in Federal elections.¹⁶⁰ Despite its shortcomings, there were two achievements of the RCDBR which Milton Lewis has enumerated: it gave wide publicity to the issue of infant mortality, making it a 'respectable, even pressing public issue' and 'it

¹⁵⁵Lothrop Stoddard, *The Revolt Against Civilization: The Menace of the Under Man* [1923] (New York: Garland, 1984), 118. Stefan Kuhl, in *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (New York: OUP, 1994), 38, 53, 61-63, 73, 99-100, stresses the American Stoddard's role in legitimating Nazism.

¹⁵⁶Sheila Faith Weiss, *Race Hygiene and National Efficiency: The Eugenics of Wilhelm Schallmayer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 137.

¹⁵⁷Johannes Rutgers, *Eugenics and Birth Control*, R A Giesecke (trans.) (Dresden: Coudray, 1923), 132.

¹⁵⁸Ackermann, *Australia: From a Woman's Point of View* (London: Cassell, 1913), 95.

¹⁵⁹Judith Allen, *Sex and Secrets: Crimes Involving Australian Women Since 1880* (Melbourne: OUP, 1990), 67-68.

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 72-73.

cleared the way for state involvement'.¹⁶¹ Publicity about the problem and the proposed solution influenced public opinion, by creating a climate which was conducive to the subsequent acceptance of eugenics.

William F Refshauge made some mistaken comments about the 1904 Report on the birth rate, for example, the claim that the Commissioners recommended adopting 'a vigorous policy of encouraging immigration'. They did not recommend this and migration was not one of their terms of reference. According to Refshauge, following the Report 'there was no legislative action taken in any State to implement pronatalist policies'.¹⁶² As it was a NSW Royal Commission, the recommendations only applied to the NSW government which did respond by passing the required laws: the Poisons Act 1905, which required prescription-only sale of the abortifacient ergot of rye, and the Private Hospitals Act 1908, which obliged private hospitals to have licences, be inspected and to keep a register of patients, births and deaths.¹⁶³ Similar laws were passed in other states.¹⁶⁴ However, despite legislative backing and the power of the mostly male alliance of pronatalists, there was no birthing avalanche; it is unlikely that any Australian child has been born as a result of its parents' sense of duty to the state.¹⁶⁵

This century, most Australian women resolutely avoided the large families which were common when fertility was minimally restricted. Even so, in 1911 the 'excellent data' compiled in the Commonwealth indicated that the population was slowly increasing, at a rate of less than 1% per annum.¹⁶⁶ The point that there was an increase, was also made by Tasmanian economist Lyndhurst Giblin to refute a claim made in the *Eugenics Review* that Australia had one of the world's lowest birth rates because the country had implemented 'women's suffrage'.¹⁶⁷

Neville Hicks wrote a comprehensive analysis of the 1904 RCDBR and of the population debate before and after the publication of its Report, which has been described as a

¹⁶¹Milton Lewis, "Populate or Perish": Aspects of Infant and Maternal Health in Sydney, 1870-1939' (PhD thesis, ANU, 1976), 125.

¹⁶²William F Refshauge, in *Population of Australia*, vol 2 (1982), 260. The Commission's 21 recommendations were published in *RCDBR*, vol 1 (1904), 43-45.

¹⁶³Peter Grabosky, *Sydney in Ferment: Crime, Dissent and Official Reaction, 1788-1973* (Canberra: ANU, 1977), 104-05.

¹⁶⁴See the 16 pages of subject entries for 'legislation' in the *Bibliography of Australian Medicine and Health Services to 1950* (Canberra: AGPS, 1988), vol 4, 370-86.

¹⁶⁵Alfred Ernest Mander, *Alarming Australia* (Sydney: Deaton and Spencer, 1938), 27.

¹⁶⁶Ronald A Fisher, 'The actuarial treatment of official birth records', *ER*, vol 18 (1926-1927), 105.

¹⁶⁷L F Giblin, 'Discussion. Endowment of motherhood', *ER*, 3 (1911-1912), 265 quoting R Murray Leslie, 'Women's progress in relation to eugenics', *ER*, 2 (1910-1911), 291.

'masterpiece of conservative rectitude'.¹⁶⁸ Hicks agreed that his analysis in *'This Sin and Scandal'* would have been 'more effective' without the errors which Michael Roe noted. The chief weakness was a claimed 'excessive simplicity of moral judgement' in arguing that all the 'natalists' were conservative, arrogant 'fuddy-duddies' and in ignoring the radicalism which Theodore Roosevelt exemplified and which many Australian pronatalists, such as Sir James Barrett and Sir Charles Mackellar, also displayed.¹⁶⁹ Graeme Davison avoided this trap in his analysis of the motivations and personalities of philanthropists involved in child rescue work in Melbourne from 1900 to 1940.¹⁷⁰ However, Simon Combe's undergraduate thesis on eugenics in NSW from 1908 to 1936 contained a high degree of such weakness without the brilliance which Hicks' work displayed.¹⁷¹

Australian pronatalism, fanned by patriotism and religion, grew in response to the high death rate in World War I and peaked during the three post-war decades.¹⁷² In his Presidential address to the 1923 Australasian Medical Congress, Sir George Syme, a world famous surgeon, warned that those who urged people to 'fructify [be fruitful in the Biblical sense] and defend the country' should not forget the importance of qualitative as well as quantitative population increases.¹⁷³ Not many Australians were concerned about this distinction. For instance, in 1925 Justice Piddington saw Australia as 'a dying nation' unless saved by a childhood endowment scheme.¹⁷⁴ Cilento also warned about the birth rate peril.¹⁷⁵ These worries were evident in 1937 when William Morris (Billy) Hughes (1862-1952), then Commonwealth Minister for Health, made his famous remark that 'Australia must advance and populate, or perish'. The slogan echoed the sentiments of the 1904 RCDBR Commissioners. Figure 2 indicates that a similar plea had been made years before Hughes' exhortation.

¹⁶⁸The quotation is from *Population and Australia: A Demographic Analysis and Projection*. National Population Inquiry (Canberra: AGPS, 1975), 176.

¹⁶⁹Neville Hicks' book, *'This Sin and Scandal': Australia's Population Debate 1891-1911* (Canberra: ANUP, 1978) was reviewed by Michael Roe in the *Australian Economic History Review*, XX (no 2) (September 1980), 173-74. Hicks acknowledged Roe's criticism in Graeme Osborne and William F Mandle (eds.), *New History: Studying Australia Today* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1982), 187, footnote 37.

¹⁷⁰'The city-bred child and urban reform in Melbourne 1900-1940', in Peter Williams (ed.), *Social Process and the City* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1983), 143-74.

¹⁷¹Simon Combe, 'Eugenics in NSW 1908-1936' (BA Hons thesis, History, UNSW, 1980).

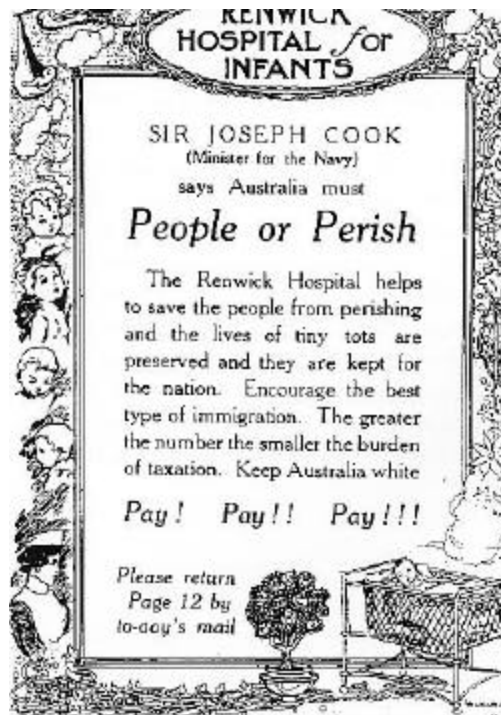
¹⁷²Richard Arthur, 'The birth rate', *Telegraph*, 25 December 1915, 15 (g).

¹⁷³G A Syme, *MJA* (16 February 1924), 5, quoted in *ER*, 16-17 (1924-1926), 67-68.

¹⁷⁴'Birthrate decline. Piddington takes a gloomy view', *Labor Daily*, 2 March 1925, 4 (d) and *Smith's Weekly*, 15 March 1941, 4 (a).

¹⁷⁵'Falling birth-rate. Dr Cilento's warning', *SMH*, 26 July 1934, 9 (h).

Figure 2: Populate or perish¹⁷⁶



¹⁷⁶A fund-raising appeal in the *Charities' Gazette and General Intelligencer: Official Organ of the Benevolent Society of New South Wales*, 25 September 1919, 11. Petrina Slaytor generously gave me this and the illustrations shown in Figures 14, 15 and 17.

Hughes asserted that 'a great number of problems confront the Commonwealth, but the declining birth-rate overshadows them all. It is impossible to exaggerate its gravity. Australia is bleeding to death'.¹⁷⁷ In view of this, it is hard to understand why Michael Roe claimed that Hughes 'believed' in 'population control'.¹⁷⁸ In fact he 'trenchantly attacked birth control' and always stressed the need for population growth.¹⁷⁹ George McCleary, the British author of *The Menace of Depopulation*, was puzzled about Australians' birth restraint:

In no country is life more sunny and pleasant. In that glorious sunshine, in view of the radiant faces that throng the great surfing beaches of the Southern Ocean, the world appears, as it appeared to Robert Louis Stevenson, 'as a brave gymnasium full of sea-bathing and horse exercise, and bracing manly virtues'. If there is any part of the world where mankind may well be expected to thrill with the joy of life it is in these two island Dominions [Australia and New Zealand], in both of which the reproduction rate has sunk below the rate required to maintain the present numbers of the population.¹⁸⁰

Similar concerns prompted the second Australian report on the decline in the birth-rate. However, those concerned with the 1944 report were predominantly health scientists. This contrasted with the 1904 Commissioners who came from such diverse areas as business, law, medicine and politics. In 1944 the report was issued by the organisation responsible for health policy-making, the National Health and Medical Research Council.¹⁸¹ The shift towards specialisation began after World War I, with specialists in fields such as anthropology, criminology, medicine, education, psychology and psychiatry concerning themselves about the nation's fitness. As many Australian eugenicists were members of medical and allied professions, their involvement had an impact on their respective fields of health and welfare.

¹⁷⁷NHMRRC. Report of the First Session, February 1937, 4.

¹⁷⁸Michael Roe, *Nine Australian Progressives: Vitalism in Bourgeois Social Thought, 1890-1960* (St Lucia: UQP, 1984), 122.

¹⁷⁹For example, Billy Hughes' remarks in 'A danger. Birth rate. Government Action?', *Sun*, 29 February 1936, 3 (h). Hughes' 1912 thundering about child endowment as a 'wholesome antidote' to the 'national poison' of birth control is discussed in Chapter 4.

¹⁸⁰George McCleary, 'Population problems in the British Commonwealth', *ER*, 30 (April 1938), 49.

¹⁸¹Appendix 1, 'Interim Report of the National Health and Medical Research Council on the Decline in the Birth-rate', NHMRC, 18th Session, 22-24 November 1944, 9-96.

White Australia

In the last two decades Australia has become a country in which multiculturalism has become firmly established in social policy and popular consciousness. However, for more than a century, Australia was 'more British than the British'. This section examines the period when the policy shaped Australian history, and the ways in which the assumptions of white superiority fed into eugenic plans for national fitness.

The anti-Asian mood which began on the 1850s gold fields culminated in the passage of the Immigration Restriction Act in 1901, a restriction which was not finally removed until the Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act of 1975. Throughout the years in which eugenics rose and fell, Australia had a homogeneous population, 98% of which derived from white British 'stock'. The rationale for this endeavour was racist but while it operated there was no need for other measures to maintain racial purity. Consequently, racism played a lesser role in the Australian eugenics movement than in other countries, such as America and South Africa.

Ironically, the proposal that Australia should be maintained as a white colony was made by a British lawyer who in 1833 had prepared an anti-racist bill which was crucial to the abolition of the slave trade. The proposal was made in London in 1841 by Sir James Stephen (1789-1859) of the Colonial Office.¹⁸² The idea was taken up in Australia and intensified with the gold rushes of the 1850s where anti-Chinese riots occurred. In 1880 the first Australian Intercolonial Conference agreed in principle to restrict Chinese immigration.¹⁸³ In 1893 the NSW Chinese Restriction Act became law and three years later the ban was extended to all Asians.¹⁸⁴ This portal-guarding aim was a major stimulus for Federation and for bringing together the Australian Labor Party.¹⁸⁵

In his Federation speech on New Year's Day 1901, Australia's first Prime Minister, Sir Edmund (Toby) Barton (1849-1920) said 'a nation for a continent, and a continent for a nation'.¹⁸⁶ The imperative to fill Australia's 'empty spaces' (see Figure 3) mixed notions of

¹⁸²Yarwood and Knowling (1982), 225 and *ADB* (1788-1850), 475.

¹⁸³There were anti-Chinese riots at Buckland River (Victoria) in 1857 and at Lambing Flat (New South Wales) in 1861, cited in Bryce Fraser (ed.), *Macquarie Book of Events* (Sydney: Macquarie Library, 1984), 66.

¹⁸⁴*Collins Milestones in Australian History: 1788 to the Present*, Robin Brown (comp.), (Sydney: Collins, 1986), 68. Australian calls for Asian exclusion intensified after Japan's victory in the 1895 Sino-Japanese war.

¹⁸⁵Jack T Lang, *I Remember* (Sydney: Invincible Press, 1956), 32.

¹⁸⁶Edmund Barton, reported in *Argus*, 1 January 1901, 4. Barton, who was using a popular saying of

efficiency and progress with eugenic ideas about maximising population growth and improving the race. Each of these objectives was represented in White Australia Policy debates. The Immigration Restriction Act - the legislation formulating the decision to prohibit non-Europeans from becoming permanent settlers - was signed on 24 December 1901 (after much hesitation) by Lord Hopetoun (1860-1908), the first Governor General of Australia. Exclusion was enforced by dictation tests in a language the applicant could not speak. These tests continued from 1901 until their abolition in 1958. The last remnants of the White Australia Policy however, were not removed until the 1970s, more than 20 years after most support for eugenics had vanished. This suggests that eugenic beliefs did not initiate this policy, nor were they the sole or the strongest influence.

The doctrines of social Darwinism - ideas of 'race and stock' and of 'blood and breed' - forged a connection between Australian nationalism, Anglo-Saxon imperialism and Caucasian racism, although the boundaries between these three strands of ethnocentrism were blurred.¹⁸⁷ Sandy Yarwood noted that among historians there have been 'sharp differences of interpretation' about the 'genesis and growth' of the White Australia Policy. He pondered whether the impulse was mainly economic, arising 'from a labour-oriented desire to conserve high living standards and trade union solidarity'. Was it fear of the unfamiliar or 'a primordial instinct' to keep the race pure originating from the spectacle of the numbers of Chinese gold miners and by an awareness of 'the vast human reservoir' from which they came?¹⁸⁸ It is impossible now to determine whether Australian ethnocentrism was racist, imperialist, eugenic, economic, patriotic or a muddle of all of these. At the time, it was widely seen in a positive light, as 'race purity not jobs, a natural instinct not selfishness, became the moral justification for exclusion'.¹⁸⁹ In 1888 the radical Brisbane weekly, *Boomerang* was the first to use the words 'White Australia Policy'.¹⁹⁰ The policy was staunchly supported by the influential *Bulletin*, popularly known as the 'Bushman's Bible'. Soon after its founding in 1880, this nationalistic, 'vulgar' but 'extremely readable'¹⁹¹ weekly from Sydney altered its stance in headings which were modified, in much the same way that public opinion changed over the 80 years in which the restrictions operated. Initially the banner slogan was 'Australia for the Australians' but the editor changed it on 7 May 1908 to

the 1890s, was quoted by Sandy Yarwood (ed.) in *Attitudes to Non-European Immigration* (Melbourne: Cassell, 1968), 103.

¹⁸⁷Douglas Cole, 'The crimson thread of kinship: Ethnic ideas in Australia, 1870-1914', *Historical Studies*, 14 (April 1971), 511 and 522.

¹⁸⁸Yarwood (1968), 1.

¹⁸⁹Cole (1971), 512 quoting *Bulletin*, 12 July, 1902 and 4 February, 1904.

¹⁹⁰The phrase was used in 'Bystander's Notebook' [supporting Queensland miners' attempts to expel Chinese gold diggers], *Boomerang*, 2 June 1888, 3.

¹⁹¹Twopenny (1883), 240.

'Australia for the White Man'.¹⁹² This heading was not removed until Donald Horne became the magazine's editor in 1961.¹⁹³

According to Gordon Greenwood, there were many problems facing Australia by 1901, but 'central to all others was the task of holding the continent - peopled, white, an outpost of European civilisation' - because 'at the very core of nationalism was the demand to control the composition of the society. "White Australia" was no meaningless term to the small and isolated society apprehensively aware of the ever-increasing population to the north. However unfortunate a term in its choosing, it was one which aroused passions and embodied convictions'.¹⁹⁴ Some 'honorary whites' became residents for pragmatic¹⁹⁵ or diplomatic¹⁹⁶ reasons. There were some attempts to promote non-white immigration, for instance in 1862 the Queensland Government passed the Coolie Immigration Act to encourage Indians to migrate as sugar plantation workers. However, the employment terms were so onerous that planters were not interested and the Act was repealed.¹⁹⁷ The following year Queenslanders began a practice of bringing, sometimes kidnapping, Pacific Islanders to work as indentured labourers. This continued until 1906 when a law ordering their deportation was passed.

Australian sentiments favouring exclusively white settlement were stimulated by Charles Henry Pearson (1830-1894) who had begun his career as an Oxford don, before settling in Australia in 1871, where he became a distinguished journalist and subsequently the Victorian Minister of Education.¹⁹⁸ Roe regards him as one of the instigators of the reforms known as 'progressivism'¹⁹⁹ or 'vitalism' which swept the United States, Britain and Australia from the 1890s until its peak in 1915.²⁰⁰ Pearson, who promoted educational opportunities

¹⁹²The Great White Australian: James Edmond, 1903-1915', *Bulletin*, 29 January 1980, 279.

¹⁹³Horne (letter to the editor) *SMH*, 7 April 1992 and correction 12 April 1992.

¹⁹⁴Greenwood (1955), 199 and 204.

¹⁹⁵For example, 393 Afghan camel drivers were allowed to settle in Australia in 1901, Fraser (1984), 65.

¹⁹⁶For example, Maoris received European status following complaints from New Zealand, 2 March 1905 item in *Chronicle of the 20th Century* (Ringwood, Victoria: Chronicle Communications with Penguin, 1990), 79.

¹⁹⁷*A White Australia. The Kanaka Labour Question: Sugar Growing in Queensland and the Part Played by the Black Man*, A 'Herald' investigation, (Melbourne, 1901), 10.

¹⁹⁸John Tregenza, *Professor of Democracy: The Life of Charles Henry Pearson, 1830-1894: Oxford Don and Australian Radical* (Melbourne: MUP, 1968), 1.

¹⁹⁹Progressivism is defined in the Appendix.

²⁰⁰See for example Roe (1984), 1 and Roe, 'Efficiency: The fascist dynamic in American Progressivism', *Teaching History*, 8 (August 1974), 38-55. It is also discussed by Michael Freeden, in 'Eugenics and progressive thought: A study in ideological affinity', *Historical Journal*, 22 (1979), 645-71 and Don S Kirschner, in 'The ambiguous legacy: Social justice and social control', *Historical Reflections*, 11 (Summer 1975), 69-88.

for women and poorly-paid workers, became a celebrity after the publication in 1893 of *National Life and Character: A Forecast*, which his biographer John Tregenza has claimed was 'discussed from St Petersburg to Tennessee'.²⁰¹ Epitomising the mounting pessimism among evolutionists,²⁰² Pearson warned about the danger 'for the higher races everywhere, if the black and yellow belt encroaches upon the earth'.²⁰³ Robert Colls summarised the objectives of Pearson's proposals as intending to ensure that whites could retain their territory. In his schema, the state would need to intervene with a form of democratic national socialism, 'overlaid by a military autocracy with fortress duties'. The state would ensure the citizens were healthy and take care of social planning and the military would defend it.²⁰⁴

Pearson's prophecy was based on observations of population growth in temperate regions which he stated were the only areas suitable for the white 'higher races'.²⁰⁵ Tregenza has accepted that Pearson's book had a 'continuing influence' but did not agree that 'the first effect of this powerful and original book was to carry to victory the "White Australia Policy"', and with that to make racial exclusiveness a leading feature in the self-governing portions of the British Empire'.²⁰⁶

Labor politician Sir Henry Parkes (1815-1896), whose introduction of the Chinese Restriction Bill in the NSW Parliament in 1888 initiated the White Australia Policy, praised Pearson as 'an academic radical' and the 'Professor of Democracy'.²⁰⁷ Pearson's prophecy about the decline of the white races was considered plausible. President Theodore Roosevelt expressed these fears in the phrase 'race suicide',²⁰⁸ warning Australians to 'fill up your cradles and throw open your gates. Beware of keeping your North empty'.²⁰⁹ Pearson's book was read by 'most of the leading public men' who accepted it as a 'sophisticated exposition' of the 'Yellow Peril'.²¹⁰ It was quoted by Barton during the debate on the

²⁰¹Tregenza (1968), 238.

²⁰²For example, Craufurd D Goodwin, 'Evolutionary theory in Australian social thought', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 25 (1964), 204 and Roe (1984), 18.

²⁰³C Pearson, *National Life and Character: A Forecast* (London: Macmillan, 1893), 96.

²⁰⁴In Robert Colls and Philip Dodds (eds.), *Englishness: Politics and Culture, 1880-1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 48.

²⁰⁵Pearson, quoted in Goodwin (1964), 403. Pearson (1893), 63, also worried that whites in tropical regions might be overpowered by blacks or assimilated by them.

²⁰⁶Tregenza (1968), 234-35, quoting R C K Ensor.

²⁰⁷Quoted in Tregenza (1968), xv.

²⁰⁸Racial suicide is defined in the Appendix.

²⁰⁹Theodore Roosevelt, quoted by Arthur in 'The success of the White Australia Policy', *Westminster Gazette*, 20 October 1908.

²¹⁰Tregenza (1968), 232, 234. Also see Yellow peril in the Appendix.

Immigration Restriction Bill as showing 'that these trends would be inevitable unless something was done to prevent them'. Barton did not think that the 'doctrine of equality' was 'really ever intended to include racial equality'.²¹¹ While this distrust of democracy later became a feature of eugenic thinking in Britain and America,²¹² very few Australian eugenisists expressed such views.²¹³

Myra Willard stated that the foremost reason for the White Australia Policy was to ensure 'the preservation of a British-Australian nationality'.²¹⁴ As evidence she quoted Australia's second Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin (1856-1919), who is credited as deserving most credit for the recognition the Commonwealth received in the first decade of this century as a 'national laboratory for social experimentation and positive liberalism'.²¹⁵ Deakin, theosophist, eugenisist, an 'intellectual disciple' of Charles Pearson, and 'the silver-tongued orator of Australia',²¹⁶ stated in his speech on the Immigration Restriction Bill:

A united race means not only that its members can intermarry and associate without degradation on either side, but implies one inspired by the same ideals, and same general cast of character, tone of thought - the same constitutional training and traditions - a people qualified to live under this constitution, the broadest and most liberal perhaps the world has yet seen reduced to writing - a people qualified to use without abusing it, and to develop themselves under it to the full height and extent of their capacity.²¹⁷

Deakin said of the Japanese, 'we fear them for their virtues'²¹⁸ but this neither pleased nor placated the Japanese. One of the few to criticise this exclusion was Edward Foxall, a political activist who in 1903 wrote *Colorphobia. An Exposure of the 'White Australia Fallacy'* under the Japanese pseudonym 'Gizen-No-Teki' ('The Enemy of Hypocrisy').²¹⁹ Other

²¹¹Ibid, 234 quoting Edmund Barton in CPD, 4 (1901), 5233. Saul Dubow, in *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), 92-93, quoted a similar view presented by Annie Besant who had been a socialist radical and birth control advocate. She argued in 1909 that 'no negro' should be able to vote and argued that Indians should have full equality with whites as both were of Aryan 'stock'.

²¹²Daniel J Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 76, supported this comment by quoting Henry Osborn who, in a speech to delegates at the Second International Congress of Eugenics, dismissed the possibility of education and environment offsetting the 'handicap of heredity'. Leonard Darwin responded, 'as equality was impossible with the feeble-minded, they can never have true liberty', quoted in *Argus*, 24 December 1921, 4.

²¹³See Richard Berry, Harvey Sutton, Raphael Cilento, John Bostock and Leslie Nye.

²¹⁴Myra Willard, *History of the White Australia Policy* (Melbourne: MUP, 1923), 189.

²¹⁵R Norris, 'Alfred Deakin', *ADB*, vol 8, 256.

²¹⁶Deakin's debt to Pearson is discussed in Hicks (1978), 85 and Johns (1914).

²¹⁷Deakin, Speech in CPD, vol 4 (1901), 4807.

²¹⁸William Gladstone (1809-1898) coined this phrase which was quoted by David Sissons, in J A A Stockwin (ed.), *Japan and Australia in the Seventies* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1972), 197.

²¹⁹Edward William Foxall (1857-1926), whose position was identified as 'Sec. Japanese Consulate, Sydney', wrote the book because he said the press had suppressed his attempts to discuss the 'White

opponents were Edward William Cole (1832-1918), an eccentric book-seller²²⁰ and the geographer Thomas Griffith Taylor (1880-1963), popularly known as 'Grif', who had boasted that he was the only government official to oppose the icon of White Australia.²²¹ Taylor also argued that Australia was not a 'dog-in-the-manger' for keeping 'other folk out' because in reality the land (as illustrated in Figure 3) only remained an 'unused paradise' as there were no attractive unused areas left.²²²

Attention focused on the White Australian Policy as a result of evidence which shook the faith of western nations in the superiority of white races. Birth rates were declining, the first victory of a coloured nation against a white one occurred in the 1905 Russo-Japanese war, and for the first time ever, in Sydney on Boxing Day 1908, a world title fight was staged between a black and a white boxer and the black competitor won.²²³ As the event could not be held in America because of its racial laws, a stadium was built in Rushcutters Bay, Sydney, where a crowd of 60,000 witnessed the African-American, Jack Johnson defeat the white Canadian, Tommy Burns.²²⁴ The match was reported by notables of the world's press. For example, Isadore Brodsky²²⁵ noted that H L Mencken (1880-1956)²²⁶ was in Sydney on assignment for the *Sunday Times* and Jack London²²⁷ covered the match for the *Sun*.

There were some strange responses to the growing awareness of the increasing Asian population and to the news of their military successes. For example, in 1909 Dr Alan Carroll

Australia question', *Colorphobia*, xi. The Sydney office of the Consulate-General of Japan supplied the translation, Pers. comm., 12 January 1993.

²²⁰Cole Turnley, in *Cole of the Book Arcade: A Pictorial Biography of E W Cole* (Hawthorne, Victoria: Cole Publications, 1974), 135-45, indicated that in 1901 Edward William Cole responded to the 'monstrous hypocrisy' of the White Australia Policy by issuing a medal and several pamphlets which denounced the policy as 'impossible'.

²²¹Quoted by Nancy J Christie, in MacLeod and Jarrell (1994), 129.

²²²Taylor, *Australia: A Study of Warm Environments and Their Effect on British Settlement*. 4th edn. (London: Methuen, 1947), 7.

²²³White (1981), 81.

²²⁴Reet and Maxwell Howell, *A History of Australian Sport* (Sydney: Shakespeare Head, 1987), 66.

²²⁵Isadore Brodsky, *The Sydney Press Gang* (Sydney: Old Free Press, 1974), 163.

²²⁶[Probably by Mencken] 'World's championship. A one-sided-battle. Stopped by police. Johnson wins on points. Colored champion at last', *Sunday Times*, 27 December 1908, 1, 7-8. Betty Adler, the editor of *H L M: The Mencken Bibliography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1961), 117, stated that Henry Louis Mencken (1880-1956) wrote much of his early material for both Associated Press and about 50-60 daily papers, most of which was unsigned, making it impossible to trace the material.

²²⁷Jack London [1876-1916], 'In a modern stadium. The negro's smile. Story of a big fight', *Australian Star* ['stable mate' of *Sunday Sun*], 28 December 1908, 1. Also 'Jack London, on the fight. "I cannot understand it". Burns the bravest of the brave', *Sunday Times*, 27 December 1908, 7 and *ibid*, 'A woman at title. [Charmian Kittredge] Mrs Jack London's impressions. Excited throughout the contest. "Everything was nice and proper"'.

(c1823-1911), the founder of the Royal Anthropological Society of Australasia, proposed that an Aboriginal army should be trained to defend the tropical north from intruders.²²⁸ In 1910, a writer in the *Eugenics Review* commended Australians for being conscious of the 'menace of the yellow races', adding that this could only be a 'healthy influence', since 'the proximity of powerful and threatening neighbours has more than once in the world's history produced a nation of more virile and even heroic men'.²²⁹ Three years later, the visiting temperance evangelist Jessie Ackermann reassured Australians that 'until the science of child-life is equally understood among the dark races there is little danger of the white races being swamped'.²³⁰

Dr Francis Pockley, the President of the 1911 Australasian Medical Congress, considered that it was a question of disease, not child care, in which 'dark races' with a far greater fertility than that of the whites, would dominate their 'ancestral domains' and become 'formidable competitors' once tropical diseases were eradicated. His preference was for whites to avoid the parasites and the tropics. However, his view was atypical and Australians were frequently reminded of their national and Imperial obligations to occupy the continent and keep it safe. A British politician, Sir Leo Chiozza Money (1870-1944), made this explicit in 1925 in his book *The Peril of the White*, in which he hoped to see white Australia's future 'assured by a large-scale policy of development and settlement' as protection from 'the Asian continent' which was 'overflowing with people who look eagerly to the empty island continent'. Money said that this 'imminent danger' of invasion was recognised by 'responsible Australian statesmen' such as Edward (Red Ted) Theodore (1884-1950), formerly the Labor Premier of Queensland, who pointed out in 1925 that Australia was responsible to the world for developing its north and asked citizens to consider the possibility of 'some power' seriously challenging Australia's right to monopolise territory which it did not develop.²³¹ Not all of his readers were convinced. For example, in London the Secretary of the Eugenics Society wrote to their Australian benefactor in 1928 indicating that she was 'not surprised' that he was 'disturbed' by Money's 'most dysgenic writings'. She wondered why a man with 'so little understanding' had received 'so much attention'.²³²

Fears of Asia's intentions were expressed by people with widely divergent political views. For example, in 1926 a left-wing correspondent wrote an article in the *Melbourne University*

²²⁸*Science of Man* (1 January 1909), 144.

²²⁹Anon, *ER*, 2 (January 1910), 222.

²³⁰Ackermann (1913), 96.

²³¹Leo Chiozza Money, *The Peril of the White* (London: Collins, 1925), 54 and 56.

²³²Secretary ES to Twitchin, 28 July 1928, SA/EUG C87.

Magazine warning of the latent threat of 'the coloured population of Asia - a teeming multitude unaware as yet of its power'.²³³ Two politically conservative authors were equally fearful that Australia's fertile coastal fringe might 'attract the straying eyes of land-hungry nations, whose exploits show keenness of vision and a directness of purpose unfettered by our moral conceptions of right and wrong'.²³⁴ In London two Labor politicians, the 'raucous radical nationalist'²³⁵ Dr Herbert Evatt (NSW) and William Kitson (WA), defended the White Australia Policy, telling delegates at a 1926 migration conference of Australia's determination to fight any proposals which attempted to remove Australia's trade and labour self-determination.²³⁶ Some politicians were tactful about Australia's intentions to maintain a population with 98% British ancestry. For instance in 1928 the Nationalist Coalition Prime Minister Stanley (later Lord) Bruce (1883-1967) commented that 'Australia would maintain the British character of its population by friendly arrangements, rather than by throwing out defiance to the whole world'.²³⁷ This was more diplomatic than his comments at the 1926 Imperial Conference in London in which he said 'unless we can populate and develop these Dominions, I do not think anyone can look forward with any optimism to the future of the British Empire'.²³⁸

British-born Meredith Atkinson (1883-1929), who has been described by Stuart Macintyre as a 'grandiloquent self-promoter whose irregularities were notorious',²³⁹ in 1913 became the first Director of Tutorial Classes to be appointed in Australia by the Workers' Educational Association.²⁴⁰ In 1920, after leaving Sydney to take up his appointment as Melbourne University's first Professor of Sociology,²⁴¹ Atkinson complained that 'few outside the Commonwealth' really understood the White Australia Policy, which had as its main objective 'the preservation of the Australian standard of social welfare'.²⁴² He supported this argument by quoting Billy Hughes' speech made to Federal Parliament in 1919:

²³³Paul Haege, 'The decadence of the white races', *Melbourne University Magazine* (1926), 134-37.

²³⁴John Bostock and Leslie John Jarvis Nye, *Whither Away? A Study of Race Psychology and the Factors Leading to Australia's National Decline*, rev edn. (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1936), 88.

²³⁵Macintyre (1994), 163.

²³⁶'White Australia. Policy attacked. Migration congress', *SMH*, 24 June 1926, 9.

²³⁷'White Australia Policy', *SMH*, 25 June 1928, 12.

²³⁸Imperial Conference, 1926. Appendices to the Summary of Proceedings (London: HMSO, 1927), 58.

²³⁹Macintyre (1994), 83.

²⁴⁰Helen Bourke, 'Sociology and the social sciences in Australia, 1912-28', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, 17 (March 1981), 29.

²⁴¹Robert Francis Irvine wrote to the Warden of the University of Sydney on 19 January 1917 opposing the appointment of Meredith Atkinson as Professor of Sociology because he 'lacked training and a scientific spirit', University of Sydney Archives, M283, No 1101.

²⁴²Atkinson (ed.), *Australia Economic and Political Studies* (Melb: Macmillan, 1920), 11.

Honourable members who have travelled in the East or in Europe will be able to understand with what difficulty this world assemblage of men, gathered from all the corners of the earth ... were able to appreciate this ideal of 5,000,000 people who had dared to say, not only that this great continent was not theirs, but that none should enter in except such as they chose. ... Perhaps the greatest thing we have achieved, under such circumstances, and in such an assemblage, is the policy of a White Australia. On this matter I know that I speak for most, if not all, of the people of Australia.²⁴³

Paraphrasing Hughes' speech, Atkinson continued 'this is the foundation of all that Australia has fought for. This is the only part of the Empire or of the world in which there is so little admixture of races. ... We are more British than Britain, and we hold firmly to this great principle of a White Australia because we know what we know, and because we have liberty and we believe in our race and in ourselves, and in our capacity to achieve our great destiny'. Atkinson then commented that Australia had 'provided the socialists and the eugenists with strong proofs of their contention that we can cultivate a super-race, if we will but furnish the social conditions of its development'.²⁴⁴ The choice of words 'the eugenists' and 'their contention', suggests that in 1920 he was trying to distance himself from the movement. If so, it was a marked and rapid change as the WEA had promoted eugenics while he was their Director and he had been invited to a high-level meeting on eugenics in 1918.²⁴⁵ Perhaps he no longer considered that eugenics added to his prestige or prospects.

While the White Australia Policy was implemented before the emergence of the eugenics movement, they had related aims, as Dr Richard Granville Waddy made clear in a paper he gave at the 1929 Australian Racial Hygiene Congress:

Unconsciously, the White Australia Policy was one of the greatest eugenic laws ever passed in Australia. A greater piece of legislation could not have been secured for this country. The types we are bringing into it are not coming from the classes we should breed from. They are not people who, mentally and physically, are capable of filling the higher positions in life. Most of the types are domestics and miners and not the intelligentsia.²⁴⁶

A contrary position was taken by James Curle, a British peddler of 'yellow peril' scares who regretted that 'no racial idealism' prompted Australia to be a 'pure-white people'. He

²⁴³Hughes, in CPD vol 89 (1919), 12165-66, explaining the defence he had made of the White Australia Policy in his role as Australia's delegate to the Peace Treaty in Versailles.

²⁴⁴Atkinson (1920), 3-4, 55. By combining the word 'the' with 'socialists' and 'eugenists', he appeared to identify them both as groups with which he had no association.

²⁴⁵The WEA's organising committee proposed including a paper on 'the value of eugenics in teaching sex hygiene' in their *Teaching of Sex Hygiene Conference*, WEA Minute Book, 21 July 1916, 92. The WEA also ran Eugenics Study Circles in the 1920s.

²⁴⁶Waddy, 'Eugenics' in *ARHC* (1929), 63.

commented that the decision 'was economic, not eugenic'²⁴⁷ in *To-day and To-morrow: The Testing Period of the White Race*, which Leonard Woolf rejected as the 'hallucinations of high fever'.²⁴⁸ In the 1928 edition of this book,

²⁴⁷James Herbert Curle, *To-day and To-morrow: The Testing Period of the White Race*, 7th edn (London: Methuen, 1928), 69.

²⁴⁸Leonard Woolf, quoted in *Book Review Digest* (1927), 185.

Curle reminded Australians and New Zealanders that 'by excluding colour, limiting entry to the best whites, and preventing the unfit from breeding, [they could] become, and remain, about the finest white strains in the world'.²⁴⁹

The concept of the superiority of the white race and the need for a white Australia was fully supported by the 'distinguished but unassuming'²⁵⁰ Wilfred Eade Agar (1882-1951), who succeeded Baldwin Spencer in 1919 as Professor of Zoology at the University of Melbourne. In turn, each became President of the Eugenics Society of Victoria: Spencer (in name only) in 1914 and Agar when the Society was revived in 1936. In 1918 Agar received a request from Leonard Darwin (1850-1943), the President of the Eugenics Education Society,²⁵¹ asking for information about Australian studies on 'inter-marriage between races'.²⁵² There is no record of a reply but Agar did maintain links with groups overseas. After a trip to Baltimore in 1926, he wrote to Raymond Pearl, Professor of Biometry and Vital Statistics at Johns Hopkins University, asking for statistics about Japanese births, claiming that Australians were 'keenly interested' in the 'possible results of admitting the yellow races'.²⁵³ Pearl forwarded the query to Dr Davis, and Agar, in a November 1927 letter to thank Pearl, indicated that the data he required - birth rates corrected for age and marriage, and classified according to occupations - 'do not exist'.²⁵⁴ In the same month, Pearl had denounced the 'biology of superiority' which lay behind such questions, asserting that eugenics had 'largely become a mingled mess of ill-grounded and uncritical sociology, economics, anthropology, and politics, full of emotional appeals to class and race prejudices, solemnly put forth as science, and unfortunately accepted as such by the general public'.²⁵⁵

²⁴⁹Curle (1928), 71. Bill Munsie, the Western Australian (Labor) Minister for Health, quoted this comment as an argument for sterilization of the mentally deficient, WAPD, 17 September 1929, 747.

²⁵⁰Macintyre (1994), 188.

²⁵¹Major Leonard Darwin, the fourth son of Charles Darwin, was the EES President from 1911 to 1926. Darwin wrote to Frank Tate on 4 May 1918 to ask about the possibility of establishing a eugenics organization in Australia. This letter is in the Education Department Special Case files, Public Record Office of Victoria. SP 1106 - Sex Education in Schools. Grant McBurnie generously gave me his notes about this correspondence.

²⁵²Darwin to Tate, op cit.

²⁵³Wilfred Eade Agar to Dr Pearl, 18 August 1927, Raymond Pearl Papers, B/P312, American Philosophical Society Library Archives.

²⁵⁴Ibid, 3 November 1927.

²⁵⁵Pearl, in the *American Mercury*, November 1927, quoted by Kevles (1985), 122.

If Agar was aware of Pearl's views, they did not influence him. In 1928 Agar mused that the question of mixed-race marriages was 'somewhat academic' because the White Australia Policy was so 'firmly rooted in sentimental, economic and political ground'.²⁵⁶ Australians who opposed that view included the geographer Thomas Griffith Taylor (1880-1963) who debunked the 'Nordic question', later calling it a 'fetish', and the anthropologist Adolphus P Elkin (1891-1979) who described the 'pure Nordic' superman as 'a fiction'.²⁵⁷ In 1927 Taylor had pointed out that the concept of a 'pure' race had developed comparatively recently, largely prompted by Count Gobineau, who argued that white races, especially northern Europeans, were innately superior to all others and that they degenerated if they interbred with others.²⁵⁸ Ten years later an Australian historian warned that Germany's use of this theory was a threat for world peace.²⁵⁹ Thirty years later the geneticist Sir Macfarlane Burnet (1899-1985) urged Australians to 'collect the bonus of exceptional vigour that hybridization offers'.²⁶⁰

Racial purity was extolled by an Australian psychiatrist, Ralph Athelstone Noble (1892-1965)²⁶¹, who defended the White Australia Policy at a 1933 meeting of the International Committee of Mental Hygiene in Washington. Noble claimed that because of this policy of 'racial purity', Australia had been saved from many of the problems experienced by multi-racial societies. His view was bolstered by Dr Emerson, an American Professor of Public Health, who argued that by not mixing races, Australia had 'strengthened [her] mental and physical purity of race' and might expect to avoid the American rates of suicide, which had quadrupled in 70 years and divorce, which had trebled in 50 years.²⁶² Agar held similar views about 'miscegenation',²⁶³ although he did concede in 1928 that the effect of wide-

²⁵⁶W E Agar, 'Some eugenic aspects of Australian population problems', in Philip David Phillips and Gordon Leslie Wood (eds), *The Peopling of Australia* (Melbourne: Macmillan in assocn with MUP, 1928), 144.

²⁵⁷Taylor (1927), 336-37, Taylor (1937), 461-62 and Elkin (1929), 34.

²⁵⁸Taylor, 'Racial misconceptions. Showing that a mixture of races is always advantageous', *Home* (1 October 1927), from RHC Papers. The reference is to Count Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau's *Essay on the Inequality of Races* (1853-55) with its theories about racial superiority. Is is currently being debated whether (or to what extent) such views influenced Wagner, Nietzsche or the excesses of Nazi Germany.

²⁵⁹Stephen H Roberts, *The House That Hitler Built* (London: Methuen, 1937), 51-53, 359-64.

²⁶⁰Frank E Macfarlane Burnet, 'Migration and race mixture from the genetic angle', *ER*, 51 (July 1959), 93-97.

²⁶¹Ralph Noble's obituary in the *BMJ* (15 May 1965), 1317, indicated that he was born in Sydney in 1892, in the 1920s he worked in mental hospitals in Sydney, from 1931 to 1933 he was Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Yale, followed by a 'pioneer role' as psychiatrist at Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge until he retired in 1957.

²⁶²'Racial purity our aim. "White Australia" policy will save country', *Guardian* (Sydney), 9 May 1930, 16.

²⁶³Michael Banton, in Milo Keynes (ed.), *Sir Francis Galton, FRS: The Legacy of His Ideas* (London: Macmillan and the Galton Institute, 1993), 176, stated that the word was coined in the 1864 US

scale mixed-race marriages was 'impossible to forecast'. However, he did not mention those scientists who rejected old assumptions about the inferiority of mixed racial groups.²⁶⁴ Agar was sure that:

most of the coloured races would not make a desirable contribution to a population living under a civilization which has been slowly wrought out by the white race in conformity with their own particular genius. Nor does the experience of other countries with a large half-caste population encourage us to try the irrevocable experiment.²⁶⁵

Just as Agar was probably unaware of Pearl's liberal views about racial mixtures, he is equally unlikely to have heard the illiberal observation attributed to Charles Davenport.²⁶⁶ Agar was aware of views promoted by Francis Galton, who in 1869 had contended that Anglo-Saxons far outranked African Negroes who, in turn, outranked Australian Aborigines who did not outrank anyone.²⁶⁷ Echoing Galton, Agar explained that any preference for immigrants from 'Nordic' (or Anglo-Saxon) countries was due to 'a natural sentiment in favour of one's kith and kin' and to the belief that the members of this race were 'actually superior to the others'. He supported this statement by saying that the 'Nordic cult' had been upheld by a number of European and American writers, whose views were influenced by the (now notorious)²⁶⁸ American Army Intelligence Tests in which the foreign-born recruits from the Nordic countries had higher scores than the others.²⁶⁹

Agar did not mention that researchers who rejected these views included radicals such as Taylor and conservatives such as William McDougall, a Professor of Psychology at Harvard University, who in 1921 described such ideas as 'fantasy erected on racial prejudice'.²⁷⁰ Twenty years later Melbourne's *Herald* asked 'representative spokesmen' if the White Australia policy should be revised. Agar, 'The Eugenist', stated that the policy should be enforced 'at all costs'. He had not changed, nor it seemed in 1948 had 'both sides of politics, [and] the trade union movement (excepting the Communist wing)' who all 'support strict

presidential election campaign by the Democrats' 'dirty tricks department' which alleged that the Republicans advocated this practice. A different, more detailed version of the 1864 hoax is given in Tucker (1994), 302, footnote 92.

²⁶⁴See Elkin (1929), 39-43 and Austin (1990), 108.

²⁶⁵Agar (1928), 143-44 and 'Blood mixing. Marriage with natives', *SMH*, 7 June 1933.

²⁶⁶Charles Davenport's claim that people of mixed race origins would have 'the long legs of the negro and the short arms of the white which would put them at a disadvantage in picking up things from the ground', was quoted by Elazar Barkan, in *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States Between the World Wars* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), 204.

²⁶⁷Mark Haller, *Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1963), 11, quoting Galton, in *Hereditary Genius* (1869), 325-37.

²⁶⁸Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (London: Penguin, 1984), 199-222.

²⁶⁹Agar (1928), 138.

²⁷⁰William McDougall, *National Welfare and National Decay* (London: Methuen, 1921), 43. For a critique of McDougall's 'undeniably fascist tendencies' see Tucker (1994).

enforcement of the present policy of exclusion'.²⁷¹ In 1945 Richard Dixon, the Assistant Secretary of the Australian Communist Party, wrote 'we must associate with our coloured allies in the peace, as in war, as equals'.²⁷²

The same year, Elkin suggested a reconsideration of the White Australia Policy which had previously been 'beyond question and above political party divisions' and had been, in historian Sir William Hancock's opinion, 'the indispensable condition of every other policy'.²⁷³ Elkin wanted to retain the policy and merely remove the term 'white'.²⁷⁴ In much the same way, eugenics campaigners began to remove the word 'eugenics' from their vocabulary after World War II.²⁷⁵ In Britain the Eugenics Society formalised this in 1957 by adopting a policy of 'crypto-eugenics' in which they promoted eugenics 'by less obvious means'.²⁷⁶

The softening of the White Australia Policy can be traced by changes in wording in the *Australian Official Yearbook*. In 1960 the mention of Asians being forbidden permanent settlement was deleted; in 1964 preference was to be given to 'European migrants who would be able to integrate readily' but this clause about preference for 'persons of European origin' was removed in 1965.²⁷⁷

While recently released Cabinet papers reveal that the Federal Liberal Government rejected proposals to relax the White Australia Policy in 1964, the Australian Labor Party was more progressive. In August 1965 the ALP deleted the words 'White Australia Policy' from its immigration policy, adding that the Party would support and uphold an expanded immigration program which would be administered with 'sympathy, understanding and tolerance'. Any suggestion of Labor Party support for the White Australia Policy was 'finally

²⁷¹J A Alexander, 'White Australia - should our policy be revised?', *Herald*, 3 March 1948, 4 (d).

²⁷²*Immigration and the 'White Australia' Policy* (Sydney: Newsletter Press, 1945), 15. Also claims in 'Elections. Moscow domination. Red Labour. Indicted by Mr Bruce', *SMH*, 10 November 1928, 17 (h), that Communists would dismantle the White Australia policy

²⁷³Adolphus Peter Elkin, 'Re-thinking the White Australia Policy', in Wilfred D Borrie et al., *A White Australia: Australia's Population Problem* (Sydney: Australasian Publishing Company and Australian Institute of Political Science, 1947), 216.

²⁷⁴Elkin, in 'Speech to the Labour (sic) Club, University of Sydney', *Union Recorder*, 5 July 1945, 120-21.

²⁷⁵For example, Victor Wallace asked Dr C P Blacker on 30 October 1949 why Professor Francis Albert Eley Crew from Edinburgh 'did not use the word "eugenics" once' in his two Melbourne lectures. Blacker replied in 18 November 1949 that he was 'not in the least surprised' by this but would 'sooner explain it verbally' than in writing, SA/EUG E4.

²⁷⁶ES policy, quoted in Faith Schenk and Alan Parkes, 'The Activities of the Eugenics Society', *ER*, 60 (1968), 154.

²⁷⁷Fraser (1984), 70.

buried' at the 1971 Conference.²⁷⁸ The amended immigration policy now included a clause which stipulated 'the avoidance of discrimination on any grounds of race or colour of skin or nationality'.²⁷⁹ Paradoxically, while eugenics was on the wane by the 1930s, the restrictive immigration policy remained until the Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act was passed in 1975.

Populating the tropical north

The debate about white people's ability to live in the tropics was one of the key issues for the 'white Australia' supporters and for eugenisists. To avoid Asian invasion they believed that the tropical north had to be filled with a healthy white population. The establishment of the Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine in 1909 and its operation in Townsville until 1930, indicates the importance which the government placed on encouraging people to live in the tropics.

While there was not universal support for the imperative to develop the tropics, it was considered the patriotic duty of politicians to promote what in 1919 was described as this 'great experiment of White Australia'.²⁸⁰ There was some spirited opposition: in 1895 a Townsville surgeon, Joseph Ahearne (1852-1926), informed a scientific audience 'that the tropics have an injurious effect upon adult Europeans [and] that their children develop into a more nervous, slighter and less enduring type'.²⁸¹ Five years later his opinions were publicised for a lay audience in the literary 'Red Page' of the *Bulletin*.²⁸² Dr Carroll stated that anthropology had 'abundantly proved' that whites could not work successfully in the tropics.²⁸³ The eugenisist Dr Richard Arthur (1865-1932) sought opinions about this: Dr F B Croucher, Singapore's Senior Medical Officer, responded that he had 'no doubt' that permanent European settlement in tropical countries was 'impractical' and that white children who stayed in the tropics degenerated 'both physically and morally'. White women's health deteriorated and, in his opinion, neither 'Britisher nor Italian could do manual work in a

²⁷⁸Entries for 2 August 1965 and 20 June 1971 in *Chronicle* (1990). On 24 January 1900 the first Federal Labor Party Policy called for 'Total exclusion of coloured and other undesirable races', quoted in Lang (1956), 32.

²⁷⁹Reported in *SMH*, 21 June 1971.

²⁸⁰Anton Breinl and W J Young, 'Tropical Australia and its settlement', *MJA* (17 May 1919), 403. A Grenfell Price, in *White Settlement in the Tropics* (New York: American Geographical Society, 1939), 76, claimed that Australians in the tropics were 'making substantial contributions toward one of the most important experiments in world history'.

²⁸¹Joseph Ahearne, 'Effect of the Queensland Government educational regulations on the physique of the present and future North Queenslander', *AAASR* (Brisbane, 1895), 797.

²⁸²Ahearne, 'The Australian in the Tropics', *Bulletin*, 29 September 1900.

²⁸³Alan Carroll, 'Australians in a tropical climate', *Science of Man* (23 January 1903), 194-95.

climate such as Singapore'.²⁸⁴ Sir James Barrett responded that the peasants of Italy would do 'exceedingly well' in the tropical north because they were such hard workers.²⁸⁵

Arthur's views indicate that not all eugenisists supported all aspects of the White Australia Policy.²⁸⁶ In 1912 Arthur opposed solely-British immigration: 'the general proposition that all white men can live in the tropics is very different to the limited one that some white men can live there' and 'the ideal of an all-British Australia is a perfectly unattainable one, and if it should be persisted in ... it will lead to overwhelming disaster'.²⁸⁷ In the 1880s Queensland had received migrants from northern Europe.²⁸⁸ Arthur suggested that southern Europeans should also work in the tropical north, 'otherwise we must keep it empty till the Japanese and Chinese come and occupy it'.²⁸⁹ He was echoing President Theodore Roosevelt, who in 1907 suggested that Australia should relax immigration laws and bring in Spaniards, Italians and Portuguese to help 'fill up the north'.²⁹⁰

Plans for establishing an Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine

In 1905 John Simeon Elkington (1871-1955) published *Tropical Australia: Is it Suitable for a Working White Race?* This staunch advocate of public health and tropical medicine noted that some tropical areas supported 'a fairly considerable white population, who do not appear to be degenerating, despite the recklessness and ignorance so often displayed in relation to personal health and habits'.²⁹¹ In his view, the tropics should be 'a prize for the fittest' and he recommended measures to ensure this fitness, particularly to prevent white 'progeny' degenerating because of inadequate parental care.²⁹² In 1906 Ramsay Smith and a German scientist, Professor Klatz, produced two reports which strongly supported white settlement of the Northern Territory.²⁹³ In 1907 Matthew MacFie claimed to have evidence in support of degeneracy theory. He indicated in a paper presented to the Australasian

²⁸⁴Croucher to Arthur, 17 September 1912 letter, Arthur Papers.

²⁸⁵Barrett to Arthur, 7 July 1913 letter, *ibid*.

²⁸⁶Brian Williams, in *Education With its Eyes Open* (Camberwell, Victoria: ACER, 1994), 332, stated that the eugenisist Dr Kenneth Cunningham 'strongly disagreed' with the white Australia policy. Williams did not elaborate on this or give substantiating references.

²⁸⁷Arthur, *Telegraph*, 22 February 1912, 9 (d) and 6 June 1912, 4 (f).

²⁸⁸Fraser (1984), 68.

²⁸⁹Richard Arthur, 'The Northern Territory', *Telegraph*, 19 June 1912, 17 (h).

²⁹⁰Entry for 11 June 1907, in *Chronicle* (1990).

²⁹¹John Simeon Colebrook Elkington, *Tropical Australia: Is it Suitable for a Working White Race?* (Melbourne: Govt. Pr., 1905), 3. In 1910 Elkington became Commissioner of Public Health in Queensland.

²⁹²*Ibid*, 5 and 8.

²⁹³Cited in the 18 November 1906 entry of *Chronicle* (1990).

Association for the Advancement of Science that white people could not stand the heat - 'a third generation of pure whites in the tropics is a feeble rarity, and a fourth is unknown'. He supported this statement by quoting Coghlan's view, expressed in *Seven Colonies of Australia, 1899-1900*, that 'a considerable area of the continent is not adapted for colonisation by European races'. MacFie described the opinions of the politicians Barton, Deakin, Reid, Kingston, Forrest 'and other self-interested partisans of the "White Australia" movement' as 'visionary and unscientific absurdities'. MacFie's position was disputed by Ramsay Smith.²⁹⁴

Views about living in the tropics were polarised, but those who favoured settlement succeeded as they shared the government view. 'The necessity for the study of tropical medicine in Australia' was stressed by Dr Frank Goldsmith of Palmerston (now called Darwin) in a paper he presented to the Intercolonial Medical Congress of Australasia in 1902.²⁹⁵ Congress delegates endorsed this need and support was provided by the Queensland Governor, Sir William Macgregor, and the Anglican Bishop of North Queensland, who had discussions with authorities in three Australian universities. Sir Thomas Anderson Stuart, from the University of Sydney, backed the proposals and in 1907 appealed to the Royal Society of NSW for support.²⁹⁶ He explained that a school of tropical medicine would ensure that northern Australia and New Guinea could be colonised, occupied and kept healthy. The proposals became a reality in 1909 with the creation of the Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine in Townsville. Its political significance is indicated by the fact that it was one of Australia's first medical research institutes. At the 1911 Australasian Medical Congress the Institute's Director, Dr Anton Breinl (1880-1944) outlined the object and scope of the Institute's work.²⁹⁷

Its importance was appreciated by delegates who passed resolutions in favour of increasing the staff and funding of the Institute and recommended that the principal subject to be discussed at the next Congress should be white settlement in the tropics.²⁹⁸ This recommendation played an important part in the decision to increase the scope of the

²⁹⁴Matthew MacFie, *How Can Tropical and Sub-tropical Australia Be Effectively Developed?*, ANZAAS, January 1907, with discussion (Adelaide: Govt. Pr., 1907). For Ramsay Smith's discussion see pages 20-24. The author might be the 'Mr MacFie of 5 Elm Grove, Armadale, Melbourne' the EES had 'already been in correspondence with'. Cited in their 24 April 1914 letter to Mrs Carlotta Greenshields, Melbourne, SA/EUG, E3B.

²⁹⁵*Intercolonial Medical Congress of Australasia. Transactions* (1902), xxix, 178-79.

²⁹⁶Presidential address by Thomas P Anderson Stuart to the Royal Society of New South Wales, 1 May 1907 (Sydney: White, 1907).

²⁹⁷*AMCT*, 1 (1911), 524-32.

²⁹⁸*Ibid*, 532.

Institute.²⁹⁹ From 1921 the Institute was administered by the Commonwealth Department of Health as its second major national project, indicating the importance the government placed on the enterprise. Dr J H L (Howard) Cumpston (1880-1954), the Director of the Quarantine Service, argued in 1920 that there were few things of 'more importance to Australia than the maintenance of White Australia'.³⁰⁰ He wrote 'it was all very well to have a white Australia, but it must be kept white'.³⁰¹ Cumpston also indicated in a book written in 1927-28 but not published until 1978, that developing the north and eradicating tropical diseases played a key part in this process.³⁰² Paradoxically, he concluded his book with speculations about whether such interventions had been 'biologically disastrous' in interfering with 'Nature's scheme for the survival of the fittest'.³⁰³ Such doubts challenged political orthodoxy which probably explains the 'difficulty getting a publisher'.³⁰⁴ While public servants provided the desired optimistic reports about the tropics,³⁰⁵ others had doubts. It was questioned in the Presidential address to the 1911 Australasian Medical Congress and in one of the discussions.³⁰⁶ Dr Nisbet protested about the Institute Director's optimism with a reminder that the previous Governor-General, Lord Dudley, had said that having a solely European labour force 'would probably have to be reconsidered'.³⁰⁷ In 1918 Leonard Darwin inquired whether any Australian studies had been done on 'the effects of climate on fertility'.³⁰⁸

The following year, a British doctor warned that as Queensland had failed to eradicate hookworm, it would be unwise for Britain to send 'her most virile and enterprising sons for a political experiment which is fore-doomed'.³⁰⁹ In a history of hookworm, Dr John Thearle discussed the role played by Dr T F McDonald (sic), who wrote to the *Brisbane Courier* in

²⁹⁹Charles C Wickens, Census Bulletin (no 26, April 1921), Summary for Tropical Australia, *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia* (Melbourne: Govt. Pr., 1923), 8.

³⁰⁰James Gillespie, *The Price of Health: Australian Governments and Medical Politics 1910-1960* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), 41, quoting Cumpston.

³⁰¹*MJA* (18 September 1920), 293.

³⁰²John Howard Lidgett Cumpston, *The Health of the People: A Study in Federalism* (Canberra: Roebuck, 1978), 49-50.

³⁰³*Ibid.*, 130.

³⁰⁴Margaret Spencer [Dr Cumpston's daughter], Pers. comm, 22 January 1992.

³⁰⁵Particularly Cilento, Cumpston, Elkington and Wickens.

³⁰⁶Dr Francis Antill Pockley said in his President's address, 'it is questionable if the white races can ever permanently occupy the tropics', *AMCT*, vol 1 (1911), 91. This speech was reported in *Telegraph*, 19 September 1911, 7 (g).

³⁰⁷Dr Nisbet, in 'Discussion on Dr Breinl's paper on the scope of the Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine', *AMTC* (1911), 533. Nisbet was appointed as a Quarantine Officer in Townsville in 1909.

³⁰⁸Darwin to Tate (1918).

³⁰⁹Dr Lieper, quoted by A Graham Butler, in 'The future of Australia: A health problem', *MJA* (17 December 1921), 562.

1903 to warn about the dangers of the 'earth-eating' disease.³¹⁰ MacDonald's sensational claims had appeared three years earlier and were immediately refuted in the Queensland Parliament.³¹¹ MacDonald also featured in Australia's history of eugenics. From 1896 until 1906, New Zealand-born 'Dr Tom' ran a 30-bed hospital in a North Queensland town. In January 1905 he wrote to Francis Galton at the Eugenics Record Office in the University of London to enquire about his Eugenics fellowship and to offer himself as an applicant.³¹² He explained that he had read about it in an Australian paper, which appears to be the first reference to eugenics in an Australian newspaper.³¹³

His application included a reference to a paper (renamed 'Evolution and sociology') which he had read at congresses in 1903 and 1905.³¹⁴ 'More important as bearing on Eugenics' was his discovery of a disease causing 'perversion of moral senses' in which anaemia, caused by a parasitic worm, created 'vicarious appetite not only physically, but morally and mentally as well' with symptoms including 'lying, sexual perversion, excess and intemperance'. He operated a Bureau of Tropical Disease and Cottage Hospital to 'meet the ravages of this terrible plague' and was 'doing single handed what the state and federal government should undertake'.³¹⁵ The possibility of having to 'live by his pen' in London, prevented him from 'going into [his] views upon Eugenics' because 'new ideas are marketable'. MacDonald's letter was annotated by Galton with a note instructing Edgar Schuster, who became the first Francis Galton Research Fellow, to 'take such steps about it as you like, if any'.³¹⁶ Although MacDonald apparently received no reply, he had more success in 1907 when the

³¹⁰John Thearle, 'The saga of the Australian leech worm', in John Pearn (ed.), *Pioneer Medicine in Australia* (Brisbane: Amphion Press, 1988), 83.

³¹¹I am indebted to John McGuire for supplying me with copies of material which appeared in the *Brisbane Courier*, 8 November 1900, 5 and were refuted in QPD, LXXXV, (1900), 1840, 'Questions on Earth-Eating Disease', from Hon A H Barlow to Postmaster-General'.

³¹²Galton Papers. University College Library, London. Item 133/5A. Dr T F MacDonald's Bureau of Tropical Disease and Cottage Hospital, Geraldton, Queensland, [renamed Innisfail in 1911], 7 January 1905 letter to Francis Galton Re: Eugenics Fellowship.

³¹³I am indebted to Dr John Laurent for supplying background information, Pers comm., 26 April 1994. This included extracts from W J Doherty's *Jubilee Souvenir of Innisfail and District* [1923?] which contained an advertisement for the Mourilyan School of Arts which had a subscription library of 6,000 volumes. Laurent indicated that MacDonald would have been easily able to access a wide range of newspapers in this library. I was unable to locate this 1904 Australian newspaper reference to eugenics.

³¹⁴MacDonald said this paper had been given at the Medical Congress in Rome in 1903 and 'again in Sydney before the Society for Advancement of Science'. *AMCT* (September 1905), 487-90 lists his paper as 'Medicine and sociology'. He also wrote on 'curing roaring in horses'. *The Medical Directory* (1914) indicates that he graduated in medicine and surgery, 1882 and in veterinary science, 1892, all from the University of Glasgow.

³¹⁵MacDonald to Galton, *Ibid*, 3.

³¹⁶J S Jones, 'The Galton Laboratory, University College London', in Keynes (1993), 190, indicated that Galton's grant of £500 a year for three years to endow a fellowship of national eugenics was accepted by the University of London in October 1904.

Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene invited him to Britain to address them about hookworm.³¹⁷

In contrast, Griffith Taylor received very little recognition in Australia for his work. After 20 years as 'almost the sole professional geographer in the Commonwealth',³¹⁸ he described his research on tropical problems, starting in 1906, as 'one long period of continuous disillusionment'.³¹⁹ His studies with the Commonwealth Weather Service indicated that climatic conditions severely limited potential land use and settlement in Australia.³²⁰ The fact that he was right was not generally acknowledged.³²¹ He drew maps of rainfall, temperature and climate which indicated that much of the arid interior was 'almost useless' and that future generations of Australia would continue to inhabit the coastal fringes 'in the lands already known by 1865'. Australia's 'Empty Lands' (see Figure 3) were not an asset. Rather, they were 'a burden' as 'their vast potentialities exist only in the mind of the ignorant booster'. Taylor had become a 'confirmed determinist and a believer in environmental control',³²² after his studies convinced him that the environment, not 'providence, priests, potentates and politicians', would determine the country's future settlement.³²³

When Taylor described the development of the tropical north as 'a white elephant', the University of Western Australia responded by banning one of his books.³²⁴ The attacks on Taylor must have sent a clear warning to scientists or politicians who shared his views or sought to challenge the orthodoxy of the need to populate the north. Most controversial of all were his views supporting Chinese-European marriage and opposing ideas of racial

³¹⁷Thearle (1988), 85. MacDonald's paper appeared in the *Journal of Tropical Medicine*, vol 11 (1908), 25-29.

³¹⁸Taylor (1947), vii.

³¹⁹Ibid, 411.

³²⁰Taylor, *Environment and Race: A Study of the Evolution, Migration, Settlement and Status of the Races of Man* (London: OUP, 1927), 276-95.

³²¹Archibald Grenfell Price, in *White Settlers in the Tropics* (New York: American Geographical Society, 1939), 52, mentioned the 'bitter attacks' on 'able and impartial observers like Professor Griffith Taylor'. J McQuilton, 'Physical Geography', in Dietrich H Borchardt (ed.), *Australians: A Guide to Sources* (Sydney: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon, 1987), 84, stated that this acknowledgement did not come until the late 1950s.

³²²For an analysis of Taylor's 'geographical determinism', see Nancy J Christie, '"Pioneering for a civilized world": Griffith Taylor and the ecology of geography', in MacLeod and Jarrell (1994), 103-54.

³²³Taylor, *Environment, Race and Migration: Fundamentals of Human Distribution with Special Sections of Racial Classification and Settlement in Canada and Australia* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1937), 444.

³²⁴See Joe M Powell, in Robert Birrell et al (eds), *Populate and Perish? The Stresses of Population Growth in Australia* (Sydney: Fontana, 1984), 81-95 and in MacLeod (1988), 253-55.

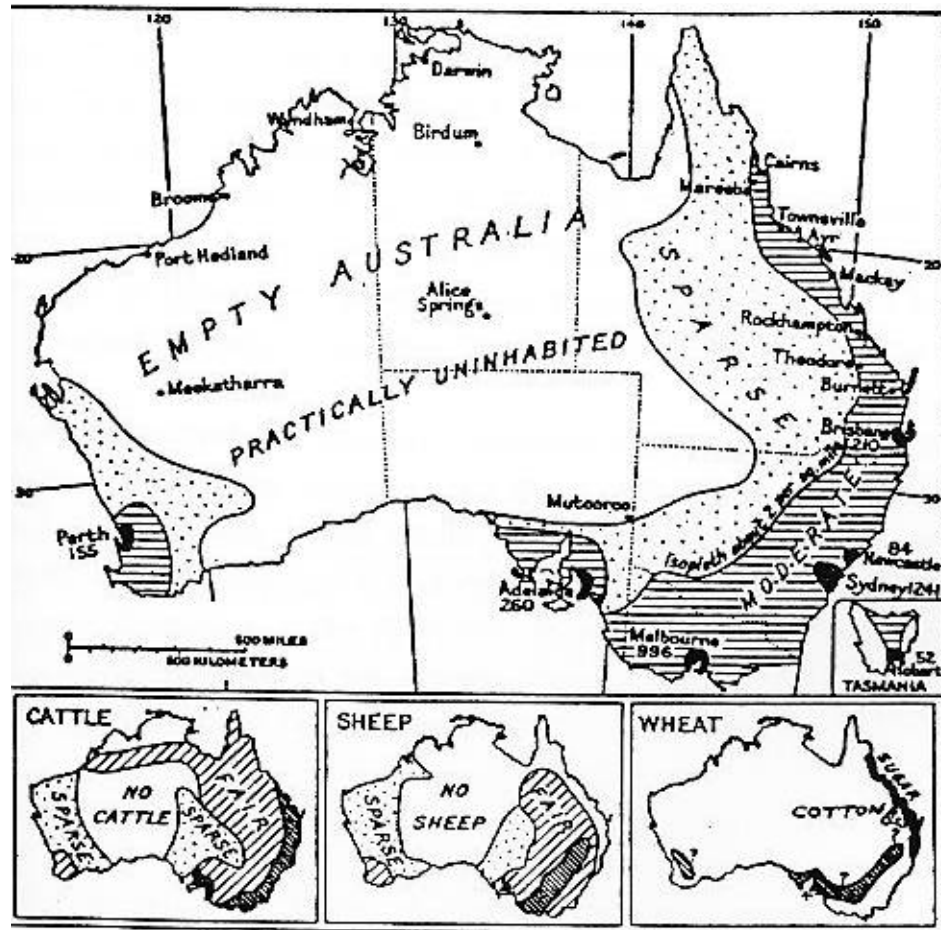
purity.³²⁵ He also pointed out that it was a mistake to believe that rapid settlement would follow the building of a railway.³²⁶

³²⁵See Turney (1991), 536 and Taylor (1927), 338-39.

³²⁶Taylor (1927), 288.

The editor of Melbourne's *Stead's Review* had earlier complained about the costly and 'resultless' efforts to settle the Northern Territory. He concluded that rail links could not make the climate cooler nor improve living conditions, thus successful white settlement in the tropical north was impossible 'no matter how great the inducements offered'.³²⁷

Figure 3: Empty Australia: practically uninhabited³²⁸



A similar conclusion was reached by Ellsworth Huntington, a political geographer at Yale University, and from 1934 to 1938 the President of the American Eugenics Society. After a

³²⁷Henry Stead, in *Stead's Review* (11 June 1921), 683, 685. See also Douglas Sladen, *From Boundary-Rider to Prime Minister: Hughes of Australia. The Man of the Hour* (London: Hutchinson, 1916), 177, for Hughes' elaboration on Labor Government plans for rail links and agricultural after it formally took over the Northern Territory from South Australia in 1911. His Government planned to develop a 'new El Dorado' in an area which 'lay ripening in the tropic sun awaiting the convenience of the first predatory hand'.

³²⁸Map of Australia showing distribution of population', in Taylor (1937), 379. See also Taylor (1947), frontispiece, for maps of annual rainfall, temperature, seasons and reliability of rain, evaporation and discomfort, and heat spells. He stated on page 441 that the consideration of such maps had made him a 'confirmed determinist and a believer in environmental control'. By this he meant that the environmental studies indicated that Australia was the driest inhabited continent in which only limited areas were habitable.

seven-week trans-Australian tour, he stated that natural selection had made it 'a most desirable community, marked by great homogeneity, good health and a high level of energy and intelligence' but this would be impossible to maintain if the population was 100 million. Huntington agreed, as well, that a railway was no solution. He published his findings in *West of the Pacific* and the book was reviewed by his friend Taylor in 1921.³²⁹ Eugenics was the only 'important point' on which Taylor disagreed with Huntington, who had argued that (provided people spent money on cooling) 'a sort of special eugenic race can be developed which will find life in our tropics profitable and pleasurable'. As eugenics formed the sole basis for this difference of opinion, it is surprising to read Nancy J Christie's statement that Taylor had 'uncritically' accepted Huntington's 'eugenic measures largely because it appealed to his own class bias'.³³⁰ Paradoxically, despite his rejection of Huntington's eugenic stance in June 1921, Taylor was an exhibitor at the Second International Eugenics Congress in New York in September 1921.³³¹

Taylor maintained that Australia's expansion would be confined to the populated 'fertile margin of the continent flung like a garland around the arid interior'.³³² This challenged the 'Million Farms Scheme' for filling Australia's 'empty spaces' which was promoted by a land-investing former Liberal Premier of NSW, Sir Joseph Carruthers (1856-1932).³³³ In 1921 Carruthers and Taylor published their conflicting views in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.³³⁴ In his autobiography Carruthers criticised Taylor for his stance:

A Professor³³⁵ (sic) of Geography in Sydney University has rashly assumed, and has recklessly broadcast his assumptions, that the unsettled portions of Australia are practically desert lands, unsuitable for settlement.³³⁶

³²⁹Griffith Taylor, 'The Pacific: An American discusses Australia', *SMH*, 21 June 1921, 11 (h).

³³⁰Nancy J Christie, 'Environment and race: Geography's search for a Darwinian synthesis', in Roy MacLeod and Philip F Rehbock, *Darwin's Laboratory: Evolutionary Theory and Natural History in the Pacific* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 464, footnote 100. Christie cited the date of Taylor's review as *SMH*, 13 February 1926 but it was in fact published on 21 June 1921.

³³¹Harry H Laughlin, *The Second International Exhibition of Eugenics*, held ... in Connection with the Second International Congress of Eugenics, in the American Museum of Natural History, New York (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1923), 55-56. Taylor, 'Exhibitor 112', presented 'one wall-diagram dealing with racial variation'.

³³²*New Outlook* (19 April 1922), 10.

³³³See address by Carruthers at the National Club, Sydney (19 July 1921), 3 and cartoon of Carruthers by Lionel Lindsay in *Millions* (1 August 1921), 6.

³³⁴'Criticism and reply', *SMH*, 27 August 1921.

³³⁵Bourke (1981), 100 noted that despite Griffith Taylor's efforts, his position was never upgraded from associate professor to professor.

³³⁶Carruthers Papers, *Autobiography* (typescript) 1870-1924, ML.

Carruthers' speculative scheme had support from the Sydney-based Millions Club.³³⁷ In 1919 it began publishing the *Millions* magazine with the slogan 'a million migrants for Australia', promoting 'patriotic aims' such as keeping Australia 'white, contented and prosperous and providing a steady stream of vigorous migrants', including children.³³⁸ In 1922 Carruthers was criticised for his 'colour-scare', 'here comes the Bogey man' philosophy.³³⁹ While Carruthers publicly acknowledged that his scheme was 'based on the necessity of keeping Australia white',³⁴⁰ he complained privately that his scheme was hindered by 'our rabid White Australia Policy' which limited immigration.³⁴¹ The scheme was 'dormant' by 1923, prompting Taylor's comment, 'it was indeed fortunate that the scheme fell through before money and energy were wasted upon it'.³⁴² Debates about the value of such schemes also caused hostility between the New Settlers' League and the Australian Labor Party, which had resolved at a Commonwealth conference to oppose assisted immigration.³⁴³

In 1923 Taylor gave a paper at the ANZAAS Congress outlining his views about Australia's future which questioned the validity of three cherished and inter-related beliefs: the importance of the White Australia Policy, the need for the settlement of the north, and the belief in white superiority. In 1924 he was censured in Parliament for his views and called such names as 'Doctor Dismal' and a 'Modern Jeremiah'.³⁴⁴ Christie discussed Taylor's 'evolutionary views', adding that he 'expanded his Darwinian umbrella to cover anthropology, philology, sociology, history and urban planning'.³⁴⁵ She pointed out that he rejected eugenics as a 'faddish and unscientific palliative in an age of social stress',³⁴⁶ which may provide the reasons for Taylor not joining the Eugenics Education Society of NSW. In any case, the Society was unlikely to have welcomed such a controversial member. After

³³⁷Michael Bosworth, in the *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 70 (October 1984), 88, noted that those who joined this 'non-political' club included National Party supporters William A Holman, Richard Arthur, Henry Braddon, Thomas J Ley, Owen Cox, Joseph Carruthers and Arthur Rickard.

³³⁸*Millions* (15 January 1930), 13.

³³⁹*New Outlook* (4 October 1922), 1.

³⁴⁰'Carruthers appeals to members', *Millions* (15 June 1923), 1.

³⁴¹Carruthers Papers, *ibid*.

³⁴²Alasdair A MacGregor (ed.), *Journeyman Taylor: The Education of a Scientist*, by Thomas Griffith Taylor (London: Hale, 1958), 168.

³⁴³See John A Brailsford, 'A million immigrants wanted', *Stead's Review* (13 November 1921), 557.

³⁴⁴See Taylor (1937), 379, Taylor (1947), 292 and Taylor (1958), 171-72.

³⁴⁵Nancy J Christie, 'Environment and race: Geography's search for a Darwinian synthesis', in MacLeod and Rehbock (1994), 437.

³⁴⁶*Ibid*, 440, quoting Taylor.

enduring years of hostility, he left Australia in 1928 to become a Professor at the University of Chicago, then moved to Toronto in 1935 where he continued as a Professor until 1951.

1920 Medical Congress

Two dates were significant in the drive to develop the tropical north: the 1909 establishment of the Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine in Townsville and the 1920 Medical Congress in Brisbane. Twenty years after the Congress, Taylor remained scathing about the settlement 'boosters' and 'optimists' who had selectively quoted the data on tropical settlement which were a central consideration. At the time he had urged people to read the full Report which showed that:

Of the 16 doctors whose opinions are quoted at length, eight pointed out grave disadvantages which were directly due to the climate. For instance, Dr Tom Nisbet stated, 'The death rate of North Queensland was one of the lowest in the world; but the ever-present desire of the inhabitants to get away from the north during the autumn of their years kept the death rate low'. ... the reason why the infantile mortality was lower than in the south was because there were no slums in the north, and many women went south before their babies were born.³⁴⁷

Although support for the concept was the norm, there were some significant dissenting views. Dr Richard Arthur who in 1927 became the NSW Minister of Health, shared Taylor's scepticism about the Congress discussions and conclusions, complaining that the voting at the Congress had been 'a put-up job' in favour of white settlement. He concluded that this was 'neither scientific nor in accordance with common sense and reason'.³⁴⁸ A third critic was Dr David Hastings Young, a former Native Health Officer in New Zealand, who complained that the pro-white settlement resolution was passed at the Congress 'in spite of much contrary evidence' in which 'even Professor W A Osborne' recommended that the attitude should be one of 'don't know-ism' as

Malaria, yellow fever and other diseases may be contributory factors of greater importance than climate, but this question is open to dispute. ... [T]he conclusion arrived at is that the tropics are not suitable for the permanent settlement of a white race. ... That the white man cannot live and flourish permanently in the tropics ... may be accepted as an established fact, the excessive heat, humidity, and dazzling sunlight making it impossible for the white race to thrive and settle there.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷Taylor (1947), 412 and *MJA* (18 September 1920), 290-99.

³⁴⁸*MJA* (23 April 1921), 345.

³⁴⁹David Hastings Young, *A White Australia: Is it Possible? The Problems of the Empty North* (Melbourne: Robertson and Mullens), 1922, 16-17.

Young recommended a non-white labour force for the tropics on the assumption that 'until Australia is prepared to give up her sentimental and traditional policy of a 'white' continent, and induces coloured labour to develop her tropical areas, and so produce tropical raw materials, she endangers her own safety and also the British Empire, of which she forms an integral part'.³⁵⁰ Young appears to have ignored the fact that this experiment had failed in the stormy years from 1863 to 1906, when Pacific Islanders worked as indentured labourers in Queensland. Young dedicated his book 'by permission' to Henry Barwell, a man he described as the 'acknowledged principal advocate of coloured settlement in tropical Australia'. Barwell, who was Premier of South Australia from 1920 to 1924, caused outrage in Sydney by expressing this advocacy in London in 1922. David Lindsay, who explored the Northern Territory in the 1880s, wrote to the *Sydney Morning Herald* asking 'What is Mr Barwell's object in defaming Australia as a white man's country?' Sir Joseph Cook, the Australian High Commissioner in London, also wrote to 'combat' these views which 'might prove mischievous in their effect on this country'.³⁵¹ Yarwood dismissed the importance of such minority views as their 'arguments had no effect on either the basic policy or its detailed administration'.³⁵² Barwell's comments do not seem to have affected his career; he was knighted in 1922 and worked in London as the Agent-General for South Australia from 1928 to 1933.

Other idiosyncratic views were expressed by Professor (later Sir) Archibald Grenfell Price (1892-1977) a historical geographer and educationalist. In 1933 this prominent ultra-conservative had visited the United States as a guest of the Rockefeller Foundation and later published a series for the Adelaide *Advertiser* lamenting President Franklin Roosevelt's 'drift towards socialism'.³⁵³ On his return Price gave a two-part radio broadcast entitled *The White Man in the Tropics* and *The Problem of North Australia* in which he claimed:

We are beginning to realise that loneliness and inter-breeding have harmed many white communities more than tropical climates, and that small scattered settlements, such as some of those in North Australia, have little chance of meeting with success. Comfort is also of vital importance, particularly for women. ... Many failures in the tropics, particularly British failures, have been partly due to ridiculous clothing, heavy unsuitable diets and alcoholic excess. ... Most important of all we are beginning to realise that the greatest barrier to white settlement in the tropics is ... the presence of vast masses of coloured peoples, who, as we know from the history of the Kanakas in

³⁵⁰Ibid, 111.

³⁵¹Letters from Lindsay and Cook, *SMH* [1922 ?], P Meggy's Scrap Book, ML.

³⁵²Yarwood (1968), 104.

³⁵³Ian Morrison, 'Culture, education, and municipalisation: Libraries and politics in the 1930s', *Australian Library Journal* (February 1993), 54.

Queensland, lower the standard of living, create reservoirs of disease, and form the means by which the whites can shirk doing the essential physical work.³⁵⁴

Price stated that 'in 1876-1877 the Japanese Government emphatically refused an official offer by South Australia for an extensive Japanese settlement in the Northern Territory, including free transport for the first 200 Japanese'.³⁵⁵ It is likely that his source was an account of this 'offer', published in 1924 by the young Stephen H Roberts (1901-1971), who later became Professor of History and Vice Chancellor of the University of Sydney and received a knighthood.³⁵⁶ In 1977 David Sissons consulted the primary material from which Roberts' account was derived, and found no evidence for Roberts' claim that an 'elaborate plan' for Japanese immigration had support from the South Australian Government.³⁵⁷ Sissons corrected these inaccuracies which had been reiterated for 50 years.³⁵⁸

James Curle, a well known white supremacist author in the 1920s and 1930s, contended that it had 'been proved over and over again that British stock will not thrive in the tropics'.³⁵⁹ Eugenists believed it was imperative that they should, because in Elkington's words, 'the tropics was a prize for the fittest' - a view which was promoted by Sir Raphael Cilento who shared the racist views on population issues which were held by his colleagues Elkington and Harvey Vincent Sutton (1882-1963) but he went further than they did in his open support of regimes in fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.³⁶⁰

Taylor claimed that Cilento took 'an unduly optimistic view' of tropical settlement.³⁶¹ Cilento countered by emphasizing the importance of preventive medicine, using information about temperate zones to support his argument for settling the tropics, and dismissing the importance of climate - Taylor's special field.³⁶² Cilento wrote:

³⁵⁴Grenfell Price, *A White Man in the Tropics* and the *Problems of North Australia*. Text of broadcasts (11 and 18 July 1934), 5 and *MJA* (26 January 1935), 106-110. Price repeated the claim about this rejection in his book (1939), 53, which considered why most white colonization of the tropics failed and whether it could 'hope for ultimate success', 3. Price identified three 'particularly unscientific and obnoxious' fallacies about settling Australia's tropics: that an empty north was dangerous; that medical advances would enable settlement and that Australians could 'work the north with coloured labor', 52-53.

³⁵⁵Price (1934), 8.

³⁵⁶Roberts, 'Northern Territory Colonization Schemes', *AAASR* (August 1924), 422-24. Also in Roberts, *History of Australian Land Settlement* (Melbourne, 1924), 358-63.

³⁵⁷'Japanese in the Northern Territory, 1884-1902', *South Australiana*, 16 (March 1977), 3-50.

³⁵⁸*Ibid*, 25-34.

³⁵⁹Curle (1928), 69.

³⁶⁰Gillespie (1991), 35

³⁶¹Taylor (1947), 413.

³⁶²Cilento (1925), 5.

It is amusing to-day to read the dire predictions of 1827-31 and earlier regarding the people of NSW. It was obvious, said the general opinion of the day, that they could never establish themselves as a people, and absolutely imperative that at the age of 8-10 years children unfortunate enough to be born in Australia must be hurried to England if their lives and their health were to be safeguarded. Six generations of healthy Australians have proved the absurdity of the contention.³⁶³

This example was irrelevant to the debate about the tropics. Ellsworth Huntington also complained about Cilento's 'lapses in memory' and 'dire confusion' in quoting his work published after a research trip to Australia in 1923. Huntington commented 'perhaps Dr Cilento's position as Director of the Division of Tropical Hygiene in the Commonwealth Department of Health of Queensland justifies him in putting an extremely optimistic interpretation upon everything connected with tropical Australia'.³⁶⁴ Not only did Cilento's biographer omit such criticism, she approvingly reiterated the views of a researcher who had described Cilento's study, *The White Man in the Tropics*, as a masterly piece of social investigation'.³⁶⁵

Another optimist was the statistician Charles Henry Wickens (1872-1939), who in 1927 rebutted the 'adverse remarks' by Huntington 'that persons of white race born in low latitudes have less physical vitality than similar persons born in temperate climates'.³⁶⁶ Wickens concluded that the data available in Queensland did not support the American geographer's theory. In 1924 Dr E S Sundstroem, a Californian physiologist then at the Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine, was astonished at 'the paucity of data on acclimatisation to a tropical climate'.³⁶⁷ Sundstroem was apparently unaware of Taylor's work in this field, such as his extensive study published in 1918 in the *Queensland Geographical Journal*. Taylor's studies of the tropics (which had received world acclaim) had sharply different conclusions from the development boosters' rosy reports.

In 1932 Ernest Burgmann (1885-1967), a scholarly and liberal Church of England Bishop of Goulburn, remained concerned about the 'unsolved problem' of tropical Australia. He

³⁶³Cilento, in Phillips and Wood (1928), 228-29.

³⁶⁴Ellsworth Huntington, 'Natural selection and climate in Northern Australia', *Economic Record*, 5 (1929), 186. Price (1939), 71, found 'considerable support' for Huntington's contention that the population of Queensland was 'young, migratory, and select', and that he had been fiercely attacked for this view by Cilento and C H Wickens. Price concluded that 'there is no doubt that Huntington had put his finger on an unpalatable truth'.

³⁶⁵Fedora Fisher, *Raphael Cilento: A Biography* (St Lucia: UQP, 1994), 44, quoting Douglas Gordon, *Health, Sickness and Society* (St Lucia: UQP, 1976), 264.

³⁶⁶Charles H Wickens, 'Vitality of the White races in low latitudes', *Economic Record*, 3 (1927), 117.

³⁶⁷E S Sundstroem, *A Summary of Some Studies of Tropical Acclimatisation*, Australia, Department of Health (Melbourne: Govt. Pr., 1924?), 5.

argued that 'we have come to assume that at all costs we must maintain a worthy standard of living for all citizens of the Commonwealth. In order to do this we have set ourselves with fine ruthlessness to keep Australia white, preferably 98% British'. Burgmann warned that this could only continue if it was not challenged by neighbouring countries, a position which could not be expected to last indefinitely.³⁶⁸ By the time Bishop Burgmann was raising these concerns, however, official interest in 'populating' the tropical north had waned. By 1930 the Commonwealth Government had closed the Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine in Townsville³⁶⁹ and given a secondary role to this field at the newly-opened School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine in Sydney.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the circumstances which forged colonists' resolute and inflexible determination to keep Australia as a 'heritage for the British race'.³⁷⁰ These circumstances, which culminated in the passage of the laws to prevent non-white immigration, also shaped the eugenics movement. Three particular circumstances - the steady decrease in the Australian birth rate, the growth of the population in Japan, and the perception that the Australian 'type' was rapidly changing - contributed to the subsequent acceptance of eugenics. With some notable exceptions, the White Australia Policy, with its almost universal support, created a social climate which was favourable to eugenics: ideas for improving the 'race' were grafted onto the social Darwinian acceptance of white superiority. For more than 70 years British-born subjects were the only people with automatic rights to enter Australia and to become citizens. These migration restrictions were intimately linked with the themes of Australian nationalism, British imperialism and Caucasian racism which contributed to debates about Australia's 'national stock'.

Many of the preoccupations in Australia during the first half of this century have proved to be ephemeral: fears of invasion cause less concern, the pressures to 'populate or perish' have eased, questions are rarely asked about national fitness, most tropical disease can be controlled and there is no longer anxiety about populating the north. These complicated endeavours took place for many reasons and eugenics is embedded in this history.

³⁶⁸Ernest Burgmann, *Whither Australia?* (Morpeth: St John's College Press, 1932), 6-7, 13, 14.

³⁶⁹Archibald Grenfell Price (1939), 74, described the closure of the Townsville Institute as 'a tragedy to science and to the Australian nation.'

³⁷⁰Billy Hughes, quoted by Sladen (1916), 132.

Chapter 2

Four Distinctive Eugenists

To understand the development of Australian eugenics, one needs to ask why some people became active in this small movement and what motivated them. The problem of definition must be considered first, because the word 'eugenics' has a 'Wonderland' ability to mean anything a person wants it to mean. Geoffrey Searle warned that many scholars applied the label 'eugenicist' to 'nearly every major political thinker' in the Edwardian era.³⁷¹ To avoid this 'absurd situation' he emphasized the need to 'discriminate more carefully between different kinds and levels of commitment to eugenics'.³⁷² Apart from distinguishing between positive and negative eugenics or 'mainline' and 'reform' eugenicists,³⁷³ few scholars have heeded Searle's warning or adopted methods for making such distinctions in numerous articles which contained a 'bewilderingly variegated list' of eugenicists. I have adopted Searle's useful method of dividing eugenicists into five groups - a system which helps to provide insight into Australian eugenics. These groups can be summarised as follows:

- 1 'Strong' eugenicists - those for whom eugenics provided a total explanation of history and the only means of escape from national collapse and decay. Searle included Leonard Darwin, Karl Pearson and Caleb Saleeby in this group.³⁷⁴
- 2 'Weak' eugenicists - those who were attracted to aspects of eugenics and, while retaining their initial political beliefs, grafted it onto their underlying but unaltered political creeds. Searle compared them to some libertarian progressives early this century, who also espoused movements such as utopian socialism, vegetarianism, rational dressing or housing reform.³⁷⁵

³⁷¹Geoffrey Russell Searle, 'Eugenics and class' in Charles Webster (ed.), *Biology, Medicine and Society 1840-1940* (Cambridge: CUP, 1981), 239-40.

³⁷²Searle, *ibid*, 239.

³⁷³See Daniel J Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 88, 173. Kevles indicated that 'Mainline' eugenicists followed the dominant hereditarian attitudes of the movement while 'reform' eugenicists were convinced that biology and environment were both important.

³⁷⁴The only Australian who fits this definition is Marion Piddington although I considered adding Twitchin to this group as he was a 'proper' eugenicist in the sense that eugenics guided his life. However, I decided not to because he did not publicly reveal these views.

³⁷⁵In Australia, eugenicists who fit Searle's 'weak' category include Meredith Atkinson, William Baylebridge, Edith Cowan, William Dakin, John Eldridge, Jean Devanny, Robert Irvine, Edith Onians and Sir Walter Baldwin Spencer, together with some Theosophists.

- 3 'Medical' eugenists - mainly doctors and health workers who considered eugenics not a political belief but a branch of public health or hygiene which, with government support, could improve people's health or reduce disease and suffering. Searle cited the Eugenic Society's Dr Carlos P Blacker as a prime example.³⁷⁶ They were closely allied to the next group.
- 4 'Career' eugenists - academics and practitioners in such fields as genetics, statistics, education or psychology, who were dubious about the value of eugenics but sympathized with the underlying objectives and welcomed eugenics because it stimulated interest in their field of study.³⁷⁷
- 5 'Opportunist' eugenists - those who were prepared to use eugenic phrases and ideas to promote unrelated causes. Searle pondered whether Fabians, particularly the Webbs, were eugenists and concluded that they were not. People who were minimally or unwittingly associated with eugenics are included in this group.³⁷⁸ I have not provided a biographical sketch of anyone with a marginal or questionable link with eugenics.

No eugenis is 'typical' and some defy classification or straddle categories. It is also relevant to consider whether a eugenist had radical or conservative political beliefs, favoured heredity or environmental eugenics, or expressed lay or scientific opinions. There were probably fewer than 50 people in Australia who contributed significantly to the eugenics movement and they were isolated from the world and from each other.³⁷⁹ Australian only had one 'strong' eugenist and most were professionals with moderate views who fitted the 'medical' or 'career' categories - all factors which helped to determine the direction and strength of the movement.

³⁷⁶Most Australian eugenists belong in this 'medical' group, for example, Dr Richard Arthur, Sir James William Barrett, Angela Booth, Dr Mary Booth, Sir Raphael West Cilento, Dr John Howard Lidgett Cumpston, Dr Reginald Spencer Ellery, Dr Norman Haire, Lillie Goodisson, Sir Charles Kinnaird Mackellar, Sir John Macpherson, Prof Emanuel Sydney Morris, Dr Ralph Athelstone Noble, Dr William Ramsay Smith, Sir Thomas Anderson Stuart, Prof Vincent Harvey Sutton and Dr Victor Hugo Wallace.

³⁷⁷This 'career' group contains the second largest number of eugenists, for example, Prof Richard James Arthur Berry, Prof John Bostock, Sir Timothy Augustine Coghlan, Dr Lorna Myrtle Hodgkinson, Sir Frank E Macfarlane Burnet, Dr William Ernest Jones, Sir George Handley Knibbs, Prof Edmund Morris Miller, Peter Stuckey Mitchell, Prof Stanley David Porteus and Henry Twitchin.

³⁷⁸Australians in this fringe 'opportunist' group include: Ruby Rich, who helped found the RHA and 11 other organizations and was described in the *Telegraph*, 19 June 1933, as 'a lady whom Sydney has long known for her publicist energy, especially in the cult of racial hygiene'; three official Australian representatives at the First International Eugenics Congress, and 2,358 young Australian men and women who entered Mitchell bequest competitions in the 1950s, without knowing that the bequest sought to further eugenics.

³⁷⁹For example, in 1913 and 1914 Henry Twitchin, Lillie Goodisson and Prof William Dakin were living in Western Australia and were almost certainly unaware of each other.

I have selected four eugenists who each played major roles within the Australian eugenics movement and each represents one of Searle's four main groups. They were born approximately within the same decade, each made their main contribution in later life, and all revered overseas eugenic thinking. All lacked significant scientific training and occupied separate, sometimes competing, spheres of operation. They have received little or no recognition and all of them, either as activists or by preserving the history, were involved in the developments which are discussed in later chapters. These four individual (but representative) eugenists are:

- 1 Marion Louisa Piddington (1869-1950), a 'strong' eugenist with radical politics who endorsed heredity eugenics, promoted both positive and negative eugenics, and made almost solo contributions to early sex education and eugenics debates.
- 2 John Chambers Eldridge (1872-1954), a 'weak' eugenist with radical politics who promoted positive and environmental eugenics. He was a public servant, unionist and briefly a politician, who contributed to the movement from 1912 until 1922 as the secretary and chronicler of the first eugenics society in NSW.
- 3 Lillie Elizabeth Goodisson (?1860-1947), a 'medical' eugenist who was politically conservative, endorsed birth control, and was the driving force behind the Racial Hygiene Association.
- 4 Henry Twitchin (1867-1930), a 'career' eugenist, who was conservative politically and advocated heredity eugenics. He was a pastoralist who contributed to eugenics as a financial benefactor.

1. Marion Louisa Piddington - 'Loose cannon'

Marion Piddington was the only Australian who can be unhesitatingly described as a 'strong' eugenist because, to her, eugenics offered a total explanation of history and provided the only way for Australia to avoid decay or collapse.

She was born in Sydney in 1869, the youngest child of Thomas O'Reilly and his second wife Rosa. Her clergyman father was described as being physically and mentally strong³⁸⁰ and

³⁸⁰See Neil O'Reilly's entry for Thomas O'Reilly (1819-1881), *ADB*, vol 5, 372.

she had both his determination and an unwavering 'passion for truth at all costs'.³⁸¹ One of her brothers was the poet and author Dowell O'Reilly (1865-1923) who, in 1894, after election as a NSW Labor politician, introduced a women's suffrage Bill which was passed ('89 for, 36 against') in the Legislative Assembly but defeated in the conservative upper house.³⁸² Dowell's daughter was the novelist Eleanor Dark, Marion's niece.

In her youth Marion had lived in a boys' school for 15 years³⁸³ and this background may have helped to foster the flair which she later showed as a eugenist and educator. In 1896 she married A B (Albert Bathurst) Piddington (1862-1945) and they were well-matched in their courage, intellect and drive.³⁸⁴ He was a prominent 'radical liberal reformer',³⁸⁵ who had begun his career as a teacher and completed it as a High Court judge and a Royal Commissioner,³⁸⁶ and she began her eugenics crusade during World War 1.

The most likely stimulus for Marion's interest was the 1912 International Eugenics Congress which the Piddingtons attended in London.³⁸⁷ The Australian government had sent four top-rank officials to the Congress³⁸⁸ but it was Albert (not one of the delegates) who responded to a paper on eugenics and militarism.³⁸⁹ His views appear to echo those of Dr Stanley Hall, an American psychologist, who had described the army as the 'poor man's university' and as a great promoter of health and intelligence'.³⁹⁰ Piddington's comments³⁹¹ were

³⁸¹Emanuel Sydney Morris, in the foreword to Piddington's *Tell Them! Or the Second Stage of Motherhood: A Hand-book of Suggestions for the Sex-training of the Child* (Sydney: Moore's Book Shop, [1926]), 7.

³⁸²Maybanke Anderson, in Meredith Anderson (ed.), *Australia: Economic and Political Studies* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1920), 275.

³⁸³Ann Curthoys, 'Eugenics, feminism, and birth control: The case of Marion Piddington', *Hecate*, 15, no 1 (1989), 74, claimed that she taught in a boys' school, run by her mother, for 14 years, and in the *ADB* that it was 'almost certainly her mother's Hayfield school at Prospect'. Piddington told Stopes that she 'lived' (not taught) in the school 'for 15 years'. This correspondence is in the Welcome Institute, Miscellaneous Collections, PP/MCS, Marie Stopes. A307. *Married Love* - Australia, Marion Piddington. A copy is in Mitchell Library, M2573, subsequently cited as ML. The letter quoted is Marion Piddington (M P) to Marie Stopes (M S), 14 September 1920, 3, ML.

³⁸⁴Carole Ferrier (ed.), *Point of Departure: The Autobiography of Jean Devanny* (St Lucia: UQP, 1986), 108.

³⁸⁵James Morris Graham, 'A B Piddington: A Radical Liberal Reformer' (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 1993) and *A B Piddington: The Last Radical Liberal* (Kensington: UNSWP, 1995).

³⁸⁶See Michael Roe, *Nine Australian Progressives: Vitalism in Bourgeois Social Thought, 1890-1960* (St Lucia: UQP, 1984), 210-43.

³⁸⁷'The Race: Ban, censor, suppress but why not educate?', Marion Piddington, *Health and Physical Culture* (March 1930), 15. M P informed W E Agar on 27 September 1937 that she had attended the Eugenics Congress in 1912. I was given this letter by Dr W T Agar.

³⁸⁸'List of Delegates', in *Problems in Eugenics*. Papers communicated at the First International Eugenics Congress held at the University of London, 24-30 July 1912 (London: EES, 1912), xv-xvii.

³⁸⁹Piddington, in response to 'Eugenics and militarism' by Vernon L Kellogg (Professor of Entomology, Stanford Univ, representing the American Breeders' Assocn), *ibid.*, 220-31.

³⁹⁰For example, William Ramsay Smith, in *Peace: An Address at the University of Adelaide on Peace*

reported in the *Times* which noted that the audience laughed when he said that war was 'incontestably race-deteriorating' but 'militarism was a good training for young men so long as they never went to war'.³⁹² It was considered eugenic madness to 'preserve the unfit and offer the unfit to our enemies'.³⁹³ Marion set about privately to rectify this dysgenic situation in 1916, made her public eugenics debut in 1919, and continued until her death at the age of 81. As suggested by his speech at the 1912 Congress, it is clear that Albert supported eugenics. However, probably in an attempt to avoid controversy, his subsequent involvement with the movement was by indirect means, such as his advocacy of child endowment.

Since her death in 1950, Piddington has often been ignored totally or portrayed as a marginal figure. For example, she had reflected fame as a correspondent with Freud,³⁹⁴ as the mentor of the novelist Jean Devanny,³⁹⁵ and as a prominent man's wife.³⁹⁶

Kay Daniels was correct in her 1983 assessment of Piddington as one of the forgotten women in Australian history and described her as 'a strange sexual radical' whose complexity of character probably explains her neglect by biographers and historians.³⁹⁷ Michael Roe has made a cursory, patronising and frequently inaccurate assessment of Piddington, in which he agreed that she 'had her qualities', but claimed that they 'took a

Day, 9 November 1910 (International Peace Society, Adelaide Branch, 1910), 3, had quoted extensively from Professor Stanley Hall's 'recently published work' on military training for adolescents. Hall had indicated that military training provided 'severe drill, strict discipline, good and regular hours, plain but wholesome fare and outdoor exercise, exposure, travel, habits of neatness' etc. This was mentioned by Piddington who may have read Hall's book or Ramsay Smith's account of it.

³⁹¹See the Congress's Report of Proceedings, Section III. Sociology and Eugenics, 49-50:

[Piddington] said he came from the only British country which had adopted the principle of universal [military] training. It was shutting both eyes to ignore the fact that Professor Kellog's paper was [mostly about] the effects upon the race of the practice of war. The net result ... was that training for war was a good thing for young men, provided they never fought. He agreed [about the benefit of discipline] and the value of preparation to be ready to lay down life for a principle. But was it impossible to get the eugenic conditions which surrounded the young soldier - proper food, full allowance of fresh air, fair leisure for physical exercise - without the universal drafting into barracks for years of the flower of the mankind of the country? The greatest movement of our time was that which sought these good conditions not only for the soldier, but for all. The value of Kellog's paper remained untouched by any of the criticisms. Its conclusion was that though war might be an eternal necessity, it could never be a benefit to the race.

³⁹²'Eugenics and militarism. Social aspects of training for war', *Times*, 30 July 1912, 4.

³⁹³Professor William J Dakin, in 'Why our civilisation must study the science of human eugenics', unsourced clipping (possibly the Melbourne *Herald*, August 1935), supplied to me by Dr Isobel Bennett, 20 November 1996.

³⁹⁴Humphrey McQueen, 'Document - Freud - letter to our sub continent', *Bowyang*, no 4 (September-October 1980), 140-43.

³⁹⁵Ferrier (1986), 108-09.

³⁹⁶Roe (1984), 214, 231-32, 239, 241.

³⁹⁷Kay Daniels, 'Marion Piddington', *National Times*, 9-15 January 1983, 25-26.

rather eccentric turn' and, 'the more Marion thought about sex, and she did so increasingly, the more confused she became'.³⁹⁸

Kerreen Reiger examined Piddington's role as a sex educator³⁹⁹ but the person who has done most to rectify this scholarly neglect is Ann Curthoys who wrote the Piddington entry for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*⁴⁰⁰ and published an overview of her eugenics and birth control work.⁴⁰¹ Curthoys was less successful however, in her attempt 'to make the connections between [Piddington's] feminism and eugenics clearer'.⁴⁰² This is not surprising, because Piddington was herself ambivalent. Apart from supporting women's rights (including the right to a fair wage)⁴⁰³ and running study courses at the Feminist Club,⁴⁰⁴ she approved of 'motherhearted women' but not what she described as the 'un-mother married' feminists who criticised unmarried mothers.⁴⁰⁵

'Conscription of the virgins'

In 1916 Piddington, using the pseudonym 'Lois', began her campaign for any woman who, because of the war, had been deprived of a mate or the chance of a child, to be given the possibility of 'scientific motherhood' by artificial insemination from a eugenically desirable donor. Eugenic, celibate or facultative [optional] motherhood (and later, eutelegensis)⁴⁰⁶ were all used as synonyms for this scheme. She introduced this controversial proposal in *Via Nuova or Science & Maternity* by Lois, in a thinly-veiled parable about Kathleen, 'one of many' who had been bereaved by the war.⁴⁰⁷ A sense of duty and religious obligation

³⁹⁸Roe (1984), 214, 232.

³⁹⁹Kerreen Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home: Modernizing the Australian Family, 1880-1940* (Melbourne: OUP, 1985), 186-88.

⁴⁰⁰ADB, vol 11, 226-27.

⁴⁰¹Curthoys (1989), 73-87.

⁴⁰²Ibid, 73.

⁴⁰³The letter by 'Lois' in the *SMH* on 17 September 1913, was quoted by Graham (1993), 106-07, as 'being almost certainly by Piddington'. There is a greater possibility that it was by Maybanke Anderson who used the pen name 'Lois' in the *SMH* from 1900 until 1927 and often explored feminist topics. See Jan Roberts, *Maybanke Anderson: Sex, Suffrage and Social Reform* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1993), 128-29.

⁴⁰⁴M P to M S, 1 June 1926, 65.

⁴⁰⁵M P, *The Unmarried Mother and Her Child* (Sydney: Moore's Bookshop, 1923), 14-15.

⁴⁰⁶M P to M S, 14 September 1937, f. 123, 'Muller, author of *Out of the Night*, thought of it before I did'. She was referring to an American communist and Nobel Prize winner, Hermann Muller (1890-1967) who completed his PhD thesis at Columbia University in 1916. His book and eutelegensis (an artificial insemination, selective breeding scheme) were promoted in Britain by researchers such as Herbert Brewer [*ER*, 27 (1935), 121-26], Julian Huxley and J B S Haldane. In *Scientific Motherhood* (1918), M P quoted Stopes' references to these techniques which were first used by doctors in the 18th century to impregnate a married woman who had an infertile husband.

⁴⁰⁷*Via Nuova* was published in 1916 by Dymock's Book Arcade Ltd, Sydney.

finally suggested a way for this woman to satisfy 'love to the individual, duty to the nation, and obedience to the Divine Command, "Increase and multiply"'. Gratified, Kathleen 'invoked the aid of Science' to perform the 'bee-like task of conveying the gift of life to the secret sanctum of its expectant seclusion'.⁴⁰⁸ She died 'clasping' the miniature of her fiancé, surrounded by her children and grandchildren. Piddington added a postscript to ensure that people realised that it should not be read as fiction: the adoption of *Via Nuova* (the new way) would benefit 'individual and national destiny after the war', it was 'in accord with the principles of modern eugenics', and it would not debase morals. The (unspecified) 'method' for achieving this was 'well-known medically' and had sometimes been used 'in the case of a man and his wife whose union would otherwise be childless'.

Roe commented about Piddington's use of 'highly emotional prose' to promote Scientific Motherhood, noting that her aim was 'anticipating Aldous Huxley and Adolf Hitler'. Apart from the fact that it was the biologist Sir Julian Huxley, not his brother Aldous, who proposed euteleogenesis in the 1930s and Hitler did not,⁴⁰⁹ there is also no foundation for this or for Roe's curious and confusing claim that:

Mary Booth was among Mrs Piddington's followers, possibly her guiding [sic] star. The two ladies agreed that Edgeworth David - scientist, explorer, academic - would be an ideal sire.⁴¹⁰

The woman Piddington praised was the anti-VD and pro-sterilization campaigner, Angela [also known as Mrs James] Booth (1869-1954),⁴¹¹ not Dr Mary Booth (1869-1956)⁴¹² whom Roe cites. In addition, Piddington, who usually worked unaided, had neither Dr Booth nor Mrs Booth as a 'follower'.

⁴⁰⁸Lois (1916), 7.

⁴⁰⁹Roe (1984), 231, footnote 43.

⁴¹⁰Ibid, Roe's footnote 43, in full on page 242, was 'Letter of 16 February 1917 (and others of period more generally [sic]), O'Reilly papers'. Neither this letter, nor others in the O'Reilly Papers, contain such a statement about Edgeworth David and Mary Booth.

⁴¹¹In *Tell Them!* (1926), 191, M P wrote, 'Mrs James [Angela] Booth, of Melbourne, in the years when venereal disease could only be mentioned in a whisper, and the "nicest women knew nothing of sex", fought with unswerving courage for sex education for the young'.

⁴¹²The work of Mary Booth as a physician, feminist and welfare worker is discussed in *ADB*, vol 7, 345-46. From 1910 to 1912 she helped establish the first school medical service in Victoria and in 1913 headed a team representing the Commonwealth Government in London at a Conference on Infant Mortality.

However, Piddington did admire Dr Marie Stopes and initiated a 21-year correspondence after the 1919 publication of Stopes' best-seller, *Married Love*.⁴¹³ These letters, now held in the British Library, contain the women's exchanged confidences and provide an insight into Piddington's motivation and thoughts. Perhaps in an effort to impress Stopes, Piddington was inclined to embellish the details of her campaigning and to exaggerate her success. The Piddingtons had lost a child in 1906, three years before the birth of their son Ralph. The fact that Stopes had also lost a child at birth and was similarly devoted to her only son, became a bond between the women. When Stopes' child died, Piddington wrote 'I can find no words to tell you of our sorrow when we heard today ... that your beautiful boy had not lived. Our experience was exactly the same so that I know how deep is the grief and how great the disappointment'.⁴¹⁴

Her first letter to Stopes in March 1919 mentioned the Scientific Motherhood campaign which she and supporters had been 'quietly' orchestrating in NSW for nearly two years.⁴¹⁵ She asked Stopes to contact Professor Maxwell Lefroy who had become 'interested' after seeing Piddington when he visited Melbourne.⁴¹⁶ Piddington began her international campaign by sending her 'correspondence' to Stopes and to Dr Charles Davenport of the United States Eugenic Record Office.⁴¹⁷ This collection of leaflets and letters which she had written to explain the scheme and solicit moral support, provides clues about Piddington's ideas for a eugenic future.⁴¹⁸ Government support would be needed to finance the record-keeping 'Eugenic Institute'⁴¹⁹ by means of a 'Eugenic Fund' to make the eugenic duos 'independent for life'.⁴²⁰ She informed Stopes that she had sent Davenport 'all the

⁴¹³M P ('A Mother'), *Telegraph*, 19 May 1923, 14 (c), described Stopes as not only 'one of our greatest living physiologists' but also 'one of the greatest living women'.

⁴¹⁴British Library, Department of Manuscripts, Additional Papers 58572. Stopes Papers. Piddington - Stopes correspondence 1919-1940, Marion Piddington to Marie Stopes, 24 October 1919, folio 3. Subsequently cited with folio numbers and initials. For example, M P to M S, 14 September 1937, f 123, 'What I suffered and lost 34 years ago, you also suffered and lost 18 years ago'. Stopes was 38 when she lost her first child and her son was born in 1924. M P was 37 when Ralph was born. Both remained only children.

⁴¹⁵M P, 'Breffny', Glenbrook NSW to M S, 10 March 1919, 3.

⁴¹⁶Harold Maxwell Lefroy (1877-1925), Professor of Entomology, Imperial College of Science and Technology, London.

⁴¹⁷On 22 August 1929 M P wrote to Dr Charles Davenport, '[ten] years ago you very kindly noticed a paper in the *Eugenical News* which I sent on Celibate Motherhood'. American Philosophical Society Library, Philadelphia, C B Davenport Papers, B/D27. Subsequently cited as M P to C D.

⁴¹⁸Dr Richard Travers provided me with *Scientific Motherhood* (1918) leaflets and letters.

⁴¹⁹*Scientific Motherhood*, 'Eugenic Institute' Leaflet. In 1930 Alfred R Radcliffe-Brown, 'one of this century's most influential anthropologists', thought it was 'premature' to create an applied science institute of eugenics, until more was known about genetics, quoted by Mulvaney in Roy MacLeod and Richard Jarrell (eds), *Dominions Apart: Reflections on the Culture of Science and Technology in Canada and Australia, 1850-1945*, *Scientia Canadensis*, 17 (nos 1 and 2), (1994), 163-64.

⁴²⁰*Scientific Motherhood*, 'Some suggestions for the materialization of the scheme'.

objectives' but had not told him that the Australian movement was now in a state of 'steady growth'. She added that girls had repeatedly told her that 'as long as they knew that their child came of good stock and [was] free from disease they would be quite content'.⁴²¹

Probably a more realistic assessment of Piddington's success is provided by her brother, Dowell O'Reilly, who wrote in 1916 'Dear Marion, I thought of you this afternoon! I fear, from what you tell me, the meeting didn't support you, but if you had your say - that somehow is on the record'.⁴²² This apparent rejection did not daunt Piddington who launched a campaign on 14 May 1918 in which the 'Sympathisers with Scientific Motherhood' wrote to doctors and the 'happily married' asking them to consider what the state could do to help 'these Spartan sufferers in the conflict', and warned them not to allow Australia to suffer the 'double disaster' of losing its 'finest daughters' as well as its 'splendid sons'.⁴²³

Piddington noted in June 1918 that while the movement 'began with about 30', they were slowly progressing after 'only 17 months of quiet propaganda', including a pamphlet by 'Dr Swan', who 'spoke with authority as a medical man' and had the interests of women and race improvement at heart.⁴²⁴ She was referring to *Facultative Motherhood Without Offence to Moral Law*, published in 1918 by 'Dr Henry Waterman Swan'.⁴²⁵ This was literally a 'pen name' - Waterman and Swan were popular brands of pen.⁴²⁶ Dr Herbert William Sweetnam may have been the author,⁴²⁷ however, it is more likely to have been Dr Ralph Worrall, later identified by Piddington as the gynaecologist who had 'been behind the Eugenic Celibate Motherhood [scheme] for nine years' but had been prevented by medical etiquette from speaking 'openly for it'.⁴²⁸ In a 30 August 1919 letter to Dr Felix Meyer, a lecturer in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Melbourne, Piddington put an optimistic gloss on the scheme's reception:

⁴²¹M P to M S (10 March 1919), 6.

⁴²²Dowell O'Reilly Papers, MSS 231, vol 3, 28 July 1916, 339.

⁴²³The copy of the 14 May 1918 form letter, which I have, was addressed to Dr Meyer.

⁴²⁴M P to Mr (sic) Stone, 28 June 1918, 6.

⁴²⁵Dr Henry Waterman Swan (pseud.), *Facultative Motherhood Without Offence to Moral Law: Every Woman's Right to Motherhood: A Suggestion* (Melbourne: Australasian Authors' Agency, 1918).

⁴²⁶M P agreed that 'Lois' was a '*nom de plume*', in *AJPP*, 15 (September 1937), 211.

⁴²⁷Travers suggested that the author might be Sweetnam (a surgeon at Launceston Hospital, Tasmania) because people using pen names often use their own initials. This seems unlikely from Sweetnam's obituary, *MJA* (29 February 1964), 333.

⁴²⁸M P to C D, [undated, October 1929?], 1. The author was probably Dr Ralph Worrall (1859-1942) a gynaecological surgeon at Sydney Hospital from 1896-1919. His son, Dr Ralph Lyndal Worrall, graduated in 1926, eight years after the pamphlet appeared and was briefly the first Co-President of the RHA. The Piddingtons knew both and Albert defended Worrall junior as 'a true patriot', in the *Telegraph* 14 June 1940, 6 (f), against charges made in Britain under the Emergency Powers Act, *ibid*, 13 June 1940, 3.

I am in touch with women in Western Australia and Queensland. The Misses Golding and their sister Mrs Dwyer, who represent the working factory girls here are with me. Men and women in the professions and in business, unmarried women of advanced years ... are keen on the subject. ... The head of our Woman's (sic) College,⁴²⁹ several heads of large schools are with us but we realize that they must keep quiet for the present. Then too, we have some young women supporters. When in Melbourne I also spoke to Lady Helen Ferguson⁴³⁰ (this in confidence) who was interested and sympathetic.⁴³¹

An example of the blunt rejections she also received is shown in her 28 June 1918 letter to 'Mr' Stone which began, 'I am very sorry that neither you nor "any of the women doctors in Melbourne will have anything to do with Scientific Motherhood"'.⁴³² Controversy intensified when she launched the mission at a Women's Political Association (WPA) meeting which was reported in the women's pages of *Figaro*, a Queensland broadsheet incorporating the *Bohemian*. The debate lasted for several months, starting with an editorial on 30 August 1919 which described Piddington's 'revolutionary - no, evolutionary' work and stressed her courage, delicacy and self-sacrifice despite receiving 'very little encouragement, and a lot of abuse'.⁴³³ The 'chief opponent' of the scheme was a socialist poet and author, Mary Elizabeth Fullerton (1868-1946), the Vice-President of the WPA and a prominent feminist campaigner.⁴³⁴ Her rejection of the proposal outraged Piddington's 'Sympathisers' who objected to Fullerton's reference to 'conscription of the virgins'⁴³⁵ and her claim that 'bastardy under the hedge' was preferable.⁴³⁶

⁴²⁹Maybanke Anderson, in Atkinson (1920), 270, wrote that the first Principal of the University of Sydney's Women's College (which opened in 1894) was Miss Louisa Macdonald (1858-1949), who still held this position in 1919.

⁴³⁰Lady Helen Munro Ferguson was invested with an OBE by her husband the Governor-General Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson, 'British Empire Honours', *SMH*, 7 January 1918.

⁴³¹M P to Dr Meyer, 31 August [1919], 4-5. M P told M S on 16 September 1919, 8, that 'Professor Berry' and 'many gynaecologists' were earnestly considering the scheme.

⁴³²M P to Mr Stone, 28 June 1918, 1. 'He' was probably Grace Clara Stone (1891-1957) an honorary doctor at Melbourne's Queen Victoria Hospital.

⁴³³'Something new', *Figaro*, 30 August 1919, 8. The correspondence continued on 6, 13, 20, 27 September, 18 October and 8 November 1919.

⁴³⁴William H Wilde, et al, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* (Melbourne: OUP, 1991), 284.

⁴³⁵'Mater no 4', *Figaro*, 8 November 1919, 7.

⁴³⁶Reply to Miss Fullerton (sic) and other members of the Women's Political Association', *Figaro*, 18 October 1919, 7 and 10.

While most correspondents adopted names such as 'Eugenist' or 'Mater', Piddington used her real name in a letter informing readers that Marie Stopes would mention the scheme in the seventh edition of *Married Love*.⁴³⁷ Stopes indicated to Piddington that although she was 'still very doubtful' whether it could work 'really well', she 'nevertheless' felt that her 'efforts deserve every consideration'.⁴³⁸ Ironically Stopes was herself 'cold-shouldered' in Britain by the Eugenics Society who shrank from her support for compulsory sterilization and her attempts to snare them into supporting her causes.⁴³⁹ Stopes declined to give Piddington any further support, claiming that it was not out of 'narrowness' but because the 'time was not ripe' for her to 'say anything more'.⁴⁴⁰ Even so, Stopes must have regretted her capitulation to Piddington's 'importunings' because the mention of celibate motherhood in *Married Love* was used by a judge in an effort to discredit Stopes in a well-publicised court case in 1923.⁴⁴¹

In 1920 Piddington promoted her campaign in Brisbane's *Daily Mail*, emphasising that 'education before procreation' was of 'paramount importance'. She stressed that extramarital births were 'just as important as [births] in marriage, if the eugenic ideal is to permeate our national life', adding that science could now 'bestow on the child-hungry [single] woman the happiness she longs for'.⁴⁴² This news was selectively reported as 'Eugenics from Australia' in the *Eugenics Review*. It noted that Piddington, like Stopes, deplored the lack of suitable healthy males that caused many women to remain single. It also mentioned her support for segregation, or a 'slight surgical interference with nature', to eliminate the unfit, and for birth control to stay 'the hideous result of reckless procreation'. But it did not elaborate on the crux of the article, scientific motherhood, apart from an

⁴³⁷'Correspondence', *Figaro*, 27 September 1919, 7.

⁴³⁸M S to M P, 9 July 1919, 1, ML.

⁴³⁹Quoted by Richard A Soloway, in *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 205.

⁴⁴⁰M S to M P, 12 April 1921, 1, ML, responding to M P's request of 14 January 1921, 5.

⁴⁴¹Muriel Box, ed., *The Trial of Marie Stopes* (London: Femina Book, 1967), 106. The judge was referring to pages 151-52 in the 1922, 10th edition of *Married Love*. The ponderous wording of this section, identical to that in the 1919, 7th edition, is:

I have received an interesting series of correspondence from Australia, where under the name of 'Scientific Motherhood', some high-minded women have been endeavouring for some time to found an Institute for the scientific insemination of women war-deprived of mates, so that though husbandless they may have the joy and sacrifice of child-bearing under properly protected conditions. Although a hundred questions about this scheme arise unanswered to one's mind, it should be watched with special interest as it is planned from high motives so different from the unreasoning and selfish ones which have for too long added to the population in ways outside monogamic marriage to which we are callous because accustomed.

⁴⁴²M P, 'Eugenics', *Daily Mail*, 10 July 1920, 9.

ambiguous reference to 'the eugenic ideal' of encouraging the 'finest specimens of womanhood ... to pass on their gifts and characteristics'.⁴⁴³

We know of Piddington's attempt to interest Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) in her plans because a copy of his reply to her letter is preserved in her collected papers. Tantalisingly, Piddington's own letters were not retained in her papers and those few which have survived, were preserved by others. In June 1921 'Prof Dr Freud' sent Piddington a devastating response, barely softened by his polite introductory remark that they were 'the private opinion of an individual who can claim no authority for it'. After indicating that he had doubts whether eugenics had advanced sufficiently to warrant 'practical measures', he added that he was 'unsympathetic' to her proposal that 'childless women should procure children by artificial anonymous fecundation', seeing 'lurking behind this device that tendency to sex-repression which will do more for the extinction of the race than war and pestilence combined'. He prophesied that such only children without a father to balance the 'undiminished weight of motherly tenderness', would be 'likely to work under heavy psychological odds, compared to the other ones'.⁴⁴⁴ His handwritten letter concluded 'I pray you will neither be 'annoyed' by my "reactionary" opinions', nor by my bad English'. Humphrey McQueen has reprinted the full text of this important letter because it was written at a significant period in Freud's career and because of the information which it provides about the eugenics movement in Australia, which in McQueen's view 'has not been documented let alone analysed'.⁴⁴⁵ In the 1920s Freud was renowned in the English-speaking world so that Piddington's cause would have benefited enormously if she had been able to gain his support. This suggests why Piddington sent her letter and a plausible explanation for Freud's reply is given by McQueen in a quotation from Ernst Freud, who indicated that his father was a 'conscientious' correspondent who 'answered every letter he received'.⁴⁴⁶

Five years later Piddington retaliated against Freud's rejection in Chapter 11 of her book *Tell Them!*, noting that Freud failed 'absolutely' in his 'over-emphasis of sex' and in his 'inability to understand the maternal instinct as separate from the mating instinct'.⁴⁴⁷ Stopes 'warmly' agreed with Piddington that Freudians who, she claimed, 'on the whole had done infinitely more harm than good', had underestimated 'the maternal influence and feeling in women'.

⁴⁴³ER, 12 (1920-21), 475.

⁴⁴⁴Freud to M P, 19 June 1921, in Marion Piddington Papers. MS 1158 (Canberra: NLA).

⁴⁴⁵McQueen (1980), 142.

⁴⁴⁶McQueen (1980), 143, quoting Ernst Freud, ed., *Letters of Sigmund Freud, 1873-1939* (London: Hogarth Press, 1971), ix.

⁴⁴⁷M P (1926), 141.

Stopes complained that some of their books were of such 'prodigious filthiness' that she was 'in despair of their sanity', adding 'I think your Chapter 11 very excellent and sound'.⁴⁴⁸

While Piddington abandoned her public crusade for celibate motherhood in 1921, her private attempts to revive the issue in 1926 and 1929 indicate that this remained her driving goal.⁴⁴⁹ Her perseverance is shown in two letters she wrote to Dr Davenport. In August 1929 she asked for his help with her scheme, arguing that 'the mere extension' of the practice to a few 'fit strains' of women outside marriage 'ought not to be considered a very marked step' and then made this strange proposal:

I have safeguarded all details in my proposal and if you could bring about the formation of a Eugenics Institute⁴⁵⁰ in Australia with me with your leading Biologists at the head it would be a magnificent gesture on the part of America and strengthen in eugenic control the hands across the sea. I passed through years of disesteem and have had to give up my advocacy of celibate motherhood and worked only quietly while I taught sex education. Now the public is beginning to forgive me and I hope before long to renew the subject and bring about the sequel to rendering the unfit sterile - that of making the fit fertile.⁴⁵¹

Davenport's reply is not recorded but he seems to have been unenthusiastic because she tried a different approach in her subsequent letter. This time she sought his views on her paper 'Maternal repression and the new psychology' and suggested that if Davenport 'could bring Dr Jung's case [studies] before the public I think it would be of use' [to get it published], adding that it could be done without mentioning the motherhood scheme if he preferred.⁴⁵² The paper was finally published, in 1937, in Australia.⁴⁵³ Her last letters to Stopes show that she continued to think about celibate motherhood. In 1937 with failing sight she wrote, 'I

⁴⁴⁸M S to M P, 19 May 1926, ff. 63-64.

⁴⁴⁹This is contrary to the assertion by Curthoys (1989), 75, that sex education was M P's life's work. Curthoys appears to be following Devanny who stated that 'Marion's chosen life-work' was 'sex education and instruction in wise parentcraft', in Ferrier (1986), 108. However, Piddington's letters show that Daniels (1983), 25, was correct to claim that Celibate Motherhood 'remained a subterranean theme of all her later work'.

⁴⁵⁰See also M P to M S, 7 January 1929, f. 95, 'This year I hope to start a Eugenics Council'.

⁴⁵¹M P to C D, 22 August 1929, 6-7.

⁴⁵²M P to C D, 19 September 1929, 2.

⁴⁵³Marion Piddington, 'The frustration of the maternal instinct and the new psychology', *AJPP*, 15 (September 1937). On page 209 Piddington selectively quoted Freud as writing 'the more I have learned, the more difficult I find it to give advice about definite lines in the difficult matter of sexual behaviour'. Piddington and the RHA were rivals and she and RHA doctor Lotte Fink also had opposite ideas about Freud: while Piddington was opposed to Freud's views, Fink quoted him as 'a modern authority' in two 1942 sex education lectures, published as *The Child and Sex* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1944).

am nearly 70 years of age and it is just to thank you and to ask you with your dynamic power to give the world the hope of a eugenic race through scientific insemination. A crowning act from you to the race'.⁴⁵⁴ Three years later Piddington wrote:

We never forgot your generous encouragement years ago when we sought after the last war to bring eugenic motherhood outside as well as within marriage. Scientific Insemination is going well for married people in Australia considering its stormy passage. I am in touch with a doctor in the USA who has scientifically inseminated two unmarried women so it is actually an accomplished fact.⁴⁵⁵ I am 72 years of age and shall go out of life after spending eight years and hundreds of pounds on the work, a failure.⁴⁵⁶

Links with the Workers' Educational Association (WEA)

After her rebuff from Freud, Piddington renewed her public activities in 1921, this time with the backing of the WEA, despite its earlier ambivalence about eugenics. This reluctance was evident in the planning of the WEA's *Teaching of Sex Hygiene* Conference. In July 1916 the organising committee recommended that one of the 'eight or nine' papers should be 'on the value of eugenics in teaching sex hygiene'⁴⁵⁷ but three months later at the conference no such paper was given.⁴⁵⁸

Humphrey McQueen indicated that Piddington and the feminist reformer Maybanke Anderson (1845-1927) were members of the WEA Women's Organising Committee that established the Eugenics Circle.⁴⁵⁹ Both women had strong links with the WEA but nothing in their prolific writing suggests that they had similar links with each other and it appears that the name 'Lois', which Anderson frequently assumed in her journalistic writing from 1900, was 'coincidentally' used by Piddington.⁴⁶⁰ However, Piddington was a great friend of

⁴⁵⁴M P to M S, 14 September 1937, f.125.

⁴⁵⁵This apparently recently reported news is at odds with M P's 1919 claim about such a pregnancy: M P to M S, 10 March 1919, f. 3: 'One dear war heroine who lost her lover in France ... left for America a few months ago. She wrote telling me that she was coming back to have her Scientific or Eugenic baby'.

⁴⁵⁶M P to M S, 11 June 1940, f.126.

⁴⁵⁷WEA Minute Book, vol 1 (Sydney: Trades Hall, 21 July 1916), 92.

⁴⁵⁸*Teaching of Sex Hygiene*, Report of a Conference organised by the Workers' Educational Association of NSW and held in the Union Hall, Sydney University on 23-25 November 1916, 2nd edn. (Sydney: Burrows and Co), 1918. M P was not one of the 172 conference delegates.

⁴⁵⁹McQueen (1980), 141, stated that Maybanke and her husband Sir Francis Anderson and the Piddingtons were involved with the WEA but this is not mentioned in the references he cites, *Australian Highway* (November 1921), 2 and (December 1921), 4, 11-12.

⁴⁶⁰For Anderson's identity as 'Lois' see *SMH*, 11 August 1900, quoted in Roberts (1993), 132 and also

Henrietta Greville (1861-1964), the WEA's first female President.⁴⁶¹ In October 1921 Greville announced that 'Mr Ingamells (sic) of Sydney Hospital'⁴⁶² was providing the Circle's first lecture.⁴⁶³ Rumours of Ingamells' involvement in the scandal of the Sydney lodge of the Theosophical Society probably explains why the first lectures were given instead by Eldridge.⁴⁶⁴ In an article which might now be seen as symbolically handing on the torch, Piddington reported on his final eugenics lectures⁴⁶⁵ just as she was publicly launching her own involvement, reminding readers that eugenics was a 'vast subject' which men and women would find encompassed all areas of WEA activity.⁴⁶⁶ While both had strong Labor Party connections, they had opposing views about eugenics: for Eldridge environment was paramount, just as heredity was to become for Piddington.

In February 1922 the Eugenics Circle had 25 (mostly female) members.⁴⁶⁷ These classes ceased in 1924 but it is clear from the statistics of books borrowed from the WEA Library that books on eugenic topics remained popular throughout the 1930s.⁴⁶⁸ As well, their newsletter, *Australian Highway*, gave publicity to eugenic matters.⁴⁶⁹ Piddington, with the support of WEA President Greville, was able to contact 'hundreds of mothers' through WEA sex education lectures, claiming that it was Greville's interest and 'the mothers' wishes' which had 'led' her to publish *Tell Them!*.⁴⁷⁰ In it she encouraged mothers, after learning

128-29, 170, 178.

⁴⁶¹In *David Stewart and the WEA* (Sydney: WEA, 1957), 55, Esmonde Higgins noted Greville's role and her continuous devotion, for example by running a sex hygiene study group in 1954 when she was 94. For details of Piddington and Greville's friendship, see *Henrietta Greville: Veteran Labor Pioneer*, by a Group of Friends (Sydney: Current Book Distributors, 1958), 10.

⁴⁶²This was Loris Ingamells, Sydney Hospital's Chief Dispenser who was registered as a pharmacist on 10 June 1913. After the Pharmacy Guild was established in 1927, he became first NSW President. I obtained this information on 5 July 1995 from Lionel Lambert, the Administrative Officer of Sydney Hospital, who had obtained it from Sydney Hospital's 1921 Annual Report. I also spoke to Doug Ramsey who qualified as a pharmacist in 1933. Ramsey remembers 'doing battle' and winning against Ingamells (and others) who had opposed the introduction of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Act in 1949.

⁴⁶³Greville, 'The Women's Organising Committee', *AH* (1 October 1921), 6.

⁴⁶⁴Jill Roe, *Beyond Belief: Theosophy in Australia* (Kensington: UNSWP, 1986), 270-7. David Stewart, *AH* (1 December 1921), 3-4, noted Eldridge's 5 and 17 November 1921 eugenics lectures.

⁴⁶⁵'The Eugenics Circle is continuing its meetings and the dates for February are the 4th and the 18th, with Mr J C Eldridge as leader', *AH* (1 February 1922), 6.

⁴⁶⁶'Breffny', (the Piddingtons' holiday house), 'Eugenics', *AH* (1 December 1921), 11-12.

⁴⁶⁷Alison Shears (letter to the Editor), 'Eugenics', *AH* (1 February 1922), 15-16.

⁴⁶⁸WEA Annual Reports from 1927 to 1939 listed the numbers of library books borrowed for anthropology, evolution and eugenics (combined): 76 in 1927 and 183 in 1939.

⁴⁶⁹'Professor Harrison' [probably Dr Ellice P Hamilton, see apology *AH* (1 January 1923), 197], in 1923 provided 22 lectures to 18 men and 26 women, WEA Annual Report (1924), 24-25 and in 1924 provided 24 lectures to 15 men and 28 women, *ibid* (1925), 8-9. Ellice P Hamilton, 'Heredity in relation to eugenics', *AH* (1 December 1922), 174-76, (1 January 1923), 195-97 and (1 February), 211-13, and 'Programme of the Eugenics Society of the USA', *AH* (1 March 1924), 5-6, (1 April), 29-32 and (1 May), 76-77.

⁴⁷⁰M P (1926), 17. The book was dedicated to the feminist Dr Lilian Helen Alexander who persuaded Melbourne University in 1887 to admit female medical students. Her obituary was in *MJA* (9 February

about infant care, to progress to 'the second stage of mothercraft', by teaching the child about sex in an honest way, while remembering that 'the little mind is no more to be overfed than the little body'.⁴⁷¹ The newsletter noted that Piddington was 'a missionary with a fine message' which 'captivated' audiences and that her book was selling 'readily', with half the profits going to the WEA.⁴⁷² *Tell Them!* in 1926, and Piddington's 1930 article on 'metaphylaxis',⁴⁷³ were probably shocking and extremely radical for the time. They are also interesting for their revelation of Piddington's liberal views and her assumption about the degrees of intimacy (bordering on intrusiveness) between children and parents which, although it might have applied to her own household, would apply to few others.

Founding the Racial Hygiene Association

In addition to her writing and WEA classes, in 1926 Piddington conducted study circles at the Feminist Club and told Stopes she wanted to start a race improvement centre modelled on Stopes' birth control clinic.⁴⁷⁴ Stopes' letters to Piddington did not mention her correspondence with the first Commonwealth Statistician, Sir George Handley Knibbs (1858-1929) which began in January 1925, or that she had asked Knibbs, and he had accepted her invitation, to become a Vice-President of her Society for Constructive Birth Control. Stopes also bypassed Piddington when she asked Knibbs to help promote Australasian membership for her Society.⁴⁷⁵

Ruby Rich recalled her impressions of meeting Piddington in 1926 and being asked to be the first joint-president of what was to become the Racial Hygiene Association. Rich remembered the maid saying 'There's a Mrs Piddington, an old lady, who says she must see you' and 'found this old lady was absolutely delightful', with a maturity which 'carried a lot of weight'. Piddington wanted a person who 'could talk about sex in a nice clean manner' in order not to shock listeners. She proposed that Rich and a 'young doctor' should form this society to educate the public about 'the terrible scourge of venereal diseases'. Rich only

1935), 190.

⁴⁷¹Piddington [1926], 14.

⁴⁷²AH (10 September 1928), 226.

⁴⁷³In 'Parental metaphylaxis', *HPC* (September 1930), 10, 44 and 46-47, Piddington outlined a plan for parents to give clinical aid to adolescent children who had exposed themselves to the risk of catching VD.

⁴⁷⁴M P to M S, 1 June 1926, f.65. She called the BMA 'a mighty curse' which prevented Women's Hospital doctors from giving contraceptive advice to diseased mothers or ones 'overburdened with children'. Curthoys (1986), 82, quoted an 8 January 1925 letter from M P to M S, indicating Piddington's wish to provide sex education and contraceptive information at Moore's Bookshop in Sydney.

⁴⁷⁵British Library. Stopes Papers. Miscellaneous correspondence from Australia, Add MS58, 573, Knibbs to Stopes, 6 January 1925, ff.10-11 and Stopes to Knibbs, 7 July 1925, f. 17.

agreed after reading about the impact of VD on children. Piddington arranged for her to speak with Dr Worrall, the son of a well-known Sydney gynaecologist, and to set up a committee.⁴⁷⁶ Piddington had played a founding role in the organisation but resigned after it distanced itself from eugenics.⁴⁷⁷

The new (as yet unnamed) society was formed on 27 April 1926 and held its first meeting on 10 May 1926, when it appointed a committee of nine (including Piddington) to draw up a constitution. The Women's League of NSW reported that 'the subjects of venereal disease and sex hygiene were dealt with by Drs Dick and Sydney Morris (Health Department), and Dr Hamilton (clinical aspect), and Mr Cresswell O'Reilly (Film Censor), educational and positive aspect'.⁴⁷⁸ On 23 June 1926 it was agreed that its name should be the Race Improvement Society of NSW and Piddington was elected honorary treasurer.⁴⁷⁹ One member questioned the use of the word 'eugenics' in the third object of the Society but after a defence by five speakers (including Piddington) the objects were adopted as the draft constitution and Piddington was elected leader of the sex education group. Retention of the pro-eugenics name however, was overturned that very day at a public meeting which voted to change the name to the Racial Hygiene Centre of NSW (RHC). The President, Ruby Rich, perhaps to soften the blow, proposed a vote of thanks to 'Mrs Piddington for her strenuous efforts and wonderful work in the city'.⁴⁸⁰

It seems likely that Piddington had tried unsuccessfully to convert the RHC to the celibate motherhood cause.⁴⁸¹ This would plausibly explain the otherwise mysterious response by the RHC Executive on 16 September 1926, noting 'correspondence from Mrs Piddington in which the suggestions made were declared constitutionally impossible', and her subsequent resignation which the RHC accepted on 24 November 1926. The RHC's emphasis on eugenics became even less, following a decision taken at its first annual meeting on 11 July 1927. A motion was passed for the eugenist wording of the third object in the constitution, 'improvement of the race on eugenic principles', to be replaced with the more abstract, 'education of the community on eugenic principles'.

⁴⁷⁶Ruby Rich, 12 December 1976, Hazel De Berg (Canberra: Oral History Unit, National Library of Australia), tape 955 and 994.

⁴⁷⁷RHC Papers, RHC Executive, ML, MSS 3838.

⁴⁷⁸Women's League of NSW Annual Report, June 1926, 11.

⁴⁷⁹Minutes of the RHC's First Executive meeting, 23 June 1926. A new treasurer, replacing Piddington, was recorded in the minutes of their 3 November 1926 meeting.

⁴⁸⁰Ibid, these 23 June 1926 minutes were signed by Ruby Rich on 11 October 1926.

⁴⁸¹Such an attempt is suggested by the wording in M P to M S, 7 June 1926, 'my earlier work for celibate motherhood failed here and those who did not and would not understand it would never listen to me on anything'. This letter is quoted in Curthoys (1989), 75, in turn quoting from Mary Murnane's notes of the Piddington-Stopes correspondence.

Although Piddington continued to hold classes for the RHC she complained to Stopes in 1928 that she had given a special class to defend Stopes' name after having been asked by Goodisson and a member of the RHC committee not to mention it. She denounced the RHC for 'working on old lines, wasting time and money, while we without financial assistance are doing the real work of teaching thousands'. She claimed that she had 'declined' to be President of the Racial Hygiene Centre'.⁴⁸² There are no records of this offer and as she had resigned only six months after the RHC's inauguration because her plans had apparently been rejected, it seems extremely unlikely that such an offer would have been made. Perhaps her need to impress Stopes influenced her to claim four months later that 'they have twice asked me to be President'. Piddington cautioned Stopes not to think that 'Miss Rich' (who was going to England) 'has anything to do with our work', adding that 'even with all their prestige and backed up by a few doctors with government subsidy' the RHC were 'futile and inefficient'.⁴⁸³

Piddington's influence, however, was exercised elsewhere. In the April 1929 issue of the woman's paper *Herself*, the cover (in Figure 4) shows a baby telephoning 'the eugenics number' and it included articles on eugenic training for boys and news of various eugenics study circles. Five months later *Herself*, now called *Herself: Her Present, Past and Future and Australian Affairs*, appealed to both religious and secular audiences by informing readers in Biblical language 'What eugenics is not' and inviting them to join study circles 'in and around Sydney', including one at the 'New Thought Centre', possibly owned by the Rationalist Association of NSW, in the city.⁴⁸⁴ The tract came, without acknowledgement, from 'A Eugenics Catechism' which was published in 1926 by the American Eugenics Society.⁴⁸⁵ It is likely that Piddington inserted the piece as she had been in contact with American eugenisists and had started six eugenics study circles.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸²M P to M S, 20 February 1928, f.80.

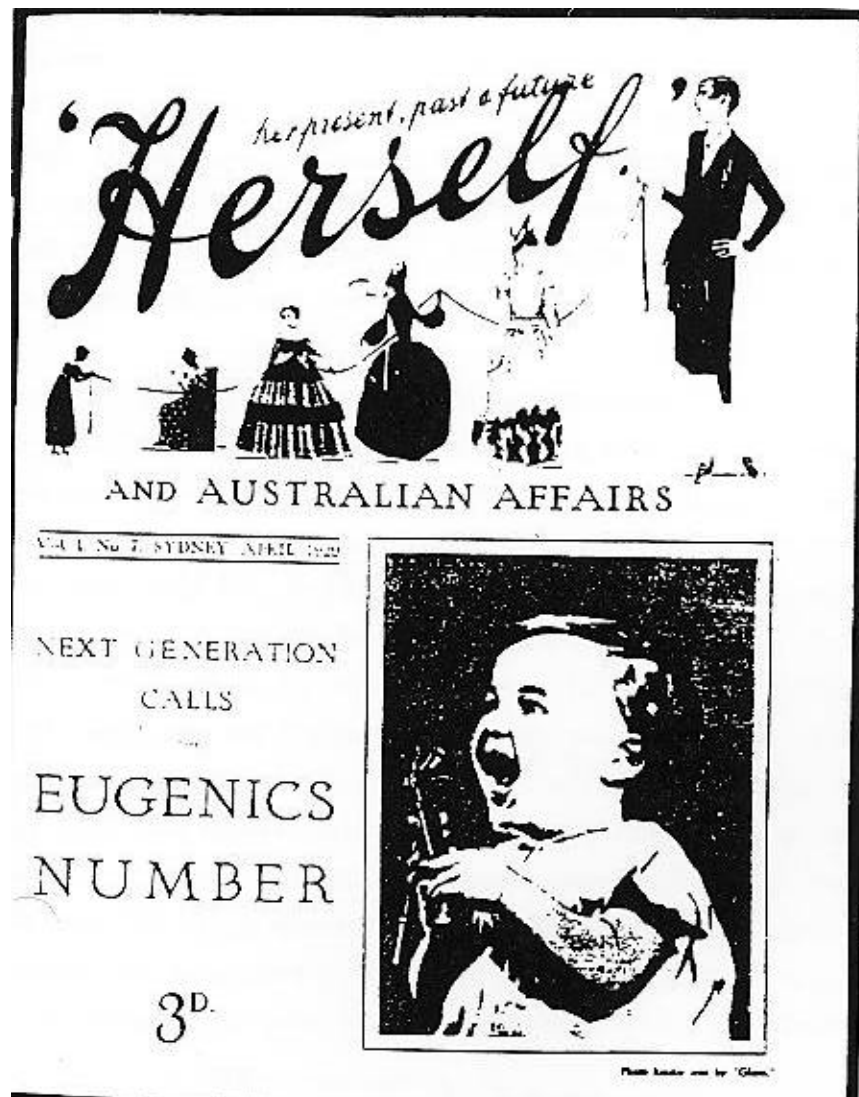
⁴⁸³M P to M S, 22 June 1928, f.88.

⁴⁸⁴Readers in *Herself*, September 1929, 16, were reassured of the many things that eugenics was not, including sex hygiene, birth control, prenatal culture, public health, free love, trial marriage, scientific love making, a vice campaign, 'government made marriage', physical culture, Spartan infanticide, or a plan for producing 'genius to order' or supermen. The New Thought Centre was at 161 Elizabeth Street, Sydney.

⁴⁸⁵Extracts from this 'Catechism' are reproduced in Kevles (1985), 60-61. Passages which were copied verbatim from the American Eugenics Society and reprinted in *Herself* include 'Q: Does eugenics contradict the Bible? A: The Bible has much to say for eugenics. It tells us that men do not gather grapes from thorns and figs from thistles ... Q: Does eugenics mean less sympathy for the unfortunate? A: It means a much better understanding of them, and a more concerted attempt to alleviate their suffering, by seeing to it that everything possible is done to have fewer hereditary defectives'.

⁴⁸⁶M P to C D, 22 August 1929, 1.

Figure 4: Next generation calls the eugenics number⁴⁸⁷



⁴⁸⁷*Herself*, 1 (no 7), April 1929, cover. Other articles promoted eugenics and reminded women that motherhood was a science. Piddington, in 'The rearing of the boy', *ibid*, 11-12, emphasized that his 'early training must be eugenic'. The first issue of this Sydney-based magazine was published in June 1928 with this endorsement on the cover by the Hon Dr Arthur, 'Minister of Health and Friend of Women': 'I wish "*Herself*" success. If it ... aids the forward march of the modern woman from foolish and uncalled for conventions and traditions, it will be of real service. Nevertheless, the transition must be to true womanhood, not to an imitation of the other sex. Let "*Herself*" have this as the ideal, and success must follow.' The magazine ceased publication in 1930.

She was also successful in another endeavour that was close to her heart. In 1923, as a result of the 'gallant' efforts by both Piddingtons, Stopes' books had been allowed through Australian customs.⁴⁸⁸ In 1930 Piddington's scorn for the RHA's conservatism and lack of eugenic consciousness was intensified after it had tried to have Stopes' books banned. She immediately wrote an outraged letter to Stopes to warn her about the latest actions by 'the terrible Racial Hygiene Association'. She also mentioned that Dr Edith How-Martyn had sent her a copy of *The Birth Control Movement in England* and had asked about Australian progress. As How-Martyn was a Life Fellow of the Eugenics Society, Piddington must have experienced chagrin when she was forced to reply that there was 'nothing to tell!'.⁴⁸⁹ Perhaps this dearth, and the RHC's attempt to ban Stopes' book *Contraception*, influenced Piddington to establish her own society.

Piddington was a tireless publicist, and while she collected 'opinions' to support her cause it is almost impossible to verify them because almost all that remains are her own reports about them.⁴⁹⁰ For example, she boasted to Stopes and Davenport that the progressive eugenicist David Starr Jordan, Chancellor of Stanford University, had been 'wonderfully kind'.⁴⁹¹ In 1923 she had made a convoluted attempt to prove her point which involved sending Davenport, not a copy of Jordan's actual letter but merely an account of it by Henry Tasman Lovell (1878-1958), Associate Professor of Psychology and Philosophy at the University of Sydney. Lovell appears to have written to Piddington, 'On returning Professor Starr Jordan's letter to you, let me say both how interesting it is to know that you have the support of so distinguished an opinion as his, and how I value your confidence in allowing me to peruse his letter'.⁴⁹² Both letters may have been forged by Piddington to impress, although Lovell was supportive in 1931 and informed newspaper readers that her work was 'an influence for good' and that 'training mothers' was 'undeniably right and necessary', adding that he approved of her 'objective method' for teaching racial health'.⁴⁹³

⁴⁸⁸For this crusade see the *Age*, 24, 25, 28, 29 May and 1 June 1923. M P to M S, 3 July 1923. M S to M P, 13 August 1923.

⁴⁸⁹M P to M S, 11 March 1930, f.107.

⁴⁹⁰M P to C D, 22 August 1929, 1. She reminded Davenport that he 'had very kindly noticed a paper [on celibate motherhood] in the *Eugenical News*. This reference was impossible to verify in Australia as the register of periodical holdings indicated that the University of Washington Library is the only library which keeps this journal.

⁴⁹¹*Ibid* and M P to M S, 24 August 1924, f.55.

⁴⁹²Henry Tasman Lovell to M P, 23 August 1923, in Davenport Papers.

⁴⁹³*Sun*, 13 December 1931, 2 (a). A leaflet with a similar endorsement from Professor Lovell is included in the Bessie Rischbieth Papers. Series 12 MS 2004, NLA, quoted in Kay Daniels, Mary Murnane and Anne Picot (eds.), *Women in Australia: An Annotated Guide to Records* (Canberra: AGPS, 1977), vol 2, 120.

While she was introduced as 'this great authority on Eugenics and Sex Education' in the articles she wrote for *Health and Physical Culture* in 1930, these did not include her photograph.⁴⁹⁴ As her column was controversial, this omission may have been deliberate so that readers would not recognize her. She was certainly modest about her own qualifications, making 'no pretension of being anything but a woman of long experience having devoted years to the work'.⁴⁹⁵ Considering the hostility she often experienced, coupled with her isolation and lack of scientific training, it is not surprising that she naively approved of overseas cranks and scientists including those who were promoting dubious projects. For example, in March 1930 the *Sydney Morning Herald* included a claim by 'prominent Austrian radiologist' Dr Wolfgang Wieser to have reduced the extent of feeble-mindedness in children by X-raying their heads and bodies.⁴⁹⁶ In September 1930 she claimed that Wieser had been 'most courteous' to her.⁴⁹⁷

The Institute of Family Relations

Piddington had long dreamed of establishing her own organization but although Roe incorrectly cites Piddington as establishing an Institute of Family relations 'in the early 1920s',⁴⁹⁸ this did not happen until 1931. In January 1931 Piddington informed Stopes that Lang's (NSW) Labor government was 'likely to grant' facilities to her so that she might 'succeed in forming an Institute of Family Relations'⁴⁹⁹ and enclosed this leaflet with her letter:

⁴⁹⁴I was unable to locate a picture of her although she appeared (as one of a group) in a collection of photographs held in the ML showing the Piddingtons and another family in the Blue Mountains in the 1930s. Unfortunately, identification was impossible because the photographs were not labelled.

⁴⁹⁵M P to C D, 22 August 1929, 5.

⁴⁹⁶'General Cable News' (from London), *SMH*, 13 March 1930, 12 (b).

⁴⁹⁷M P to Cora Hodson, Sec EES, 29 September 1930, SA/EUG/E2.

⁴⁹⁸Roe (1984), 232.

⁴⁹⁹M P to M S, 24 January 1931, f. 110.

Arrest of Racial Decay. The Hon W Davies, [NSW] Minister of Education, has granted the use of the Assembly Hall, Education Building, Bridge Street [Sydney], to a group of social workers who propose to carry out, under the direction of Mrs Marion Piddington, a campaign against the dangers of promiscuity and 'the menace in our midst' [VD]. ... The classes, which are an extension of the work carried out by Mrs Piddington and others during the past eight years, will follow her special 'impersonal' method.⁵⁰⁰

While the leaflet implied that she had government support, the reality may only have been that she was given permission to hire a hall.⁵⁰¹ After World War I, the WEA held classes in the Education Department's building and it was also used by the Race Improvement Society in 1926.⁵⁰² Whether or not she held classes there, she pressed on with her work.⁵⁰³ On 12 August 1931 she was finally able to send Stopes her 'first letter' on the 'letter paper' of the Institute of Family Relations, admitting that it was only an extension of the previous ten years' sex education work and that the 14 Directors were working in a voluntary capacity in 'a small room', probably her flat.⁵⁰⁴ She still maintained the fiction that 'next year a scientist will join me as President and it will become a Scientific Institute for Research' when she was 'gone'.⁵⁰⁵ By 15 March 1933 the IFR letterhead only listed Piddington, 'assisted by eminent honorary specialists'. In the same letter Piddington asked Stopes to allow the IFR to make her 'new cheap birth control method' available in Australia and 'sell it cheaply to the public'.

The extent of her bitterness towards the RHA is revealed in a letter to Stopes protesting about the RHA's book-banning activities. Piddington assured Stopes that she would fight this censorship, adding that 'the type of mind that controls organisation work is hopeless and very unclean'.⁵⁰⁶ A 'Note on Mrs Piddington' in the Margaret Sanger Papers indicates that

⁵⁰⁰Ibid, f. 111.

⁵⁰¹Mary MacPherson, from the Education Department's School History Unit, consulted their archives which did not have information about this, Pers comm., 4 July 1995.

⁵⁰²Jane Tabberer, *The Times of Henrietta* (Sydney: Union of Australian Women, 1970), 198, and 'The Society [which became the RHA] will meet at the Assembly Hall, Education Department, on Wednesday at 8pm', *SMH*, 19 June 1926, 10 (e).

⁵⁰³M P to M S, 22 June 1928, f. 88, the letterhead was 'Sex Education Room, Burdekin House, Macquarie St Sydney'. While still using the same letterhead in her letter to Davenport on 22 August 1929, the address was her flat in 91 Phillip Street, Sydney.

⁵⁰⁴M P to M S, 12 August 1931, f. 112. The IFR listed Dr John Bradfield (Trustee) and Directors: Rev P J Bothwell, Mrs Bowering, Mrs Butler, J T Dingle, Mrs H Greville, R H Greville, A D Hope, Mrs Roy Jones, Mrs Carrie Tennant Kelly, M P, Rev H M Riley, Mrs Elsie Rivett, Miss M Terry, and Mrs Trevenna assisted by honorary specialists in biology, urology, gynaecology, psychiatry, venereology, obstetrics, psychiatry and medicine.

⁵⁰⁵MP to M S, 12 August 1931, *ibid*.

⁵⁰⁶M P to M S, 11 March 1930, f. 107.

Piddington frequently made such savagely sweeping generalizations.⁵⁰⁷ In 1934 Alice Hicks, a midwife and member of Sanger's Birth Control International Information Centre, had visited 'M P' several times. Hicks reported to Sanger that Piddington was 'individualistic', adding that there was 'an atmosphere of mystery' about the IFR: it had no committee, Piddington would not ally herself with any other organization and would not reveal the names of the 'specialists' who assisted her. Hicks found Piddington was reluctant even to discuss the 'perfectly reliable' contraceptive method she had invented, finally saying it was a sponge which she sold to women with a recipe for a home-made spermicide. Piddington also said that she referred pregnant women for abortions. Hicks concluded that M P is the Institute, and that it was a 'money making concern'.

Although she had received no reply when she wrote to Margaret Sanger, Piddington also contacted other American eugenicists who, as well as preaching their messages to lay audiences, frequently translated their ideas into practice.⁵⁰⁸ Piddington often echoed their views and shared their position on sterilization, which appears to have shaped their research, much of which was a sham. Stefan Kuhl has catalogued their connections as contributors to, and supporters of, Nazi sterilization and eugenics policies.⁵⁰⁹

Piddington forged a mutually supportive relationship with Jean Devanny (1894-1962) for the relatively short period that the New Zealand-born novelist lived in Sydney. Devanny wrote in her autobiography that she had formed a 'friendship deep and lasting' with the Piddingtons from 1929 after they assisted her in gaol and during her involvement with the Communist Party. They also encouraged her writing by making their holiday house available to her. In response, Devanny helped run classes at the Institute of Family Relations, endorsed Piddington's work and wrote articles under her 'stimulus'. This influence is apparent in an article in *Stead's Review* in which Devanny wrote:

Sterilization is the logical extension of birth control, to include those stocks whose feeble-mindedness or degeneracy precludes the use of ordinary methods. Voluntary birth control among the superior types must be offset by enforced birth control among the uncontrolled, the bestial, the simple.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁷Library of Congress, Washington. Margaret Sanger Papers, vol 23, 1935.

⁵⁰⁸These activists included, Goddard, Davenport, Johnson, Laughlin, Gosney and Popenoe. See M P to C D, 22 August 1929, 1, 'I cannot thank you and Mr Laughlin enough' and 'Professor Roswell Johnson wrote me a completely kind letter'. In 1930 she frequently mentioned these eugenicists in *Health and Physical Culture*. Piddington may have named her IFR after Popenoe's Institute of Family Relations which was established in California in 1930. The year before, Paul Popenoe and Rosewell Gosney had written *Sterilization for Human Betterment* which helped give legitimacy to Nazi actions.

⁵⁰⁹Stefan Kuhl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism and German National Socialism* (New York: OUP, 1994), 40-47.

⁵¹⁰Jean Devanny, 'Eugenic reform and the unfit', *Stead's Review* (1 May 1930), 22.

Possibly in a once only experiment, the IFR turned this theory into practice in 1931. While the *Sun* sought to remain neutral by reporting that the IFR had 'supervised the first case of sterilization in Australia' and were 'tackling the problem on purely scientific grounds',⁵¹¹ *Smith's Weekly* disapprovingly noted the IFR's 'astounding activity' in sterilizing a 'pioneer patient' for no charge, who was 'poor', 'sickly' and 'on the dole'⁵¹² and then described the 'brave wife' holding the hand of her 'stricken husband' who had made the decision to be sterilized because 'inherited taint was his lifelong nightmare'.⁵¹³ The Institute's psychologist, John Dingle, described another applicant for the procedure as being 'typical of the need for sterilization', having come from a family of 18 children who had been born to a mother of 'low mental calibre' and an 'epileptic pensioner' father. Of the nine living children, two were married, four were at school and three were below school age. Two of the applicant's sisters were 'morons' who were 'dirty, untidy and illiterate, never likely to make useful citizens or healthy mothers'.⁵¹⁴

Despite these sensational announcements, the main function of the IFR was to provide sex education classes and give birth control advice, mostly by mail.⁵¹⁵ This attracted criticism from Dr Edith How-Martyn in London, the Director of Margaret Sanger's Birth Control Information Centre. In 1933 How-Martyn wrote to a colleague in New York, warning that Piddington was 'rather unbalanced', tried to 'cover far too much ground', and had 'made the movement look rather foolish by her strong advocacy of artificial insemination'.⁵¹⁶ She was not in favour of the Centre 'bothering about Mrs Piddington' and was concerned because the IFR was 'prepared to send' Stopes' occlusive cervical caps by mail - for a 'heavy' charge of 21 shillings - without fitting the women or knowing whether the cap would fit. Unaware of the

⁵¹¹Weakness of intellect may not be inherited. Sterilization has its flaws. Churches against, doctors are guarded. Sydney's one clinic', *Sun*, 13 December 1931, 2 (a).

⁵¹²Made sterile by surgeon at his own wish. Sydney man's act staggers social opinion', *Smith's Weekly*, 10 October 1931, 1, 13. It described the IFR as having been established by 'apostles of social hygiene and eugenics', including clergymen, literary ladies, scientists and psychologists, warning that the IFR 'seems to contain an amount of crankiness' and should not be trusted to 'alter' fatherhood and motherhood.

⁵¹³Sterilised man tells reason why. Inherited taint was his lifelong nightmare. Brave wife joins hands with stricken husband', *Smith's Weekly*, 17 October 1931, in RHC papers.

⁵¹⁴*Ibid*, 13. Dingle's employment was listed in *AJPP*, vol 7 (1927), 227-33, as the 'Psychological Laboratory, University of Sydney'.

⁵¹⁵An advertisement for the IFR is in the RHC Papers, MSS 3838, ML: 'Prevention of Racial Decay. The Institute of Family Relations. ... Correspondence strictly confidential. Interviews arranged by letter. Continuous classes on the objective method of sex training with psychological help to parents are held on Wednesday and Thursday each week from 11 am to 5.30 pm. Evening classes. Reading room open all day Friday. Tea and refreshments. Fees on application'. Another example is in Kay Daniels and Mary Murnane (comps.), *Uphill All the Way* (St Lucia: UQP, 1980), 153-54.

⁵¹⁶Dr Edith How-Martyn, London to Miss F Rose, National Committee on Federal Legislation for Birth Control, New York, 30 May 1933, Sanger Papers, vol 22.

birth control movement's criticism of the quality of her service, the WEA magazine published an advertisement for the IFR in 1935. When WEA (Victoria) criticised this on the grounds of morality, the WEA's Sydney Executive defended the right to advertise such services.⁵¹⁷

Piddington received few positive responses to her numerous appeals and there is no record of a response to an appeal, possibly her last, which was sent to Professor Agar in 1937. There was a cross beside this sentence: 'Our Institute has completed almost the first cases of voluntary sterilization, we have had grateful letters from those who have had this very simple operation, and also the major operation for women'.⁵¹⁸ While it is easy to believe her comment that she had lent Gosney and Popenoe's extremist book to 'Ministers of the Crown and Doctors with no result', it is harder to believe her claim that 'more than 41,000' had attended her classes or that the IFR had performed female sterilizations, and extremely unlikely that she received the following accolade which she attributed to the President of the Eugenics Society:

A few months ago Lord Horder sent the following message. 'Tell Mrs Piddington that sterilization is the first thing to do'.⁵¹⁹

Unquestionably, Piddington was a complex character who promoted her causes powerfully, even brazenly. However, the assessments by Roe, that she was 'confused',⁵²⁰ and was partly a 'puritan' according to Curthoys,⁵²¹ are wide of the mark. Her actions, even at their most extreme, always flowed logically from her beliefs. Eugenics was her overall goal and within this she worked for celibate motherhood, birth control (to protect the health of fit mothers and to reduce or eliminate the births of the unfit) and the sterilization of the unfit. She also believed that sex education was essential and that informed children would avoid prostitutes and promiscuity as adults and, as a consequence, be protected from VD. Piddington envisaged a totalitarian utopia in which only fitness for motherhood would be considered, little boys would not have trouser pockets in order to prevent them from becoming sexually precocious and the unfit would happily forgo parenthood for the good of the nation. In addition to extreme views such as these, she also promoted honest

⁵¹⁷The IFR advertisement was in *AH* (15 April 1935), 80. It was discussed in the WEA Executive minute book, 7 June 1935. See also Higgins (1957), 64. Piddington's friend, Greville, had connections with the WEA and may have influenced the NSW Executive.

⁵¹⁸M P to W E Agar, 27 September 1937. I was given this letter by Agar's son, Dr W T Agar. This cross may have been placed by M P in emphasis or Agar's response.

⁵¹⁹Lord Horder, the ES President from 1935 to 1948, was a moderate eugenicist who did not advocate sterilization in 1937, a time when Nazi excesses were becoming known.

⁵²⁰Roe (1984), 232.

⁵²¹Curthoys (1989), 86.

communication between parents and children, and it was not prudery that made her disapprove of 'medical prophylaxis' (condoms) but a fear that they encouraged profligacy and vice. Her anti-VD work included a radical proposal for 'metaphylaxis' (or 'after guarding') for parents to have for use on their children if they had exposed themselves to infection by 'just one slip'.⁵²²

She was Australia's only 'strong' eugenisit, but her influence was limited because of her individualistic, often eccentric approach. When she died in 1950 her obituary did not mention her involvement in eugenics and birth control. As the writer was most probably Devanny - a colleague who had advocated both causes in the 1930s - the omission indicates that by the time of her death eugenics had become disreputable while birth control had not yet become respectable.⁵²³ She was remembered instead as a 'social work pioneer':

Mrs Marian (sic) Piddington, who died in a Sydney private hospital last week, aged 81, was a pioneer in the work of marriage guidance. For 30 years she carried on, almost unaided, the Institute of Family Relations from an office in Phillip Street, Sydney. In a period when people were suspicious of any frank advocacy of sex education, Mrs Piddington was educating parents in the art of wise parentcraft. She gave personal interviews, lectured to classes, and sought support for her cause from politicians and leaders in the community. Mrs Piddington's only son, Dr Ralph Piddington, is a reader in social anthropology at Edinburgh University.⁵²⁴

2. John [Jack] Chambers Eldridge - Labor politician

Figure 5: Eldridge at 59⁵²⁵



Eldridge provides a good example of Searle's 'weak' eugenists who added their eugenic beliefs to a primary commitment to politics which remained basically unaltered. While for ten years Eldridge strenuously promoted eugenics as part of his campaign to improve living standards, his eugenic interest

for a review of Piddington's 'Sex training with relation to promiscuity and hoped to have discussed at the *Second International Congress for Sex* st 1930. She told Hodson, 29 September 1930, that her paper was received too late.

es in her autobiography and misspelt Piddington's first name as 'Marian'

⁵²⁵ J.C. Eldridge, Labor minister for Martin (NSW)', *Bulletin* (10 June 1931), 13 (a).

appears to have died once it had become incompatible with his political views. Eldridge was born in 1872 to peripatetic Australian parents then living in Calcutta. After attending state schools in Australia, he began a 38-year career with the NSW public service in 1889.

Starting as a junior draughtsman with the Sewerage Department, earning £50 a year, he rapidly progressed to senior positions and, by the time he resigned to enter Federal Parliament in 1929, his annual salary was more than £560.⁵²⁶ Eldridge became known as a unionist and, from 1929 to 1931, as the Member for Martin in the Scullin (Federal) Labor government.⁵²⁷

Eldridge was an energetic speaker, broadcaster and pamphleteer who pioneered the Australian Labor Party speakers' classes.⁵²⁸ Opponents categorised him as a 'militant'⁵²⁹ and approving supporters called him a 'stalwart'.⁵³⁰ In addition to his often stormy career as a public servant, union member and politician, he ardently promoted eugenics from 1912 to 1922, but while his formal career has been recorded, his eugenics involvement has not.⁵³¹ This eugenics activity is significant, both as an example of an Australian with left wing political views who supported eugenics and because Eldridge was the prime mover and only chronicler of NSW's first eugenics society.

Eldridge publicised his passion for eugenics at the age of 40. When the First International Eugenics Congress was held in London in July 1912, almost the only negative coverage occurred in Sydney's *Telegraph* which sardonically reported on the 'so-called science of eugenics' and reminded readers that people, like race horses, could 'win and lose in all shapes and sizes'. The leader-writer preferred marriages to remain subject to 'sentimental

⁵²⁶The *NSW Public Service Lists* record Eldridge's career from 1890 (aged 17) until 1928 (aged 56).

⁵²⁷From 1922 to 1933 the federal electorate of Martin (NSW) covered a large area of Sydney's wealthy northern suburbs including Wahroonga, North Ryde, Ryde, Lindfield, also Concord and Burwood.

⁵²⁸The NSW Parliamentary Library's *Newspaper Index 1910-1975*, lists 70 entries for Eldridge, mostly in the years of his short political career.

⁵²⁹Examples of negative views are 'Labour (sic) Party. Annual Conference. Election of Officers. Militants defeated', *SMH*, 25 April 1924, 8 and 'Federal Caucus. Cave against Mr Theodore. Crisis may be precipitated', *SMH*, 20 February 1930, 11. A 'cave' is a group of seceders from a political party on some special question.

⁵³⁰'Late J C Eldridge', *Century*, 7 May 1954, 3.

⁵³¹Eldridge himself may be the initial source of many of the inaccurate details which appear in Joan Rydon's, *A Biographical Register of the Commonwealth Parliament 1901-1972* (Canberra: ANUP, 1975), 68.

impulses', not eugenics.⁵³² Three days later, Eldridge responded to this editorial with an impassioned defence of the 'youngest [and] assuredly the greatest of all sciences'. He stressed that eugenics was still in its infancy, had no involvement in 'matrimonial selection', and had gone no further than to propose 'segregation of the hopelessly unfit'.⁵³³

Before the end of the year, Eldridge had formalised his support by joining the London-based Eugenics Education Society (EES), and by becoming the Honorary Secretary of Sydney's Eugenics Education Society of NSW (EESNSW) which was launched on 11 December 1912. Dr Richard Arthur became President of the EESNSW and was later elected as an EES Vice-President.⁵³⁴ Robert Francis Irvine (1861-1941), the University of Sydney's first Professor of Economics,⁵³⁵ was Vice-President of the NSW Society. Eldridge informed the EES, 'I may say I am the Secretary of the State Labour Bureau of NSW and that I have qualified in the Sydney University in the science of Economics'.⁵³⁶ While he was a senior public servant and overseas records indicated that he had a 'Certificate in Economics' from the University of Sydney,⁵³⁷ he did not graduate.⁵³⁸

His interest in eugenics, economics and environmental issues was probably kindled by Irvine (formerly a senior public servant and subsequently Chairman of the Public Service Board), who gave lectures to public servants on economics and commerce from 1905, at the request of the University Senate.⁵³⁹ Eldridge is likely to have been one of the many people who attended these courses and he persevered with his interest. His war dossier indicates that he received paid leave from his position in the Australian Imperial Force's Educational

⁵³²'The Eugenics Congress', *Telegraph*, 27 July 1912, 12 (f).

⁵³³'The science of eugenics', letter by Eldridge, *Telegraph*, 30 July 1912, 11.

⁵³⁴Arthur's EES Vice-Presidency was noted in his obituary in *Who Was Who*. In 1917 the Women's Liberal League passed a resolution that: 'The Council of the [WLL] warmly congratulate Dr Arthur on the honour conferred upon him by the Eugenics Society of Great Britain, by his unanimous election as Vice-President of that body', *Woman's Voice*, 1 August 1917, 1. Lesley Hall found this 'odd' as Arthur was merely re-elected. She was unable to verify the date of his initial election, Pers. comm., 19 July 1995.

⁵³⁵In 1912 a Chair of Economics was established in the University of Sydney's Faculty of Arts. Irvine commenced as the Professor of Economics in 1913 and the first degree was awarded in 1914, Clifford Turney et al, *Australia's First: A History of the University of Sydney, vol 1, 1850-1939* (Sydney: USP, 1991), 384-86.

⁵³⁶'Membership application', Eldridge to EES, 17 December 1912, EES Archives (London), SA/EUG, E2, 'Eugenics Education Society in NSW'. Subsequently cited as Eldridge to EES.

⁵³⁷*London School of Economics and Political Science (University of London) Register 1895-1932* (London: LSEPS, 1934), 55 indicated that Eldridge attended the School in 1919-1920 and was awarded a Social Science Certificate in 1919.

⁵³⁸Eldridge was not listed in the University of Sydney's *Register of Graduates, 1880+*. Those accepting that Eldridge had graduated include *Bulletin*, 10 June 1931, 13, J T Lang, *Truth*, 6 April 1958, 37 and Rydon (1975), 68.

⁵³⁹Bruce McFarlane, *Professor Irvine's Economics in Australian Labour History, 1912-1933* (Canberra: Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 1966), 3.

Section to attend the London School of Economics from May until December 1919. It also contains a letter from Eldridge stating that in May 1920, London University had awarded him a Certificate in Social Science and Administration.⁵⁴⁰ In a letter accompanying his membership application, Eldridge informed the EES that the newly-established Sydney Branch shared the parent body's objectives. He indicated that his decision to join was influenced by his contact with the English pro-environment eugenicist, Dr Caleb Saleeby, whose activities appropriately matched his name, which is Arabic for crusader.⁵⁴¹ Eldridge mentioned two other stimuli: Saleeby's eugenics series in *Harmsworth Popular Science*⁵⁴² and news in the *Eugenics Review* that New Zealand had established several eugenics branches.⁵⁴³

In June 1913 Eldridge addressed a 'large gathering' of Rationalist Association of NSW members, explaining that eugenists wished to make people aware of the need to consider the race, not just themselves. He mentioned his defence of eugenics after reading the *Telegraph's* 'leading article of destructive criticism' the previous July.⁵⁴⁴ Eldridge's public support for eugenics spanned a decade and his record of the EESNSW's activity has been preserved in the EES Archives. Saleeby, author of the 36 fortnightly instalments which Harmsworth published,⁵⁴⁵ appears to have been Eldridge's mentor. He used Saleeby's words (without acknowledgement) to redefine the goals of the EESNSW in a 1914 letter to the *Telegraph*. This indicates that between 1912 and 1914 the society had changed direction: although initially sharing the (hereditarian) objectives of the parent EES, the NSW society quickly adopted Saleeby's 'nurtural' (environmental) perspective.⁵⁴⁶ Australian eugenists shared Saleeby's distaste for those who preached class eugenics, and the closely allied group he called 'the better dead' school - genetic determinists who aimed to eliminate the 'unfit'.⁵⁴⁷ 'Nurtural' eugenists such as Saleeby were sometimes called 'euthenists'.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁰Eldridge enlisted on 29 November 1916, embarked for active service abroad on 5 June 1918, was detached for duty with AIF Headquarters, Education Office, London on 14 January 1919 and discharged from the AIF in Sydney on 22 July 1920, AA (ACT), Series B2455, 'Personnel Dossiers for First AIF Ex-Service Members'.

⁵⁴¹Lesley Hall indicated that pre-1920 records of the EES were sparse and there was no record of Eldridge/Saleeby correspondence, neither was Saleeby listed in other EES files and the whereabouts of his papers was unknown. Pers. comm., 21 April 1995.

⁵⁴²Arthur Mee (ed.), *Harmsworth Popular Science* (London: Educational Book Co, 7 vols, [1912?]), 5145, acknowledged that 'The author [Saleeby] contributes the Eugenics section to "*Popular Science*".

⁵⁴³'Notes and Quarterly Chronicle', *ER*, (July 1912), 107-14.

⁵⁴⁴'Dealing with degenerates. Segregation advocated. Britain's vast expenditure', *Sun*, 3 June 1913.

⁵⁴⁵From 1896 Alfred Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe) and his brother Harold (Lord Rothermere), revolutionised British papers and produced series such as *Popular Science*.

⁵⁴⁶Saleeby, a founding member of the EES, often disagreed with the views of hereditarian eugenists, calling them 'class eugenists' and the 'better dead' school.

⁵⁴⁷Saleeby, in Mee [1912], 3292.

because they prompted 'euthenics', the science of bettering the environment or improving living conditions. While they did not use the term, 'euthenics' aptly described the social reform orientation of the decision-makers, Eldridge, Irvine and Arthur, and was adopted as the Society's new 'official statement of the scope of eugenics':

⁵⁴⁸In *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1912), 207, Charles B Davenport applied this term to reformers and eugenists who believed that psychopaths and other deviants would be cured by improving their environment.

- 1 Natural or Primary Eugenics: Biology, heredity, etc
 - (a) Positive - encouraging worthy parenthood
 - (b) Negative - discouraging unworthy parenthood
 - (c) Preventive - opposing the racial poisons (venereal diseases, alcohol, etc)

- 2 Nurtural or Secondary Eugenics: Sociology, environment, education, etc
 - (a) Physical - including nurture from beginning (not merely from the cradle) to the grave
 - (b) Psychical (sic) - including education, etc
 - (c) Social and moral - home, school and nation.⁵⁴⁹

Irvine seems to have influenced Eldridge's involvement in economics, eugenics, social sciences and low cost housing. Evidence for this is provided in the conclusion of his letter to the *Telegraph*, 'the recent statement by Professor Irvine that "the problem of how to produce a superior civilisation is both biological and sociological" is not only entirely in accord with the principles of eugenics, but it forms the whole basis of the new science'.⁵⁵⁰ The following year Eldridge made proposals for overcoming 'the housing trouble [which] is one of many which arise out of our unsound economic system'.⁵⁵¹ His comments bear strong resemblance to passages in Irvine's 1913 report on workers' housing.⁵⁵² Additional evidence of this influence is given in Eldridge's endorsement of Irvine's 'illuminating' 1914 publication, *The Place of the Social Sciences in a Modern University*.⁵⁵³

In his first progress report to the EES in October 1916, Eldridge described 'press work on eugenics', most of which he had written, including an epic in 35 fortnightly instalments for the *Navy*, a union broadsheet produced by the Railway Workers and General Labourers' Association of NSW.⁵⁵⁴ He correctly judged that the 'industrial section' and the 'Australian masses' had been indifferent to or suspicious of eugenics, and claimed that his writing had helped to change this as:

⁵⁴⁹Eldridge, *Telegraph*, 5 March 1914, 4, quoting Saleeby, in Mee [1912?], 127.

⁵⁵⁰Eldridge (5 March 1914).

⁵⁵¹J C Eldridge, *The Housing Problem: What it Means, and How to Approach it* (Sydney: Worker Trade Union Print, 1915), 3.

⁵⁵²R F Irvine (Commissioner), *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Question of the Housing of Workmen in Europe and America* (Sydney: Govt. Pr., 1913).

⁵⁵³Eldridge, 'Eugenics', *Navy*, 9 May 1916, 5.

⁵⁵⁴*Navy*, part 1 (vol 3, 17 May 1915, 3) to part 35 (vol 5, 26 September 1916, 5).

- 1 It has taken our subject right into an important quarter, usually most difficult to reach
- 2 It has been attentively received
- 3 It has gained not only sympathy but active support.⁵⁵⁵

Eldridge defended himself from any criticism the EES might have of his 'unorthodox' style, by explaining that he had adopted it to 'win for our cause the attention, interest, respect and support of the public for which it was written'.⁵⁵⁶ There appears to be no record of public response to this ponderous series but the editor cryptically noted in the journal's final issue that it was 'safe to say that the educative value of Mr Eldridge's articles will not cease with the circulation of the *Navvy*'.⁵⁵⁷ Eldridge informed the EES that progress in Australia's efforts to check and prevent VD had been slow, despite the work by the Commonwealth government and voluntary organisations such as the EESNSW. Some appreciated the seriousness of the threat but ignorance, prejudice, 'a great spirit of sectionalism', and a lack of co-operation between organisations, had all delayed progress despite the efforts of Dr Arthur. Although they were political opponents, Eldridge generously described Arthur as an 'able advocate and champion' on this subject.⁵⁵⁸ In his farewell report to the EES in 1916, when he enlisted for active service, Eldridge apologised that the Sydney Branch had not achieved more, explaining that members had done their best by 'constantly' urging the 'local public' about the importance of eugenics. He hoped that the Branch's beginnings 'may lead to better results in the future years'.⁵⁵⁹

A year after his demobilization, Eldridge sent a progress report to the EES on 9 November 1921 with news that the activities of the EESNSW had been 'taken in hand' and 'its activities renewed'.⁵⁶⁰ After thanking the EES Secretary for her 'courtesy and kindness' each time he had called at their London office, he expressed regret that 'visits during 1918, 1919 and 1920 received no mention in the *Eugenics Review*'.⁵⁶¹ His report and criticism were followed a week later by questions which the EES probably found distasteful. For instance he asked if they advocated or conducted inquiries into 'whether or not the current economic system was essentially dysgenic', and asked for their position on a statement in the

⁵⁵⁵Eldridge to Mrs Gotto, Hon Sec EES, 3 October 1916, 1-4.

⁵⁵⁶*Ibid*, 2-3.

⁵⁵⁷Leading article in the "obituary" issue of *Navvy*, 26 September 1916, 1.

⁵⁵⁸Eldridge to Gotto, 3 October 1916, 3.

⁵⁵⁹*Ibid*, 4.

⁵⁶⁰Eldridge to Joint Hon Secs, EES, 9 November 1921.

⁵⁶¹*Ibid*, 3. The EES apologised on 11 January 1921.

Eugenics Review that the 'economic division' of upper and lower classes corresponded with the eugenic division.⁵⁶² These questions related to the position he held briefly as the Under-Secretary for Motherhood in the office of Greg McGirr, the first and only Minister for Motherhood in the 1920-1921 Storey (NSW) Labor Government.⁵⁶³ While Eldridge claimed that costs of McGirr's proposed Motherhood Endowment Bill would be partly 'defrayed by the amount saved by the abolition of the State Children Relief Board',⁵⁶⁴ others claimed that this proposal lapsed because people objected that it was immoral for a child support scheme to receive funds from a State lottery.⁵⁶⁵ Eldridge added a postscript on 16 November 1921, the day after the second reading of McGirr's Bill, noting Dr Arthur's support 'in principle' and including an extract from his speech which made the Bill's relevance to eugenics explicit:

We owe to the child, if possible, that it should have good parents. I believe that in the future far more attention will be paid to the science of eugenics than is done at the present time. We will seek to prevent persons who are suffering from some disease which may be handed on to their offspring from propagating their kind. ... But once a child is here we must regard it as our primary duty to supply it with the necessities of life. The first essential is an abundant supply of good and wholesome food [followed by such things as] adequate clothing, housing in hygienic surroundings, and ample opportunities for education.⁵⁶⁶

Arthur had claimed to be the 'earliest and most persistent advocate of child endowment'.⁵⁶⁷ His credentials as an environmental eugenicist had been established by his child endowment proposal on 12 December 1916 in what Michael Roe described as 'probably his most important speech to Parliament'. In Roe's view, this entitled Arthur, more than any other Australian, to receive credit for this poverty-alleviating idea which remained his primary goal until 1927.⁵⁶⁸

Eldridge's next letter to the EES on 18 November 1921 contained a statement summarising McGirr's proposed legislation with a request for it to be publicised in the *Eugenics Review*.

⁵⁶²Ibid, 14 November 1921. The EES responses to Eldridge's questions were all negative.

⁵⁶³In *I Remember* (Sydney: Invincible Press, [1956]), 223, Jack Lang wrote that the 'stormy petrel' Greg McGirr was the 'first, and only, Minister for Motherhood' with 'Jack Eldridge ... the Under-Secretary for Motherhood'. Lang added that nothing came of the plan, despite Eldridge's efforts.

⁵⁶⁴J C Eldridge, *Motherhood Endowment Bibliography* (Sydney: Public Library of New South Wales, 31 (sic) June 1921), 49.

⁵⁶⁵A B Piddington, *The Next Step: A Family Basic Income* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1921), 31.

⁵⁶⁶Eldridge to EES, 14 November 1921, 3, and 16 November postscript. NSWPP, Second Series, 84 (Session 1921), 1713.

⁵⁶⁷SMH, 30 November 1927, 4 (h).

⁵⁶⁸Roe (1984), 170-71.

Curiously, he prefaced this letter 'although the subject has no direct eugenic significance, I feel sure that on general grounds it will be of interest to members of the Society, as well as to the general public'.⁵⁶⁹ The article appeared⁵⁷⁰ but was scathingly dismissed by an anonymous reviewer:

In our last issue we printed a proposed scheme for the Endowment of Motherhood in NSW. On consulting the Parliamentary Debates, ... we find considerable opposition in Committee to this measure. In his opening statement Mr J J G McGirr (Lab.), Minister for Motherhood, remarked that the measure was practically noncontentious as it aimed at 'benefiting the class of people who of all are the most deserving - the mothers who are rearing large families, and whose husbands are the poorest paid men in the community'. The 'cult of incompetence' could hardly go further!⁵⁷¹

McGirr had described the scheme as an unprecedented and innovative attempt to provide a benefit, initially to families on the basic wage, and later to assist 'every mother who is doing her duty' to increase the 'best class of immigrant Australia can have - the Australian child'.⁵⁷² Its pronatalist intention - also illustrated in Figures 2 and 14 - was emphasized by Arthur (reiterating 1904 fears) that the decline in the birthrate made the outlook 'most ominous' for 'white Australia' (see Figure 2). He stressed that the Bill's role in reversing this (by giving children a chance in life and lessening infant mortality) would be of the 'utmost value' for Australia's future.⁵⁷³ The Bill was defeated in the Legislative Council. Eldridge's role in the history of eugenics ended in 1922, coinciding with the disparaging comment in the *Eugenics Review* and after the EES responses to his questions indicated that there were irreconcilable differences between the thinking of the parent body and its NSW branch:

I think we as a Society mean by the term 'poverty' or 'lower class' to refer to those who are of so inferior a stock that they are non-self-supporting. ... I feel inclined to say that our Society exists for two purposes; (1) for research work; (2) to focus interest and inquiry into fields of knowledge in as much as they affect the science of heredity.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁶⁹Eldridge to EES, 18 November 1921.

⁵⁷⁰J C Eldridge, 'Motherhood Endowment in Australia. Survey of Events and legislation', *ER*, 14 (1922-1923), 54-58.

⁵⁷¹'E.I.C', 'Endowment of Motherhood', *ER*, 14 (1922-1923), 134.

⁵⁷²NSWPP, Second Series, 48 (Session 1921), 847.

⁵⁷³*Ibid*, 856.

⁵⁷⁴Joint Hon Sec to Eldridge, 3 February 1922.

There was no formal response from Britain or letter of resignation from Australia and Leonard Darwin mentioned his 'members in Australia' in 1923.⁵⁷⁵ However, the lack of any subsequent letters from the EESNSW in the EES Archives casts doubt on Darwin's claim and suggests that with Eldridge's disaffection, the society had also ceased in 1922. Unlike Arthur, who continued his eugenics advocacy when the RHA was established in 1926, Eldridge made no further public statements about eugenics after his ardently-sought and professionally-important child endowment goal was publicly ridiculed by the British Society he had admired. This disillusionment might explain why eugenics was excluded from his political biography by Joan Rydon, while membership of the Anthropological Society of NSW was listed, despite the fact that Eldridge was never a member of this quasi-scientific society.

Five years after his schism with eugenics, Eldridge gave his support to Lang's Family Endowment Bill (1927), which was passed. One of Eldridge's propaganda pamphlets for this Bill opened with the unfortunately worded sentence, 'The human race marches forward on the feet of little children'⁵⁷⁶ but his support was ultimately rewarded by election as the Federal Labor MHR for Martin (NSW), in the 1929 swing to Labor.⁵⁷⁷ He entered federal parliament at the age of 57, when the Depression was gaining momentum. Although his career was brief, it included some arresting moments: for instance, the 'thunderous declaration' that an Australian, possibly even a woman, should be chosen as the next Australian Governor-General,⁵⁷⁸ at which, as Manning Clark has noted, both sides of the House 'collapsed into hilarity' on hearing this.⁵⁷⁹ In addition, Eldridge was part of the faction which supported NSW Premier Lang's finance plan⁵⁸⁰ and refused to pledge their acceptance of federal policy.⁵⁸¹ Two months later Eldridge 'blasted' his political career by

⁵⁷⁵On 17 November 1923 Leonard Darwin urged Commonwealth representatives to promote 'race propagation' studies, SA/EUG, D.166, Premiers: India and Colonies 1923-27. Senator (later Sir) Reginald Victor Wilson, Australia House, replied that education was a State, not a Commonwealth, responsibility. On 28 November Darwin thanked Wilson and stated that he would stress race instruction 'through our members in Australia'.

⁵⁷⁶Eldridge, *Family Endowment Act of NSW - 1927: Main Provisions and Procedure* (Sydney: NSW Branch of the Bakers, Pastrycooks and Milling Employers' Unions, 1927).

⁵⁷⁷Eldridge had contested for the Senate in 1925, and in 1931 and 1934 also unsuccessfully contested for the seat of Barton (in Kogarah, a suburb in Sydney's south).

⁵⁷⁸Governor-General. Australian appointment. Advocated by Labour (sic) Member', *SMH*, 18 November 1929, 12 (a) and 'Our next G-G. An Australian? Scullin Government to make recommendation', *Telegraph*, 4 February 1930, 5 (a).

⁵⁷⁹C M H Manning Clark, *A History of Australia, vol VI, 1916-1935* (Melbourne: MUP, 1987), 332 quoting CPD, 122, 20 November 1929, 6-8. See also 'Leaflet', 19 May 1930, Eldridge Papers, ML, MSS 933 and previous reference.

⁵⁸⁰Bede Nairn, in *The 'Big Fella': Jack Lang and the Australian Labor Party 1891-1949* (Melbourne: MUP, 1986), 188-89, said this split originated in the February 1930 revolt by Eldridge, Lazzarini, James, Dunn and Rae. See also *SMH*, 20 February 1930, 11 (g).

⁵⁸¹On 11 March 1931, Eldridge and six others advocated Lang's plan. See 'Mr Ward not admitted. By the Federal Caucus. Seven members form new party', *SMH*, 13 March 1931, 9 (d). On 28 March 1931 a special conference of the Federal ALP expelled the NSW (Lang) Branch and steps were taken

calling the Church 'Harlots of Mammon'.⁵⁸² After parliamentary defeat, Eldridge faded from public view.⁵⁸³

It is now apparent that he made another mistake in 1941 when he paid 'a cordial tribute' to the Consul-General for Japan in Sydney, signing himself as 'one who wishes you to know that an Australian citizen respectfully approves of your just and valued contribution to current thought on the situation in the Pacific'.⁵⁸⁴ The Consul-General responded that the 'Japanese Government desires only the friendliest relations with Australia, and looks to Australia for co-operation in the preservation of peace in the region of the Pacific'.⁵⁸⁵

Although he had been a staunch Lang supporter, Eldridge's death in 1954 was noted only briefly in Lang's newspaper, which suggests that this 'veteran Labor politician' had a small and quickly forgotten role in Labor history. Although the obituary described him as a 'stalwart' and a 'keen student of social problems and a keen propagandist' who had trained young Labor speakers and provided them with a 'grounding in economics', it did not supply any details of Eldridge's achievements. In his old age all glory had faded, with the 'tribute' poignantly noting that he 'had been in retirement but regularly visited the city to discuss politics'.⁵⁸⁶

Paradoxically, although Eldridge had failed in an attempt to compile a history of early Labor politics in each state,⁵⁸⁷ he succeeded (probably unintentionally) in providing historians with a record of the activities of the EESNSW. While his political and union activities have attracted some attention,⁵⁸⁸ none has been given to the significant role which Eldridge played for ten years as the mainstay of the EESNSW.⁵⁸⁹ Although Eldridge was a 'weak'

to establish a separate federal party in NSW - a schism which lasted until 1936, Geoffrey Sawyer, *Australian Federal Politics and Law, 1929-1949* (Parkville, Victoria: MUP, 1963), 7.

⁵⁸²"Harlots of Mammon" says Eldridge. Church attacked. Opposed to cant and humbug', *Labor Daily*, 30 May 1931, 1; 'Mr Eldridge, MP. Attacked by Minister. "Deeply offensive words"', *SMH*, 30 May 1931, 13 (e); J T Lang, 'Three words blasted a politician's career', *Truth*, 6 April 1958, 37 (a).

⁵⁸³After his defeat, items noted only his injury when hit by a tram, *Labor Daily*, 5 March 1937, 1 (f) and his appointment as a federal industrial inspector, *SMH*, 7 August 1940, 8.

⁵⁸⁴Eldridge to Mr Akiyama, Consul-General for Japan (Sydney), 18 February 1941, AA (NSW), Series C443, Item J 19.

⁵⁸⁵*Ibid*, Akiyama to Eldridge (undated, March 1941?).

⁵⁸⁶'Late J C Eldridge', *Century*, 7 May 1954, 3.

⁵⁸⁷Eldridge Papers, ML MSS 933, include his 21 February 1927 request to ALP members for biographies and histories of Labor politics in each state. He received few responses.

⁵⁸⁸For example, Lang [1956], Sawyer (1963) and Nairn (1986).

⁵⁸⁹In a 9 November 1921 letter to the EES Secretary, Eldridge listed himself as 'NSW Representative on Council of Parent Body: Mr J C Eldridge, JP, Hon Sec, NSW Branch'. This is strange as the EES would presumably know who the NSW representative was, and (in 1917) it was Arthur the EES elected, not Eldridge.

eugenicist according to Searle's definition, he played a major role in ensuring that environmental eugenics was promoted in NSW from 1912 until 1922.

3. Lillie Elizabeth Goodisson - Team leader

Lillie Elizabeth Goodisson (?1860-1947) is included in this group because she saw eugenics as an adjunct to her primary goal of improving women's health and eradicating or reducing the suffering caused by VD.

Figure 6: Goodisson, probably in her 80s⁵⁹⁰



Goodisson and the Racial Hygiene Association (RHA) were so intimately connected that their identities are hard to disentangle. Although many aspects of Goodisson's life, including her date of birth and the time she worked for the RHA, are hazy, Meredith Foley has supplied the basic details in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.⁵⁹¹ Lillie Elizabeth Price was born in Wales in about 1860. She came from a medical family, her father was a doctor, she was a trained nurse and at the age of 19 she married Dr Lawford Evans. The couple migrated to New Zealand,

where they had children in 1881 and 1883.

Goodisson's attributes may have been inherited by her daughter, Evelyn Evans, who was described as a 'handsome, intelligent and forceful woman, with conservative political views' and a dislike of trade unions.⁵⁹²

By 1895 Lillie had moved to Melbourne, and in the early 1900s she moved to Western Australia where, a year after becoming a widow in 1903, she married Albert Goodisson. He apparently had syphilis in its dormant secondary stage and later went to Batavia for 'health reasons'. He had 'general paralysis' and derangement (features of untreated tertiary syphilis) and was committed to a lunatic asylum in September 1913, where Lillie visited him before his death on 4 February 1914. The stigma of the illness could explain why there is no explicit acknowledgement that Albert had VD, and no indication of whether Lillie, before this

⁵⁹⁰The picture of Goodisson presented to the RHA after her death at 89 in 1949.

⁵⁹¹ADB, vol 9, 47-48. See also Foley, in Radi (1988), 72-73.

⁵⁹²Goodisson's son, Brooke Price Evans, lived in Perth and her daughter, Evelyn P Evans, lived in Sydney where she was secretary of the Australian Trained Nurses' Association from 1917 to 1946 and secretary of the Australian Nursing Federation from 1924 to 1951. See Mary Dickenson, *An Unsentimental Union: The NSW Nurses Association 1931-1992* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1993), 37.

marriage, knew of his illness, or if she became infected herself. However, experience of its progress suggests why she later became an anti-VD crusader in an organisation which was run almost exclusively by women for women and why she advocated health examinations before marriage and expressed concern that 'dishonesty is prevailing'.⁵⁹³

After her ordeal, Goodisson returned to Melbourne where she was given financial and emotional support by Ivy Brookes, the daughter of Alfred Deakin and wife of the wealthy businessman, Herbert Brookes. Brookes had many links with organisations related to women, education, music and politics, and was the foundation secretary of the Women's Division of the People's Liberal Party.⁵⁹⁴ Goodisson succeeded her as secretary, writing letters to the *Argus* on the Division's behalf in 1915 and 1918.⁵⁹⁵ She was active in the Empire Trade Defence Association and other causes in a pattern of multiple involvement which many other eugenists followed.⁵⁹⁶ She also ran a small library which Brookes had helped her to establish, but after she became ill and the business failed, she moved to Sydney in 1926 where her daughter was living. She then joined the Crows Nest Branch of the Women's Reform League and with other members of this Branch (assisted by the Women's Service Guilds)⁵⁹⁷ launched the Racial Hygiene Association of NSW in 1926.

⁵⁹³In 'Health examination before marriage', *Progressive Journal* (5 November 1935), 3.

⁵⁹⁴See Ivy Brookes' Papers, 1869-1970, MS 1924, NLA.

⁵⁹⁵'People's Liberal Party. Women's Division Conference', *Argus*, 30 April 1915, 9 and 'C E Merrett, President, L E Goodisson, General Secretary, People's Liberal Party, *Argus*, 25 January 1918, 9.

⁵⁹⁶See Foley (1988), 73. In addition to her RHA involvement, Goodisson was an executive of the National Council of Women, treasurer of the Travellers' Aid Society, active in the Good Film League of NSW, Sydney Health Week and the Mental Hygiene Council. She also opposed the death penalty and the killing of koalas.

⁵⁹⁷Bessie Rischbieth Papers, NLA, MS 2004, Series 5, Item 957, quoted by Meredith Anne Foley in 'The Women's Movement in New South Wales and Victoria, 1918-1938' (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 1985), 280.

Figure 7: Aims of the Racial Hygiene Association of NSW⁵⁹⁸



Goodisson found her niche in Sydney as General Secretary of the RHA whose three aims were to provide sex education, combat VD, and promote eugenics. In spite of community opposition, she established 'racial hygiene' on a firm footing.⁵⁹⁹ After her death, the RHA was described as having been founded 'by a band of six women under the leadership of Mrs L W (sic) Goodisson'.⁶⁰⁰ Looking back, Ruby Rich said that Marion Piddington and Anna Roberts⁶⁰¹ had asked her to help them found the Association.⁶⁰²

⁵⁹⁸RHA Annual Report (1938-39). The RHA's dreams of providing a national service are suggested by the use of a map of Australia, not just NSW.

⁵⁹⁹RHC Executive, 23 June 1926, listed Goodisson as the Honorary Secretary.

⁶⁰⁰Dr Lotte A Fink, in 'Reports from Countries', *Third International Planned Parenthood Conference Proceedings*, Bombay, November 1952 (Bombay: FPA of India, 1953), 207.

⁶⁰¹Anna Roberts was President of the conservative Women's Reform League of NSW, formerly the Women's Liberal League. The Crows Nest Branch of the WRL passed a resolution supporting the formation of what became the RHA, Annual Report of the WRL of NSW (June 1926), 10-11. NLA, MS 2004/5/957.

⁶⁰²Margaret Conley, "'Citizens: Protect your birthright': The Racial Hygiene Association of New South Wales", *Bowyang*, 6 (1981), 9, quoting Ruby Rich on 15 June 1978.

Rich acknowledged that 'dear Goody', a 'wonderful, wonderful person' had founded the RHA's birth control work.⁶⁰³ The initially unknown Goodisson gave stability to the RHA, unlike its patrons, presidents and executive members who were chosen for their name, influence and interest but never stayed long. Members stated in 1932 that 'she is the Society and without her there would be no Society'.⁶⁰⁴ The President called her 'a brick' and thanked her 'for her very strenuous work for the year'.⁶⁰⁵ One of the Medical Advisory Board said 'Mrs Goodisson has been the driving force ever since the Association has been in existence. When Mrs Goodisson goes on the warpath you have to give in in the end. She usually gets her way'.⁶⁰⁶ In Melbourne in 1934 Barrett commented 'Mrs Goodisson thinks that the Racial Hygiene is the most important work of all'. This seemed self evident to her: 'what work can be greater than Morals, Health and Education?'.⁶⁰⁷

Goodisson was more of an enigma than Piddington and has received less attention from historians, probably because her achievements were often indistinguishable from those of the RHA. Most information comes from Goodisson's writing, and while much of it was formal RHA propaganda, it sometimes provides glimpses of her personality. For example, she generously reviewed Piddington's book *Tell Them!* which was published shortly after Piddington's RHA rift. Goodisson said the book was 'well written and a wonderful help to mothers' and described Piddington as 'an advanced thinker and writer'.⁶⁰⁸ Goodisson was only once quoted as 'a eugenisit' - in 1936 when she gave her eugenically-unorthodox⁶⁰⁹ views about the proposed abdication of King Edward VIII:

He has every right to make a personal decision. A man should choose his own wife. The woman of a man's own choice is likely to be a better wife racially than the wife forced on him by others, particularly when the latter is chosen from the intermarried ranks of European royalty. Personally, I would like to see him give up the marriage and remain King, but he has the right to choose.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰³Rich (1976), tape 13, 359 and 369. The birth control clinic began in 1933 but Goodisson's work began from the RHA's outset in 1926.

⁶⁰⁴Reverend W Stewart, RHA Annual Meeting, 18 July 1932, 3.

⁶⁰⁵Victor Roberts, *ibid*, 2.

⁶⁰⁶Dr John Cooper Booth, *ibid*, 4-5.

⁶⁰⁷RHA Annual Report (1934), 9.

⁶⁰⁸*The Dawn* (January 1927), in the RHA Papers.

⁶⁰⁹While Goodisson's argument was logical, a conventional eugenic view would have considered the needs of the nation, not the man, as the deciding factor.

⁶¹⁰'What women think of the King's problem', *Telegraph*, 8 December 1936, 8.

Perhaps for self protection, she rarely expressed her private opinions because community disapproval of the RHA was widespread. Rich described her as a 'very cautious person' who thought it was better not to have the birth control pioneer Dr Norman Haire (n? Zions, 1892-1952) as a member because he 'wasn't very popular',⁶¹¹ probably because of his forthright comments and his unconventional habits.⁶¹² However, Goodisson courageously answered RHA critics. In 1936 she wrote 'we want migration, we want babies, we must have both, but let us have them of good quality' adding the daring rider, the 'healthy ancestry of the parents, not their marital status, was the essential prerequisite for breeding a healthy race'.⁶¹³

She later responded to 'unfair criticism' about the RHA's birth control clinic with the comment that it 'was certainly not responsible for the falling birth rate'.⁶¹⁴ In 1938, after she was verbally attacked by the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, Dr Michael Kelly, she replied in the *Sun* that 'neither the Racial Hygiene Association nor I personally believe in companionate or trial marriages, or in any illegal unions, though we know they exist: and I have been able on several occasions to dissuade girls from entering into such agreements'.⁶¹⁵ She had shown she was not afraid of controversy or religious conventions by disputing Kelly's view that birth control was murder.⁶¹⁶ In a Health Week radio broadcast she stated that Kelly 'showed ignorance of biological facts', pointing out 'if his argument that failure to give life was equivalent to taking life were true, then self control, which was the method he advocated, was also murder'.⁶¹⁷

She revealed virtually nothing about her own private life, apart from recording that in 1930 she spent six months in Hobart to help her sick elderly mother. Her account of what she accomplished in Tasmania closely resembles Piddington's reports of campaigns, complete with gospel-style tallies of audience sizes:

⁶¹¹Rich (1976), tape 13, 368. She said the RHA had regular contact with Haire.

⁶¹²For example, in *Sex Problems of To-day* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1942), 26, Haire wrote 'unhealthy parents who refrain from polluting the race are serving the community no less well than do healthy parents who add healthy children to the population'.

⁶¹³The Racial Hygiene Association. 'Australia's want of population', *Progressive Journal* (10 April 1936), 7.

⁶¹⁴RHA. Birth Control Clinic Report (1938), 2.

⁶¹⁵'Trial marriage not approved - Mrs Goodisson in reply', *Sun*, 25 March 1938, 9 (d). See also Ben Lindsey and Wainwright Evens, *The Companionate Marriage* (New York: Brentano's Ltd, 1928). In *The Child and Sex* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1944), 23, Lotte A Fink (1898-1960) indicated that Judge Lindsey's books had done much to stir public interest in problems of adolescent sexuality. Dr Fink was an RHA medical officer.

⁶¹⁶'Birth control. Attack by Archbishop Kelly', *SMH*, 15 October 1931, 9.

⁶¹⁷'Health week', *SMH*, 17 October 1931, 17.

I gave 15 addresses in the Domain on Sunday afternoon. The attendances range from 150 to 500 making an aggregate of between 3,000 and 4,000. ... I also addressed the Theosophical Society and attended a good many political meetings, the State elections being in progress, mainly for the purpose of propaganda, questioning candidates as to whether if returned they would 'press' for the provision of adequate facilities for the treatment of venereal disease.⁶¹⁸

Although Goodisson was politically conservative and Piddington was affiliated with the Labor Party, they had remarkably similar views about issues such as promiscuity, sex education, VD, birth control, and sterilization of the 'unfit'. Both lectured, gave advice, ran classes, published and distributed literature, went on promotional tours, sought support and used the press in their efforts to educate the community about eugenics.⁶¹⁹ Their rivalry in the 1930s is probably explained by the fact that they had strong personalities and provided similar services, preached similar messages, and both operated in Sydney. Goodisson was primarily interested in the provision of birth control and in securing assistance from the medical profession to gain public acceptance, funding, and a safe health service. She made skilful network contacts and worked as a member of an organization. This was a policy which succeeded, unlike that of Piddington whose style was totally opposite. The IFR had no advisory committee, as Piddington believed that 'the machinery of organization retards the work of an individual'. Birth control pioneer Dr How-Martyn commented that Piddington's lone and lay approach ran counter to the movement's policy which was to 'get this matter of birth control methods into the hands of the doctors'. She also commented that Piddington covered too much, and that her involvement in sex education and advice on marriage and 'abnormalities of sex' were 'far better left to other societies and not mixed up with birth control'.⁶²⁰

When the RHA opened its Martin Place birth control clinic in 1933, Goodisson described it as 'the first properly constituted' one in Australia, implying that the clinic which Piddington had opened two years previously, two blocks away in Phillip Street, was not.⁶²¹ Goodisson's not totally correct description is understandable but it is hard to understand how Lado Ruzicka and John Caldwell could make these unsourced statements:

⁶¹⁸RHA Annual Report (1931), 4.

⁶¹⁹Because the RHA had more resources and patronage, Goodisson was able to extend this propaganda by means of broadcasts, films, deputations, fund raising appeals and meetings. See *SMH*, 10 August 1927, 12.

⁶²⁰How-Martyn (1933).

⁶²¹Goodisson, 'The Racial Hygiene Association of NSW', in National Council of Women of NSW. Biennial Reports for 1933-34 (Parramatta: Argus Print, 1934), 36. She repeated this claim in Frederick Charles Tucker, *The Story of Life*, 5th edn. (Sydney: Tucker's Publications, 1936), 27.

Although a small [birth control] clinic was established in a private house in Sydney in 1926, it sought to avoid attack until the 1960s by its eugenicist name, 'The Racial Hygiene Association of Australia'.⁶²²

They were wrong about the place, date, name and purpose: the clinic was on an upper floor of an imposing life insurance office building at 14 Martin Place;⁶²³ the clinic began in 1933; the RHA never expanded to become the 'Racial Hygiene Association of Australia'; the name was chosen years before their clinic opened and an emotive 'eugenicist' name would not have deflected attack.⁶²⁴

Theosophy

Jill Roe, in *Beyond Belief: Theosophy in Australia, 1879-1939*, documented this movement's influence on Australian society from the 1880s when it was put 'on a firm footing' by its charismatic leader, Annie Besant (1847-1933).⁶²⁵ It had a diffuse impact on feminism, free thought, the arts and education because members of the Theosophical Society often joined other groups such as the RHA, WEA, and the Peace Society.⁶²⁶ Many noted Australians had links with theosophy but some were reluctant to admit this.⁶²⁷ The secrecy possibly related to a 1922 scandal in the Sydney lodge of the society which caused Besant to end her Australian tour hurriedly.⁶²⁸ It might also explain why the Theosophical Society did not

⁶²²Ruzicka and Caldwell, *The End of Demographic Transition in Australia* (Australian Family Formation Project Monograph no 5), Canberra, Department of Demography, Institute of Advanced Studies, Australian National University, 1977), 31.

⁶²³This stone building on the corner of Martin Place and Pitt Street was built in 1894 by the Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York with the keystone set by the NSW Premier Sir George Dibbs. In 1930 four floors were added. The building, which is in the central business district, is heritage listed and still operates as an insurance office.

⁶²⁴When Victor Wallace tried to avoid hostility, he chose the neutral-sounding name 'Women's Welfare Clinic' for the birth control clinic which he began on 17 October 1934 with the Melbourne District Nursing Society.

⁶²⁵Jill Roe (1986), 53.

⁶²⁶For example, the Rev Harold Morton was one of the RHA Vice-Presidents in 1928-1929. He was Acting General Secretary to the Theosophical Society in 1927 and the TS General Secretary in 1928-1929. He read RHA broadcasts on the Theosophist radio station 2GB in 1933 and 1939. A related interest was shown by Muriel Dean, a nurse who had run the RHA's Newcastle clinic for 10 years from about 1952 and was still an active member of the Order of the Star of the East when I interviewed her on 12 March 1988.

⁶²⁷Theosophists include Maybanke Anderson, Edith Cowan, Alfred Deakin, Bessie Rischbieth, Rose Scott and Sir John Cockburn. Anderson Stuart was a Freemason and there were links between Freemasonry and the Theosophists' co-masonry which they 'remodelled to admit women', Jill Roe (1986), 196. Ruby Rich joined the co-masons.

⁶²⁸See M P to M S, 27 April 1922, f.16 and Roe (1986), 266, 268-70.

reveal that they had established the Good Film League in 1922,⁶²⁹ a body which promoted films of 'high ethical and artistic standard' and encouraged people to complain about foreign, particularly American films, if they were offensive to women, decency or British civilization.⁶³⁰ The cultural first objective seems to have received more emphasis and for many years Sydney audiences enjoyed plays at the theosophist Savoy Theatre which opened in 1930, and quality films in their North Sydney cinema.⁶³¹

While Goodisson's association with theosophy is not clear, the Society was extremely supportive, publishing her articles and those on related topics in their magazine.⁶³² She also had access to the theosophists' Sydney radio station, 2GB.⁶³³ In thanking the station manager for allowing her to give weekly RHA broadcasts, she acknowledged that 'undoubtedly 99% of the correspondence and interviews' were as a result of this publicity.⁶³⁴ Despite her seven-year association with 2GB, she did not mention the station's ownership.⁶³⁵ The links which Goodisson and other eugenists had with theosophy were probably more extensive than has been acknowledged. After the scandal in the Sydney lodge in the 1920s, many theosophists were reluctant to reveal their membership, in much the same way that some families now deny that their relatives played any part in eugenics.

Censorship

From the following extract in the 1929 RHA Annual Report, it appears that Goodisson tried to distance herself from the RHA's ill-judged foray into censorship. The description of the deputation urging the prohibition of 'salacious literature' also concealed the part played by the Good Film League, or the link which she and Cresswell O'Reilly, an RHA Vice-President, had with this theosophist initiative:

⁶²⁹*Good Film Bulletin*, no 3 (1 January 1927), 1. There were only four issues (from 1926-27) with no mention in any of them of links with the Theosophical Society.

⁶³⁰Roe (1986), 326. Some theosophists' patriotism progressed to links with extreme right wing groups.

⁶³¹For example, *Honi Soit* (10 October 1931), advertised that the RHA-sponsored play 'Just One slip' by Dr Stewart Mackay' at the Savoy Theatre, Bligh St, Sydney.

⁶³²*Advance! Australia* (Sydney: Australian Section of the Theosophist Society, 1926 to 1929), included articles by Goodisson in December 1927, 248-49; January 1928, 33; May 1928, 221-22, and published articles on related issues in September 1928, 30, 41; February 1929, 33-35 and March 1929, 31-33.

⁶³³Theosophical broadcasting began on 23 August 1926, as radio 2GB (standing for Giordano Bruno, a sceptic Italian philosopher), *Austral Theosophist* (15 August 1926), 43.

⁶³⁴RHA Annual Report (1933), 7.

⁶³⁵*Ibid* (1934), 8. In 1934 Goodisson's 10.30 am Friday radio timeslot was sold, although material continued to be read for her. The Theosophists sold the station in 1936.

At the request of several persons, who do not belong to our Organisation, we called together a Committee of those who were taking a keen interest in the matter. [It met four times and a meeting of interested parties was addressed by] Mr O'Reilly, Rev R B S Hammond, Mrs [Mildred] Muscio and the Rev Victor Bell. Unfortunately, there was some division of opinion as to the best methods to be used.⁶³⁶

The press reported on the RHA's continuing attempts to stem the 'flood' of objectionable literature.⁶³⁷ In January 1930 'thousands of people surged round a detachment of police while they raided a bookshop in Martin Place' causing them to be 'seriously inconvenienced' while they 'confiscated about £1,000 worth' of allegedly indecent material.⁶³⁸ In February Piddington warned Stopes that 'the terrible' RHA had 'got to work again' confiscating Stopes' books and declaring some of them obscene. She promised to do what she could, adding that Associations did 'more harm than good' and attracted 'a type of mind that does infinite harm'.⁶³⁹

In her next letter, on 11 March, Piddington reported that the RHA had succeeded in closing the Parks Brothers' bookshop and that after the police raid, Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and Erich Remarque's novel *All Quiet On The Western Front* had been banned in NSW. She was unsure if Stopes' books were to be banned, although 'the RHA would know that I should make another fight and may have kept that fact out of the papers'. The RHA Annual Report of 1930 noted that 'unfortunately, many of those [sized] books were quite harmless and even good'⁶⁴⁰ and a newspaper reported it as 'an amusing instance of how hope may be too generously realised'.⁶⁴¹ Dr Norman Haire noted that as a result, booksellers did not dare to display 'even the most reputable books' on birth control out of fear that they might be 'overwhelmed with protests from "purity" fanatics'.⁶⁴²

The RHA was further tested in 1932 after psychologist George Southern tried to form a NSW branch of the World League for Sexual Reform. The RHA Executive was divided on whether

⁶³⁶'Salacious Publications, Postcards etc.', RHA Annual Report (1929). See also 'Police Action. Against Pernicious publications', *SMH*, 17 September 1929, 8 (e). The deputation to the Chief Secretary included representatives of the RHA, the Council of Churches, the Salvation Army, the Education Department and the YMCA.

⁶³⁷'Social hygiene', *SMH*, 10 July 1929, 12 (f).

⁶³⁸'Bookshop raided. Alleged indecent literature', *SMH*, 16 January 1930, 8 (d).

⁶³⁹M P to M S, 20 February 1930, f.105.

⁶⁴⁰RHA Annual Report (1930), 3.

⁶⁴¹'Book censorship. Results of police activity', *SMH*, 16 October 1930, 12 (f).

⁶⁴²Haire (1942), 28.

he should be asked to resign.⁶⁴³ Southern responded by writing, publishing and distributing a book with the subtitle 'A broadside attack on sexual morality, likely to make wowsers yell and thinkers think' and an added note that 'the PMG [postal authority] banned this book'.⁶⁴⁴ He considered that the RHA were wowsers,⁶⁴⁵ noting that in 1933 he had planned to read his paper 'to a small club of which I was a member. That organisation, however, developed what looked like chilblains before the reading had taken place, and I fancy it has suffered from cold feet ever since'.⁶⁴⁶

Regret about their previous stance might explain why two experts with RHA affiliations gave evidence in support of Macquarie Street doctor and former RHA vice-president, Robert Storer,⁶⁴⁷ who was charged in 1933 under the Obscene Publications Act after selling a policeman a copy of his book *Sex in Modern Life: A Survey of Sexual Life in Adolescence and Marriage*.⁶⁴⁸ Some good did come from this because, according to Peter Coleman, this was the first time in NSW where expert witnesses were allowed to testify in obscenity cases, and in this instance, the magistrate and Appeal Judge found that the book was not obscene.⁶⁴⁹ Regardless of whether the RHA were puritans or reformers, or a mixture of both, their actions helped to promote open discussion about taboo topics.

In 1928 the RHA had affiliated itself with the National Council of Women with Goodisson acting as the Convener of the Council's Equal Moral Standards Committee.⁶⁵⁰ While she was certainly no prude, in this role she once objected to 'nude female figures being dressed' in shop windows and to the advertising and display of sanitary towels.⁶⁵¹ However,

⁶⁴³RHA Executive meeting, 7 June 1932.

⁶⁴⁴George W R Southern, *Making Morality Modern* [Mosman, NSW: Southern 1934].

⁶⁴⁵John Norton, founder of the Sydney *Truth*, coined this in the 1890s from the slogan 'We Only Want Social Evils Remedied' and used it to describe pious political opponents.

⁶⁴⁶Southern [1934], 5. John Tregenza, *Australian Little Magazines 1923-1954: Their Role in Forming and Reflecting Literary Trends* (Adelaide: Libraries Board of South Australia, 1964), 34-35, 92, noted Southern's contribution to the magazine *Pandemonium* - a critical and literary monthly published in Melbourne from 1934 to 1935.

⁶⁴⁷The experts were a Professor of Medicine (Harvey Sutton), a Unitarian Minister (Rev Heathcote) and a Congregational Minister (Rev T E Ruth). Sutton and Ruth were RHA vice presidents. The RHC papers contain clippings about Storer's 1935 removal from Australian and British medical registers. Dr Richard Travers supplied me with references to Melbourne's *Truth* from 1933 to 1939 which made allegations against Storer and are included in an unpublished bibliography on Australian sexology compiled by John Willis.

⁶⁴⁸Storer's book was published in Melbourne by James Little and Co in 1933.

⁶⁴⁹Peter Coleman, *Obscenity, Blasphemy, Sedition: Censorship in Australia* (Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, [1963?], 81-82.

⁶⁵⁰NSW National Council of Women, Executive Minutes, 14 June 1928, ML.

⁶⁵¹*Ibid*, 5 December 1935. The motion was carried and a letter was sent to the Retail Traders' Assocn.

Goodisson and her Committee showed considerably more concern about the need for segregated farm colonies for mentally deficient people.⁶⁵² Goodisson continued providing 'loyal service' as Convener until 1946 when, at the age of 86, she asked the NCW to accept her resignation and for the artist and political activist Portia Geach to take her place.⁶⁵³

RHA publicity

In 1929 the RHA made their Annual Report more forceful by adding illustrations such as the tableau in Figure 8. Goodisson gave frequent radio broadcasts, wrote for the *Progressive Journal*,⁶⁵⁴ used the WEA magazine *Australian Highway* to publicise RHA work in Newcastle in 1928⁶⁵⁵ and ensured that the RHA's press publicity was maintained.⁶⁵⁶

She was also involved with the RHA's Vice-Regally endorsed appeal for funds which provides telling evidence of the organization's initial prestige and respectability.⁶⁵⁷ In 1929 she lectured and showed films in Wollongong and the South Coast.⁶⁵⁸ In addition to work with the annual Health Week Exhibition and her routine duties with the RHA, she organised the Australian Racial Hygiene Congress and tried to establish RHA branches nationwide. Goodisson also co-ordinated various deputations and represented the RHA on such associations as the Mental Hygiene Society, the National Council of Women, the American Social Hygiene Association, the Parks and Playgrounds Movement, the Good Film League, the 2GB Happiness Club and the Standing Committee on Maternal Mortality.⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵²Ibid, 6 May 1937, 1 December 1938 and 4 May and 1 June 1939.

⁶⁵³Ibid, 30 May 1946. Portia Geach (1873-1959), 'the champion of the housewife' was the founder and President of the NSW Housewives' Assocn and in 1928, the President of the Housewives' Progressive Assocn.

⁶⁵⁴Goodisson articles appeared in the *Progressive Journal* in 1935, 1 August, 6, 32; 5 November, 3, 48; 5 December, 3, 29 and in 1936: 5 January, 3, 48; 10 March, 32 and 10 April, 7. The magazine only operated for these two years.

⁶⁵⁵See *AH* (10 April 1929), 127-28, and (10 June 1932), 292-93.

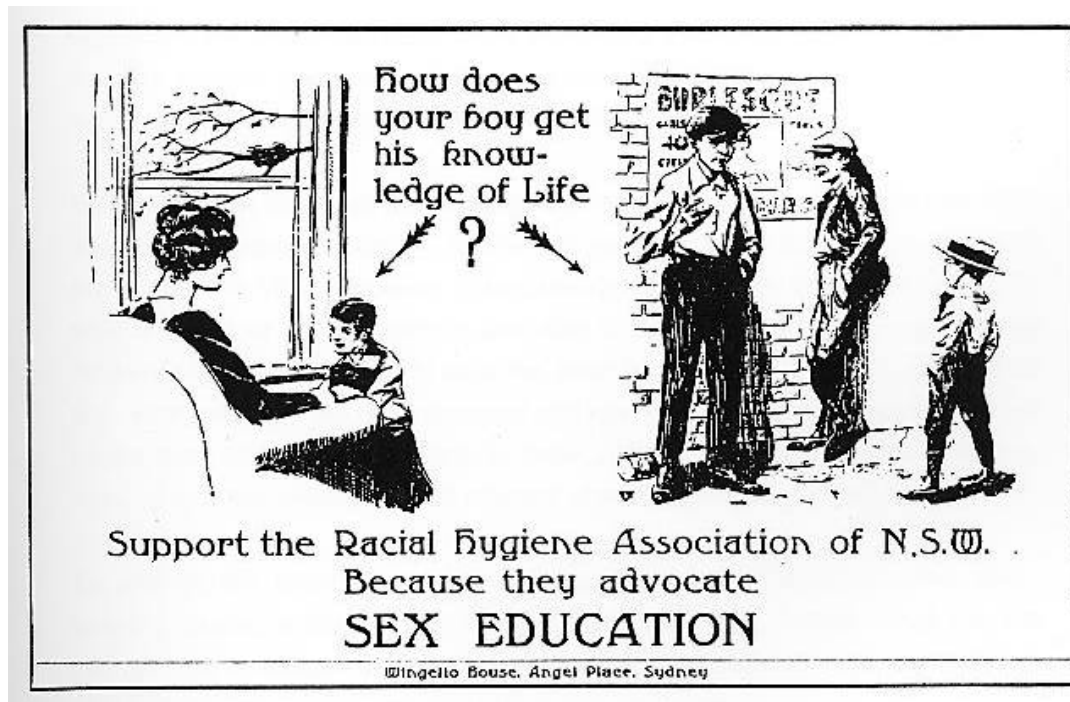
⁶⁵⁶From December 1926 to December 1936 there were 50 RHA-related items in the *SMH*.

⁶⁵⁷'Racial Hygiene Centre', *SMH*, 21 February 1928, 6 (d).

⁶⁵⁸'Racial Hygiene Association', *SMH*, 30 October 1929, 8 (f).

⁶⁵⁹Goodisson noted that the RHA had resigned from the Maternal Mortality Committee because it found that the RHA's 'opinions on birth control were not acceptable to them', RHA Annual Report (1938), 2. This antagonism escalated. On page 9 of the 1938-39 RHA Report, Goodisson reported that 'for some unknown reason, we have not been asked to send out speakers to organizations, schools, P & C Associations or Mothers' clubs. For some years we have been doing this work, and we are at a loss to know why they want neither our men or women any longer'. On page 1 of the 1940 RHA Report she wrote 'I now know what the "unknown reason" is: we run a Birth Control Clinic, attended by women doctors of the highest character and ability!! Surely it is better that such work be done openly as it is in England and America than that abortions should be performed, valuable lives lost and the future health of the women of the community endangered'.

Figure 8: Sex education: mother's knee or the gutter?⁶⁶⁰



Other publicity, of a kind the RHA probably did not want, was generated externally by Walter Cresswell O'Reilly (1877-1954). In 1929, during the brief period in which he was an RHA Vice-President, he appears to have persuaded the RHA to pursue a policy of stringent censorship. Alarm about such repressive actions and a rejection of zealotry such as O'Reilly had expressed in ultra-conservative statements about eugenics, may explain why the RHA accepted his resignation in 1929.⁶⁶¹ Although O'Reilly was quick to censor the work of others,⁶⁶² he displayed no evidence of self-censorship in a 1931 radio broadcast on 'Race Improvement'. For example, he emotively stated that the 'cream' of the country's men and women had been 'skimmed off' and was in fact decaying and ceasing to adequately 'beget its kind'. He warned that to prevent 'the lower strata, the subnormal and the undesirable'

⁶⁶⁰RHA Annual Report (1929).

⁶⁶¹In the RHA Annual Report (1928-1929), it was noted that 'Mr O'Reilly had unexpected mayoral honours thrust on him, in addition to his other manifold duties, public and private, and has therefore had reluctantly to retire from office'. He had been a Vice-President.

⁶⁶²Joel Greenberg, in the *ADB* entry for O'Reilly, stated that he was a lay preacher, a trustee of the Methodist Church and from 1925-28, the Commonwealth Censor in Sydney. He dominated and shaped film censorship and, from 1928-35, as Chief Commonwealth Film Censor, cut or rejected half the films submitted. He was Mayor of Ku-ring-gai for five terms and an ardent conservationist who became the first President of the National Trust in 1945-46.

from populating the world, it was necessary to embrace eugenic principles, which would result in 'progressive evolution' and the production of a 'super race' with 'God-like power'.⁶⁶³

Goodisson never expressed such extreme views. Indeed, she may not even have been interested in eugenics although, clearly, two passions in her life were contraception and politics. In 1932 Goodisson unsuccessfully contested the Newcastle seat in the state elections as a Social Reform candidate 'in an attempt to stir a sense of public responsibility' about VD and 'to write the need for such reforms across the political sky'. She described 'two good meetings' and having 'spread more propaganda' in two weeks than was usually possible in three years.⁶⁶⁴ This political activity may have caused the 'undercurrent of criticism' she subsequently received.⁶⁶⁵

As well as the financial difficulties in the Depression, Goodisson hints about stressful internal antagonisms in her comment in the RHA Annual report that she had retained the support of some members of the RHA Executive who had 'faithfully stood behind' her when she had been 'placed in a very difficult position through the unwarranted action of a small section of the Committee'.⁶⁶⁶ Goodisson may have clashed with the socialite Comtesse de Vilme-Hautmont, a former Gilbert and Sullivan star and a newly-appointed member of the RHA Executive Committee.⁶⁶⁷ In addition, there was such an acute rubber shortage during World War II that the RHA clinic could no longer supply the 'Racia caps'⁶⁶⁸ which they had had specially manufactured.⁶⁶⁹ Despite these difficulties the clinic continued, unlike the RHA's rival, the birth control clinic in Melbourne, which had been forced to close in 1940 because the rubber shortage meant that condoms and diaphragms were not available for civilian use. There is no record of Goodisson's response to this news but she was probably too busy trying to ensure that the RHA would survive, a task which became even more urgent in 1940 after the NSW Government grant was withdrawn, as without this regular source of income, the organization was placed in a perilous financial position. No further

⁶⁶³'Race Improvement', [a report of O'Reilly's speech] *SMH*, 16 October 1931, 8. On 23 October 1934 he spoke at the Feminist Club on 'Racial decay and degeneration', which was reported in the RHA Annual Report (1935), 8.

⁶⁶⁴RHA Annual Report (1932), 4.

⁶⁶⁵Minutes, RHA Annual Meeting, 18 July 1932, 5.

⁶⁶⁶RHA Annual Report (1939-1940), 1, 6.

⁶⁶⁷In her stage career she was known as Lavinia Florence (Vinia) de Loitte (1881-1962).

⁶⁶⁸'Racia', as well as echoing the RHA name, had eugenic associations as did Stopes' 'Pro Race' caps which were designed to prevent 'unfit' births for the good of the race. These RHA contraceptives were made by the Nutex Rubber company and Stefania Siedlecky informed me that, despite the name, they were diaphragms, not cervical caps.

⁶⁶⁹Lotte A Fink, 'The Racial Hygiene Association of Australia', in Gregory Pincus, (ed.), *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Planned Parenthood* (London: IPPF, 1956), 287.

RHA reports appear to have been published from 1940 until after Goodisson's death, a silence which might indicate that she had resigned from the RHA.⁶⁷⁰ The organization's activities were 'greatly reduced during the war'⁶⁷¹ and they did not start to regain momentum until the mid 1960s.

When she died on 10 January 1947 at the age of 87, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that 'for 20 years' she had been General Secretary of the RHA 'which she started' and that 'she was greatly interested in political affairs all her life'.⁶⁷² Without her energy and dedication, the organization went into abeyance. A desultory tribute to 'the Founder, the late Mrs Goodisson' appeared in the May 1948 *RHA Monthly Bulletin*, which mentioned that her photograph (shown in Figure 6) had been unveiled and that Miss Rich had spoken about her early work. A reprinted extract from the Health Week booklet noted that Goodisson had for '26 years'⁶⁷³ contributed to the success of Health Week and that she would be 'mourned by all who were associated with her in this and other activities to improve the health and well-being of the people'.⁶⁷⁴

4. Henry Twitchin - Benefactor

Henry Twitchin is included in this category because he viewed eugenics as an extension of the stock breeding techniques he employed as a pastoralist. Twitchin's money helped to save London's Eugenics Society from oblivion and indirectly helped Australian societies as well, by saving records in both countries. Indeed, a substantial amount of this thesis draws on material his money helped preserve. The donations, which began in 1923, and his 1930 legacy, made the Society financially comfortable, giving it an influence far beyond its small membership and ensuring that the office operated efficiently and its archives were saved.⁶⁷⁵ These records, some with annotations, include Australian correspondence which is significantly more extensive than the files which survived in Australia, thus filling gaps and at

⁶⁷⁰The possibility that Goodisson might have had dementia or terminal VD seems unlikely because her activities at a NCW meeting were noted until seven months before her death.

⁶⁷¹'Planned parenthood', *SMH*, 14 January 1949, 2 (d). The RHA's reduced activity was also related to the *National Security (VD and Contraceptives) Regulations* which were in force from 1942 to 1946 and aimed to prohibit advertising and supply of contraceptives.

⁶⁷²*SMH*, 11 January 1947, 18.

⁶⁷³The *SMH* described Goodisson's Sydney work covering '20 years' and the Health Committee and the RHA reported it was '26 years'. However, she arrived in Sydney in 1926 and her most active RHA work was from 1926 to 1939, a period of 13 years.

⁶⁷⁴*RHA Monthly Bulletin*, no 1 (May 1948), 1.

⁶⁷⁵Lesley Hall, 'Illustrations from the Wellcome Institute Library: The Eugenics Society Archives in the Contemporary Medical Archives Centre', *Medical History*, 34 (1990), 328. Twitchin's bequest 'had an enormous influence on the development of the Society' as Catholic opposition to eugenics intensified in 1930, Schenk and Parkes (1968), 142, 149.

times indicating British eugenicists' thinking. Twitchin is also interesting because of his (probably incorrect) belief that he had a genetic taint. The likelihood that such a perception changed his life and that of many others is noteworthy, even typical. Indeed, many eugenic beliefs were similarly dubious because, in the words of the chroniclers of the 'somewhat chequered history' of the EES, these reformers were 'more concerned with social evils than with human genetics' and their studies lacked scientific rigour.⁶⁷⁶

I was unable to find a picture of Henry Twitchin, and most details about him are from his own letters. After his death in 1930, biographical information was supplied by a close friend of his from Berkshire, England, who had maintained contact with him and had been the only person to help with his 'outfit and packing' when he emigrated to Western Australia at the age of 21.⁶⁷⁷ She described his childhood on a 'white elephant' of a farm where life was difficult for the hard-working but indulgent mother and three children. From her account, they were dominated by the church-avoiding, irritable father who, despite his reputation for holding advanced views, insisted on sealing the house to avoid draughts and imposed a cloistered life on the two 'delicate' girls who died young from TB.⁶⁷⁸

Twitchin probably escaped his sisters' fate because he was allowed to ride a bicycle and attend grammar school. He then studied at an agricultural college, becoming 'livestock prizeman' in 1888 where he met like-minded students who stimulated him to think about emigration. His family strongly opposed the trip, but he raised the money, included a dress-suit in his luggage despite his father's jeers,⁶⁷⁹ and arrived in Albany, Western Australia on 17 May 1890.⁶⁸⁰ Ten years later, an insight into Twitchin's personality was provided by Mr Olivey, Travelling Inspector of Aborigines who, in a report to his superior in July 1900, commented on conditions at Twitchin's Towera station:

⁶⁷⁶Schenk and Parkes (1968), 142.

⁶⁷⁷There are several files of Twitchin's correspondence (some uncatalogued) in the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, Eugenics Society Archives: SA/EUG, C87, '[Twitchin's] 1922-1930 correspondence with the Eugenics Society'; C343, 'H Twitchen (sic) correspondence (1922-1930)'; H and I. Copies of files C343 and H are in the Mitchell Library, M2565. See also Leonard Darwin, 'Henry Twitchin: An account of the Society's most generous benefactor', *ER*, 22 (July 1930), 91-97.

⁶⁷⁸According to the informant (a lover?) Twitchin's 'irritable' father was not in sympathy with the 'gentle and kind' boy and it was his 'very reasonable fear' [of TB], 'together with a young man's natural desire to travel and see the world, which was the reason for his going to Australia', H1, 1-3.

⁶⁷⁹Most people were afraid of Henry's 'too strict' and 'very sarcastic' father who harped about the dress-suit for years, asking whether his son wore it 'riding round flourishing a stock-whip', H1, 2, 5.

⁶⁸⁰The passenger list of the ship *Oroya* (from London) described Twitchin as 'a practical farmer gone to Beverley' (a town east of Perth). I was given this information by Tom Reynolds of the State Archives of Western Australia, 2 September 1992.

No natives on relief here. One old man 60, blind and one woman about 55 nearly blind are fed and kept by Mr Twitchin, who considers it his duty to keep these old people, they having no near relations working for him, neither does he ask for blankets for them but finds them himself. It is quite refreshing to meet a gentleman with such views. I am sorry there are not more like him.⁶⁸¹

⁶⁸¹State Archives of WA, Acc 255, File 500/1900. Twitchin's properties were near Exmouth Gulf on the north-western coast of WA, where the United States' naval communications station was built in 1963.

After losing sheep in the 1891-1903 droughts, Twitchin had returned to Britain and managed to raise capital for sinking artesian wells on his station. As a result he became wealthy and was by 1923 'the largest land holder and stock owner in the State'.⁶⁸² In 1922, Twitchin explained to Major Leonard Darwin that he had resolved in 1911 when he joined the Society, to send donations and leave them his estates for use in promoting eugenics.⁶⁸³ As a stock breeder in the 1890s, he had become convinced that racial improvement would only occur if the same techniques used on animals were applied to people. He did not publicise his views but discussed eugenics with 'one or two' of his neighbours, adding that he had advocated the 'immediate introduction of legislation in all civilised countries prohibiting the propagation of the unfit from any cause'.⁶⁸⁴ He later realized that most people were not ready for 'such a revolutionary change', and that the best course was to 'educate the masses to see the inestimable advantage of adopting the principle and gradually enforce control'.⁶⁸⁵ The possible catalyst for this revelation was the *Eugenics Review* announcement that a large bequest for the promotion of positive eugenics (referred to in Figure 12) had been made by Peter Mitchell, a pastoralist from Albury, NSW.⁶⁸⁶ Twitchin would have received the magazine because of his EES membership and, as all mail is savoured in remote areas and he had a keen interest in eugenics, it is likely that he would have read about this 1921 bequest.⁶⁸⁷

He sent the first of his many letters to Leonard Darwin on 26 March 1922, indicating that he was 'born of unsound parents' and had consequently suffered because he had 'inherited their weaknesses'. He added that he had never married, 'although better fitted to do so probably than fully one-half of those who do', which raises questions about his perceived 'unsoundness'.⁶⁸⁸ Initially Twitchin was not specific about his 'weaknesses' but he may have believed that he too would die from the disease that killed his sisters. It is ironic that

⁶⁸²H T to Allen, 2 December 1923, C87. All letters are from this file unless stated otherwise.

⁶⁸³H T told L D his properties were valued at £160,000, 4 April 1922. The bequest was estimated as: 'about £100,000 net', *Times*, 5 April 1930, 16 (c); *Nature*, 19 April 1930, 610 and *SMH*, 2 May 1930, 12 (f); '£70,000 to £80,000', *ER*, 22 (July 1930), 87 and 'about £57,000', *ER*, 60 (1968), 149.

⁶⁸⁴H T to L D, 4 April 1922. I could not find any evidence of this or any other activities indicating that he was interested in advancing the cause of Australian eugenics.

⁶⁸⁵He described the Society as 'too academic', undated with 13 May 1924 letter from the EES Secretary to Allen, C343. Ironically, in view of his role, Twitchin had earlier (19 November 1923) suggested the use of mass media, explaining that it was 'more important to have many people interested in our teaching than to have the money of the few'.

⁶⁸⁶'A squatter's will', *ER*, 12 (1920-1921), 428.

⁶⁸⁷A dossier on Peter Stuckey Mitchell (1856-1921) was provided to me by Helen Livsey of the Albury and District Historical Society, Pers. comm., 27 February 1995.

⁶⁸⁸H T to L D, 26 March 1922. Perhaps he had ideals of eugenic perfection similar to those of Marie Stopes who opposed her son's engagement because his fiancée wore glasses. She said in 1947, 'on Eugenic grounds I should advise against the marriage were they strangers to me', quoted by June Rose, *Marie Stopes and the Sexual Revolution* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), 234.

Twitchin's questionable self-diagnosis of 'inherited weakness' was accepted by his beneficiaries who portrayed him as a flawed personality, a 'queer being',⁶⁸⁹ and that subsequent researchers have accepted this assessment.⁶⁹⁰ In the second of numerous letters he explained to Darwin (whose own writing had been criticised for lacking 'literary facility' and showing 'heaviness of touch') that one of his 'inherited handicaps' was a difficulty in explaining himself in writing and speech, particularly when he was worried.⁶⁹¹ His letters reveal that Twitchin was a thoughtful man who posed questions which Darwin found difficult to answer. For example, he asked if the acquired inheritance theory was discounted, what could explain the fact that a sheep-dog pup without any training was able to round up chickens, or he wondered, precisely which eugenic methods did Plato propose?⁶⁹²

The obituaries and the publicity for his 1930 bequest emphasised Twitchin's 'nervous delicacy' and 'hereditary defects' and claimed that the donations had been anonymous to avoid 'winning any notoriety (sic) for himself'.⁶⁹³ The author of these negative comments in *Nature*, the *Times* and the *Eugenics Review*, was 80 year-old Leonard Darwin who showed no empathy for Twitchin.⁶⁹⁴ In his account of

⁶⁸⁹L D to Sir Bernard Mallet, 'You seem to have ... got more at home with him than I did. I never had a meal with him, and a meal is helpful', 1 March 1930, 12.

⁶⁹⁰Kevles (1985), 172, repeated the quote about Twitchin's 'unsound parents' and Soloway (1990), 163, 195, 218, wrote that Darwin had 'patiently cultivated the reclusive Twitchin for years', called him 'eccentric' and repeated Darwin's 'queer being' epithet.

⁶⁹¹H T to L D, 5 September 1922.

⁶⁹²H T to L D, 26 August and 14 December 1927. L D needed colleagues' help to answer these questions, 13 September 1927 and 6 January 1928.

⁶⁹³1930 obituaries in *Times*, 5 April, 16; *Nature*, 19 April, 610 and *SMH*, 2 May, 12.

⁶⁹⁴This lack of empathy is hard to understand because Darwin, a 'slow developer', had retired from an unsuitable career in the army, partly because of ill health, and was 61 before eugenics gave purpose to his life. Darwin chose an army career believing he was the 'stupidest member of his family', Margaret Keynes, *Leonard Darwin, 1850-1943* (Cambridge: Privately printed at CUP, 1943), 3-4. Another niece wrote that 'Uncle Lenny' 'at last, when he was over 60', began doing work 'he felt to be of importance', Gwen Raverat, *Period Piece* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), 196.

the Society's 'most generous benefactor', Darwin claimed that Twitchin suffered 'constantly' from 'periods' of depression, and was disparaging about Twitchin in his private comments, passing judgements which were superficial and negative.⁶⁹⁵ Snobbery about dealing with a wealthy man who had made his money in the colonial outback might be a factor, certainly a reviewer has commented that the 'social smugness' implicit in Darwin's books was 'appalling'.⁶⁹⁶ As was his early determination to steer Twitchin in an approved 'direction' in order to ensure that his donations would continue 'with certainty'.⁶⁹⁷

Avarice, or at least the concern not to lose the bequest may have influenced Darwin and Sir Ernest Allen, joint executors of the will, to write Twitchin friendly letters bordering on the obsequious, whose tone was in marked contrast with the often negative comments they made about him in private. Certainly there were some examples where Darwin was ready to use Twitchin's information but this may have been a strategy to safeguard the promised bequest. For example, Twitchin commented to Darwin that as an experienced manager of 'large stock farms [he knew] the utter madness of going on breeding up when the Ranch is fully stocked and there is no, or insufficient, outlet for the surplus'.⁶⁹⁸ Darwin paraphrased this statement about over-breeding in a book (distributed at Twitchin's expense)⁶⁹⁹ commenting that 'managers of large stock farms in the Dominions' had learnt this.⁷⁰⁰ However, the publicly stated negative assessments were accepted by Lord Horder in comments about Twitchin's 'hereditary tendencies to unsound health' in a

⁶⁹⁵Darwin, July 1930, 91.

⁶⁹⁶Harry Roberts' review of Darwin's *Need For Eugenic Reform* is in *Book Review Digest* (1926), 174.

⁶⁹⁷Sec, EES to Allen, 13 May 1924, C343; Allen to Sec, 26 June 1926, C343. L D even indicated that H T signed a codicil on the day of his death, leaving the EES his French properties (1930), 93, 95-96.

⁶⁹⁸H T to L D, 10 April 1927, C 87.

⁶⁹⁹Between 1926 and 1929, while he lived in France, Twitchin paid for 1,400 copies of Darwin's books to be donated to libraries in Britain, America and 'all over the Empire' (including 50 books to be sent to Australia), L D to H T, 26 January 1927. L D to H T, 'from the enclosed [*Argus*, 26 January 1929] you can see that my book did reach Australia', 24 June 1929. None of his books was listed in the *Mitchell Library Dictionary Catalog of Printed Books* (Boston, Mass: Hall, 1968), vol 11, 741, although the NLA and Fisher Library have Leonard Darwin's *What is Eugenics?* In 1995 the Fisher Library copy did not appear to have ever been borrowed and some of the pages were uncut.

⁷⁰⁰Leonard Darwin, *What is Eugenics?* (London: Watts, 1928), 21.

1935 public lecture on eugenics he gave in Melbourne. He may have been attempting to justify the fact that Britain rather than Australia benefited from Twitchin's legacy when he commented:

It was not in the older countries so much as in the new, where deep-rooted prejudice was not so strong, that he placed his hopes for the success in eugenic propaganda; at the same time he realized that it was in the older countries that eugenic reform was most needed.⁷⁰¹

A researcher thought Twitchin's name might indicate a familial link with Huntington's disease.⁷⁰² Twitchin's sisters clearly died from an unrelated illness and his parents died in extreme old age, although people with this disease rarely survive for so long. As the name relates to location, not behaviour, this disease hypothesis is as unlikely as the mentally unstable image of him that the Eugenics Society created. After his retirement at 57, Twitchin lived on the French Riviera in the coincidentally named Villa Eugene until, at the age of 63, he died unexpectedly after an appendix operation.⁷⁰³

Twitchin's achievements cast further doubt on the Society's claims that he suffered from depression and was mentally unstable. On 2 December 1923, Twitchin wrote to Allen about changes in his fortunes affecting the bequest to the Society. He wrote from Perth, where he was having medical treatment for pneumonia, asking Allen to 'come out after all', all expenses paid, if he 'was still free to do so'.⁷⁰⁴ Twitchin explained that he had been 'very sick' when he left his property and had had to leave his papers behind. Because of his illness, and because of the volatility of the property market, he could not remember what he had previously written and his recollection of recent events was 'also very hazy'. He suggested meeting in Perth where he was staying during summer and emphasised the need for confidentiality about his bequest, adding 'it will be time enough when a majority in the world can see the truth and importance of its teaching - and I trust that you will take every precaution to keep it secret'.⁷⁰⁵

⁷⁰¹'Eugenics', *MJA* (5 October 1935), 438.

⁷⁰²As a result of a 26 October 1993 request by Associate Professor Garth Nicholson from the Molecular Medicine Laboratory, Concord Hospital, I provided him with background material about Twitchin, including the information that the name Twitchin comes from the old English word for 'road-fork' or 'cross-roads'. Nicholson presented a paper, 'Henry Twitchin: An Australian contribution to the eugenics movement', at the Australian Society of the History of Medicine Conference, Norfolk Island, 2-9 July 1995.

⁷⁰³Darwin (1930), 91.

⁷⁰⁴H T to L D, 19 May 1923, C343.

⁷⁰⁵H T to Allen, 2 December 1923, C343.

Allen had been chosen for the negotiations because of his 'engaging personality, coupled with perseverance and foresight'.⁷⁰⁶ However, Allen reneged on his 1923 offer to visit Twitchin and asked for Darwin's help 'in dealing with a man so nervously unstable as Mr Twitchin appears to be'.⁷⁰⁷ This is Allen's manipulative 'evidence' of Twitchin's 'instability':

He writes of his strength giving way, so much so that he could not write. He is 'very sick'; his recollection is very hazy, even of recent happenings!! His affairs have undergone so many changes that he hardly knows what he has written. He is very suspicious of everyone - a hampering secrecy is all important. He wants me to start not later than the middle of January 1924!! I got his letter on the 31st of December 1923.⁷⁰⁸

To a lesser extent Darwin shared this view: 'In the first place I do not see such marked signs of mental instability in Mr Twitchin as you do'.⁷⁰⁹ Twitchin was almost 20 years younger than Darwin and the other Society members he contacted and, apart from their similarly conservative viewpoints, eugenics was probably their only shared interest.⁷¹⁰ In his will, Twitchin described Allen and Darwin as 'friends', yet their behaviour towards him appears mercenary rather than friendly.⁷¹¹ The woman who supplied Darwin with biographical details noted her scepticism about his claims that Twitchin had 'inherited bad health'. In her assessment of Twitchin she concluded:

At last, when he sold his estates the money paid represented the largest turn-over ever known in the Australian colonies. But his success was built up at the expense of his health. I think he was perfectly sound and healthy when he first went to Australia ... but the long years and the hard life of the tropics wore him out.⁷¹²

⁷⁰⁶Sir Charles Stewart to L D, 2 January 1923.

⁷⁰⁷Sir Ernest Allen (knighted after retirement from the Public Trustee Office) gave health and financial reasons for wishing to end the negotiations, Allen to L D, 18 January 1924.

⁷⁰⁸Allen to L D, 18 January 1924, 1-3.

⁷⁰⁹L D to Allen, 19 January 1924, 1.

⁷¹⁰Twitchin's political views are indicated by his distaste in having to pay £28,000 tax on the sale of his properties 'to support the Australian parasitic majority', 20 December 1926, and a remark about 'socialist governments in Australia', 26 August 1927.

⁷¹¹H T indicated that, because property prices had changed, he wanted Allen to visit Perth to discuss the bequest. As he had been sick, it is natural that he could not remember his previous letters. Perhaps Allen did not realise the strength of Australian gossip, that the property was 1,260 kilometres north of Perth, that H T left it rarely and that if they did not meet in Perth between December and April, a visit to his sheep property near the Exmouth Gulf would involve a long trip, first by cargo boat and then overland.

⁷¹²Pedigree and Family, H1, 3, 5.

His death was reported on the front page of the *West Australian* on 29 March 1930: 'Twitchin, on March 19, at Villa Eugene, Fabron, Nice (France), after operation, Henry Twitchin, late of Kennett House, Newbury, England and Towera and Lyndon stations, Yanarie, Ashburton, [north-western coast of Western Australia], aged 63 years'. As enthusiasm for eugenics was ebbing in the 1930s, it may have suited the Eugenics Society to accept Twitchin's non-specific self-evaluation of unsoundness and to add embellishments of their own about his mental instability. They may have felt that the messianic appeal of a selfless but doomed colonial hermit sacrificing himself to save humanity would provide dramatic publicity and rally support to their cause. Surprisingly little was known about Twitchin in three Western Australian research institutions I contacted.⁷¹³ However, the evidence they did supply, Twitchin's letters, and the positive comments from his contemporaries create a very different image from that provided by the Society. For instance Alice Drake-Brockman spoke of Twitchin's friendship with her and with her 'late husband who was his oldest friend in Australia'. The men had been school friends in Britain and she claimed that Twitchin had promised that her 'children's future would be his responsibility'. This was not specified in the will but £10,000 was allocated to the RSPCA and to the daughter of his 'friend Thomas de Pledge of Yanrey Station, WA'.⁷¹⁴ Twitchin's bravery in leaving home alone, his many overseas trips and his financial success, all suggest that he was hard-working, a shrewd but kindly manager and a generous friend.⁷¹⁵ The Berkshire friend was right to be sceptical about the seemingly false picture of Twitchin which the Eugenics Society promoted.

Conclusion

The four eugenists discussed in this chapter were important as individuals and as representatives of four distinctive groups. Two became eugenists probably as a result of personal experiences: Twitchin, because he believed he had 'inherited bad health' and Goodisson because she had a syphilitic husband. Australian-born Eldridge and Piddington and Welsh-born Goodisson attempted to further the cause of eugenics in Australia. English-born Twitchin (a 'career' eugenist who worked as a pastoralist in Australia) gave his money to further eugenics in Britain and had the longest-lasting commitment to eugenics, although he told few people about it. Eldridge, Piddington and Goodisson were middle aged or older

⁷¹³Archivists at the University of Western Australia could not find information about Twitchin and the J S Battye Library of West Australian History supplied his death notice. An archivist at the State Archives of WA informed me on 2 September 1992 that 'Our research confirms [the Battye Library's] conclusion that there is little documentary evidence available on Twitchin's life in this State'.

⁷¹⁴Alison Drake-Brockman to Allen, 21 June 1930, H.6, Twitchin's will, *ibid*.

⁷¹⁵When Twitchin died, he owned properties in France and an expensive central London residence. This suggests that he was not a recluse, as does the fact that he took a dress-suit with him to Australia and enjoyed playing tennis, H T to L D, 28 December 1928.

before they embarked on their very public campaigns of eugenic education. However, while both women remained unwavering in their commitment, Eldridge's dedication to eugenics ceased after ten years. Eldridge (a 'weak' eugenicist) appears to have embraced eugenics only while he believed it would help his political career, but the women's aims were humanitarian and their political activities were aimed at furthering their eugenics-related causes. Piddington (a 'strong' eugenicist) believed that human history could be explained in terms of eugenics and she crusaded energetically for a eugenic utopia. Goodisson (a 'medical' eugenicist) made pragmatic use of both eugenics and politics to further her public health goals.

Eldridge and Piddington were affiliated with the Labor Party, but while he favoured an environmental approach, she espoused hereditarian eugenics. Goodisson and Twitchin were politically conservative, but while she focused on women's health, he focused on the eradication of the unfit. These four distinctive eugenicists reveal a fascinating complexity which seems to have little direct relationship to politics, gender or the era in which they lived.

The style of Australian eugenics reflects the fact that its members were drawn almost exclusively from those in Searle's 'medical' and 'career' groups, for whom eugenics was secondary to their interests in furthering public health or their careers. Having established the different kinds and levels of commitment to eugenics in Australia, the following chapter considers the dynamics in which these diverse groups interacted in the development of eugenics in various states and in three international eugenics congresses.

Chapter 3

Organized Eugenics

This chapter explores seven attempts from 1911 to 1936 to establish eugenics organizations in Australia.⁷¹⁶ It is prefaced by an examination of language and eugenics and of Australia's links with the three international eugenics congresses. While people from many countries hailed the first congress in 1912 as an important scientific event, the third congress in 1932 met widespread scepticism. The aims were applauded in 1912 but by the time the third congress was held, these aims were largely discredited, suggesting a shift in the acceptability of eugenics which was also apparent in the rise and fall of the Australian eugenics movement. This transition is emphasized by the congress invitations and Australian officials' replies to them.⁷¹⁷ These replies, the attempts to promote eugenics in Australia and British vetting of two Australian groups provide insight into the changes in the movement's fortunes in less than one generation. The chapter concludes by considering the differences between the two main eugenics-related organizations in Australia - the Racial Hygiene Association of NSW and the Eugenics Society of Victoria - and discusses the impact of these differences.

The language of eugenics

Australian eugenicists adopted the language of their counterparts in Britain and America and many of the words were indistinguishable from the strident language of their predecessors, the degeneracy theorists. For example, at an Anglican Conference in Brisbane in 1913, the Bishop of Riverina said he needed to 'lift up his voice against the dark blot of race suicide', a plague-like evil that had infected 'nearly all the Christian nations' which 'were forced to unpleasant conclusions that whilst the West', including Australia, 'was undermining her strength' by 'luxury, lack of seriousness and infidelity', the East, by 'self-denial, alertness,

⁷¹⁶More details about the history of eugenics in Australia are provided by scholars such as Bacchi, Cawte, Lewis, Garton, Roe and Turtle, whose works were mentioned in the introduction and by John Farrow, 'The Eugenics Society of Victoria: Politisation of Biology and Anti-Socialism' (BA Essay, ANU, 1973); Jane Foley, 'The Eugenics Society of Victoria and its Role in the Birth Control Controversy of the 1930s' (BA Hons thesis, University of Melbourne, 1980); Grant McBurnie, 'Constructing Sexuality in Victoria 1930-1950: Sex Reformers Associated with the Victorian Eugenics Society' (PhD thesis, Monash University, 1989), and Stefania Siedlecky and Diana Wyndham, *Populate and Perish: Australian Women's Fight for Birth Control* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1990).

⁷¹⁷Australian Archives/ACT, CRS CP 78, Item 12/209, [1912 - First International Eugenics Congress] and AA/ACT, CRS A981, Item Conferences 103, [1932 - Third International Eugenics Congress].

adaptation and numbers', was growing increasingly strong and and 'was becoming conscious of her strength'.⁷¹⁸

Proposals for environmental or 'nurtural' eugenics were usually for the collective good, couched in vague but uplifting terms such as those used in his Presidential speech by Sir John Macpherson at the Australasian Medical Congress in 1923:

Eugenic principles are carried out in many ways and embrace all those legislative and municipal measures which aim at good housing and drainage, better conditions of labour, pure food regulations, general hygiene, the abolition of dangerous drug habits, and increased facilities for early and efficient medical and surgical treatment to those in need of them.⁷¹⁹

In contrast, proposals for negative eugenics were usually subjective, derogatory and restrictive, with the intention of controlling individuals. Those targeted were people affected by racial poisons⁷²⁰ (particularly VD, alcoholism and feeble-mindedness), such as prostitutes, consumptives, epileptics, the mentally ill and those with inherited conditions. British eugenisists included paupers in this list, unlike Australian eugenisists who concentrated instead on the mentally defective people. Eugenisists made explicit distinctions between good and bad, desirable and undesirable, fit and unfit: people of 'good stock' (the fit) should have large families, and people of 'bad stock' (the unfit) should have fewer children or none at all.⁷²¹ Just as eugenics created its own code words, anti-eugenics rhetoric often employs distinctive jargon, as shown in this 1995 example: 'Eugenics is a discourse of surveillance designed to patrol the reproductive capacities of women's bodies'.⁷²²

In 1917 Professor David Welsh argued that it was 'criminally negligent' to allow any increase in the 'hazardous experiment' of allowing immigrants with 'strains of criminality and feeble-mindedness to be grafted onto our imperial stock'.⁷²³ The importance of moral purity was

⁷¹⁸'Medical notes', *AMG* (11 October 1913), 354.

⁷¹⁹Sir John Macpherson, 'Legislative machinery for care of the feeble-minded in Great Britain', *MJA* (7 June 1924), 407. Stephen Garton, in *Medicine and Madness: A Social History of Insanity in New South Wales 1880-1940* (Kensington: UNSWP, 1988), 76, incorrectly called him Sir James MacPherson.

⁷²⁰Racial poisons are defined in the Appendix.

⁷²¹William Baylebridge (pseud), *National Notes*, 3rd edn. (Sydney: Tallabila Press, 1936), 35, proposed 'Among the sound, interference with the natural reproductive processes would, by the use of every possible deterrent, be discouraged. The fit, encouraged to marry early and have large families, would out-multiply the less fit, not thus encouraged'. The anonymous first edition (1913) copy in Mitchell Library has the note 'the author is William Blocksidge'. He adopted the name Baylebridge in 1925.

⁷²²Joseph Pugliese, 'Language and minorities', in Shirley Fitzgerald and Garry Wotherspoon (eds.), *Minorities: Cultural Diversity in Sydney* (Sydney: State Library of New South Wales in assocn with the Sydney History Group, 1995), 208.

⁷²³MacKellar and Welsh (1917), 62.

stressed by Judge Walter Bevan, an RHA member, who asked in 1927 'are we going to have a White Australia: not merely white in skin, but white at heart - a really good, clean Australia?'.⁷²⁴ The judge's remarks echo the social purity comments made by ANZAC Commander, General Birdwood in 1914. Warning about the dangers which soldiers in Egypt faced from alcohol, prostitutes and VD, he urged the officers to encourage the troops to abstain 'in the interest of our children and children's children' and to keep Australia 'clean' and 'white'.⁷²⁵ The association of whiteness with cleanliness, goodness and purity, implied that blackness was associated with the opposite characteristics.⁷²⁶ In *Illness as Metaphor*, Susan Sontag has analysed the ways in which words describing diseases often indicate the disapproval, horror or revulsion which these inspired.⁷²⁷ Alcohol was called the 'black terror'.⁷²⁸ Venereal disease had various names such as 'the pox', 'the great pox', 'a social disease', 'the social evil', 'bad blood', 'the scourge' or 'the terrible peril'.⁷²⁹ It was also called the 'red plague' to distinguish it from the 'black' (bubonic) plague, the 'white plague' (tuberculosis) and the 'yellow plague' (smallpox).⁷³⁰ Efforts to prevent, control and treat VD were usually called 'social hygiene' and the American Social Hygiene Association and the British

⁷²⁴Bevan, a District Court Judge from 1914, reported in the *Sunday Times*, 26 June 1927.

⁷²⁵William Riddell Birdwood to the Officers, 27 December 1914, quoted by Jane Tolerton in *Ettie: A Life of Ettie Rout* (Auckland: Penguin, 1992), 124.

⁷²⁶Use of the term 'white man' to praise any worthy character is discussed by Richard White in *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity, 1788-1980* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1981), 82.

⁷²⁷Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1978).

⁷²⁸Agnes Considine, *The Wider Outlook* (Melbourne: Vidler, 1925), 83.

⁷²⁹An old name for venereal disease was 'love sickness' because people caught it from sexual contact, once known as venery (derived from Venus, the goddess of love).

⁷³⁰B Burnett Ham, 'Discussion of the prevention of syphilis', *AMCT*, vol 1 (1911), 691.

Social Hygiene Council were established to fight VD. Words for racial poisons were often frightening and negative, while reformers usually employed positive or neutral sounding terms.⁷³¹

The eugenics movement attracted many people and some of them produced quite incoherent material such as Arthur Hayes' 1915 tract which railed against degeneracy.⁷³² Many others were similarly histrionic. For example, in 1927 a psychologist argued that heredity and alcohol had the 'unenviable distinction of being the princes of blight producers'⁷³³ and an American eugenist, Dr Herman Rubin, warned that 'blood always tells', with the result that 'people of degenerated or deteriorated blood' living in 'unsanitary surroundings' would produce 'scrub children, defective children, degenerated children'.⁷³⁴ His book, *Eugenics and Sex Harmony*, contained some sound advice but Dr Cumpston wanted to ban its importation in 1935 on the grounds that 'it contained matter which might well, for general circulation, be considered objectionable'.⁷³⁵ Perhaps he objected to Rubins' illustrations, examples of which appear as Figures 16 and 18 to 20. Frequently eugenists and other social reformers used alarmist language and quoted (or misquoted) experts to gain respectability. William Little's book on heredity asked:

Does it not matter that King Alcohol's besotted army dares invade your home, and by its tainted breath curse future generations? In other words, battalions of spectral silent generations, with inherited taints, unfairly penalise the innocent, and force them to erect asylums, jails, and homes for the poor and sick, as well as to maintain their fleets and armies, and custodians of life and property.⁷³⁶

This tract contained 'proofs' of the impact of maternal impressions on unborn children and 'true stories' about the transmission of acquired characteristics, and the (unsourced) claim that 'Darwin considered that "forms of disorder, malformation, and even maiming are transmissible"'.⁷³⁷ Sometimes eugenists changed the meaning of language. For example,

⁷³¹Australia's Association to Combat the Social Evil was an exception with a negative title.

⁷³²Arthur W Hayes, *Future Generations: Woman, the Future Ruler of This Earth. If This Earth was a Stud Farm and the Men and Women Thereon Represented the Stock, Three Quarters Would be Rendered Incapable of Reproduction* (Sydney: typescript, 1915), ML. There are many similarly incomprehensible examples of writing in the Archives of the Inspector-General of the Insane.

⁷³³John Bostock, 'Mental deficiency: causes and characteristics', *MJA* (5 March 1927), 325. James Eastman, in *Happy Marriage* (Melbourne: McCubbin, [193-?]), 21, warned that 'the least valuable strains - the diseased, the degenerate, the mentally defective, the alcoholic - show the most marked tendency to multiply and pass on their undesirable characteristics to their swarming progeny'.

⁷³⁴Herman Harold Rubin, *Eugenics and Sex Harmony: The Sexes, Their Relations and Problems*, 2nd edn (New York: Pioneer Publications, 1942), 24. First published in 1933.

⁷³⁵Cumpston, Memorandum to the Comptroller-General, Department of Trade and Customs, Canberra, 23 September 1935, AA A425, 35/8897. Cumpston claimed that the book was prohibited in Canada. The Australian Customs' ban was lifted in December 1935.

⁷³⁶William Little, *A Visit to Topos, and How the Science of Heredity is Practised There* (Ballarat: Berry and Anderson, 1897), 18. Mitchell Library paid a shilling for it in 1910.

⁷³⁷*Ibid.*, 25.

there is a wholesomeness associated with Australia's National Fitness Movement which provides activities such as sport and recreation camps for children.⁷³⁸ However, darker aspects of national fitness occurred in Germany, where 'naturism' (physical culture, nudism, dance, natural healing etc), at first used to achieve fitness (racial hygiene)⁷³⁹ evolved into theories of Aryan superiority.⁷⁴⁰ In the 1920s and 1930s Australia produced magazines promoting fascist views, for example a magazine which was briefly but revealingly called *Better Health and Racial Efficiency Through Diet, Hygiene, Psychology, Physical Culture*⁷⁴¹ and a journal, *Health and Physical Culture*, which in 1930 announced a series on world-famous physical culturalists, starting with Mussolini.⁷⁴² For 40 years British, American and Australian eugenists used the word 'betterment'; indeed, the first editorial in the *Eugenics Review* announced that its 'noble purpose' was for 'the betterment of the Human Race'.⁷⁴³ However, the 'betterment' aim was also applied to such activities as sterilizing the unfit or confining Aboriginals to reserves.⁷⁴⁴ The term also served as a convenient euphemism, just as 'ethnic cleansing', with its connotations of cleanliness, has been used as a code for genocide in the recent war in the Balkans.

In 1917 Professor Welsh warned University of Sydney undergraduates about 'nights of sin', adding that in the case of VD 'it is the wild asses who sow the wild oats'.⁷⁴⁵ Similarly, in 1924 Professor Berry claimed that the unfit 'breed like weeds, and are just about as useful'.⁷⁴⁶ This agricultural analogy was repeated in a 1930s poster (shown in Figure 9) issued by the Eugenics Society in London. References to the decline and fall of ancient civilisations were also popular.⁷⁴⁷ An Australian priest stated that Rome provided evidence

⁷³⁸For details see *History and Structure of the National Fitness Council* (Sydney: Education Department of NSW, 1959) and National Fitness progress reports in NHMRC Reports.

⁷³⁹Racial hygiene is defined in the Appendix.

⁷⁴⁰Arnd Kruger, 'There goes this art of manliness: Naturism and racial hygiene in Germany', *Journal of Sport History*, 18 (Spring 1991), 135-58.

⁷⁴¹Published in Melbourne by Fruit World Pty Ltd in August 1925. After this issue it reverted to its former title, *National Magazine of Health*.

⁷⁴²Benito Mussolini. World famous physical culturalists. No 1', *HPC* (June 1930), 29, 38. The series did not go beyond this first feature. However, in *Nine Australian Progressives: Vitalism in Bourgeois Social Thought, 1890-1960* (St Lucia, Qld: UQP, 1984), 232, Michael Roe gave a different perspective by inverting the article as 'World Famous Physical Culturalists, No 1: Benito Mussolini'.

⁷⁴³*ER*, 1 (1909-1910), 3.

⁷⁴⁴See 'Medical progress and eugenics', *AMJ* (19 October 1912), 742. In the *Argus*, 26 July 1913, 9 (h), Barrett mentioned the 'betterment movements' in America and Canada.

⁷⁴⁵David Arthur Welsh, 'The predisposing causes of disease and disaster. An address to undergraduates', in *University of Sydney Society for Combating Venereal Diseases, Proceedings* (Sydney: University of Sydney), 12.

⁷⁴⁶R J A Berry, 'The problem of the unfit', [Melbourne] *Herald*, 3 May 1924, 11.

⁷⁴⁷See examples by Allen G Roper, *Ancient Eugenics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1913) and Bostock and Nye, *Whither Away? A Study of Race Psychology and the Factors Leading to Australia's National Decline*, 2nd edn. (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1936), 42-64.

of the way in which 'race suicide broke the arm which had held the world in its grip'.⁷⁴⁸ He was making a clumsy reference to the view, first promoted by Edward Gibbon,⁷⁴⁹ that racial degeneration and city life would send the British Empire, like Rome, into oblivion.⁷⁵⁰

Harvey Sutton proposed that degenerates should be 'wiped out' by segregation and isolation because this was no worse than cloistering university Dons and thus preventing future generations from inheriting their intelligence.⁷⁵¹ People using these phrases were echoing Darwinian metaphors about plants and animals which

⁷⁴⁸Reverend Eustace Boylan, *Factors in National Decay* (Melbourne: Australian Catholic Truth Society, 1917), 5.

⁷⁴⁹Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (6 vols, 1776-1788).

⁷⁵⁰Alun Howkins, 'The discovery of rural England', in Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (eds.), *Englishness: Politics and Culture, 1880-1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 65-66.

⁷⁵¹'The cure of feeble-mindedness', *AMG* (7 June 1913), 556. Harvey Sutton was recycling a British argument as celibacy was never required for Australian academics.

eugenists also favoured.⁷⁵² A similar analogy was used in the conclusion of an important Nazi propaganda film in 1936.⁷⁵³

Figure 9: Only healthy seed must be sown!⁷⁵⁴



⁷⁵²For example, see Paul Crook (quoting Stepan) in *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 33 no 3 (1986), 246 and Angela Booth in *Teaching of Sex Hygiene: Report of a conference by the WEA of NSW*, November 1916, 2nd edn. (Sydney: Burrows, 1918), 37.

⁷⁵³The film, *Erbkrank* (translated as *Hereditary Defective*) concluded by showing people planting seeds with the comment: 'the farmer who prevents the overgrowth of the weed promotes the valuable'. This was quoted by Stefan Kuhl, in *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (New York: OUP, 1994), 48-49.

⁷⁵⁴A poster reproduced by Lesley A Hall in 'Illustrations from the Wellcome Institute Library. The Eugenics Society Archives in the Contemporary Medical Archives Centre', *Medical History*, 34 (1990), 327-33, Plate 3, CMAC: SA/EUG/G/G. Poster 'Healthy Seed'. Hall noted that the Eugenics Society 'would appear to have produced this during the 1930s' in an effort to convey the negative eugenics message.

In 1940 the Eugenics Society of Victoria wanted 'to secure a better world' with 'better - biologically better - people to live in it'.⁷⁵⁵ The wording 'biologically better people' had been taken (unacknowledged) from articles published in the *Eugenics Review*.⁷⁵⁶ It closely resembles the saying 'National Socialism is nothing but applied biology', coined in 1931 by German Society for Racial Hygiene member Fritz Lenz, and adopted as a popular slogan by the Nazis in an attempt to scientifically sanction their activities.⁷⁵⁷ Consider the rather positive-sounding language in a 1933 *Sydney Morning Herald* report of Germany's new sterilization law:

It will apply to sufferers from chronic alcoholism, feeble-mindedness, insanity, epilepsy, St Vitus Dance, blindness, deafness, dumbness and deformity. Dr Lenz, Professor of Eugenics, extolled Herr Hitler as a teetotaler and non-smoker. He said that the banning of drink and tobacco would greatly increase public health and efficiency. Only 10 out of the 100 concentration camps in Germany are now occupied. These will be closed as soon as circumstances permit. Most of the workmen who were detained for political reasons have already been liberated, although many undisciplined Nazis remain ... Nazis in Vienna are intensifying their propaganda activities. They are even fixing contrivances on the backs of dogs, with sausages fastened in front of their noses, so that every time the animals attempt to seize the sausages they operate a jack-in-the-box, out of which pops a swastika.⁷⁵⁸

This sympathetic item appears objective at first glance but it was probably published in the form presented by the geneticist Lenz, a skilled propagandist who had applauded Hitler even before he came to power.⁷⁵⁹ It listed various disabling conditions to persuade the reader that the sterilizations would be medically justified. The adulating information that Hitler neither smoked nor drank was used to encourage an acceptance of his innocuous comments that banning both would improve public health and efficiency. Fears about concentration camps and Nazi excesses were calmed with the news that under-filled concentration camps would soon be closed when order was restored among unruly Nazis, and concluded with a joke, implying that they resembled fun-loving children so there was no need to worry about their propaganda.⁷⁶⁰

W J Thomas, who had been the Honorary Secretary of the Australian Association for Fighting Venereal Disease, criticised the Nazis in his 1940s sex education book. He found it

⁷⁵⁵Victor Hugo Wallace, 26 May 1940 to the Prime Minister's Department, Canberra, AA/ACT, A461, Item T347/1/1.

⁷⁵⁶*ER*, 30 (October 1938), 31, 163 and (October 1939), 151-52.

⁷⁵⁷Kuhl (1994), 36. The career and impact of prominent Nazi eugenicist Fritz Lenz (1887-1976) is analysed by Sheila Faith Weiss, in *Medizinhistorisches Journal*, 27 nos 1-2 (1992), 5-25.

⁷⁵⁸'Germany. Sterilisation of the Unfit', *SMH*, 25 October 1933, 13 (a).

⁷⁵⁹Loren R Graham, 'Science and values: The eugenics movement in Germany and Russia in the 1920s', *American Historical Review*, 83 (1978), 1143. Fritz Lenz became Germany's first Professor of Racial Hygiene at the University of Munich in 1923.

⁷⁶⁰Australian responses to this regime are discussed in chapter 6.

'an interesting and sinister fact that Hitler and his associates have exploited the primitive sex urge as a political weapon'. 'Under the guise of "liberty" they had broken down all moral barriers and deliberately pandered to the primitive in man. In order to stimulate the birthrate at all costs, the Nazis had reduced sexual relations to the level of the stud farm'. He added that women who were 'obeying the Führer' were called 'army mattresses' by Nazi soldiers.⁷⁶¹ However, as late as 1944 Sutton was still using the language of Nazism and extremist eugenists in his textbook, *Lectures on Preventive Medicine*.

The aim (of eugenics) is human betterment: first the progressive improvement of inherited worth in its broadest sense - the best seed in the best soil. Second, the guarding against degeneration of the race by greater numbers and proportions of duds - (a) deficient, disordered or deviated mentally, deformed and disabled, drunkards and dope addicts, (b) degraded morally, (c) degenerate sexually, (d) delinquent, (e) destitute, especially where these are capable of handing on their defect or the tendency of the defect to their children - the worst seed in the worst soil.
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Derogatory images with eugenic overtones are still being used, such as the chapter heading 'The Bright Man's Burden' in a book on mental retardation published in 1981.⁷⁶³

There were a number of books written with eugenic themes from the 1910s to the 1930s. Professor Edmund Morris Miller (1881-1964) has included four of them in his bibliographic survey of Australian authors from the early days of the colony

⁷⁶¹Thomas, *Plain Words: A Guide to Sex Education* (Sydney: F Johnson, 1942?), 21, 23.

⁷⁶²Sutton, *Lectures on Preventive Medicine* (Sydney: Consolidated Press, 1944), 25.

⁷⁶³Daniel I Winkler, in Ruth Macklin and William Gaylin (eds.), *Mental Retardation and Sterilization: A Problem of Competency and Paternalism* (New York: Plenum Press, 1981), 149-66. This is a twist of the 'white man's burden' poem by Rudyard Kipling, who urged Americans to take up the responsibilities which he felt that whites, especially the British, should show towards coloured people in their Empire.

until 1938.⁷⁶⁴ These books are *The Modern Heloise* (1912), by Alfred Buchanan (1874-1941); *The Wider Outlook* (1925) by Agnes Considine; *Murder and the Law* (1932) by Dominic MacGuire (1903-1978) and *Prelude to Christopher* (1933) by Eleanor Dark (1901-1985).⁷⁶⁵ Eugenics provided a fashionable frill to the book by Buchanan who was a writer, journalist and lawyer. However, it was more central in Considine's domestic story which devoted a chapter to evangelistic discussions about eugenics.⁷⁶⁶ McGuire, who was a prolific author, lecturer on international politics and Australia's first Ambassador to Italy from 1954 to 1959, merely used the setting of eugenists' conference at an English resort as the background to a murder mystery. Dark, for 20 years one of Australia's best-selling authors, was Piddington's niece so it is not surprising that her first novel examined eugenics-related problems relating to inherited mental illness. While eugenics was centrally important to the plot, the novel increased its strength because Dark maintained a neutral position about eugenics.

Curiously, Morris Miller did not mention two other important contributors to this field, William Baylebridge (1883-1942) and Erle Cox.⁷⁶⁷ A major part of Noel Macainsh's examination of the influence of Nietzsche⁷⁶⁸ in Australia was devoted to Baylebridge's writing, particularly his *National Notes* which he prepared from 1909 to 1913.⁷⁶⁹ Roe has emphasized how 'extraordinarily interesting' it was that in this publication Baylebridge had advocated a 'thoroughly fascist' regime for Australia before 1914.⁷⁷⁰ Subsequent editions of Baylebridge's privately published

⁷⁶⁴Edmund Morris Miller, *Australian Literature from its Beginnings to 1935: A Descriptive and Bibliographic Survey of Books by Australian Authors in Poetry, Drama, Fiction, Criticism and Anthology with subsidiary Entries to 1938* [1940], (Sydney: SUP facsimile edn., 1975).

⁷⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 697, 756, 781, 783.

⁷⁶⁶Buchanan, *The Modern Heloise* (London: Ouseley, 1912), 8-9, 52-53, 108-11, 124-26, 190-92. Considine, *The Wider Outlook* (Melbourne: Vidler, 1925), 79-86.

⁷⁶⁷William Baylebridge is one of only six authors mentioned under the heading 'eugenics' in the *Australian National Bibliography 1901-1950, Subject Index* and one of 16 entries in the Mitchell Library *Dictionary Catalog of Printed Books*. The *ML Catalog* was published in 1968 and the *ANB* in 1988. Curiously, neither Morris Miller nor these libraries listed Erle Cox's *Out of the Silence*.

⁷⁶⁸Havelock Ellis introduced Fredrich Nietzsche's philosophy to English-speaking audiences in 1896 in *The Savoy: An Illustrated Monthly*, no 2, April, 79-94; no 3, July, 68-81 and no 4 August, 57-63.

⁷⁶⁹Noel Macainsh, *Nietzsche in Australia: A Literary Inquiry into a Nationalistic Ideology* (Munich: Verlag fur Dokumentation und Werbung, 1975), 105, quoting Baylebridge.

⁷⁷⁰Roe (1984), 17.

'blood and soil' manifesto appeared in 1922 and 1936 and all three editions contain an ill-assorted array of eugenics-related aphorisms.⁷⁷¹ Macainsh concluded that Baylebridge was indirectly influenced by Nietzsche and that his inadequate understanding of this philosophy was because he had acquired it second-hand, as interpreted by eugenisists.⁷⁷² Dorothy Green agreed with Macainsh that Baylebridge's vitalist philosophy showed only superficial resemblance to Nazism and fascism, but warned that 'it would be unwise to underrate the appeal of his rhetoric to irrational minds'.⁷⁷³ The danger seems exaggerated:⁷⁷⁴ boredom or mirth is more likely.

Erle Cox (1873-1950), who published three novels, was one of Melbourne's best-known journalists. His *Out of the Silence* is a science-fiction saga about futuristic plans by a super-woman to make the world eugenically perfect. It first appeared as a serial in the *Argus* in 1925, was subsequently published as a book, and in 1934 appeared again in the *Argus*.⁷⁷⁵ The lasting popularity of all of these books which were written by renowned writers⁷⁷⁶ provides another indication of the interest in eugenics during the 1920s and 1930s. Dark's novel won the Australian Literature Society's gold medal in 1934 and was widely and favourably reviewed.⁷⁷⁷ The topic was also popular in a variety of magazines - literary, current issues and women's - including Sydney's *Triad* (1915-27), *New Outlook* (1922-23) and *Progressive Journal* (1935-36) and in Melbourne's *Stead's Review* (1892-1931).

⁷⁷¹For example, Baylebridge: 'Our chief obstacle to reform is the sickening sentimentality of philanthropists who are themselves degenerate' (1913), 29. Also: 'To permit the degenerate and worthless, since this handicaps the endowed and profitable, is to be twice unblest', 'celibacy would be discouraged amongst the fit, promoted among the unfit' and 'our democracy would be an aristocracy of the efficient', (1936), 29, 38, 49, 57.

⁷⁷²Macainsh (1975), 119.

⁷⁷³Henry MacKenzie Green, *A History of Australian Literature: Pure and Applied, Vol 1. 1789-1923*, revised by Dorothy Green (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1984-85), 538.

⁷⁷⁴Critical reviews of Baylebridge's work outweigh the complimentary. See *ADB*, vol 7, 218-19 and *All About Books*, 8 (12 October 1936), 157-58 which noted his 'remote, authoritative air' and lack of originality, precision or coherence'.

⁷⁷⁵In her PhD thesis, 'Health and the State. The Development of Collective Responsibilities For Health Care in Australia in the First Half of the Twentieth Century' (Canberra: ANU, 1974), 156, Claudia Thame mistakenly wrote that the book appeared first. After the serializations, the book was also published in American, British, Russian and French editions with unexpurgated editions appearing in 1947 and 1976.

⁷⁷⁶The biographical details of the authors are from William H Wilde et al., in *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* (Oxford: OUP, 1991).

⁷⁷⁷For 1934 reviews of *Prelude to Christopher*, see *Telegraph* and *Herald*, 19 May; *SMH*, 25 May; *Bulletin*, 30 May and *All About Books*, 12 June.

The International Eugenics Congresses

The 1912 Congress in London

The prestige and respectability which eugenics enjoyed in 1912 is indicated by the fact that the invitation to attend the first congress was dispatched from Downing Street to Andrew Fisher, the (Labor) Prime Minister of Australia.⁷⁷⁸ The invitation to appoint two honorary members and two delegates to the Congress was received on 10 June 1912. On 4 July Fisher invited Lord Denman, the Governor-General, to send a cable to the Secretary of State for the Colonies advising him that the Commonwealth Government would be represented at the Congress by Sir John Cockburn.⁷⁷⁹ Curiously, a Court Circular in London announced his appointment on 28 June, more than a week before the acceptance was cabled from Melbourne.⁷⁸⁰ Australia's other official representatives were listed as 'the Hon T A Coghlan (New South Wales), the Hon A A Kirkpatrick (South Australia) and Prof A Stuart (University of Sydney)'.⁷⁸¹

A note to Francis Galton indicated Cockburn's interest in eugenics.⁷⁸² Anderson Stuart (and probably Coghlan) were sympathetic, but there is no indication of the

⁷⁷⁸The dispatch specified: 'Two invitations to Ministers and Heads of Government Departments to become Honorary Members of the First International Eugenics Congress. Two invitations to Government Departments and Boards to appoint delegates to the above Congress', Downing Street, L Harcourt, Sec of State for the Colonies, Dispatch 210, 10 May 1912, AA (1912).

⁷⁷⁹On 6 July 1912 a cable from Melbourne read: 'Referring to your despatch of 10th May, [number] 201, Eugenics Congress. Government of Commonwealth of Australia will be represented by Sir John Cockburn', *ibid.* Scottish-born John Alexander Cockburn (1850-1929) was 'a medical practitioner, Federationist and advanced liberal', *ADB*, vol 8, 42. He was Premier of South Australia from 1889-1890, served in London as the Agent-General for SA from 1898-1901, representing Australia at six international congresses.

⁷⁸⁰Court Circular. The Hon. Sir John Cockburn will represent Australia at the first International Congress on Eugenics in London next month', *Times*, 28 June 1912, 11.

⁷⁸¹'Delegates' in *Problems in Eugenics*. Papers communicated to the First International Eugenics Congress, the University of London, July 24th to 30th, 1912 (London: EES, 1912), xv-xvii.

⁷⁸²See University College London, The Galton Papers, 133/5N, 22 March 1905, 'Sir John Cockburn deeply regrets that an engagement in the north will prevent him from being present on October 30th. He is deeply interested in Mr Galton's researches in Eugenics and trusts that some further opportunity may present itself for conferring on the subject'.

views on eugenics held by the former South Australian pioneer Labor politician Andrew Kirkpatrick.⁷⁸³

The guest list appears to have been politically determined: Sir Newton James Moore, formerly the Liberal Premier of Western Australia, was there⁷⁸⁴ but the Premier of Victoria declined to send a representative.⁷⁸⁵ While the Piddingtons and Edith Onians also attended, Onians was the only Australian at the Congress to write a report, which formed part of an informative account of her two-year study of child rescue work in England, America and Europe.⁷⁸⁶ The Australian press reported extensively on the Congress and most were positive about eugenics.⁷⁸⁷ The congress papers in English, French, Italian and German, were duly published but had a poorly-chosen title, *Problems in Eugenics*.

The 1921 Congress in New York

Possibly because he had debunked Australian icons, Australian newspapers appear not to have reported that Thomas Griffith Taylor was one of the 126 contributors to the exhibition held in conjunction with the Second International Eugenics Congress. He exhibited 'One wall-diagram dealing with racial variation'.⁷⁸⁸ However, the

⁷⁸³In 1909 Andrew Alexander Kirkpatrick (1848-1928) became South Australia's first Labor Agent-General in London, *ADB*, vol 9, 610-11.

⁷⁸⁴*Times*, 25 July 1912, 9 (d) listed 'Sir N J Moore' as one of those attending the reception 'to which all the members of the Congress were invited'.

⁷⁸⁵'Study of eugenics. International Congress', *Argus*, 20 June 1912, 11, reported a suggestion by William A Watt (1871-1946), the Liberal Premier of Victoria, that Dr Burnett Ham, the Chairman of the State's Board of Public Health, should keep in touch with the findings of the conference.

⁷⁸⁶Edith Onians, *The Men of To-morrow* (Melbourne: Thomas C Lothian, 1914), 258.

⁷⁸⁷The Piddingtons' attendance at the Congress and Eldridge's angry rejoinder after a negative report in *Telegraph*, 27 July 1912, were discussed in the previous section. In 1912, positive responses were published in *AMG* (20 April), 414-15, *Argus*, 20 June, 11; 26 July, 7; 24 August, 18; 5 September, 14; 7 September, 9 and *SMH*, 29 July, 9.

⁷⁸⁸Harry H Laughlin, *The Second International Exhibition of Eugenics held 22 September to 22 October 1921 in Connection with the Second International Congress of Eugenics* (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1923), Exhibitor 112, Professor Griffith Taylor, Associate Professor of Geography, University of Sydney. Exhibition. 'One wall-diagram dealing with racial variation'.

press had lavished praise on the other Australian exhibitor, listed simply as 'Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics'.⁷⁸⁹ This was Sir George Knibbs, a genial man with 'an unchallengeable position' in the 'esteem of the world of science and learning'.⁷⁹⁰ A year before the Congress the *Sydney Morning Herald* had announced:

Mr G H Knibbs, Commonwealth Statistician, has been nominated by the National Research Council of the United States of America as a vice-president of the Second International Eugenics Congress, to be held in New York City, September 21-28, 1921. In communicating his nomination to the statistician, Dr Charles B Davenport, division of biology and agriculture of the Eugenics Committee, stated that it was by way of appreciation 'of Mr Knibbs' work on demography'. He also stated that the nomination was approved by the Eugenics Education Society of London of which Major Leonard Darwin, son of the the late Sir (sic) Charles Darwin, is president.⁷⁹¹

Knibbs, the Australian delegate at six international congresses in Europe in 1909, was described at the time as a 'nimble scientist' and a 'versatile mathematician' and commended for 'the excellent *Official Yearbook of the Commonwealth* issued under his direction [which] is the amazement of the world's experts in figures'.⁷⁹² His selection on the executive was supported by Davenport, who hoped that he would accept⁷⁹³ and Leonard Darwin, who urged him to contribute a paper.⁷⁹⁴ Knibbs had accepted the position despite his uncertainty about attending as 1921 was 'Census year'.⁷⁹⁵

He seems to have done neither,⁷⁹⁶ although he had been on the International Eugenics' Committee in London in 1919.⁷⁹⁷ However, Knibbs' acceptance of the Congress appointment and his role as an exhibitor provides two indications that the Australian

⁷⁸⁹Ibid, 31, 'Exhibitor 29. Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, "The Rialto", Collins Street, Melbourne, Australia. Exhibits: Book, *Mathematical Theory of Population*'.

⁷⁹⁰Sir John Monash's comments in 1923 when he became President of the AAAS on Knibbs' retirement, quoted in 'Death of Sir George H Knibbs', *Journal of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research*, 2 no 2 (May 1929), 67.

⁷⁹¹'Personal column', *SMH*, 15 October 1920, 8 (d).

⁷⁹²Johns (1914). In 1914 Knibbs was on the Provisional Committee of Melbourne's Eugenics Education Society and he wrote about eugenics in *The Shadow of the World's Future or the Earth's Population Possibilities and the Consequences of the Present Rate of Increase of the Earth's Inhabitants* (London: Ernest Benn, 1928), 112-14.

⁷⁹³Davenport to Knibbs 15 September 1920, C B Davenport Papers, B/D27, American Philosophical Society Library (APS).

⁷⁹⁴Knibbs apparently intended to submit a paper because he indicated to Davenport on 11 March 1921 that the later deadline for American papers would suit him.

⁷⁹⁵Knibbs to Davenport, 19 November 1920.

⁷⁹⁶No paper by Knibbs appeared in the Congress papers. Lesley Hall indicated that Knibbs 'was present at a meeting of the Permanent International Eugenics Committee held in London at the Royal Society on 18 October 1919, but the official headed paper of the 1921 International Congress did not include the names of the vice-Presidents'. Martha Harrison (from the American Philosophical Society) kindly sent me three letters between Knibbs and Davenport but was unable to find further information.

⁷⁹⁷British Library. Marie Stopes Papers. Miscellaneous correspondence from Australia (Add MS 58, 572), Knibbs to Stopes, 6 January 1925, folio 10. If he had been to the 1921 Congress, it is almost certain that he would have said so.

government considered that eugenics was respectable, as Knibbs acted in his official capacity as Commonwealth Statistician and the 'honour' of his appointment was publicly announced.⁷⁹⁸ In contrast, by this time overseas reporting about eugenics had become less respectful.⁷⁹⁹

The 1932 Congress in New York

After 1921 the status of eugenics deteriorated with eugenicists 'losing ground ever since genes ... were discovered'.⁸⁰⁰ The wording of the official invitation to the Congress in New York, and the Australian response, indicate that feelings about eugenics had shifted to such an extent in both countries that the Australian and the American Governments wished to distance themselves from the Congress. In March 1932 the invitation was forwarded to the Attorney General and Minister for External Affairs from the American Consul, who noted that 'the Congress is not held under the auspices of the United States and that it has no official connection with the Government of the United States'.⁸⁰¹ The conservative (United Australia Party) Prime Minister of Australia, Joseph Lyons, replied 'that the Commonwealth Government, while appreciating the kind invitation of the Management of the Congress, regret that they are unable to see their way to arrange for representation'.⁸⁰² There are other signs that enthusiasm for eugenics had dwindled by this time: there is no record of any Australians at the Congress, it did not receive any local publicity, and it was not mentioned by the RHA.⁸⁰³ Harvey Sutton, Director of the recently opened School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine in Sydney, requested a copy of the Congress transactions in

⁷⁹⁸Knibbs' letters to Davenport were on the letterhead paper of the Commonwealth Statistician, Melbourne. The congress was reported in a favourable light in 'Future of the race. Proposals by scientists. Interesting discussion', *Argus*, 24 December 1921, 4 (h).

⁷⁹⁹For example, the unsigned article 'When eugenicists disagree', *New York Times*, 20 November 1921, Section 7, 13 (a), stated that eugenicists 'were nearly as far apart on the question of cousin marriages as neighbourhood gossips' and the author reminded readers that Charles Darwin had married a cousin, as had his son, Major Leonard Darwin.

⁸⁰⁰'The week in science: Eugenists and geneticists are at odds', *New York Times*, 28 August 1932, Section 8, 4.

⁸⁰¹Wilbur Keblinger, American Consul, Sydney, forwarding the 1 February 1932 invitation from the International Federation of Eugenic Organizations, Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, New York to J G Latham, Attorney General and Minister for External Affairs, Canberra, 23 March, 1932, AA/ACT, Item A981, Conferences 103 (1932).

⁸⁰²J A Lyons, Prime Minister and Acting Minister for External Affairs, Canberra to the Consul-in-Charge, Sydney, 27 June 1932, AA (1932). On 30 June, Albert M Doyle, the American Consul, informed Mr Lyons that his response had been 'forwarded to the Secretary of State at Washington for transmission to the Secretary of the Congress', *ibid*.

⁸⁰³The minutes of the 18 July 1932 RHA Annual meeting did not mention the Congress which was held a month later, nor did the Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 1933, and no entries related to the eugenics congresses under the heading 'eugenics' in the 26 national newspapers indexed by the NSW Parliamentary Library from 1910-1975.

1931 as he was 'particularly desirous of having a good reference library'.⁸⁰⁴ There is no record of any reply from Sutton to Davenport's invitation to 'join in the work' of the Congress.⁸⁰⁵ Feelings about eugenics may be judged by an ex-RHA member's comments about 'the fallacy of eugenics' and his observation that 'the stupidity of these reformers is grotesque'.⁸⁰⁶ Robert Cook from Washington, DC bluntly called his paper 'Is eugenics half-baked?' and while he did not think so, many did.⁸⁰⁷

Records of congress attendances are rather imprecise, as indicated in Table 2, but Kevles' unreferenced claim that the Third Congress 'attracted fewer than a hundred people',⁸⁰⁸ seems to be a significant underestimate. Eugenics was losing credibility by 1932 but audience size is not a reliable indicator of whether 'mainline' eugenics had collapsed. Cook wrote that enrolment was 'less than 1,000'.⁸⁰⁹

⁸⁰⁴Harvey Sutton to Charles B Davenport, 24 July 1931, C B Davenport Papers B/D27.

⁸⁰⁵Julia Goodrich, Secretary to Dr Davenport, to Harvey Sutton, 2 September 1931, *ibid*.

⁸⁰⁶Robert V Storer, *Sex in Modern Life: A Survey of Sexual Life in Adolescence and Marriage*, 2nd edn. (Melbourne: James Little, 1933), 70. Dr Storer had been on the RHA Advisory Board from 1928 to 1930.

⁸⁰⁷Robert Cook, in *A Decade of Progress in Eugenics: Scientific Papers of the Third International Congress of Eugenics ... held at the American Museum of Natural History, New York. August 21-23, 1932* (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1934), 441-46.

⁸⁰⁸Daniel Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 169.

⁸⁰⁹Cook, in *A Decade* (1934), 441.

Table 2: Attendances at eugenics congresses⁸¹⁰

Congress	Place	Nos of 'officers, committeemen and delegates'	Nos of 'members' (sic) ⁸¹¹
First 24-30 June 1912	University of London	324	not specified
Second 22-28 September 1921	American Museum of Natural History	312	401
Third 21-23 August 1932	American Museum of Natural History	73	400

The editor added that world wide: 'the total enrolment of all the existing programs devoted to furthering a eugenic program is probably less than ten thousand'.⁸¹² In Cook's opinion, unless eugenics congresses were as well attended as political conventions, eugenists have failed their mission'.⁸¹³ There are inconsistencies in membership lists of the International Federation of Eugenics Organizations⁸¹⁴ and recent estimates are also vague.⁸¹⁵

⁸¹⁰A *Decade* (1934), 13-14.

⁸¹¹Ibid, 13-14, in a summary of attendances at all three congresses, Harry H Laughlin stated that 200 of the delegates made the trip to Cold Spring Harbor, *ibid*, 8. There is confusion about terminology with 'patrons, committeemen (sic), delegates, supporting members, sustaining members and active members' in 1932 and 'honorary members, associate members and delegates' in 1912. *Problems in Eugenics* (1912) listed 99 delegates, four from Australia. Edith Onians was not in the delegates' list but on pages 246 and 248 of her 1914 book, said she 'had the honour of being a delegate'.

⁸¹²Ibid, 391.

⁸¹³Ibid, 446.

⁸¹⁴The 1929 International Federation of Eugenic Organizations membership list, reprinted in *The Eugenical News*, XV no 1 (January 1930), 11-15, included Russia as a member since 1922 but not Hungary. However, the list for the 1932 congress listed Hungary as a member since 1921 but not Russia.

⁸¹⁵In Mark B Adams (ed.), *The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil and Russia* (New York: OUP, 1990), 5, Adams wrote 'In the decades between 1890 and 1930, eugenics movements developed in more than thirty countries', without defining 'eugenics movements' or specifying which countries were involved.

The 1932 Congress issued a table listing the Federation representatives in 22 countries.⁸¹⁶ Australia was not listed, although in 1921 it was listed as one of the countries qualified to have representation on an International Commission of Eugenics.⁸¹⁷ The insignificance of Australia as a contributor to world eugenics in 1932 was emphasized in the *Eugenic Review's* pre-congress report: 'Eugenics is now alive in India, China, Japan and Java. Africa and Australia are also stirring'.⁸¹⁸ Measured in the context of this puffery, the Australian movement appears to have made minimal impact on global eugenics. Perhaps Australia's 'stirrings' were only mentioned by the British Society in diplomatic recognition of Twitchin's bequest.

Establishing eugenics organizations in Australia

There were seven attempts to form eugenics groups in Australia but only three of them (in the eastern states) were very active.⁸¹⁹ Some attempts failed, some groups were short-lived, and the Racial Hygiene Association of NSW is the only one which still operates. It was renamed the Family Planning Association in 1960, and in the 1990s its eugenics roots only feature as a part of its history. Table 3 (in chronological order) provides an overview of states which had (or attempted to have) eugenics groups from 1911 to 1961. Table 4 places these groups in context by identifying significant local and overseas events which occurred before, during and after the rise and fall of eugenics in Australia.

⁸¹⁶A *Decade* (1934), 522-26, listed representatives from 22 countries. Those joining in 1912 were Argentina, Belgium, Cuba, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Norway, United States of America; in 1921-1923 Czechoslovakia, Finland, Hungary, The Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland; in 1924-1928 Austria, Estonia, Poland, South Africa, and from 1929-1932 Canada and the Dutch East Indies.

⁸¹⁷Item 7 of the 'proposed rules' of the Second Congress listed these 'co-operating countries': 'In Europe, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden; In America, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Columbia, Cuba, Mexico, Venezuela, United States of America. Also Australia and New Zealand'. Quoted in *ER*, 13 (April 1921 - January 1922), 524.

⁸¹⁸'International Eugenics Congress', *ER*, 22-23 (April 1930 - January 1932), 241.

⁸¹⁹In addition, the RHA made numerous attempts to establish branches in other states. For details see Siedlecky and Wyndham (1990), particularly 164.

Table 3: Eugenics organizations in Australian states, 1911 to 1961

Years of operation	State	Name of organization	Notable members and comments on activities
1911 to 1916 (but mainly in 1911)	SA	S A Branch of the British Science Guild, Sub-Committee on Eugenics	William A Magarey, Dr Edward Angas Johnson, Dr Robert Marten, Sir Henry Newland, Dr Robert Pulleine, Dr Charles Reissman, Thomas Smeaton and Sir Fred Young. During 1911, the eight Sub-committees each produced a <i>Race Building</i> report which was reprinted in Adelaide's <i>The Mail</i> in 1916
From 11 December 1912 until February 1922	NSW	Eugenics Education Society of NSW	Dr Richard Arthur (Pres), Prof Robert F Irvine (Vice-pres), J C Eldridge (Sec), H A Bell (Treas), R L Baker, Dr Andrew Davidson, C C Faulkner, A W Green, Rev R B S Hammond, Peter McNaught, Prof T P Anderson Stuart, Colin Smith, David Stead, Misses Fraser, Cotton and Von Hagen
Some time between 1913 and 1920	WA	Eugenics Society	Prof William Dakin attempted to establish a society in the University of Western Australia, but it 'failed due to lack of public support'
From July 1914: in February 1915 it was in 'suspended animation'	Vic	Eugenics Education Society of Melbourne	Prof Baldwin Spencer (Pres), Dr W Ernest Jones (Vice-pres), Mr G H Knibbs, Ada Mary A'Beckett, S A Burrows, Alfred Deakin, Carlotta Greenshields, W Groom, Alec Hunt, Julia Lavender, A McDonald, Dr Felix Meyer and Dr Harvey Sutton
From 27 April 1926 onwards	NSW	Race Improvement Society of NSW, then Racial Hygiene Association	Ruby Rich and Dr Ralph Lyndal Worrall (Presidents), Lillie Goodisson (Sec), Marion Piddington (briefly Treas), Dr Phillip Addison, Dr Richard Arthur, Sir Henry Braddon, Florence Liggins Elkin, Sir Benjamin Fuller, Walter Cresswell O'Reilly, Judge Alfred E Rainbow, Anna Roberts, Victor Roberts, Miss MacCallum. The RHA changed its name in 1960 to the Family Planning Association
From July 1933: by 1937 it had 'gone into recess'	WA	Eugenics Society, University of Western Australia	Muriel Marion (Pres), Mr D Stuart (Sec), Mr L Snook (Vice-pres), Mr C Thiel (Treas), Mr G Bourne, Mrs Farleigh, K C B Green and R E Parker, supported by Prof E Nicholls, Dr Everitt Atkinson, Dr H J Gray, Dr Roberta Jull and Dr R G Williams
From 12 October 1936 until 1961	Vic	Eugenics Society of Victoria	Prof Wilfred E Agar (Pres), Dr Victor H Wallace (Sec), Dr Pierre M Bachelard, Angela Booth, Rev William Bottomley, Prof George S Browne, Dr William Bryden, Mrs Janie Butler, Dr Kenneth Cunningham, Dr John Dale, Dr Fritz Duras, Dr Reg Ellery, John Alexander Gunn, Prof Peter MacCallum, Sir Keith Murdoch, Dr Clive Faran Ridge, Sir David Rivett, Sir Sidney Sewell, Dr George Simpson, Dr Georgina Sweet, Mr Frank Tate

Table 4: Events with significance for eugenics, 1850s to 1940s

Date	Australia	Great Britain	United States	World
1850s to 1870s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1788 to 1868 convict era • 1850s to 1880s gold rushes • Anti-Chinese riots • 1875 Australian Health Society founded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1780+ Industrial Revolution • 1859 Darwin's <i>Origin of Species</i> • 1860s Contagious Diseases Acts • 1876 Knowlton trial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1869-79 Oneida Community • 1877 Dugdale's <i>The Jukes': A Study in Crime, Pauperism, Disease and Heredity</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theories of Gobineau 1850s • Weismann 1860s • 1877 Degeneracy theories • Births slump in west, rise in Japan
1880s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boom 1860 to 1890 • First immigration wave • Free education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Galton coined the word 'eugenics' • Social Darwinism widely accepted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comstock laws aim to suppress vice and contraception 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works by Ibsen, Zola, Lombroso and Nietzsche were influential
1890s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression • National drought • Decline in births • Invasion fears 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1899 to 1902 Boer war • Fears of 'yellow peril' spread 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1890 to 1915 Progressive era 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression • 1899 to 1900 Boxer Rebellion in China
1900s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1900 Bubonic plague • 1901 Federation • 1901 to 1960s 'White Australia' • 1904 Royal Commission on the Birth-rate Decline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1904 Mendel's paper rediscovered • 1904 Inter-Dept Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-minded • 1907 Eugenics Education Society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1903 immigration restrictions • 1907 Indiana sterilization law • Eugenics Record Office, Cold Spring Harbor, New York • 1912 Goddard's <i>The Kallikak Family</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1904 Binet's IQ tests • 1904-05 Russo-Japanese war • Ehrlich develops VD treatment • 1905 German Society for Race Hygiene
1910s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1912 £5 baby bonus • 1911-14 second immigration wave 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1912 First Eugenics Congress • 1913 Mental Deficiency Act • 1918 Stopes' <i>Married Love</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1913 to 1933 Prohibition era • 1917 Margaret Sanger jailed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of town planning • World War I • 1917 Russian Revolution
1920s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1921 C'wealth Dept of Health established • Royal Commission on Health (1925) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lidbetter's 'pauper pedigrees' • 'Big Brother' movement sends adolescents to Australia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1921 Second Eugenics Congress • 1924 Johnson Act bans 'unfit' migrants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Switzerland, Denmark, Finland and Alberta pass sterilization laws • 1929 to 1933 world Depression
1930s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth-rate at lowest point • 1936 NHMRC established • 1938 blood transfusions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1930 Lambeth Conference, Anglican Bishops back birth control • Sterilization Bill defeated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28 states with sterilization laws • 1932 Third Eugenics Congress • Geneticists disown eugenics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1930s and 40s Papal encyclicals ban eugenics, birth control • From 1933 Nazi sterilizations
1940s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1941 Federal child endowment • National Fitness Councils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1946 start of British £10 migration scheme to Australia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McCarthyism • Cold war • 1948 Kinsey Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World War II • 1943 Penicillin used to treat VD

Checking the Bona Fides

One indication of the relationship which 'antipodean' groups had with the British 'parent' society is revealed by the efforts it made to determine whether its Australian offspring were 'fit'. The Eugenics Education Society in London twice used 'informants' to check on the credentials of Australian branches. The first was prompted by Eldridge's 17 December 1912 announcement, on paper headed 'Eugenics Education of NSW (Australia)', 'I have pleasure in notifying you that on the 11th instant the above-named Society was formed in Sydney, the capital of this, the Mother State of Australia'.⁸²⁰ He also applied for membership of the 'Eugenics Education Society of Great Britain'.

One of the Society's members had added the following note on the back of Eldridge's application requesting both letters to be brought to the EES Council:

Eldridge, Labour Department, Public Service; Arthur, M.D. about 40, rather an enthusiast. *Public Service List* to be sent. Dr Ashburton Thom[p]son.⁸²¹

The Society had apparently received their information about the Australian group from an English-educated public health expert,⁸²² Dr John Ashburton Thompson, the NSW Government's Chief Medical Officer and Permanent Head of the Department of Public Health.⁸²³

In 1937 the parent society, now known as the Eugenics Society, did not initially respond to Dr Victor Wallace's 'greetings from a little sister organisation in Australia', sent a year after the Eugenics Society of Victoria was established.⁸²⁴ However, the British Society undertook its second, clandestine and much more extensive, check in 1938 following this request from Wallace:

⁸²⁰Eldridge to Secretary EES, 17 December 1912, Wellcome Institute, Eugenics Society, SA/EUG, E2, Eugenics Education Society in NSW 1912-1930. Formation of EESNSW.

⁸²¹Ibid, application for EES membership.

⁸²²Ashburton Thompson's observations on plague (in *Accounts of Plague at Sydney in the Years 1900-1907* and in *AMG*, 25 (1906), 311-21) are quoted by Ralph Doherty, in 'Australia's contribution to tropical health: past and present', *MJA* (19 April 1993), 553.

⁸²³*Medical Directory* (1914), 164. Thompson was listed as sole Royal Commissioner of each state of Commonwealth (1912) on Uniform Standards for Foods and Drugs.

⁸²⁴V H Wallace to Sec ES, 2 June 1937, E3, Victorian Eugenics Society 1914-1939.

We are the pioneers in this country and it is probable that the Victorian Society will later become an Australian one, for we have had many enquiries from the capital cities of other states. ... We were interested to learn that Mr Henry Twitchin, who left your Society such a substantial legacy, made his fortune through sheep farming in Australia. Would it not be appropriate if a Eugenics Society in Australia were to be assisted by you in its infancy? If your Society in its wisdom, sees fit to assist us in a small way financially, the grant will be 'thankfully received and faithfully administered'.⁸²⁵

Dr Carlos Paton Blacker (1895-1975), the Society Secretary, suggested to Clifton Chance, a wealthy Manchester investment consultant,⁸²⁶ that 'it would be graceful if we made them a grant of £100.⁸²⁷ Unconvinced, Chance warned instead of the Society's 'very unfavourable' accounts and suggested that 'before making a grant to people in Australia, I think we ought to satisfy ourselves that the people concerned are really satisfactory and that there are no rival groups to whom we should be equally obligated to make grants'. He was acquainted with the economist Colin Clark and offered to ask him to check the society's credentials.⁸²⁸ Blacker informed Lord Horder that, subject to his approval, the Committee would make a grant of £25.⁸²⁹ Blacker expected that Horder would have met the Society's officials on his Australian visit⁸³⁰ but, as he had not, Committee members decided to 'hold back the grant' until they knew more about the new group.⁸³¹

Their first informant was Colin Clark who, on 29 July 1937, gave the first Eugenics Society of Victoria lecture (listed in Figure 10) on 'the menace of depopulation' - a preoccupation of this Catholic convert with nine children.⁸³² He often railed against birth control and, in a 1944 national radio broadcast, described contraception as a 'perversion' which involved acts which were 'filthy, vicious and disgusting'.⁸³³ Clark reported that 'Agar is a first rate man

⁸²⁵Wallace to Sec, E3 *ibid*, 15 February 1938.

⁸²⁶Richard Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Chapel Hill: Univ of North Carolina Press, 1990), 176.

⁸²⁷Blacker to Chance, E3 *ibid*, 21 March 1938.

⁸²⁸Chance to Blacker, 22 March 1938.

⁸²⁹Blacker to Lord Horder, 6 April 1938.

⁸³⁰Horder's public lecture on 'Eugenics' was reported in the *MJA* (5 October 1935), 438.

⁸³¹C P Blacker to Mrs E E Potton, 13 April 1938, who suggested that Dr Zebulon Mennell would check the credentials of the Eugenics Society of Victoria.

⁸³²English-educated Colin Grant Clark (1905-1989) was a lecturer in statistics at Cambridge from 1931-1938, then Director of the Queensland Bureau of Industry, Government Statistician and Financial Adviser to the Treasury. In an abortion debate with Germaine Greer at the Sydney Town Hall in 1972 he said he was unsure whether to address her as 'Miss Greer or Mrs'. She said 'call me Dr'.

⁸³³Clark, in *The Nation's Forum of the Air*, vol 1 (no 2), 23 August 1944, 10, 'Population Unlimited?', published by the Australian Broadcasting Commission in Sydney.

and I do not think there is any chance of a rival group arising in Victoria. He is planning to get some population research done under university auspices. Wallace is good too'.⁸³⁴

Figure 10: Eugenics Society of Victoria - 1937 syllabus⁸³⁵

THE EUGENICS SOCIETY OF VICTORIA

Syllabus of Lectures 1937

Five public lectures, each dealing with some aspect of the Science of Eugenics, will be given at Scots Church Hall, Russell Street, at 8 p.m. on the following Thursdays:—

July 29th.—“The Menace of Depopulation”
by Mr. Colin Clark, M.A.

August 12th.—“The Principles of Heredity”
by Dr. W. Bryden.

September 9th.—“Mental Deficiency and Insanity”
by Dr. Reg. S. Ellery.

September 23rd.—“Birth Control and Eugenics”
by Dr. V. H. Wallace.

October 7th.—“The Eugenic Outlook for the Future”
by Professor W. E. Agar.

Admission to each Lecture, 1/-.

Members of the Society will be admitted free to all the lectures. The Annual Subscription is 10/- for Full Members, 2/6 for Associate Members. Persons wishing to become members should communicate with the President, Professor W. E. Agar, The University, Carlton, N.3., or the Secretary, Dr. V. H. Wallace, 61 Collins Street, C.I.

⁸³⁴Clark to Blacker, 2 May 1938.

⁸³⁵The ESV published a syllabus from 1937 to 1939 and in 1945. Dr Wilfred T Agar kindly supplied me with copies of them.

The British Society's tortuous checking process involved asking Dr Zebulon Mennell,⁸³⁶ an Australian-educated Harley Street doctor who contacted Dr Geoffrey Kaye in Melbourne for help. Kaye then gleaned information from three anonymous but easily identifiable 'informants' and passed these reports to the EES. Kaye's information is extraordinary and he even disparaged those who helped him. It is not clear whether they knew of Kaye's purpose or, if they did, whether their intention was to help or hinder the Eugenics Society of Victoria. This is an abridged version of Kaye's information which has been retained in the EES Archives:

Informant A (senior university professor; virile type; positive views; great admirer of the achievements of National Socialism). Has no personal knowledge of Melbourne Eugenic Society ... but recognises your 'Dr Agar' as Wilfred Agar, professor of Zoology in this university - he is, of course, a perfectly reputable man and it speaks well for the Society that he is its President. Regards Dr Wallace as a dubious personality but is not disposed to explain or amplify this opinion.

Informant B (locally-eminant psychiatrist; young, literary; a disciple of Freud; far-travelled; rather communist in opinions - until he went to Russia and found there, not communism, but National Socialism!). Had lectured to Eugenics Society soon after its formation ('Eugenics and mental disease'⁸³⁷). Small gathering; about 70 people. Of these, many were 'abnormal types' such as delight to attend public meetings, especially those of slightly sexual character. Believes the really serious members to number about 30-40. Is himself in sympathy with the aims of the Society. ... Knows Wallace - regards him as a genuine, if unstable, enthusiast in the cause of contraception. ... Does not know of any particularly 'prominent people' in the Society, apart from Professor Agar and Dr Wallace.

Informant C (high official of local BMA; forceful, rather dictatorial; necessarily involved in medical politics, but more concerned with paediatrics and medical history; an admirable organizer and a pillar of the Army Service). Confirms much of the two previous informants' opinions. Regards the Society as a small but earnest body engaged in propagating the latest ideas and literature on contraception. BMA was notified of its foundation and has no quarrel with it, although equally no interest in its activities. Regards the organizers as genuine enthusiasts, while deploring their publicity campaign. Considers Dr W as a sincere and ethical, but rather unstable, enthusiast. Rather neatly, says that his character is conveyed by his Christian names, which are Victor Hugo! ⁸³⁸

⁸³⁶Zebulon Mennell, 149 Harley Street, London. MRCS Eng 1900, LRCP (London) 1900, MB University of London, 1901, *Medical Register*, 1938.

⁸³⁷Ellery gave two ESV lectures: 9 September 1937, 'Mental deficiency and insanity' and 23 June 1938, 'The social problem group'. See Figure 10.

⁸³⁸Kaye to Mennell, 3 June 1938. Geoffrey Alfred Kaye, MB BS 1926, MD Melb 1929, Hon Anaesthetist Alfred Hospital Melbourne and Dental Hospital, Lecturer in Anaesthetics, University of Melbourne, 1937, *Knox's Medical Directory for Australia* (1938).

The informants were A: Professor William Osborne,⁸³⁹ B: Dr Reg Ellery⁸⁴⁰ and C: Sir James Barrett.⁸⁴¹ It is impossible to know how the Eugenics Society judged whether the Victorians were 'satisfactory'. They appeared unconcerned about extremist political affiliations in either the informants or society members but the question about 'prominent people' suggests elitist concerns. They might have been looking for an excuse to say no. These searches provide valuable information about the attitudes of individuals and about the unequal relationships between the British and Australian eugenics organizations. There is a disparaging, mocking tone in the British reports which was also apparent in their appraisal of Twitchin a few years earlier. After receiving the appraisals, Blacker sent Wallace a cheque for £25 and a consignment of second-hand books and pamphlets.⁸⁴² Wallace expressed gratitude for this small and reluctantly-given grant and thanked the Society for its 'interest and confidence in the Eugenics Society of Victoria'.⁸⁴³

⁸³⁹I am indebted to an informant who, while not wanting to 'be in any way connected with a possible identification', enclosed Osborne's obituary 'which is after all public property', 22 March 1994. William Alexander Osborne (1873-1967) was Professor of Physiology at the University of Melbourne. His obituary, *MJA* (16 December 1967), 1144, described him 'as a typical "Nordic" - tall, robust, blue-eyed, strikingly handsome. His manner was concise and rather chilling. Barry Jones indicated in *ADB* vol 11, 103-05, that this Irish-born academic was a leader-writer for the *Age* in 1912-13 and made broadcasts in 1915 on the need for national efficiency and the need to develop scientific research in Australia.

⁸⁴⁰Reginald Spencer Ellery was born in Adelaide in 1897, qualified in medicine and psychiatry from Melbourne University, worked in the State's Lunacy Department and opened a 20-bed hospital. He was a member of the Melbourne Institute of Psychoanalysis.

⁸⁴¹Sir James William Barrett (1862-1945) was described by S Murray-Smith in the *ADB* (1891-1939), 186-87 as an 'ophthalmologist and publicist' and 'an exponent of "national efficiency"' who from the 1890s maintained 'a voluminous writing to the press, especially the *Argus*'. He was associated with the University of Melbourne, as vice-chancellor in 1931, deputy chancellor in 1934 and chancellor in 1935-1939. He was also involved with town planning and playgroups associations, VD, immigration, baby clinics and the WEA.

⁸⁴²Blacker to Wallace, 3 June 1938.

⁸⁴³Wallace to Blacker, 17 August 1938. The ESV may have known about this British-instigated check on them because Ellery, an ESV member, had been quizzed.

First attempts

Six months after participating in the discussion on eugenics at the 1913 meeting of the BMA in Brighton (England),⁸⁴⁴ Dr William Ernest Jones, the Inspector-General of the Insane (Victoria), listed five Eugenics Education Society branches in Australasia:

Affiliated Branches have been established in New South Wales and in New Zealand there are four in the cities of Dunedin, Christchurch, and Wellington and in the town of Timaru. There is also a society in South Australia, but at present I understand it is not affiliated with the Eugenics Education Society. There should be, I think, a society in Victoria, and it seems highly desirable that this society should be affiliated with the London one.⁸⁴⁵

The New Zealand branches soon expired.⁸⁴⁶ Jones differentiated between eugenics groups and those promoting pronatalism, such as Melbourne's Race Preservation League, which was formed in 1912 to educate 'all people to a recognition of their paternal and maternal responsibilities with a view to the preservation, expansion and improvement of our race, and to encourage purity of life and conduct'.⁸⁴⁷ Doctors and the clergy praised the League in a series of addresses on 'social evils'.⁸⁴⁸ As indicated in Figure 2, politicians periodically reminded women about the 'sacred duties of motherhood'⁸⁴⁹ and the gentry blamed recalcitrants for causing the Empire's collapse.⁸⁵⁰ Pronatalists were not concerned about 'fitness' but urged all women to be 'fruitful' and to avoid the 'sins' of contraception and abortion.

Pronatalism was widely accepted until the 1950s and the reduction in family sizes which began in 1870 was achieved by such practices as abstinence, abortion and the use of folk methods of contraception. Australia's ultra-conservative response was to pass Indecent Publications Acts between 1876 and 1902 which, under the guise of morality, aimed to

⁸⁴⁴Section of Medical Sociology. Discussion on "Eugenics", 81st Annual meeting of the British Medical Association, Brighton, 23-25 July 1913', *BMJ* (2 August 1913), 231.

⁸⁴⁵W Ernest Jones, 'Eugenics', *Australian Medical Journal* (3 January 1914), 1371.

⁸⁴⁶They ceased because the post-1914 'spirit of destruction dampened the ardour of those who used to be full of enthusiasm', McGregor Walmsley, St Kilda, New Zealand to Sec EES, 25 June 1933, SA/EUG, E19.

⁸⁴⁷AMG, 9 March, 255-56. People were invited to contact the chairman, Mr Frank Cornell, Surrey Hills, Melbourne, who would arrange to send copies of the League's platform or speakers to help form other branches.

⁸⁴⁸Charles Bage, 'Race suicide', in *Social Sins. A Series of Sermons and Addresses on Social Evils*, delivered in St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne. ... (Melbourne: Church of England Messenger, 1912), 17-28. See also, W G Hindley, 'The empty cradle', *ibid*, 14.

⁸⁴⁹The duties of motherhood. Bishop of Melbourne speaks out. Immorality of race suicide', *SMH*, 26 March 1904. 10 (e).

⁸⁵⁰Viscount Wolmer, a British MP and father of seven, told the League of National Life that 'the pernicious doctrines of birth control will cause the eventual downfall of the British Empire', *SMH*, 1 November 1929, 14 (e). William Matthew Palmer Wolmer (1912-1942) was educated at Balliol College, Oxford and served in the Hampshire Regiment.

maximise births by preventing the advertisement or supply of contraceptives. While the publication and circulation of Annie Besant's birth control pamphlet *The Law of Population* encountered no legal obstacles in Britain, in 1888 it was subject to court action in Australia.⁸⁵¹ This attempt to restrict contraceptive information indicates the inaccuracy of the American birth control advocate Dr Adolphus Knopf's fantasy about Australia as a birth control paradise:

In Australia and New Zealand, the means of artificial restriction are in free circulation and the restriction of families is almost universal. Yet these two English colonies have furnished their mother country in these hours of struggle with the most efficient, and physically and mentally best equipped regiments. [These] soldiers ... have shown themselves to be brave and fearless fighters and certainly equal, if not superior as far as their English brethren. In the latter country it is well known that birth control is frowned upon by the legal and nearly all the ecclesiastical authorities.⁸⁵²

Possibly this propaganda from antipodean white countries might have been concocted to support American birth control campaigner Margaret Sanger during her 1917 imprisonment. The reality was more likely as Dr Norman Haire described it in a 1938 visit to Australia. He observed that little had changed in the 20 years he had been away, 'medical students still received no training in contraceptive technique', and 'a good many' doctors 'knew as little about it as did their patients'.⁸⁵³ In 1942 he could find 'only two birth control clinics in the whole of Australia'. The subject was 'not quite respectable' and contraceptives were sold for inflated prices 'as drinks are at a sly-grog shop'.⁸⁵⁴ When Haire wrote a weekly family planning advice column for the magazine *Woman*, the Catholic Church included the magazine on its list of prohibited books.⁸⁵⁵ There might have been Australian opposition to eugenics because many eugenists advocated birth control. The widespread opposition to contraception did not really end until oral contraception became available. While Roman Catholicism was not the dominant religion in Australia, between a quarter and a third of the population was Catholic and the Church exerted a powerful influence on its flock and on

⁸⁵¹S Chandrasekhar, 'A Dirty Filthy Book': *The Writings of Charles Knowlton and Annie Besant on Reproductive Physiology and Birth Control and an Account of the Bradlaugh-Besant Trial* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 57-58.

⁸⁵²Adolphus Knopf, *Aspects of Birth Control* (Little Blue Book, no 209) [1917?], 14. This was in the RHA Library with a sticker noting 'Distributed in San Diego, California by The Truth Seeker Co. It is one of more than 300 million in the series produced from the 1920s to the 1940s by a publisher from Kansas, Emanuel Haldeman-Julius, who was described by Vern L Bullough, in *Science in the Bedroom: A History of Sex Research* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 142-43, as 'probably the major American disseminator of information [on sex education] aimed at the working classes'.

⁸⁵³Norman Haire, *Birth Control Methods (Contraception, Abortion, Sterilization)* 3rd edn. (London: Allen and Unwin, 1938), 11.

⁸⁵⁴Haire, *Sex Problems of Today*, 2nd edn. (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1942), 29. He may have been referring to Piddington's high prices which were also criticised in the Sanger Papers, vol 22, 30 May 1933.

⁸⁵⁵Haire, *Birth Control Methods* (Sydney: Australasian Publishing Co., 1945), 15-16.

politics. Subsequently, the Catholic opposition to birth control and eugenics had considerably more impact on both of these movements in Australia than it did in either Britain or America where a smaller proportion of the population was Catholic.

Another distinctive difference about Australian eugenics is the way in which clergy of other denominations remained silent on this issue, unlike their colleagues in Britain who had polarised views. As Richard Soloway has explained, some British eugenists sought support from the church by reminding the clergy that both groups promoted 'self sacrifice and beneficence to the whole of humanity, including generations to come'.⁸⁵⁶ Some influential British clergymen were supportive but others felt that eugenic plans for selective breeding were improper.

South Australia

South Australia - the only state which did not receive convicts - was proud of its reputation for social reforms and religious freedom. According to Jill Roe, the state's desire to be seen as responsible and separate from the other states meant that it acted in 'conformity with what were thought to be the best British practices'.⁸⁵⁷ This may explain why it formed the first eugenics group in Australia in 1911 and why this group was established as a sub-committee of the South Australian Branch of the (pure or 'hard' science) British Science Guild, rather than a branch of the (social or 'soft' science) Eugenics Education Society.⁸⁵⁸ Their drive to be first is shown in the comment 'we hope South Australia will be the first of the Australian States to recognise that racial energy, endurance, and health are at stake'.⁸⁵⁹ The impetus might have been Sir John Cockburn, the state's former premier who moved to London in 1898 as the S A Agent-General (representing Australia at the 1912 Eugenics Congress) and was the chairman of the Guild's Committee on Education.⁸⁶⁰

⁸⁵⁶Montague Crackanthorpe, quoted by Soloway (1990), 82.

⁸⁵⁷Jill Roe (ed.), *Social Policy in Australia: Some Perspectives 1901-1975* (Stanmore, NSW: Cassell Australia, 1976), 13.

⁸⁵⁸Possibly this was related to the small size of the population which was Roman Catholic and the Lutherans colonists' German heritage may have increased the interest in science.

⁸⁵⁹'Physical Culture' (no 3), 26 April 1911, in British Science Guild. South Australian Branch, *Race Building*. Reprinted from *The Mail* (Adelaide 1916), 10. In fact, the Guild's Sydney Branch had already issued *Upon the Provision of Open Air Spaces for the Use of School Children in Sydney and Suburbs* (Sydney: Royal Society's House, 1 October 1909).

⁸⁶⁰See Roy MacLeod, 'Science for imperial efficiency and social change: Reflections on the British Science Guild, 1905-1936', *Public Understanding of Science*, 3 (1994), 155-93, which provides a detailed account of the Guild's work, in Britain and in Australia, as a prestigious scientific 'ginger' group.

The report on Eugenics by the Guild's Sub-committee was published on 19 October 1911,⁸⁶¹ signed by eight 'definitely high-level' men, assisted by a doctor and two preachers.⁸⁶² Their recommendations, moderated by the need to be publicly acceptable and to extend existing laws,⁸⁶³ were for a register of 'eugenic diseases' to be maintained by the Board of Health, with marriage licences to be withheld from those suffering from 'any one of these diseases or tendencies'.⁸⁶⁴ The Sub-committee believed that:

habitual criminals and sex perverts should be segregated permanently in specially administered institutions. Our suggestions are not new, save in scope and detail. The Eugenic idea, with varying modifications, has apparently been already adopted by the legislatures of Austria, Italy, Servia (sic), the Argentine Republic, and a number of the American States. We advocate the application of the Eugenic method as an effective means of abolishing much of the suffering and poverty which oppress society.⁸⁶⁵

This was one of eight reports on race building - 'Science Guild's great work' - which were produced in 1911.⁸⁶⁶ Another was produced in 1914.⁸⁶⁷ However, they achieved nothing: despite support from Professor T Brailsford Robertson⁸⁶⁸ 'of the California University', the

⁸⁶¹British Science Guild, SA Branch, *Eugenics* (Report of a Sub-committee) [Adelaide: 19 October 1911].

⁸⁶²I am indebted to Barbara Mayfield from the SA Research and Family History Team, State Library of South Australia, for assistance with biographical details about these men: Dr Charles Reissmann, consulting surgeon; Dr Robert Pulleine, obituary in *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, 59 (1935) v, vi; Thomas Hyland Smeaton (1857-1927) Glasgow-born architect, writer and politician who opposed militant unionism and was president of the SA Temperance Alliance; Sir Frederick William Young (1876-1948) a Liberal politician who supported state sponsorship of British migrant youths to work on the land and who in 1915-1918 was the SA agent-general in London; Sir Henry Simpson Newland (1873-1960), surgeon and President of the Royal Empire Society from 1935-55; British-born Dr Robert Humphrey Marten, in 1901 the first in SA to remove a cerebral tumour and said to have the largest and most lucrative practice in Adelaide; Dr Edward Angas Johnson (1873 - ?), an honorary physician at the Royal Adelaide Hospital, and lawyer William Ashley Magarey. Assisted by Dr Michael Henry Downey, Joseph Coles Kirby (1837-1924) a Congregational minister, tract writer and prohibitionist with extremist views about sterilization, and Rev Henry Howard (1859-1933) a Methodist minister described as 'one of the greatest preachers in the history of Australia'.

⁸⁶³*Eugenics* (1911), 1, 'But for the curb of these desiderata it is probable that our proposals would have been more drastic'.

⁸⁶⁴The six categories of eugenic unfitness were: 'tuberculosis, epilepsy, insanity, syphilis and gonorrhoea, confirmed tendency and confirmed alcoholism'.

⁸⁶⁵*Eugenics* (1911), 3.

⁸⁶⁶The eight Sub-committees examined: 1. *Puericulture* (or infant nurture), Dr Frank Hone, Harriet Stirling, Helen Mayo, Gertrude Halley, Jas Gray, L S Morice, Annie Hornabrook, Crawford Vaughan and Edward Lucas; 2. *Scientific nutrition*, Robert Pulleine, Edgar Brown, Edith Devitt, B S Roach and R S Rogers; 3. *Physical culture*, H S Newland, A Williams, W A Magarey, Thompson Green, A H Peake, Henry Gilbert and Hugo Leschen; 4. *Graduated ethics*, William Jethro Brown, W Mitchell and A J Schultz; 5. *Science in schools*, Prof Kerr Grant, Alfred H Neale, William Cooke, Walter Howchin, William Fuller, Ellen Benham, George Dankel, George Ritchie, William Adey; 6. *Negative eugenics* (see Table 3); 7. *Venereal diseases*, Frank S Hone, Dr C Trent Ch De Crespigny, H S Newland and Dr Harold Rischbieth; 8. *Research Institute*, Sir Edward Stirling, Edward H Rennie, Kerr Grant, H S Newland and W A Magarey.

⁸⁶⁷Frank S Hone, et al, 'Venereal diseases. Report of the British Science Guild', *MJA*, 25 July 1914, 97-99. 'In any practical scheme ensuing from the study of eugenics the problem of the eradication of venereal disease stands in the forefront', 97.

⁸⁶⁸Thorburn Brailsford Robertson (1884-1930), an Australian-born professor of physiology and

committee members' request for the founding of a national research institute was 'not taken up' by Joseph Cook's Liberal (conservative) Federal Government, and none of their recommendations became law. In the year before the Guild's 1911 reports and the two years after, eugenic topics were discussed by Dr William Ramsay Smith (1859-1937), the Scottish-educated, versatile, cultured and well-travelled Permanent Head of the Department

biochemistry, provided 'very full and valuable' details of the cost, constitution and scope of the proposed Federal Institute, *Race Building* (1916), 26-27. For his reasoned views about who are 'the fit', see *The Spirit of Research*, Jane W Robertson (ed.) (Adelaide: F W Preece, 1931), 191-210.

of Public Health of South Australia.⁸⁶⁹ Smith introduced the topic in a 1910 Peace Day address, hoping that eugenics might remove the need for studies of war.⁸⁷⁰ He was more expansive in two important documents in 1912 and 1913. The first, *On Race-Culture and the Conditions to Influence it in South Australia*,⁸⁷¹ summarised developments in Britain and Australia and listed seven studies which were 'really' about 'race-deterioration'. He warned of the 'danger of going beyond what the scientific facts warrant, and of going ahead of public opinion'.⁸⁷² Smith quoted a British representative of the British Science Guild, who in 1907 recommended a 'national stock-take' because he feared that 'the character and physique of the British must be changing rapidly on account of the draining of the picked men to the colonies'.⁸⁷³ This is ironic considering that for 80 years Britain had sent 'picked men' to Australia as convicts.

According to Smith, the work of Francis Galton had 'been extended both scientifically and popularly, and medical gentlemen [most notably Saleeby] who have either devoted themselves to journalism and authorship, or who combine extensive practice with effective preaching, have done a great deal to awaken general interest in the subject of race-culture'.⁸⁷⁴ Smith's initial chapters indicated that some of Australia's scientific and medical organisations were aware of British developments. He then outlined the ways in which Australian responses to eugenics differed from those in other countries. While the movement's influence would be felt 'if only as part of a general scientific and popular movement', 'other influences' were at work so that a responsiveness to eugenics 'might well have' begun with little or no reference to 'any movement going on elsewhere'. As a result of the uniquely Australian influence, 'the type produced by a thousand years of inter-breeding,

⁸⁶⁹William Ramsay Smith, *Australian Conditions and Problems from the Standpoint of Present Anthropological Knowledge*, Presidential Address to the Section of Anthropology of the AAAS, Melbourne, 1913 (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1913), 9. See *ADB*, vol 11, 674-75. He also attended 'the International Congress of Anthropology and Prehistoric Archaeology at Geneva, the 15th International Congress on Hygiene at Washington, and the 21st Annual Meeting of Military Surgeons of the United States at Baltimore'.

⁸⁷⁰Ramsay Smith, *Peace: An Address Delivered at the University of Adelaide on Peace Day, 9 November 1910*. (International Peace Society, Adelaide Branch, 1910), 5.

⁸⁷¹Ramsay Smith, *On Race-Culture and the Conditions to Influence it in South Australia* (Adelaide: Govt Pr., 1912).

⁸⁷²*Ibid*, 7.

⁸⁷³*Ibid*, 9. Smith, quoting Sir Lander Brunton of the British Science Guild at a 1907 deputation to the British Prime Minister. It also included members from the following bodies: Royal Anthropological Institute, Sociological Society, Childhood Society, Royal College of Surgeons, Royal Society and Royal Statistical Society. Strangely, considering it was also a moral question, no religious bodies appear to have become involved.

⁸⁷⁴Smith (1912), 10.

that seemed unalterable, appears to have become radically changed in the course of two or three generations'.⁸⁷⁵

These changes, combined with concerns about Australia's small and apparently shrinking population on the fringe of the continent, explain why support for eugenics was widespread in Australia. In addition to the 'social laboratory' image,⁸⁷⁶ Australia qualified as the world's anthropological laboratory. As early as 1909 its significance was emphasized by Knibbs in the first *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia*, indicating the official backing and central importance of this question:

The population of Australia is fundamentally British, and thus furnishes an example of the transplanting of a race into conditions greatly differing from those in which it had been developed. The biological and sociological significance of this will ultimately appear in the effects of the physical and moral constitution produced by the complete change of climatic and social environment, for the new conditions are likely to considerably modify both the physical characteristics and the social instincts of the constituents of the population. At present the characteristics of the Australian population ... are only in the making, and probably it will not be possible to point to a distinct Australian type until three or four generations more have passed. Even then ... with our great extent of territory and varying conditions ... a variety of types are to be expected. The Australian at present is little other than a transplanted Briton, with the essential characteristics of his British forebears, the desire for freedom from restraint, however, being perhaps more strongly accentuated. The greater opportunity for an open-air existence and the absence of the restrictions of older civilisations may be held to be in the main responsible for this.⁸⁷⁷

Smith wished to maintain these advantages by such public health measures as medical inspections of school children - 'it is universally recognised that the future of the Commonwealth depends upon the way in which the young are trained'.⁸⁷⁸

⁸⁷⁵Ibid.

⁸⁷⁶See 'Leading the world? 1901-1914', in Jill Roe (1976), 3-23.

⁸⁷⁷George H Knibbs, *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia* containing authoritative statistics for the period 1901-1908 ... (Melbourne: Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1909), 158. The title varied.

⁸⁷⁸For a summary of measures for the 'supervision of infant life', see the *Official Yearbook of the Commonwealth of Australia*, no 6 (1913), 1100-09.

Smith drew from first-hand knowledge in these comments about the desirability of implementing eugenic principles:

In a good many countries there is a certain amount of knowledge available regarding the factors that influence the wellbeing of the citizen and that affect the number of his progeny, their physical condition and their mental potentialities at birth, and their bodily, mental and moral characters in adolescence and adult life. Certain scientific facts regarding development, heredity, and hygiene are well established; but a difficulty has nearly always arisen in connection with the application of such principles, since other principles become evident and other facts are discovered that modify our teaching, our practice, and our legislation. ... It is therefore necessary to proceed very carefully, in case, while trying to do a little good scientifically, we do a great deal of harm socially.⁸⁷⁹

Smith's recommendations related to the environmental issues such as housing, sanitation, the control of TB and 'subsidiary influences':

School education and all that it includes, proper home-life and all that it implies, should embrace all that is necessary for the well-being of the individual, the family, and the State. Where children are orphans, and where for any reason they require other care, then the State Children's Department supplies such by means of foster parents and school privileges.⁸⁸⁰ If all these matters were faithfully attended to, little else would require to be said in connection with the subject of race-culture; nearly everything else would be unnecessary or negligible. The supply of the unfit would stop naturally.

Smith noted that as these improvements would take several generations, 'it [was] desirable to notice some other matters and to refer to other methods and agencies, in case anyone may think that his panacea for social evils has been neglected or is unknown'.⁸⁸¹ Smith's comment may have been prompted by the dogmatic views of the Guild's Eugenics Subcommittee which published an abridged Eugenics report in 1911. The full version revealed their extremism:

⁸⁷⁹Smith (1912) 12, 14.

⁸⁸⁰See Catherine H Spence, *State Children in Australia: A History of Boarding Out and its Developments* (Adelaide: Vardon and Sons, 1907), a history of the State Children's Council of South Australia which describes state-supported fostering and residential care from 1883 of the children who were wards of state.

⁸⁸¹Smith (1912), 20.

The study of heredity is of recent growth. It follows, therefore, that complete absolution must be given to those past generations who have unwittingly handed down their imperfections, but the same absolution cannot be given to those of the present and the future. All that is necessary in the people is a national outlook - a recognition that social science cannot be complete until the propagation of the species ceases to be a personal licence and becomes regulated as a branch of an enlightened national life. ... The recognition by [unfit people for] the necessity for restraint is, we need hardly say, the highest form of patriotism.⁸⁸²

Smith's 1913 report, *Australian Conditions and Problems from the Standpoint of Present Anthropological Knowledge*, considered how a 'white population foreign to the soil' would achieve 'its destiny in new and strange surroundings'.⁸⁸³ In Smith's optimistic opinion: 'From the race point of view there are infinite possibilities of good for Australia and no known or suspected dangers that need influence either the trend or the details of the country's present immigration policy. ... There is evidence that changes due to changed environment have already taken place in the white people in Australia as elsewhere'.⁸⁸⁴

Smith reiterated the importance of education in ensuring that environment maximises a person's heredity, as it was very much a matter of opportunity whether a boy with 'the bump of acquisitiveness' would become a thief or the curator of a national museum.⁸⁸⁵ He mentioned marriage, childbearing and pensions, concluding that these were a part of positive eugenics and 'as far as we are warranted to go in advising or in restraining. And the reason is, that beyond this we have no real knowledge'.⁸⁸⁶ The lack of knowledge about heredity and the lack of agreement on what is wanted - factors which still apply - may have influenced Smith to retain public health as his priority and not to attempt to influence evolution.

No further activities were recorded until the 1930s when the RHA made three attempts to establish a branch in South Australia. The records of their attempts are in their annual reports and in Security Service files. In 1934, after Goodisson spent two months in Adelaide, there was initial success: 'After many setbacks, with Councillor A J Barrett as President and Mrs Davis as Hon Secretary', 'some of the leading men and women' had been enrolled on the committee which had framed their ideals and constitution on RHA NSW

⁸⁸²*Race Building* (1916), 19-20. This was a reprint of the 1911 report.

⁸⁸³Smith (1913), 3, 10.

⁸⁸⁴*Ibid*, 14.

⁸⁸⁵*Ibid*, 16.

⁸⁸⁶*Ibid*, 19.

lines.⁸⁸⁷ In 1935 the RHA heard 'little' from their SA branch.⁸⁸⁸ In 1936 it had 'been closed down from lack of interest and funds'.⁸⁸⁹

News of the next attempt to found a RHA branch came from the Security Service (from 1949 known as the Australian Security Intelligence Organization - ASIO). During the war, this earlier surveillance body had kept a dossier on the RHA and in 1943 the South Australian Branch of the Security Service received information from its offices in the eastern states that Mrs Charles Helman, a Jewish 'refugee alien', had contacted Mrs [now Dr] Winifred Mitchell, a 'leading member of the South Australian Communist Women's Committee, arranging for their meeting to discuss plans for the formation of a Racial Hygiene Association in this state'.⁸⁹⁰ The words used by RHA President, Ruby Rich in her letter to Mrs Helman, shows that she was certainly concerned about breaches of confidentiality and may have suspected or known about the surveillance:

I went to the Racial Hygiene with Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Dugood (sic)⁸⁹¹ and saw to it that both of them took away a good deal of literature. ... I think it best if all correspondence goes through the office at 14 Martin Place, Sydney. Do not think me non-co-operative if I urge that this be done.⁸⁹²

In 1995 Mitchell confirmed that while this 1943 attempt to establish a clinic in Adelaide had failed, she had positive memories of the RHA's Martin Place birth control clinic in the 1940s when their emphasis was on women's health, not eugenics.⁸⁹³ After a fourth RHA failure in 1967 - a clinic in the industrial city of Whyalla - the Family Planning Association of South Australia was established in 1970.

⁸⁸⁷RHA Annual Report (1934), 3.

⁸⁸⁸Ibid (1935), 2.

⁸⁸⁹Ibid (1936), 1.

⁸⁹⁰Deputy Director of Security, Sydney to Director General of Security, Canberra, 10 December 1943, AA/SA D1915, Item 22063

⁸⁹¹Most probably Phyllis Duguid, the second wife of Dr Charles Duguid. From 1940-1947 he was a member of the SA Government Aborigines Protection Board.

⁸⁹²AA/SA, ibid, Ruby Rich, 'The Astor', Etham Ave, Darling Point, NSW to Mrs Charles Helman, 137 Henley Beach Rd, Torrensville, SA, 1 December 1943.

⁸⁹³Winifred Mitchell, Pers comm., 10 March 1995.

New South Wales

The first Australian branch of the British parent society was formed in Sydney on 11 December 1912. Lectures given by the 'volatile' Rev George Walters⁸⁹⁴ in 1912 and 1916 provide a perspective on the NSW Eugenics Education Society which was different from the contributions by Arthur, Eldridge and Anderson Stuart. In the week the Society was launched, Walters gave a sermon in which he explored topics such as socialism, over-population and the 'extremes of eugenics':

One is a misnamed 'charity', based upon exaggerated humanitarian ideas, which would 'coddle' the unfit, and leave them free to propagate their undesirable kind. The other is that which Dr Saleeby rather forcibly denounces as the 'beasthood of Nietzsche' and his disciples, along with their 'mad misconceptions of the Darwinian theory'.⁸⁹⁵

Walters argued that 'there is, and must be, a limit to the world's population'. While some of Europe's millions might emigrate to America or Australia, the world's 'teeming millions' 'will not be able to emigrate to another planet'.⁸⁹⁶ He praised the aims of 'philosophic socialism' to improve the environment, but did not believe that crime, unemployment and feeble-mindedness would 'become as extinct' when appropriate housing, work, wages, and recreation were provided.⁸⁹⁷ He wished to influence people and to form public opinion as 'the hope of doing this is pretty well our only comfort just at present'.⁸⁹⁸ This suggests a lack of support for eugenics, even in its most influential early years.

⁸⁹⁴Jill Roe (1976), 41-42. In the 1890s Walters left Melbourne and 'passed over theosophy' to form a NSW branch of Rev Charles Strong's Australian Church (for four years) then 'returned to Unitarianism'. For biographical details see Walter H Burgess, 'The Unitarian Church at Sydney', *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society* (London), IV (no 2), October 1928, 140-42, 143-44, 152-53.

⁸⁹⁵*Eugenics; or Scientific Race Culture*. A lecture delivered by the Reverend George Walters, Hyde Park Unitarian Church, Sydney, NSW, 15 December 1912.

⁸⁹⁶*Ibid*, 10.

⁸⁹⁷*Ibid*, 12.

⁸⁹⁸*Ibid*, 15.

Four years later another sermon, *Eugenic Problems and The War*, was 'redelivered' under the auspices of the Eugenics Society.⁸⁹⁹ As his views conflicted with the Society's, it is surprising that they backed him and published his speech. According to Walters, war would force people to consider the previously neglected topic of 'wise and healthy parentage'.⁹⁰⁰ 'By destroying many of the best fitted' it would teach people 'to prevent the indiscriminate reproduction of the unfit' and would possibly 'convince rational men and women that what is deemed necessary in the breeding of horses and dogs may be even more necessary in the case of human beings'.⁹⁰¹ Considering eugenics 'as a sort of higher-cattle breeding'⁹⁰² was anathema to the society's mainstay, Eldridge, who espoused environmental eugenics. Walters' public exposition of his extreme views must have affected the society and might explain why the society crumbled after Eldridge withdrew in 1922.

In 1926 the Race Improvement Society's aims, as shown in Figure 7, were to teach sex education, eradicate VD and educate the community along eugenic lines. Its founders were members of the politically conservative Women's Reform League.⁹⁰³ In 1927 the new society became the Racial Hygiene Centre of NSW and in 1928, after a third name change, it was called the Racial Hygiene Association of NSW.⁹⁰⁴ In turn, this became the Family Planning Association of NSW in 1960.

The response to a 1950 RHA submission shows that the opposition by state and Commonwealth senior public servants and politicians to racial hygiene related to birth control, not eugenics. This opposition was shown by a 1933 warning by the Catholic Church for women to avoid the RHA's clinic;⁹⁰⁵ books about contraception were listed as 'prohibited publications' in the 1930s and in 1942 the National Security (Venereal Diseases and Contraceptives) regulations prohibited advertising of contraception. This continued until the end of 1946, and it was not until 1968 that the NHMRC recommended that family planning should be readily available. The Association requested the Prime Minister to include a 'British medical authority' amongst 'six eminent scientists' the government planned to invite

⁸⁹⁹*Eugenic Problems and the War*, a lecture by George Walters, Hyde Park Unitarian Church, Sydney on 27 August 1916 and redelivered under the auspices of the Eugenics Society on 29 September 1916. Published at the expense of Mr H C Bell, the Hon Treasurer of that Society. Both sermons are in Fisher's Rare Book Department.

⁹⁰⁰See also Figure 15.

⁹⁰¹*Ibid*, 10.

⁹⁰²Havelock Ellis, *The Task of Social Hygiene* (London: Constable, 1912), 196.

⁹⁰³The conservative Women's Reform League (formerly the Women's Liberal League) was founded by Mrs Molyneux Parkes in December 1902. In 1917 the League united with the Nationalist Party.

⁹⁰⁴I have given details of the establishment and work of the RHA in the sections on Piddington and Goodisson, and in Siedlecky and Wyndham (1990).

⁹⁰⁵*Telegraph*, 9 December 1933, 3 (e).

to Australia in 1951 during the Commonwealth Jubilee celebrations.⁹⁰⁶ The RHA proposed five people for consideration: Drs Helena Wright, Carlos P Blacker, Edward Griffith and David Mace, and Mr Cyril Bibby.⁹⁰⁷ The first three nominated were strong birth control advocates: Wright was a pioneer in the field and one of Griffith's books on the subject had been seized by the Queensland Customs in 1938.⁹⁰⁸

The Commonwealth Director-General of Health examined the RHA's 1949-1950 Annual Report and informed the Prime Minister that 'doubt is expressed as to the desirability of inviting a British medical authority to lecture on racial hygiene during the celebrations'.⁹⁰⁹ The rejection was masked in the response to the Premier of NSW who was informed that the RHA suggestions would be added to a list to be considered and that the British Medical Association had been informed and asked if it wanted to be associated with such a visit.⁹¹⁰ Before the introduction of 'the pill', the BMA did not publicly support birth control.

The RHA was never a 'proper' eugenics association and the topic was relegated to the sixth object as Clause 3 (e) in their Articles of Association.⁹¹¹ Eugenics' importance diminished further when Piddington resigned in 1926 after losing her battle to retain the group's focus as a race improvement (eugenics) society. RHA support for eugenics was largely rhetorical (it sounded scientific), as a loosely-defined 'good works' category. Ruby Rich recollected that in practice, eugenics served as a 'large umbrella' which provided the RHA with an excuse to do 'lots of things' outside their charter.⁹¹² Eugenics had marginal relevance and the eugenics Clause 3 (e) probably remained for a generation because no one noticed it or thought that it should go. However, after a takeover of FPA NSW by feminists, the new Board deleted this clause when they updated the Articles of Association in 1975. This amendment was passed unanimously in committee and adopted at the annual general

⁹⁰⁶AA/ACT, A1658, Item 200/2/48, 'Racial Hygiene delegates, Premier to Prime Minister, 31 October 1950'.

⁹⁰⁷Helena Wright was also an ES member; C P Blacker, the ES general secretary, advocated birth control as did Edward Griffith. David Mace was an authority on marriage counselling and Cyril Bibby, the editor in Britain of *International Journal of Sexology*, also wrote sex education books which were used by the NSW Department of Education.

⁹⁰⁸Edward Griffith's book *Modern Marriage and Birth Control* was seized by Queensland's Department of Customs and Excise on 18 November 1938. On 10 February 1939 the importer was informed by the Commonwealth Comptroller-General of Customs that 'this book issued by the Left Book Club, London was not regarded as a prohibited import', AA/ACT, CRS A425, Item 38/11992.

⁹⁰⁹A J Metcalfe, Director-General of Health to Prime Minister's Department, 7 December 1950 (?), AA/ACT, Item 200/2/48, *ibid*.

⁹¹⁰*Ibid*, Prime Minister to Hon James McGirr, Premier of NSW, [18 December 1950?].

⁹¹¹Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Racial Hygiene Association of New South Wales. The Companies Act 1899 (Sydney: RHA, 18 August 1932), 3, Clause 3 (e).

⁹¹²Ruby Rich, reflecting on her days with the RHA, Hazel De Berg, interviewer (Canberra: Oral History Unit of the National Library of Australia, 12 December 1976), tape 995, counter no 13,357.

meeting. To the FPA NSW in its new incarnation, eugenics was a vestige of a previous era which had no place in an organisation which supported a woman's right to control her fertility.⁹¹³

In 1986 eugenics was still included in the constitution and rules of the national family planning body⁹¹⁴ and the Administrator of Family Planning Australia, Inc, told me that eugenics was no longer in the constitution in November 1989. However, she was unable to find any reference giving the reason for this exclusion.⁹¹⁵

Western Australia

Western Australia had two short-lived eugenics societies at the University of Western Australia. Attempts to launch the first were probably pre-1914 and the second was launched in 1933. Information about both was provided by Miss Muriel Marion who informed the Eugenics Education Society in August 1933 that the university had formed a eugenics society 'during the last few months'.⁹¹⁶ According to Marion, one previous attempt was made 'about twelve years ago' by Professor William Dakin, but failed 'owing to lack of public support'.⁹¹⁷ Details in the university's undergraduate newspaper were more explicit:

Scarcely more than a decade ago Professor Dakin and some of his contemporaries endeavoured to interest a phlegmatic public in this vitally important subject, but all was unavailing - he was subjected to ridicule by all and sundry. The momentous question now is will the younger generation prove as unintelligent as their forebears and as easily frightened by the discussion of recognised social evils.⁹¹⁸

This is puzzling as no other records of this furore were located.⁹¹⁹ In addition, Dakin had travelled from England to the wilds of Western Australia in 1913 to become biology professor at the newly-formed university. Accordingly, he might have expected deferential treatment, both as an overseas expert⁹²⁰ and because he was an experienced speaker.⁹²¹ Although

⁹¹³The FPA President Dorothy Simons elaborated on this changed emphasis in 'The philosophy of the organisation' in *FPA NSW Staff Information Bulletin* (March 1976), 2-5.

⁹¹⁴'Constitution and Rules', Family Planning Federation of Australia Inc (Canberra, ACT: FPFA, rev edn., 14 July 1986), Section 3 (f), of the FPFA's objects: 'To stimulate appropriate scientific research in the following subjects: the biological, demographic, economic, eugenic, psychological and social implications of human fertility and its regulation, fertility, sub-fertility and sterility'.

⁹¹⁵Leonie Harrison, Family Planning Australia Inc, Pers. comm, 20 September 1995.

⁹¹⁶SA/EUG, E5, Muriel Marion to Pres, EES London, 12 August 1933, 1.

⁹¹⁷*Ibid*, 2.

⁹¹⁸'Eugenics Society', *The Pelican*, 16 June 1933, 2, probably by Muriel Marion.

⁹¹⁹I am indebted to Jenny Edgecombe for her research, at the Archives of the University of WA and the State Library of WA, for information about both of these eugenics societies.

⁹²⁰Ursula Bygott and K J Cable, 'William John Dakin' (1883-1950), *ADB*, vol 8, 190-91.

it is likely that he tried to start a group, given his interest in eugenics,⁹²² it is remarkable that memories of his 'ridicule' survived for 20 years.⁹²³ Perhaps Dakin proselytised during the war when concerns about immediate survival made people angry about his hypothetical plans for improving the race.

According to Marion, the new group began well. Even before its first meeting in July 1933, the Eugenics Society of the University of Western Australia had 'a very representative membership' and the support of Professor E Nicholls, Professor of Biology⁹²⁴ and Dr Everitt Atkinson, Commissioner for Public Health. Three lectures were given by 'leaders in the medical profession': Mr G Bourne M Sc, Dr R G Williams, who was described as a 'Brain Pathologist to the Asylum for the Insane', and Dr Roberta Jull, the first female doctor in Perth.⁹²⁵ The *West Australian* reported that Williams supported the Society 'wholeheartedly' but feared that its members might be caught 'between two fires': the 'semi-scientific circles' who felt they could cure 'sub-normals', and the 'lay public'.⁹²⁶ This may explain why the group did not last very long. Even so, the group is interesting because it is different from any other Australian eugenics groups as two factors set it apart: it had no famous members and the group was 'rather youthful', as they were in fact students, although membership was also open to the community.⁹²⁷ The Eugenics Society, which co-existed with university sporting, debating and musical societies, had vague objectives and after its launch seemed to exist only in name.⁹²⁸ In 1936 there was nine shillings in its 'coffers'⁹²⁹ and by 1937 the Eugenics Society had 'gone into recess'.⁹³⁰

⁹²¹An article, 'Embodied Voices: Commentators on international affairs', in *The Home* (1 June 1944), 16, described Dakin as doubly connected with the Australian Broadcasting Commission, as a speaker and an adviser of wide interests who had been closely linked with the ABC since its inception in 1928.

⁹²²See Reginald Everitt Atkinson and W J Dakin, *Sex Hygiene and Sex Education* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1918). Dakin was quoted in 'Sterilise unfit. Would end evil in generation says Professor', *Sun and Guardian*, 18 August 1935, 7 (a). His opposition to teaching biology [sex education] in schools was noted in the RHA Annual Report (1938), 6.

⁹²³While Marion said it was 'about twelve years ago' it must have been even longer as Dakin taught at the university from 1913 to 1920.

⁹²⁴Edgecombe noted a report (in the *West Australian*, 19 September 1933) that Professor Nicholls had been on six weeks sick leave, which she said indicated that a 'supporter' was absent in the crucial early stage of the eugenics society.

⁹²⁵Marion (12 August 1933), 1-2. Bourne outlined 'The scientific basis of eugenics', Williams spoke about 'The advisability and practicability of racial improvement by means of selective breeding' and Dr Roberta Henrietta Margaritta Jull (1872-1961) gave a 'popular lecture' on 'Heredity and environment'.

⁹²⁶'Community welfare. Importance of eugenics', *West Australian*, 6 July 1933. This and 'Eugenics Society. Lecture at University', *ibid*, [13 July?] contained in SA/EUG. E5.

⁹²⁷The University of WA Eugenics Society was registered with the University's Guild of Undergraduates on 6 July 1933. Committee members were: Miss M Marion (Pres), M L Snook (Vice-pres), Mr D Stuart (Sec), Mr C Thiel (Treas), Mrs Farleigh, Mr G Bourne and Mr K C B Green. Of the 32 members, there were 20 students, five graduates, two staff and five 'others', Archives of the Guild, [1934].

⁹²⁸The Society's undated constitution had as its objects: '(a) to promote the study of eugenics. (b) to arrange for lectures to be given or for papers to be read on the subject by competent persons chosen

It is strange that in 1933 Marion knew about Dakin's failed attempt between 1913 and 1920 but not about Henry Twitchin, whose death was featured on the front page of the *West Australian* on 29 March 1930 and whose bequest to eugenics was reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.⁹³¹ In 1938, Dr Wallace's awareness that Twitchin had made his fortune as a West Australian pastoralist prompted him to ask the Eugenics Society for financial assistance. However, neither the RHA nor other eugenicists knew about this legacy, which suggests that their eugenics involvement was slight or that they were unaware of overseas developments.

In 1936, the Sydney RHA entertained Bessie Rischbieth from Perth, a Theosophist feminist who was strongly identified with the Women's Service Guilds of Western Australia. Goodisson gave her a 'good deal' of information in the hope that she would start a branch in Perth, 'where already the Women's Service Guild has a Racial Hygiene Committee'.⁹³² The Guild had called for laws to deal with mental defectives⁹³³ and in 1933 some of its members were interested in eugenics.⁹³⁴ They do not appear to have contacted Marion's society and no action followed any of these initiatives. Finally, in 1971, the Family Planning Association of Western Australia was established.

Victoria

Dr Ernest Jones, who in January 1914 published an article in a medical journal supporting eugenics, reaffirmed this support publicly in March in an address on the 'science of man-breeding'.⁹³⁵ The public meeting, with the backing of the Criminology Society, was held in the 'outstanding and outspoken' Rev Charles Strong's break-away Australian Church,⁹³⁶ a

or approved by the committee (c) to disburse the knowledge so gained in such a manner as will benefit the community in general'. In Archives of the Guild, Register of University Societies as at 30 May 1935.

⁹²⁹'Societies Council Quandary', *The Pelican*, 3 July 1936, 3.

⁹³⁰Ibid, Report of the Societies Council for 1937, 2. Council received a letter noting that the Eugenics Society had 'gone into recess'. In September 1937 Marion joined the British Society but her membership lapsed in June 1939, SA/EUG. E5. There is no record of her graduation or subsequent activities.

⁹³¹'Funds for eugenics. Pastoralist's large bequest', *SMH*, 2 May 1930, 12 and 3 May 1930, 16.

⁹³²RHA Annual Report (1936), 6.

⁹³³Marjorie King, Sec Women's Service Guilds of WA to the Prime Minister of Australia, 29 May 1928, resolutions re 'Legislation for the mentally defectives' (sic), AA/ACT, Series A458/1, Item 745/1/339. Prominent members included Edith Cowan and Dr Jull.

⁹³⁴Dorothea Cass, Women's Service Guilds of WA to Sec ES, 2 November 1933, noted 'A group of our members is again anxious to go into this question' [eugenics], SA/EUG, E5.

⁹³⁵'Law of eugenics. Who should marry? Hereditary influences', *Argus*, 6 March 1914, 10.

⁹³⁶Roe (1976), 33.

progressive forum which sponsored social improvement schemes, attracted local writers and poets, and was influenced by American radicalism.⁹³⁷ After the meeting Carlotta Greenshields wrote to the Eugenics Education Society in London 'on behalf of a few people interested in eugenics' who wished to start a Society in Melbourne.⁹³⁸ The EES Secretary, Mrs Gotto, responded with this comment which the Victorian group interpreted as a directive:

The approval of Professor Spencer at the University would, I think, be almost essential to any Branch founded in Melbourne as he is one of the recognised authorities on Biology and is already in touch with the Society. I would suggest your communicating with him and asking him if he could assist to form a governing body composed of leading medical men and members of the Staff of the University.⁹³⁹

'A small but enthusiastic meeting' decided on 13 July 1914 to form a 'Eugenics Education Society of Melbourne', as an affiliated branch of the society in London, with Spencer president and Jones, senior vice-president. The *Argus* published a list of 'provisional committee' members: 'Mrs Lavender, Dr Jean Greig, Mrs T A Beckett, Dr Felix Meyer, Dr Harvey Sutton, Mr G H Knibbs, the Rev W Closs, Mr S A Burrows, Mr W Groom, Mr Alfred Deakin, Mr A McDonald, and Mrs R P [Carlotta] Greenshields'.⁹⁴⁰ Despite the claim by Anthea Hyslop, repeated by Michael Roe,⁹⁴¹ this list did not include Sir James Barrett's name, nor was he a member of the 1914 eugenics society.⁹⁴² Somewhat surprisingly, Barrett also stayed aloof from the subsequent society which was formed in 1936,⁹⁴³ contrary to Graeme Davison's claim that the postwar society's membership 'of course' contained Barrett.⁹⁴⁴

⁹³⁷ Joseph Jones, *Radical Cousins: Nineteenth Century American and Australian Writers* (St Lucia: UQP, 1976), 73-74.

⁹³⁸ Carlotta Greenshields, Glenferrie, Melbourne to Sec EES, 3 March 1914, SA/EUG, E3.

⁹³⁹ Hon Sec EES to Mrs Greenshields, 24 April 1914, *ibid*.

⁹⁴⁰ 'Eugenics. Victorian Society formed', *Argus*, 14 July 1914, 11. Committee members included Julia Margaret Lavender (1858-1923), rationalist, feminist, teacher and the first female graduate from an Australian university; Dr Jean Greig, Medical Inspector, Education Department; Ada Mary A Beckett (1872-1948), Biologist, demonstrator and assistant lecturer in biology at the University of Melbourne from 1901 and closely involved with the kindergarten movement; Dr Felix Meyer, Lecturer in obstetrics and gynaecology at the University of Melbourne; Dr Harvey Sutton (1882-1963), Medical officer, Victorian Department of Public Instruction; George Handley Knibbs, *op. cit*; Alfred Deakin (1856-1919), Prime Minister of Australia in 1903-04, 1905-08 and 1909-10 and Mr W Groom, politician. See also Table 2.

⁹⁴¹ Roe (1984), 88, postscript to chapter.

⁹⁴² Anthea Hyslop, 'The Social Reform Movement in Melbourne, 1890-1914' (PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 1980), 231, quoting *Argus*, 14 July 1914.

⁹⁴³ McBurnie (1989), 85, footnote 11, 'Davison incorrectly notes that James Barrett was a member of the Eugenics Society; there is no evidence for this in membership lists or minutes'.

⁹⁴⁴ Graeme Davison, in Peter Williams (ed.), *Social Process and the City* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1983), 167.

Events in 1914 unsettled Melbourne's illustrious eugenists and, after only seven months, Jones informed Mrs Gotto 'I am afraid that the Victorian Eugenics Society is in a state of suspended animation. The war put the *coup de grace* to it whilst it was yet in a shaky condition owing to the fact that your society intimated that they would like to see Professor Baldwin Spencer as its first President. This gentleman was so busy that he was quite unable to give us any assistance'. Jones hoped that others would help him to form a new, 'substantial' society towards the end of 1915.⁹⁴⁵ However, there was no action for three years. In May 1918, Leonard Darwin wrote to Frank Tate, the Director of Education in Victoria, asking questions relating to 'the general problem of securing the best possible stock to populate the Empire'.⁹⁴⁶ In August, Tate's office issued this file note: 'Inform received letter from Darwin. As the Melbourne Eugenics Society has ceased, and action seems desirable in certain directions, Director would like to confer with you and others. Meeting 27 August 1918'.⁹⁴⁷

The practice of approaching prominent people was continued: Tate invited eugenists, James and Angela Booth,⁹⁴⁸ Ernest Jones and George Knibbs, as well as many leaders of Melbourne's medical and teaching professions.⁹⁴⁹ Unfortunately, there is no record of their replies, the notes of the meeting, or the response which was sent to Darwin. The following year, Alec Hunt informed Tate that 'a long time had elapsed since the Eugenics Education Society matter' which had been relegated to a constitution-drafting sub-committee consisting of Dr Cumpston, Mr Knibbs (until October 1918), Dr Osborne, Mr Gates (the Education Department's Chief Inspector) and himself. In addition to attempts in 1914 and 1915, this third attempt to found a society had failed by April 1919. The work on the constitution was left to Hunt who was 'so obsessed' with his official duties that he had to reluctantly withdraw from the 'movement'.⁹⁵⁰

⁹⁴⁵W Ernest Jones to Hon Sec EES, 10 February 1915, *ibid*.

⁹⁴⁶Leonard Darwin, EES to Frank Tate, 'Steps taken for Australian racial purity', 4 May 1918. Education Dept, Special Case files, Public Record Office of Victoria. SP 1106 - Sex Education in Schools. Grant McBurnie kindly supplied me with his notes from this file.

⁹⁴⁷Letters re Eugenics meeting sent on 21 August 1918 from Tate to 17 people.

⁹⁴⁸Angela Booth, founding member of the Association to Combat the Social Evil was married to Dr James Booth, Hon Physician Broken Hill Hospital, Chairman Children's Court. Angela Booth also took a prominent role in the ESV. Meredith Foley and Heather Radi incorrectly claimed that she was 'a member of the Racial Hygiene Association', in Radi (ed.), *200 Australian Women* (Sydney: Women's Redress Press, [1988]), 87.

⁹⁴⁹Invitations were also sent to Meredith Atkinson, Professor of Sociology; R J A Berry, Professor of Anatomy; Dr John Howard L Cumpston, Director of Quarantine; Dr Eileen Fitzgerald, Senior Medical Officer, Education Department; Dr Jean Greig, Medical Inspector, Education Department; Alec Hunt, Secretary, Home and Territories Department; James McRae, Vice-Principal, Teachers' Training College; William Osborne, Professor of Physiology; Stanley Porteus, Superintendent of Special Schools; Dr John Smyth, Principal of the Teachers' College; Drs Stephens and Collins, both with Collins Street addresses; and the Reverend Charles Strong, Australian Church.

⁹⁵⁰Hunt to Tate, withdrawing from the EES constitution subcommittee, 3 April 1919.

There was a long interval before another effort was made to form a society. In 1934, as part of the RHA's expansionist dream, Goodisson spent two months in Melbourne attempting to get the one remaining society,⁹⁵¹ Barrett's, to 'enlarge its ideals and change its name'.⁹⁵² 'Dr John Dale,⁹⁵³ the city Medical officer is Vice-president and keenly interested, and I am sure they will arrange the alterations necessary to enable us to ... form an Australian Association'.⁹⁵⁴ She was referring to the Australian Health Society, which Sir James Barrett ran on 'similar lines' to the RHA from 1920 to 1937.⁹⁵⁵ There was no merger. News that Barrett had closed his organisation prompted Goodisson and RHA President Ruby Rich to visit Melbourne in October 1936 to arrange 'a very representative meeting' in the hope of forming a Victorian branch of the RHA. Professor Agar, 'a noted eugenicist',⁹⁵⁶ chaired the meeting with help from Dr Wallace, and Dr Maurice Schalit (who later married Ruby Rich). The NSW plan did not succeed, as Goodisson noted in her carefully worded statement in the RHA Annual Report:

At the first committee meeting [on 12 October 1936], it became a Eugenic Society, which I venture to say, will not touch the people we want to help. Our hope, therefore, of forming an Australian Federation of Racial Hygiene, has, at any rate, for the present, expired, but we have by sad experience realised the reason thereof. It is necessary for the organiser of any new Branches to spend some months in each State to prepare the way for a big meeting and to remain until a capable secretary and a good committee are appointed.⁹⁵⁷

⁹⁵¹RHA Annual Report (1934), 4. RHA Annual Report (1928-1929) noted that Goodisson contacted 'Sir James Barrett, Mrs James [Angela] Booth, and Mrs Waddell, who each have an organisation for the teaching of Sex Education'. See also *MJA*, 4 June 1921, 465-66.

⁹⁵²RHA Annual Report (1934), 3.

⁹⁵³Information in 'Obituary', *University of Melbourne Gazette* (October 1952), 82, indicates that John Dale (1885-1952), OBE, MD, MRCS, was born in Warwickshire and educated in Birmingham. He was Melbourne's City Health Officer from 1927 to 1950, where he promoted immunization of children and slum clearance. In 1945 he was the President of the BMA and, on retirement, he worked as the Chief Medical Officer for the Australian Immigration Commission in the Hague. He died in a car accident in Venice.

⁹⁵⁴Barrett was a prickly man who disapproved of contraception, factors which probably reduced the likelihood of a merger between his Association and the RHA. Dr Wilfred T Agar also believed that it would be unlikely that two such decisive personalities as Berry and Barrett would both belong to the same society, Pers comm, 20 October 1992.

⁹⁵⁵RHA Annual Report (1937), 2. Barrett approved of 'practical eugenics', see Barrett, *The Twin Ideals: An Educated Commonwealth*, vol 1 (London: H K Lewis, 1918), 307.

⁹⁵⁶A biographical note in Agar, *Science and Human Welfare* (Realities of Reconstruction, no 4) (Melbourne: MUP in assocn with OUP, 1943), indicates: 'Professor W E Agar, OBE, MA, D Sc, FRS. A very distinguished scientist ... Professor of Zoology in the University of Melbourne since 1920. He has contributed extensively to scientific journals on biological subjects, has recently published an outstanding book, *The Theory of the Living Organism* and has a world reputation in his own field. He is particularly interested in eugenics and has given many lectures on this subject to public audiences in Victoria'.

⁹⁵⁷McBurnie (1989), 2.

While the RHA correctly assessed why their venture had failed, it is likely that the Victorians would have hailed the meeting as a success because, instead of becoming a satellite of the RHA, they had formed an independent society, the Eugenics Society of Victoria (ESV), reflecting their objectives and run according to their wishes. Goodisson expressed her feelings about the failure of her dream much more bluntly to Wallace, the Secretary of the infant Victorian society:

I do think it is most shockingly bad taste for anyone to go on a Provisional Committee of an Association, and then turn it into another. ... I feel that it is the end of my work in any other State, when such a thing as this could have happened. ... There is the end of our Federation ... I am afraid Professor Agar's Association will be all talk and no work ... probably the methods which you are going to take up, are too vague to appeal to the ordinary citizens. One wants deeds not words.⁹⁵⁸

Birth control was a divisive issue for the newly formed Victorian organization. From 1934 Dr Wallace had been the director of Melbourne's first birth control clinic⁹⁵⁹ and wanted the ESV to establish its own clinic. In 1939, ESV member Mrs Janie Butler⁹⁶⁰ had donated £100 for a clinic the ESV planned to open in a Melbourne slum. On learning this, Sir John Harris, the Minister for Health, was 'heartily disapproving'⁹⁶¹ and the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr Daniel Mannix, was 'astounded' to read that 'certain busy bodies propose to establish a birth control clinic to help people send Australia all the faster tobogganing down into disaster'.⁹⁶² As a result of this 'tumult', Marie Stopes sent a 'liberal donation'.⁹⁶³ Agar wanted to provide contraceptive advice for 'eugenic reasons' so, although the ESV agreed in principle, when he realised that contraception was rarely sought for these reasons,⁹⁶⁴ the ESV decided not to become involved. Instead, mainly at Wallace's initiative, a newly-formed Social Hygiene Society 'quietly' established a clinic in Melbourne's prestigious Collins Street.⁹⁶⁵ He hoped that an organization could withstand criticism more easily than one or two individuals.

⁹⁵⁸Ibid, 93-94, quoting Eugenics Society of Victoria, Mrs Goodisson to Dr Wallace, 18 November 1936, in Wallace Papers 2/3/1.

⁹⁵⁹From 1934 until 1940 the District Nursing Service of the Royal Women's Hospital ran the Women's Welfare Clinic two afternoons each week. See Newman Rosenthal, *People - Not Cases: The Royal District Nursing Service* (Melbourne: Nelson, 1974), 106-31.

⁹⁶⁰McBurnie (1989), 300, described her as a Melbourne-born philanthropist and member of the Rationalist Society whose husband was William Butler, a NZ timber merchant.

⁹⁶¹*Argus*, 20 April 1939.

⁹⁶²*Sun*, 24 April 1939.

⁹⁶³Wallace (1962), 216.

⁹⁶⁴See also Table 5.

⁹⁶⁵Agar (1945), 6-7.

It took some time before Goodisson's prophecy that the ESV would be 'all talk and no work' was confirmed, but her pessimism was justified. In 1945, Agar looked back on eight rather unproductive years of operation.⁹⁶⁶ It was 'not a very imposing total' of educational work,⁹⁶⁷ consisting of only two pamphlets⁹⁶⁸ and from 1937 to 1939 (the ESV's peak years) 17 poorly-attended public lectures⁹⁶⁹ which attracted 'very few of the influential section of the population of Melbourne'.

Agar gloomily noted that only overseas countries had done research on ways in which eugenic or dysgenic trends were operating and that, as the ESV was not in a position to sponsor such work, it was impossible to determine whether similar conditions existed in Australia. Agar indicated that they could only alert appropriate bodies of the need for such research. He suggested that the Australian National Research Council's Social Services Research Committee might be persuaded to consider eugenic problems such as 'the size of families from which mentally deficient, backward and clever school children come', and to 'follow up of past pupils from special schools for defective or backward children'. Nothing was done about this, although Agar said that the Committee had agreed that these were 'suitable subjects' for their interest.⁹⁷⁰

Agar's proposal fared no better than the South Australian Race Culture sub-committee's call for a national research institute which had languished in 1913. He also worried whether they should restrict themselves 'rather rigidly to eugenics in its strictest sense', or should include issues such as welfare, VD, housing and alcoholism. Although he had 'often been in conflict with other members of the Society' over this issue, he had continued to support 'pure' eugenics rather than environmental eugenics, on the grounds that 'an improvement or deterioration of the inborn, inherited, qualities of the race is permanent'. There was a second, pragmatic reason: as 'nearly all of these other [environmental] problems immediately become involved in medical questions, and without a strong and active medical representation' in the membership, the Society was not 'in a position to study these questions in an expert manner'.⁹⁷¹

⁹⁶⁶Wilfred E Agar, *History of Our Past Activities* [1945], supplied to me by Dr Wilfred T Agar, 12 March 1994. These names (those present?) were written on the speech: Dr Ellery, Dr Bachelard, Prof MacCallum, Colin Clark, Dr W Bryden (academic, Melbourne University), Dr Faran Ridge, Dr Dale, Dr Cunningham, Mrs Booth, Dr Duras, Dr Anita Muhl.

⁹⁶⁷*Ibid*, 5.

⁹⁶⁸Angela Booth, *Voluntary Sterilization for Human Betterment* (1938), and W E Agar, *Eugenics and the Future of the Australian Population* (1939).

⁹⁶⁹See Figure 10.

⁹⁷⁰Agar (1945), 8.

⁹⁷¹*Ibid*, 9-10.

Comparison of the NSW and Victorian Groups

McBurnie appeared to be considering the long-term viability of both groups when he wrote that 'other reasons for the "failure" [of the ESV] may be identified'.⁹⁷² He argued that a women's organisation backed the formation of the RHA and these women formed a reserve which could be enlisted as RHA members, with back-up support from medical and other experts. In Melbourne, the position was reversed. 'Goodisson approached the "experts" (medical, academic and professional) first, expecting that a unified group would result'. The RHA in Sydney also had Goodisson's 'energy and the financial support of wealthy patrons' and it was not possible to transplant her zeal to another state. He was quoting Ethelwyn Wallace-Dawson's recollections of her experiences of the ESV 50 years previously.⁹⁷³

While the RHA initially had eminent patrons and wealthy subscribers, this ceased with the Depression.⁹⁷⁴ In the 1930s the high-level RHA patrons lent only their names, finances were tight and the lack of private or government backing caused 'occasional panics when the treasury [was] empty'.⁹⁷⁵ I think that McBurnie was wrong about Goodisson's approach to 'experts'. This was unlikely, for two reasons: she would not have had the required Melbourne insider's knowledge of this fraternity to make such an approach, and the selection seemed to mirror the previous groups' expert-gathering attempts. I agree with McBurnie that Goodisson was most responsible for the RHA achievements and that the ESV 'had no similar figure'.⁹⁷⁶ However, the most important point is that Goodisson's achievements were lasting because she was promoting birth control. Even if there had been a Victorian 'Goodisson', the ESV would probably still have failed because, in Goodisson's words, eugenics was 'too vague to appeal to ordinary citizens'.

A comparison of the groups should also include such factors as the changed attitudes to eugenics in the decade separating each group's vital early years, and a consideration of

⁹⁷²McBurnie (1989), 94.

⁹⁷³McBurnie, *ibid*, 94-95, from an interview with Mrs Wallace-Dawson, September 1988. Ethelyn Iris Wallace was born in 1912 and she and her first husband Dr Victor Hugo Wallace (1893-1978), were prominent members of the ESV.

⁹⁷⁴A Vice-Regal endorsement of the RHA's fund-raising appeal, issued from Government House in Sydney was published in the *SMH*, 5 November 1927, 17 (f). The RHA Annual Report of 1928-29 listed around 100 individual and corporate subscribers, including heiresses Ruby Rich and Dame Eadith Walker, businessmen R M Marcus Clark, Sir Samuel Hordern, Sir Arthur Rickard (the 'Realty Specialist'), Edward William Knox (whose father founded the Colonial Sugar Refining Co.), Sir Henry Braddon, Sir Owen Cox, Sir Arthur Meeks, James Dunlop (the tyre manufacturer) and the Tattersall's Club.

⁹⁷⁵RHA Annual Report (1933), 1.

⁹⁷⁶McBurnie (1989), 95.

their different mandates and divergent styles. For instance, the ESV took an academic approach and did not promote eugenics on the radio.⁹⁷⁷ This contrasted with the RHA which promoted its cause with tours, talks and radio shows which, Goodisson acknowledged, generated 99% of RHA publicity.⁹⁷⁸ It would be a mistake to consider the RHA a 'success' and the ESV a 'failure': while the NSW group continued and the Victorian did not, from the 1940s to the 1960s the RHA was only 'alive' in the sense that it had not been formally disbanded. The RHA, like all the Victorian groups, made the mistake of enlisting people who were known for their name, influence and position, but not for their support and staying power. There could also be problems with over-involvement: when Lady Enid de Chair, wife of the NSW Governor, ended her term as Patron, the RHA thanked the Vice-Regal couple in what appears to be a carefully ambiguous manner, noting that although 'some of her remarks gave rise to much newspaper criticism, she kept up her interest'.⁹⁷⁹ The *Daily Guardian* reported this 'criticism' from a different perspective. It appears that de Chair's patronage of the RHA was so contentious that her continuation in the role was put to the vote at a public meeting. It was won by her 'notable' supporters⁹⁸⁰ and it is significant that none of those listed was a member of the RHA. The paper noted that these prominent citizens joined de Chair in urging parents to tell their children of the 'great sex problems' and warn them about VD. It is extraordinary that RHA members were not also supporters as the organization's aims (shown in Figure 7) were to further these exact objectives.

Neither state could point to many achievements and the RHA, which was often near collapse, had a small membership and seemed unable to attract or retain presidents or office bearers. Its continuation was perhaps only due to the indefatigable efforts of the charismatic Goodisson who managed to steer the shaky organisation. She was a tireless worker who usually won her battles. Even at the age of nearly 80, two years after the Melbourne rift, she had lost none of her determination and stamina; when she was 'on holidays' in Melbourne she had visited prominent medical men and women in her attempts to win then to her cause. She reported having made two good contacts with representatives of

⁹⁷⁷Prof Agar's three talks on eugenics on national radio were given prior to the formation of the ESV. See Letter from Charles J A Moses, ABC to Goodisson, 15 November 1935, AA/NSW, SP 1063/1, Item 635.

⁹⁷⁸Acknowledgement of the publicity from 2GB broadcasts, RHA Annual Report (1933), 7.

⁹⁷⁹RHA Annual Report (1930), 5. Examples of the publicity surrounding her comments are 'Governor's wife speaks mind' and 'Vice-Regal pair publicly join controversial movement', *Daily Guardian*, 24 July 1929, 1.

⁹⁸⁰'Combating red curse. Sydney notables praise Lady de Chair - 'A gallant woman', *Daily Guardian*, 26 July 1929, 1. Those in favour were Rev W J Grant, Sir Arthur Cocks (NSW President YMCA), Grace Scobie (Professional Workers), Mr P J L Kenny (Father and Son Movement), Matron Kirkealdie (Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children) and Mrs Edmund Gates (Women's League).

societies which were 'working on somewhat similar lines to ours'. These were Dr Victor Wallace of the Eugenics Society and 'Dr R [George] Simpson'⁹⁸¹ of the Australian Health Society which, Goodisson noted, had recently been resuscitated by Sir James Barrett.⁹⁸²

Nothing came of this renewed attempt and ironically her successors repeated the same mistakes when they tried to establish a branch clinic in the 1960s. After opening in August 1961 in Melbourne's St Kilda Road, the birth control clinic closed for 'lack of support' in October 1962. Judge Rainbow, president of Sydney's grandly-titled Family Planning Association of Australia (previously the RHA) blamed Melbourne doctors for the failure.⁹⁸³ However, Melbournians said that it failed because the site was unsuitable, there was poor publicity and it lacked local roots, having been set up and administered from the Sydney office.⁹⁸⁴ In the 1960s, as in the 1930s, an attempt by a small group of volunteers to form an inter-state clone ignored logic, logistics and state rivalry, and failed. It was not until 1970 that, finally, the local community successfully established FPA Victoria.

In his deliberations Agar had identified the key difference between the ESV and the RHA which determined their respective fates: whereas the ESV strove for an unattainable abstract goal and had little popular or medical support, the RHA had both popular and medical support because birth control was a tangible health service which many people wanted. While McBurnie did not consider this, it is a more significant and longer-lasting reason why the RHA, and not the ESV, continued. It also clearly indicates the eugenic origins of family planning services. While many organizations have been formed to promote health and welfare, Dr Wallace made pertinent comments in his 1962 valedictory tribute to the ESV which also relate to wider attempts to promote eugenics:

Some have had a brief existence, some have become firmly established as permanent institutions in our society, and some occupy a borderline position which means that their survival or their dissolution and subsequent revival are determined by fluctuations in popular interest and support. It would seem that eugenics belongs to the last class. ... It is difficult to assess the exact influence of any particular group on the life of a community. The Eugenics Society of Victoria did have an impact upon

⁹⁸¹In *Melbourne District Nursing Society Midwifery Service* (Melbourne: The Society, 1952), George Simpson described the first birth-control clinic in Victoria which opened in 1934 and was called 'The Mothers' Welfare Clinic'.

⁹⁸²RHA Annual Report, 1938-1939, 'Melbourne'.

⁹⁸³Alfred E Rainbow, 'The Family Planning Association of Australia', in *Proceedings of the 7th Conference of the International Planned Parenthood Federation*, 10-16 February 1963, Singapore (Amsterdam: Excerpta Medica Foundation, 1963), 643.

⁹⁸⁴John Leeton and Janet Peterson, 'Family planning in Melbourne: A Medico-social project', *MJA*, 8 March 1969, 540

public opinion. In certain respects we were pioneers in this country and the subject which we presented to the public stimulated discussion and aroused controversy.⁹⁸⁵

⁹⁸⁵V H Wallace, 'The Eugenics Society of Victoria (1936-1961)', *ER*, 52-53 (January 1962), 215, 218.

A Victorian Bequest

A postscript to the history of the ESV is information which they provided in attempts to receive some benefit of a eugenics bequest which had been made by a man of whom they knew nothing. In 1949 the University of Melbourne received a bequest from Mr John Nicholas Peters, 'gentleman' of St Kilda who died in 1946 leaving £33,000 'for the purpose of establishing a lectureship in Eugenics'.⁹⁸⁶ Dr Wallace, who 'very much' wanted the position, wrote to the Eugenic Society's Dr Blacker enclosing an extract from Peters' will listing the bequest conditions:⁹⁸⁷

To further the investigation into the laws of heredity in man, the influence of heredity and environment on human characteristics on the actual position in Australia in regard to the birth rates of feeble-minded or other defectives and other work of a similar nature with a view to finding some means to ensure that future generations shall be descended mainly from persons of good stock and thus to assist nature in producing a more highly evolved type of human being which should be the ultimate aim of all human endeavour.⁹⁸⁸

Peters wanted any remaining money to be used for research work in anthropology. Blacker speedily acknowledged Wallace's 'important' letter.⁹⁸⁹ Peters had not been associated with the ESV and the society had no control over the legacy.⁹⁹⁰ In 1960 Wallace tried to revive interest by supplying details to the Eugenics Society's new General Secretary, Dr G C L Bertram. Wallace indicated that as far as he had 'been able to discover', the money had gone to the Biology Department which gave 'some lectures in human genetics'.⁹⁹¹ Dr Bertram was 'interested' and asked if anyone in the University had the 'formal title of Lecturer in Eugenics'.⁹⁹² Wallace later informed Blacker that he thought the money was 'absorbed by the Biology School' and 'the lectureship was never established'.⁹⁹³ It is not clear where the money went but officials at the University of Melbourne confirmed in 1996 that nothing came of Peters' expressed wish for a eugenics lectureship. The University

⁹⁸⁶Wallace to Blacker, 18 March 1961, *ibid*. Wallace indicated that he remembered those words, although he had lost the newspaper cutting. For Peters' death notice see *Argus*, 3 September 1946, 2 (b).

⁹⁸⁷Wallace to Blacker, 15 August 1949, SA/EUG, E4.

⁹⁸⁸*Ibid*, enclosure.

⁹⁸⁹Blacker to Wallace (copy to Sir Alexander Carr-Saunders), 24 August 1949, *ibid*.

⁹⁹⁰Wallace to Blacker, 18 March 1961, *ibid*.

⁹⁹¹Wallace to Bertram, 14 September 1960, *ibid*.

⁹⁹²Dr G C L Bertram to Wallace, 28 September 1960, *ibid*.

⁹⁹³Wallace to Blacker, 16 June 1960, *ibid* and 18 March 1961. Wallace said that he referred to this 'again because something may be done about it'. He thought the amount was £33,000 and informed Professor M J D White of the legacy. White was the Professor of Zoology at the University of Melbourne and Wallace told Blacker that 'if approached' by the ES, White 'would see to it that lectures in eugenics were delivered'.

initially offered appointments (in a related field) to two overseas academics, both of whom refused.⁹⁹⁴ In March 1961 the University recommended that a Readership in Human Genetics should be established and 'it would seem that this in fact happened'.

The differences in treatment of the 1930 Twitchin and the 1949 Peters bequest is interesting. Their choice of recipients and the times of their deaths, pre- and post-World War II, appear to have been factors. While Twitchin's money was used to promote eugenics by the Eugenics Society, the more general use of the Peters' bequest by the University of Melbourne was an irritation to the ESV's Dr Wallace.

Conclusion

Few Australian scholars appear to know about the extent of the pre-1914 eugenics activity. For example, in 1990 Alison Turtle wrote that 'the organized eugenics movement gained little ground [in Australia], and almost none at all until after the [1914-18] war'⁹⁹⁵ and, in a similar vein, Stephen Garton stated in 1994 that the eugenics movement was weak prior to 1914.⁹⁹⁶ The fallacy of these statements was demonstrated in this chapter which explored seven attempts from 1911 to 1936 to establish Australian eugenics organizations. In addition to the eugenics-related activity in four states during this period, it was also the time in which health administrators such as J H L Cumpston, Sydney Morris, Ernest Jones, Harvey Sutton and Anderson Stuart became eugenisists, and this ideology subsequently played a role in their careers, which all helped to influence the nation's health.

Eugenics was variously interpreted by a very diverse group of people and this complexity makes it hard to assess the movement's impact. This difficulty is compounded by a number of paradoxes. For example, there were eugenisists in Tasmania and Queensland but neither state had eugenics organizations;⁹⁹⁷ despite this, Tasmania was the first and only state to pass laws about the feeble-minded. In addition, while all states tried to pass eugenics-related laws, none of the people who advocated such laws were members of eugenics organizations. Eugenisists' attempts to establish eugenics research institutes failed, probably because the groups were small, vied constantly with each other and had frequent internal

⁹⁹⁴John A Goodwin, Council Secretariat Officer, on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor, the University of Melbourne, in a letter to me on 12 February 1996, confirmed that in 1949 a geneticist from Canada was offered appointment as Senior Lecturer in the Department of Experimental Medicine but declined the offer. From 1951 to 1955 the University was again unsuccessful in their attempts to appoint a researcher from Cambridge as a Senior Lecturer in the Statistics Department.

⁹⁹⁵Alison Turtle, 'Anthropometry in Britain and Australia: technology, ideology and imperial connection', *Storia della Psicologia*, 2 no 2 (1990), 134.

⁹⁹⁶Stephen Garton, 'Sound minds in healthy bodies: reconsidering eugenics in Australia, 1914-1940', *Australian Historical Studies*, 26 (October 1994), 164.

⁹⁹⁷For example, eugenisists in these states included Sir Raphael Cilento in Queensland, and E Morris Miller and E Sydney Morris in Tasmania.

and external disagreements.⁹⁹⁸ Eugenics organisations were established in four states before 1914 but most were short-lived. The EESNSW ceased in 1922 and the RHA did not start until 1926 and this apparent lack of interest may have prompted the terse 1924 letter which the Secretary of the Eugenics Society wrote to Joshua O'Brien, a Queensland paper merchant, thanking him for his support. She noted that they 'were in touch' with a few people in his 'part of the world' but there was 'not yet any well organised Society in Australia or New Zealand'.⁹⁹⁹ Interested individuals included Griffith Taylor and Knibbs who both contributed exhibits to the 1921 International Eugenics Congress but no Australian eugenists participated in or reported on the 1932 International Eugenics Congresses and in other issues, their responses were fragmentary and sporadic.

However, from a broader perspective, eugenists have made an extraordinarily significant contribution to public health in Australia and this, while not immediately apparent, has been real and long-lasting. Eugenics attracted and influenced the thinking of many prominent people who carried this ideology into policy formulation in many of the health and education services which these experts helped to establish. Eugenists' efforts to improve national fitness encompassed maternal and child health, fighting VD and TB, and the provision of sex education and birth control.

⁹⁹⁸An example of the groups' adversarial 'positioning' was provided by Dr Wallace who, in an article in the *Third International Conference on Planned Parenthood*, 24-29 November 1952 (Bombay: IPPF, 1953), 205-06, listed himself as 'President of the Social Hygiene Society, Secretary of the Eugenics Society and Editor for Australia of *The International Journal of Sexology*'. Despite the fact that the ESV had never operated a birth control clinic, Wallace's article appeared as the first of two reports under the heading: 'Reports from Countries. Australia. I. 'Planned Parenthood in Victoria'. The RHA, which had contributed more in the field and had provided birth control since 1933, had its report by Dr Lottie Fink listed second as 'II. Planned parenthood in other states', *ibid*, 207-08.

⁹⁹⁹Secretary, Eugenics Society, London to Joshua O'Brien, Brisbane, 25 February 1924, SA/EUG, C 255 Joshua O'Brien correspondence.

While the rationale for eugenics may now appear misguided or offensive, many of the positive aspects of eugenics have been incorporated into the development of public health.

In addition, the crusades by eugenists helped to bring about the public acceptance of services which are today seen as the norm but had previously had been ignored or rejected. In Wallace's words, 'the [eugenics] pioneers played a definite part in winning this freedom and in bringing about this enlightenment'.¹⁰⁰⁰ Phyllis Cilento noted that at the start of her medical career in the 1920s, birth control was considered 'not quite nice' but attitudes later 'changed rapidly as a result of Mrs Goodisson's efforts'.¹⁰⁰¹ This praise was exaggerated as there were many factors which related to the gradual acceptance of the practice and, while Goodisson staunchly advocated contraception, it was always acknowledged that she worked as part of a team. In contrast, Piddington worked in isolation and, while her lack of success was related to this, it might also be attributed to her failure to obtain medical support and her refusal to work co-operatively with any organization. Dr How-Martyn, the British Director of Margaret Sanger's Birth Control International Information Centre, while specifically rejecting Piddington's mode of operation, also identified the secret of the RHA's success:

It has been the union of people of like mind on these reforms that has helped in forming and moulding of public opinion and has brought about the Movement as we see it today.¹⁰⁰²

¹⁰⁰⁰Ibid, 218.

¹⁰⁰¹*Lady Cilento: My Life* (Ryde, NSW: Methuen Haynes, 1987), 77.

¹⁰⁰²Library of Congress. 'Note on Mrs Piddington', Sanger Papers, vol 23, 1935.

PART 2

THE PRACTICE OF EUGENICS

Chapter 4

Boosting the Population

Motherhood and migration have always been important to Australia. Governments promoted both in the belief that a large, steadily increasing population was vital for the country's wealth and progress. This chapter considers some fanciful plans for positive eugenics and the serious measures taken to boost population and to increase the nation's fitness. The mothers of the race needed education and the women's movement and eugenists were involved in this teaching, an attempt which has drawn recent criticism. The chapter concludes by examining migration policies and proposals for boosting national fitness.

Figure 11: Positive eugenics: perfect pair produce four¹⁰⁰³



¹⁰⁰³Plate reproduced by Lesley A Hall, in 'Illustrations from the Wellcome Institute Library. The Eugenics Society Archives in the Contemporary Medical Archives Centre', *Medical History*, 34 (1990), 330. This tableau was identified in the Society's Archives as Figure 1. CMAC: SA/EUG/J.18. Richard Soloway used it on the cover of his 1990 book.

Positive Eugenics

In theory, eugenists were in favour of the objectives of 'positive eugenics', which aimed at encouraging the 'finest types' to have larger families. Figure 11 shows an idealised version of this. It reproduces the cover of a leaflet which the Eugenics Society issued in 1930s to explain the meaning of eugenics. In practice, few eugenists promoted this goal which was described by H L Mencken as 'the augmentation of the teachable minority'.¹⁰⁰⁴ In practice, eugenists shied away from positive eugenics, as most of the movement's supporters had few children or none at all¹⁰⁰⁵ and they found it was 'more practicable' to promote 'preventive' and 'negative' eugenics. Donald Pickens has noted that 'the Oneida community was the best-known example of positive eugenics'¹⁰⁰⁶ and the most notorious attempt was Nazi Germany's Lebensborn experiment to produce 'perfect Aryans'.¹⁰⁰⁷ More recently, plans for increasing the numbers of 'good' births include Robert Graham's Californian sperm bank with its Nobel laureate donors¹⁰⁰⁸ and Singapore's efforts to tempt tertiary-educated women to marry and have large families.¹⁰⁰⁹

In 1913 proposals to encourage 'good' births were described by two medical journals as failures or oddities: in Britain, an editorial referred to John Humphrey Noyes' (1811-1886) Oneida Community, and to an experiment by Frederick William (1688-1740) 'who tried to "propagate procerity" [height] by marrying his gigantic Guards to such tall women as he could find'. Neither experiment was very successful.¹⁰¹⁰ In Australia, an item of 'medical miscellany' in 1913 reported on a forthcoming 'remarkable experiment' in New York in which a 'jury of doctors' would choose a 'perfect' couple for marriage and then watch the eugenic sequel.¹⁰¹¹

¹⁰⁰⁴H L Mencken, quoted by H M Parshley, in *The Science of Human Reproduction: Biological Aspects of Sex* (New York: Eugenics Publishing Co, 1933), 271.

¹⁰⁰⁵George Archdall Reid, 'The biological foundations of sociology', *Sociological Papers*, vol 3 (1907), 25. Francis Galton and Leonard Darwin had no children. Exceptions to the small family norm were Harvey Sutton who had seven children and Prof Sir Ronald Fisher who had eight, *BMJ* (22-29 December 1990), 1446. Fisher's 'fit family' image was shattered when his wife Eileen divorced him. Kevles (1985), 180, mistakenly called her 'Ruth'.

¹⁰⁰⁶Donald Pickens, *Eugenics and the Progressives* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968), 227.

¹⁰⁰⁷This is discussed by Catrine Clay and Michael Leapman in *The Lebensborn Experiment in Nazi Germany* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1995). 'Lebensborn' means 'fount of life'.

¹⁰⁰⁸William J Broad, 'A bank for Nobel sperm', *Science*, 207 (21 March 1980), 1326-27.

¹⁰⁰⁹Chee Khoon Chan, 'Eugenics on the rise: A report from Singapore', *International Journal of Health Services*, 15 (1985), 702-12.

¹⁰¹⁰'Eugenics', *BMJ* (23 August 1913), 509.

¹⁰¹¹'Eugenic experiment', *AMG* (13 December 1913), 548. Mrs William Kissam Vanderbilt, a wealthy member of the selection committee, indicated that 'a fund of £200 is being raised to further the idea, of which £100 will be given to the bride and groom after the eugenic marriage is performed, and the other

British birth control pioneer Dr Charles Vickery Drysdale (1874-1961) indicated in 1912 that Neo-Malthusianism¹⁰¹² [birth control] and eugenics were 'one and the same thing', as far as negative, educative and preventive measures were concerned. However, he and other Neo-Malthusians opposed eugenists' goals for 'so-called' positive eugenics on the grounds that:

we do not want an aristocracy of fitness any more than any other aristocracy to dominate us, and a general high level of happiness and vitality can better be produced by the agricultural method of weeding out the unfit and mixing the remainder than by the horticultural method of breeding from selected stocks.¹⁰¹³

Drysdale said that his followers 'unreservedly stigmatise as brutal, unscientific and immoral' the stipulation that the 'fit' should reproduce as much as possible to ensure the elimination of the 'unfit'.¹⁰¹⁴ For him, a 'particularly objectionable' aspect was the position such advocates assigned to women 'who are to be merely the passive instruments of unlimited maternity, without any rights to higher education or participation in public affairs'. His preferred birth control which 'would soon result in the elimination of all those who are insufficiently endowed with the bump of philoprogenitiveness', leaving 'the recruiting of the race' to the lovers of children.¹⁰¹⁵ Drysdale (inaccurately) argued that Australia and New Zealand were neo-Malthusian and feminist utopias:

in which women are the freest in the world, and in which the diffusion of neo-Malthusian practice is the most widespread, have seen the most rapid fall in the birth-rate but their general and infantile mortality is the lowest in the world, their rate of increase of population is the highest, and it has recently accelerated.¹⁰¹⁶

£100 will be theirs when the first child is born.'

¹⁰¹²Neo-Malthusianism is defined in the Appendix.

¹⁰¹³Charles Vickery Drysdale, *Neo-Malthusianism and Eugenics* (London: William Bell, 1912), 22. Dr Charles V Drysdale was the son of Dr Alice Drysdale-Vickery, a pioneering feminist, and Dr Charles R Drysdale, the Neo-Malthusian League's first President.

¹⁰¹⁴*Ibid*, 9.

¹⁰¹⁵*Ibid*, 10, citing Dr Robert Murray Leslie, *ER*, 3 (January 1911).

¹⁰¹⁶*Ibid*, 12.

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wealthy grazier from Albury,
NSW.¹⁰¹⁸

In 1921 *Eugenics Review*
provided extensive details
about the instructions which
Mitchell left in his will for
prizes for eugenics
competitions to be awarded
from his £500,000 estate.

¹⁰¹⁸*The Australian Encyclopaedia*, 107, described Miller as a grazier and philanthropist, a race horse breeder, a good judge of stock, and an admirer of strength and efficiency.

The exotic nature of the bequest probably explains why it was featured by the *Eugenics Review* which explained Miller's belief that, rather than assisting the weak, 'more lasting good is to be accomplished for the race by assisting the healthy and strong to develop their natural advantages'. His estate was to be divided into 21 parts, seven of which were set aside for 'annual prizes for unmarried females not exceeding 30 years of age, British subjects and *bona-fide* residents of the Commonwealth, of a white race and not the offspring of first cousins'. Female applicants had to complete a written examination and were selected according to 'physical excellence, freedom from hereditary taint or disease, particularly of the intellect, brightness and cheerfulness of disposition'. The women's likely ability 'to bear and rear normal healthy children' was also important. They had to be knowledgeable about history, geography, English literature and the 'Protestant Bible'. Other prerequisites were swimming, horse riding, and housekeeping, domestic economy, infant care and the need for cleanliness. Two parts of the estate were for male contestants who had to shoot well, have an excellent physique and have honourably fulfilled any military obligations.¹⁰¹⁹

The contests did not begin until 30 years after Mitchell's death and in June 1954 the bequest, 'one of the strangest wills in Australia's history', was reported on the front page of a Sydney newspaper (see Figure 12) giving details about the benefactor and the large prizes. The *Australian Women's Weekly* sponsored the contests¹⁰²⁰ and Adolphus P Elkin, the University of Sydney's Professor of Anthropology, led the selection committee.¹⁰²¹ More than 2,358 people applied, 200 completed examinations and £10,000 in prizes was awarded. The first results were announced in March 1955 and the competitions continued until 1959.¹⁰²² Two of these prize-winners told me in 1995 that they had no idea about the eugenic aims of

¹⁰¹⁹'A Squatter's will', *ER*, 12 (1920-1921), 428.

¹⁰²⁰Noni Rowland, 'Talent bequest executors describe man who left fortune to help youth', *Australian Women's Weekly*, 14 July 1954, 12. Applications for the bequest competitions were invited in 'Mitchell Will', *AWW*, 17 November 1954, 20-21.

¹⁰²¹In 'We bring candidates to Sydney', *AWW*, 16 March 1955, 12, the magazine noted that Professor Elkin was assisted by Miss Fanny Cohen, former headmistress of Sydney's Fort Street Girls High School, Dr John Fulton, Medical Superintendent of the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children and Mrs Charles Tilden, who administered Country Women's Association Girls' Hostels during the war and was a 'practical housewife and mother'.

¹⁰²²In 1955: *AWW*, 23 March, 20-21; 30 March, 12-13; 31 August, 26; 26 October, 15; in 1956: 4 April, 20; 6 June 1956, 12; 19 September, 41. The story was summarised in 1988 by Helen Livsey, Research Officer, Albury and District Historical Society, in 'The search for a perfect Australian: The strange will of Peter Stuckey Mitchell'.

the bequest.¹⁰²³ Eugenics was 'under a cloud' after the war and the sponsors probably feared ridicule if the truth was revealed. Curiously, in 1971 additional contests for soldiers and sailors were announced.¹⁰²⁴ The 1921 will was 'tied up' for 33 years and these contests bear the unmistakeable mark of the era in which Mitchell's bequest was made.

A most unusual example of a nurture-oriented positive eugenics scheme was conducted in NSW from the 1940s by Leslie Owen Bailey (1891-1964), the millionaire owner of the Chic Salon chain of dress shops. 'Daddy' Bailey invested more than £650,000¹⁰²⁵ to run Hopewood House in Bowral for the 'betterment of society', providing a homelike environment and wholesome food for 43 boys and 43 girls who, like the baby in Figure 17, had been born under 'unfortunate circumstances'.¹⁰²⁶ He urged supporters to 'work together to show Australia what fine children Bowral can produce'.¹⁰²⁷ Bailey's evangelistic beliefs about 'natural health' and 'rational eating', and his rejection of conventional medicine appears to be related to his admiration for Dr Alan Carroll who had faddish beliefs about the links between diet and longevity.¹⁰²⁸ However, many of Bailey's efforts were beneficial: there were no infant deaths and the children were healthy.¹⁰²⁹

¹⁰²³These prize winners were 21-year-old medical students, Barbara Bennett, *AWW*, 30 March 1955, 12 and Geoffrey Porter, *AWW*, 6 June 1956, 12. Because it was Mitchell's positive eugenics ambition to assist healthy couples to produce large families it is interesting to note the personal details of these two prize winners. Dr Bennett married three times and has one child, three adopted children and grandchildren. Dr Porter had six children but one died in infancy, Person. comm, 13 March 1995.

¹⁰²⁴'Grazier's will means cash for servicemen', *Sunday Australian*, 24 October 1971, 4.

¹⁰²⁵Jack Dunn Trop, *A Gift of Love: The Hopewood Story* (Sydney: West Publishing, 1971), 218-19. Other donors included Zoe Benjamin, Automatic Totalisators Ltd, William Arnott Ltd, David Jones, Murrumbidgee Dried Fruit Sales, 2GB Happiness Club and branches of the Theosophist-linked Order of the Star in the East.

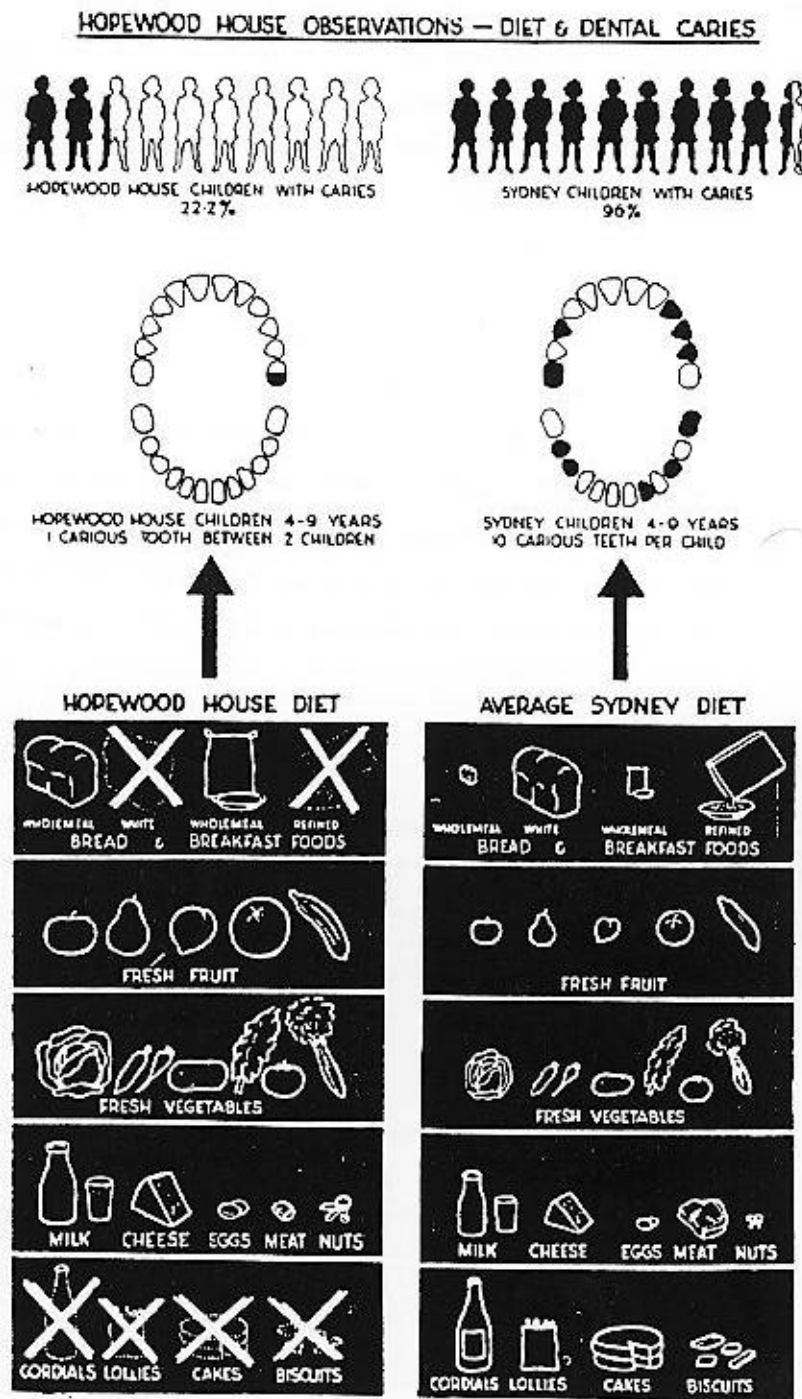
¹⁰²⁶Trop (1971), 59-60, quoting Bailey at the opening of Hopewood in 1942. It was opened by Francis M Forde, Minister for the Army, and from 6 to 13 July 1945, the Commonwealth Labor Prime Minister. Most of the Hopewood infants were fathered by members of the armed services.

¹⁰²⁷Trop quoting Bailey, 61.

¹⁰²⁸For examples of Carroll's views, see Mrs D Izett, *Health and Longevity According to the Theories of the Late Dr Alan Carroll: With an Account of the Work of the Child Study Association* (Sydney: Epsworth, 1915).

¹⁰²⁹Trop (1971), 60: In 1941 when Australia's national infant death rate was 6.8%, Hopewood did not have a single death, even though the mothers were 'distressed' (that is, single and unmarried) and the babies had to be bottle fed. Ibid, 163, quoting Bailey, in 1944: 'When we are able to demonstrate about a 100 children with sound teeth and health records well above average, and a mortality rate which is a record low, we will be in a position to encourage others to pay more attention to our child welfare methods'.

Figure 13: Environmental eugenics: good food produces superior teeth¹⁰³⁰



¹⁰³⁰Child health. Diet and dental caries', by the Nutrition Section, Commonwealth Department of Health, in *Health* (a monthly journal dealing with developments in the field of public health issued by the Department) 3 (no 3), September 1953, 69-70. The figure was used with acknowledgement in the 1952 report of Bailey's Youth Welfare Association - an annual report which related to Bailey's children's homes, including Hopewood.

It is interesting to note in the illustrative chart (Figure 13) that the Department of Health, while making the 'meat' figure small, had not put a cross through the 'meat' category, although the Hopewood diet was almost totally vegetarian.¹⁰³¹ Bailey was extremely proud of their dental health and arranged for dentists to regularly survey and examine the children's teeth.¹⁰³² The impressive findings of a 10-year survey by Sydney's Institute of Dental Research indicated that only 22% of Hopewood House children had dental caries compared with 96% of the control group of Sydney children. The impact of the healthy diet at Hopewood is shown in Figure 13, which appeared in the Commonwealth Department of Health's journal, *Health*, in 1953.

My father carried out one of these dental inspections at Hopewood House and, as a nine-year old, I spent a happy day with the children.¹⁰³³ A recent article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* was drawn from interviews with almost 40 adults who had grown up at Hopewood and were bitterly divided about what the journalists called a post World War II 'extraordinary social experiment'. The title of the article, 'Blind vision: The Sydney kids who were to breed a super race', makes it clear that the writers had ignored the childrens' benefits and sided with the denigrators.¹⁰³⁴

Baby bonus

Given the Australian pride for egalitarianism, most citizens would have shared Drysdale's distaste for positive eugenics if they had been aware that any such plans had been proposed in Australia for this form of biological elitism. In contrast, there was strong public support for child or maternity allowances.¹⁰³⁵ These Australian benefits were introduced in 1912 and formed an important social welfare initiative.¹⁰³⁶ They were distinctive because

¹⁰³¹The figure was also reprinted in Trop (1971), 197-98, who in noting this, attributed it to the Department's reluctance to totally eliminate meat from the list of 'good' foods.

¹⁰³²Trop (1971), 163-202 gives a record of the dental studies, for example N E Goldsworthy, 'Every doctor a dietitian', (based on a ten-year study, 1947-1956, of the children of Hopewood House, Bowral), *MJA*, 20 February 1960, 285-86. See also studies in *Dental Journal of Australia* (July-August 1953), 163-68 and *Australian Dental Journal* (October 1958), 309-30 and (December), 378-98.

¹⁰³³After the children had proudly conducted me around their house, we spent the day playing in the extensive grounds and feeding the animals. The 'baby', a three year old boy, insisted on showing me that he could now make his bed. I particularly remember enjoying the snacks of carrots and dried fruits and being allowed to use my teeth to open nuts.

¹⁰³⁴Emma Tom and Matthew Russell, 'Blind vision: The Sydney kids who were to breed a super race', *SMH*, 5 February 1994, Spectrum, 1A and 4A.

¹⁰³⁵Thomas H Kewley, *Social Security in Australia, 1900-72*, 2nd edn. (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1973), 106 and discussion 99-116. See also Bettina Cass, 'Women, Children and the State: A Study of Child Endowment and Family Allowances in Australia, 1916-1981' (PhD thesis, UNSW, 1993).

¹⁰³⁶Ben Buckley and Ted Wheelwright, *No Paradise for Workers: Capitalism and the Common People in Australia, 1788-1914* (Melbourne: OUP, 1988), 231, described the 1900 NSW legislation for age pensions and the 1912 Commonwealth Maternity Allowances Act as the only initiatives which,

they were provided to both married and unmarried women, and they were not means tested. Endowments of motherhood followed demands (first made in the 19th century) by socialists, feminists and then

Figure 14: The Australian baby: Australia's greatest asset¹⁰³⁷

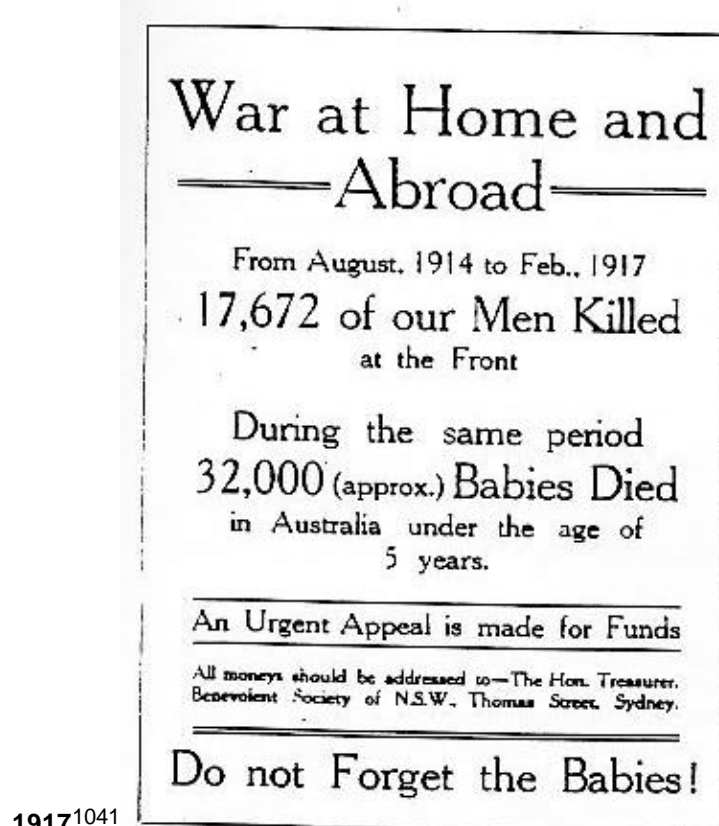


together with the development of the arbitration system, provided any justification for describing Australia as a social laboratory.

¹⁰³⁷*The Charities' Gazette and General Intelligencer: Official Organ of the Benevolent Society of New South Wales*, 20 (no 7) 1 July 1918, cover. Ironically, the statistics provided in the 1904 RCDBR, vol 1, Exhibit no 139, indicated that in 1898 the annual death-rate of children under one year of age (average age 15 weeks) who had been admitted to the Benevolent Asylum was '86.33%'. These figures were qualified by two lengthy notes which do little to lessen the shockingly high death rate revealed by these statistics which accounts for their inclusion in the Commission's Report.

eugenists, for the state to provide financial assistance to mothers in recognition of the social benefit they provided.¹⁰³⁸ A mother's duty to rear healthy children permeated 'all the discussion of infant mortality and child welfare', whether the focus was on quality or quantity, on the nurture of the fittest, or on the preservation of infant life.¹⁰³⁹ Figures 11 and 14 provide examples of the motherhood ethos which was strongly promoted in Australia¹⁰⁴⁰ and, as shown in the following plea for funds, World War I increased the concerns about Australia's population losses 'at home and abroad'.

Figure 15: Infant deaths in Australia: 1914 to



While Marie Stopes enthused about 'radiant motherhood', others worried because there was too little of it. William Jethro Brown (1868-1930), law professor at the University of Adelaide, indicated that in 1912 'much was heard' about introducing a tax on bachelors and the

¹⁰³⁸Anna Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', *History Workshop: A Journal of Socialist Historians*, Issue 5 (Spring 1978), 22-24.

¹⁰³⁹*Ibid*, 24.

¹⁰⁴⁰An example of this pronatalism appears in 'Motherhood', *MJA* (24 April 1926), 467, which stated that 'the average woman has a period of productivity of about 30 years and Nature gives her opportunities of bringing into the world a family of 20 or more. *Homo sapiens* differs from other animals in a deliberate opposition to Nature's methods'.

¹⁰⁴¹*The Charities' Gazette and General Intelligencer* (4 March 1917).

childless.¹⁰⁴² During that year, Andrew Fisher's Federal (Labor) Government introduced a 'Baby Bonus' (or maternity allowance) in which £5 was given to white mothers after the birth of each child.

Some believed there were better ways for using the allocated £600,000 to improve mothers' health and increase births.¹⁰⁴³ Some church groups complained about 'out of wedlock' mothers receiving 'encouragement'.¹⁰⁴⁴ An editorial in the *Australasian Medical Gazette* wanted only the poor to benefit and claimed that the government intended to 're-arrange the system' to exclude the wealthy people who 'really do not want it'.¹⁰⁴⁵ It was not until more than two decades later that the National Council of Women raised the issue of payment of benefits to Aboriginal mothers.¹⁰⁴⁶

In 1921 a doctor noted that the bonus 'should suffice to cover all that is required in an ideal scheme'. Perhaps our legislators will for once relinquish the transparent habit of vote-catching and will do something serious for the welfare of the Australian race!¹⁰⁴⁷ The only doubts on eugenic grounds were expressed by the *Eugenics Review* which hoped 'that some effort will be made to direct such funds towards the parents of good stock who are likely to produce fit and healthy children, and that the state is not offering a reward of £5 for the birth of mentally deficient and unemployable of pauper stock!'.¹⁰⁴⁸ While the intended purpose of the bonus has been debated, Billy Hughes believed that it would provide a 'wholesome antidote' to birth control, which he described as a 'national poison'.¹⁰⁴⁹

Dr Arthur was equally motivated by social justice and by eugenics in his 1919 proposal for family endowment to the NSW Board of Trade.¹⁰⁵⁰ He pointed out that the one-child family was often the result of VD; that children who were 'semi-starved' could not benefit from free

¹⁰⁴²Brown, *The Underlying Principles of Modern Legislation* (London: Murray, 1912), 267.

¹⁰⁴³'Eugenics and the Baby Bonus', *SMH*, 23 October 1912, 12 (d). The Maternity Allowance was reduced and means-tested during the Depression and abolished in 1978 by Malcolm Fraser's (Liberal) Government. Doubts about whether 'motherhood' was getting the best value from the bonus were expressed in the *All Australian Women's Conference on the Maternity Bonus*, held in Melbourne, March 1923. Papers from the conference were published in *Health*, vol 1 (May 1923), 121-38.

¹⁰⁴⁴'Maternity Bonus. Mr Thomas replies to Council of Churches', *Argus*, 30 September 1912, 11 (g).

¹⁰⁴⁵'The maternity bonus', *AMG*, 9 August 1913, 126.

¹⁰⁴⁶'Aboriginal women. Issue of maternity bonus urged', *SMH*, 18 September 1936, in RHC Papers.

¹⁰⁴⁷'The control of child-birth', *MJA* (15 October 1921), 321.

¹⁰⁴⁸'Notes. The birth rate in Australia', *ER*, vol 4 (April 1912-January 1913), 325.

¹⁰⁴⁹Speech by Attorney-General W M Hughes, 24 September 1912, in the second reading of the Maternity Allowances Bill, CPP [Representatives], 1912, 3338.

¹⁰⁵⁰*State Endowment For Families and the Fallacy of the Existing Basic Wage System*. Statement by Dr Richard Arthur, MLA before the NSW Board of Trade, 2 September 1919 (Sydney: Govt Pr, 1919).

and compulsory education; and that the two-child family would mean 'racial and national suicide'.¹⁰⁵¹ He reiterated the catch cries about 'holding this country for the white race':

It is the people who [raised more than three children], by sacrifice of the comforts and pleasures of life, who are the true patriots, and they should be recognised as such, and their extra children regarded as a national charge. [His proposal was not meant to increase the birth rate] - offering five shillings a week to a woman who did not want children would not induce her to do so. [It was] for the welfare of the children who are already here, and are not getting enough to eat to-day, and who are not getting enough clothes and a proper start in life.¹⁰⁵²

Dr Edith Barrett, Secretary of the Victorian Branch of the National Council of Women and Sir James Barrett's sister, gave a paper at the 1923 All Australian Women's Conference on the Maternity Bonus.¹⁰⁵³ She told delegates that although the Bonus had operated for ten years, the birth rate had 'steadily and seriously declined' and that the Bonus had 'failed to protect the lives of the mothers' and had 'failed to seriously influence [reduce] infantile mortality'.¹⁰⁵⁴ It was an 'act of folly' to allow infants to perish from preventable causes, including VD, and to spend 'large sums' on migrants. She concluded 'the Baby Bonus has resulted in medical men being employed to a much greater extent than formerly, but without any practical reduction of maternal or infantile mortality'.¹⁰⁵⁵ Barrett's doubts about doctors were confirmed by the findings of the federal government's 1925 Royal Commission on Health which was appointed to examine VD, the falling birth-rate and the high maternal and infant death rate.¹⁰⁵⁶

Barrett's concern was shared by 'gradualist socialist' Muriel Heagney (1885-1974), a unionist who fought for equal pay for women.¹⁰⁵⁷ Heagney did not agree with Barrett's suggestions that the yearly £700,000 spent on the Bonus should be used for antenatal clinics, maternity hospitals, visiting nurses and domestic aids. Heagney wanted to keep the Bonus and give it directly to mothers, as the money spent on it was 'insignificant' in comparison with the £80,000,000 a year spent for five years on the war, the huge interest being paid, and the

¹⁰⁵¹Arthur, *ibid*, 4-8.

¹⁰⁵²*Ibid*, 14.

¹⁰⁵³Edith Barrett, 'Is the Motherhood of Australia getting the best value from the Maternity Bonus?', *Health*, 1 (May 1923), 121-126.

¹⁰⁵⁴Barrett, *ibid*, 121-4.

¹⁰⁵⁵*Ibid*, 124.

¹⁰⁵⁶Discussed by Humphrey McQueen, in *Social Sketches of Australia, 1888-1975* (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin Books, 1978), 112.

¹⁰⁵⁷Patricia Ranauld, 'Feminism and class: The United Associations of Women and the Council of Action for Equal Pay in the Depression', in Bevege et al (eds.), *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1982), 284.

vast spending on immigration.¹⁰⁵⁸ Quoting from Eldridge's 'Motherhood Endowment' paper and from Saleeby, she stressed the environmental causes of the high death rate:

In 1918, one in every 219 married mothers died from puerperal [childbirth] causes, and one in every 123 unmarried mothers. This shows the relation between economic and social conditions and the high death rate. Bad industrial conditions prior to marriage, unhealthy homes, lack of proper food and rest, financial anxiety and worry, ignorance of physical conditions are all admitted to be contributory factors. If we are to get to the root of the evil, we must ensure for every mother in the community good housing, continuous income, freedom from arduous toil, medical care and attention, and everything else that is conducive to the production of healthy children, whilst retaining her own health and vigour. Only by these means can we wipe out the blot of which we are speaking.¹⁰⁵⁹

Unlike Britain, Australian child endowment measures were not class-based. This fact was noted with displeasure in Britain by the Eugenics Education Society which believed that Australia's policies would increase the size of the 'less valuable' classes. Saleeby deplored such 'class eugenics' which pervaded the thinking of British eugenicists. For example, the EES criticised the Australian £5 Bonus in 1912; in 1922 they rebuffed Eldridge for his 'Endowment of Motherhood' proposal, and Leonard Darwin's address to the Second International Eugenics Congress contained a thinly-disguised criticism of A B Piddington's proposals in *The Next Step, A Family Basic Income*.¹⁰⁶⁰ Darwin said:

It follows that to increase the taxation on the more fit in order to ease the strain of family life amongst the less fit would do a double dose of harm; that is by decreasing the output of children where it should be increased and by increasing it where it should be diminished! ... In regard to all proposals such as that recently made in Australia, for directly and indirectly taking from all workmen a proportion of their earnings and for distributing the money thus obtained amongst the parents in proportion to the number of their young children, here again the racial effects will be good if, and only if, the benefits received from each couple are proportionate to the contributions made by members of the same group to which they belong, a condition almost certain to be neglected.¹⁰⁶¹

In 1928 a Sydney newspaper reported Julian Huxley's 'notion for a Ministry of Eugenics', which prompted John Charles Lucas Fitzpatrick (1862-1932), a politician and journalist, to muse that 'so many strange and fanatical ideas are being propounded just now that one hardly knows whether to treat them seriously or otherwise'. However, he suggested that Dr Arthur would be well qualified to lead such a Ministry as 'no harm and a lot of good might come out of it'.¹⁰⁶² Signs of economic troubles were increasing during this period,

¹⁰⁵⁸Muriel A Heagney, 'Has the Maternity Allowance Failed?', *Health*, 1 (May 1923), 135.

¹⁰⁵⁹*Ibid*, 136.

¹⁰⁶⁰A B Piddington, *The Next Step: A Family Basic Income* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1921).

¹⁰⁶¹'Darwin's address to the 1921 Congress', *ER*, 13 (April 1921-January 1922), 507-08.

¹⁰⁶²J C L Fitzpatrick, MLA, quoted in 'Breeding the Best. Ministry for Eugenics. Chance for Dr

prompting the Commonwealth's 1928 Royal Commission on Child Endowment or Family Allowance to state that proposals for a national endowment scheme would only be acceptable if they 'would produce benefits more than compensating for the difficulties and disadvantages' of the additional taxation to fund them.¹⁰⁶³ The Commissioners proposed to limit assistance by providing it only to children of 'the right kind of stock'. In order to justify the use of public funds, 'eugenic considerations which have not hitherto been regarded must be taken into account'.¹⁰⁶⁴ After Dr Cumpston cautiously outlined some measures, noting that 'there may be a large difference of opinion as to how far eugenic control could safely be carried out at present', the Commissioners concluded:

A logical consequence of the establishment of a Commonwealth scheme of Child Endowment would be the creation of some form of eugenic control.

Expert witnesses appeared unanimous that up to a certain point, such control is both practicable and desirable.

The unmistakably feeble-minded, and persons tainted with serious and transmissible diseases or defects, should be prevented from reproducing their species.

Within such limits, in our opinion, eugenic control should be established, whether or not Child Endowment be accepted as a feature of national policy.¹⁰⁶⁵

The 1929 world slump prevented the scheme from being implemented. Instead, British health expert Dame Janet Campbell was commissioned to report on maternal and child welfare in Australia.¹⁰⁶⁶ 'In view of the special importance of these interests of the Empire as a whole', Britain's Minister for Health agreed that she could undertake her 'special mission' in Australia.¹⁰⁶⁷ This prompted objections from the NSW Minister for Health, Dr Arthur who claimed that she would 'find more in Australia than she could teach'¹⁰⁶⁸ and insisted that it was unnecessary to have another Royal Commission investigate maternal and infant mortality.¹⁰⁶⁹ Prompted by these concerns, the National Council of Women

Arthur?', *Times*, 2 December 1928, in the RHC Papers. Fitzpatrick held posts in Sir George Fuller's ministries and believed in supporting the Empire. A call for a Eugenics Ministry was made in *The Book of Life: A Comprehensive Work For All Interested in the Art of Right Living* (Sydney: Health and Physical Culture Co, 1933), 121.

¹⁰⁶³*Report of the Royal Commission on Child Endowment or Family Allowances*, CPP, vol 2 (1929), 1301.

¹⁰⁶⁴*Ibid*, 'H. Eugenic Control', paras 627-633, 1359-1360.

¹⁰⁶⁵*Ibid*, 888-891, 1046.

¹⁰⁶⁶*SMH*, 15 May 1929, 15 (c). Dame Janet's findings confirmed Edith Barrett's view that Australian women's preference for doctors rather than midwives was linked with the high death rate. Extracts of Campbell's 1930 report to the Australian Parliament are in Beverley Kingston (ed.), *The World Moves Slowly: A Documentary History of Australian Women* (Stanmore, NSW: Cassell Australia, 1977), 147-50.

¹⁰⁶⁷*Times*, 15 May 1929.

¹⁰⁶⁸*SMH*, 30 May 1929, 11 (f) and 7 June 1929, 10 (e).

¹⁰⁶⁹*SMH*, 15 June 1929, 16 (c).

requested the Commonwealth Government to provide subsidies to the states to enable them to fund obstetrics teaching in universities with a medical school.¹⁰⁷⁰ Millicent Preston Stanley showed political astuteness by using the slogan 'horses' rights for women' in an attempt to persuade the University of Sydney to establish a chair in midwifery in preference to a veterinary course in horse obstetrics.¹⁰⁷¹ The slogan was first used by an American judge, Ben Lindsey (1869-1943), a supporter of women's suffrage, children's rights and 'companionate marriage', who had campaigned for these groups to have rights equal to those available for the welfare of horses.¹⁰⁷²

In 1938 and 1944 two ESV members proposed draconian measures to encourage the 'fit' to have more children. On 7 July 1938, Dr Fritz Duras gave a lecture on 'Eugenics in Germany today' which was reported in the *Age*.¹⁰⁷³ Duras, the Director of Physical Education at Melbourne University, described the measures taken by the Nazis 'to improve the quality and quantity of the race' as 'one of the most interesting biological experiments in the world'.¹⁰⁷⁴ He made a similarly sinister-sounding proposal in October 1938, reminding the Federal Government of the importance 'of enlisting the help of the health authorities and the medical profession' in the national fitness campaign.¹⁰⁷⁵

In 1944 Professor Agar, the ESV President, proposed a eugenics scheme in which families with above average incomes would be encouraged to have more children and the childless would provide money for a family 'equalisation' allowance by 'sharing out' their incomes.¹⁰⁷⁶ This is an unusual example of a eugenisist proposing that wealthy Australians should be assisted at the expense of poorer and childless people. Perhaps British-born Agar did not realise that emulating the practice by British eugenists of identifying fitness and unfitness in

¹⁰⁷⁰Maternity deaths could be halved! Expert's scathing attack on to-day's obstetric methods, "Doctors lose far more patients than do midwives". Dame [Janet] Campbell also critical', *Daily Guardian*, 6 September 1929, 15.

¹⁰⁷¹Millicent Preston Stanley (1883-1955), entry by Heather Radi, in *ADB*, vol 11, 285. She was the first woman to be elected to the NSW Parliament and was the National Party member for Eastern Suburbs, holding office from 30 May 1925 until 9 September 1927.

¹⁰⁷²See A B Piddington (1921), 29, who noted that 'a work with a striking title was published a few years ago by the famous Judge Lindsay (sic), "*Horses' Rights For Women*". Onians and Marion Piddington also quoted Lindsey approvingly.

¹⁰⁷³Marriage bonuses. Germans want more babies. Honours for mothers', *Age*, 8 July 1938, 12 (d).

¹⁰⁷⁴Grant McBurnie, 'Constructing Sexuality in Victoria 1930-1950: Sex Reformers Associated with the Victorian Eugenics Society' (PhD thesis, Monash University, 1989), 301, stated that Duras was born in 1896 in Bonn, Germany and trained there as an MD.

¹⁰⁷⁵Duras, 'We can be the fittest nation. We should do much more', *Herald* (Melbourne), 22 October 1938, reprinted in NHMRC, Report of the 5th Session, November 1938, Appendix.

¹⁰⁷⁶W E Agar, 'Family income', *Herald* (Melbourne), 24 June 1944.

class terms was abhorrent to Australians. Agar indicated that his scheme was 'turned down very contemptuously by Mr Chifley', the Labor Prime Minister.¹⁰⁷⁷

Another contentious view was expressed by Dr Norman Haire who had returned to Australia in 1940 after an absence of over 20 years in Europe.¹⁰⁷⁸ In an ABC radio forum in 1944, Haire provocatively suggested that the government should provide a 'No-Baby Bonus' to parents of 'bad stock' as an incentive for them to remain childless and, in addition, the bonus should only go to 'healthy and otherwise desirable parents'. This, he hoped would 'dissuade' the births of children who were 'likely to be a burden to the community' and 'induce' parents of good stock to produce healthy children who would be an asset. In his view, the choice of 'suitable migrants from the womb' was just as important as choosing 'suitable migrants from overseas'.¹⁰⁷⁹

¹⁰⁷⁷Agar, 'History of [ESV] past activities' [1945], 4. Supplied by Dr W T Agar.

¹⁰⁷⁸Norman Haire, *Sex Problems of To-day* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1942), 14.

¹⁰⁷⁹Haire, in *The Nation's Forum of the Air*, vol 1 (no 2), August 1944, 8, 'Population Unlimited?', held in the Assembly Hall, Sydney and broadcast by the ABC.

Dr Wallace believed that the 'differential birth rate' which Agar sought to overcome 'was not so prominent a feature of Australian vital statistics as it is in those of older countries'.¹⁰⁸⁰ He also questioned the ability of an 'official body' [the NHMRC]¹⁰⁸¹ to discover the 'elusive truth' about women's reasons for limiting births,¹⁰⁸² believing that an honest response was more likely in questionnaires which he had received from 530 women who consulted him about contraception.¹⁰⁸³ His analysis of their reasons for using contraception, compiled between 1934 and 1944, and the reasons which women gave for attending the RHA Birth Control Clinic in 1938-1939, are shown in Table 5, which, while unsophisticated, show a pattern of predominantly economics and health, rather than eugenics, as reasons for using contraception.

Table 5: Reasons for attending birth control clinics in the 1930s¹⁰⁸⁴

	Financial difficulties/ economics	Health	Eugenics/ hereditary
Wallace	292	221	8
RHA Clinic	358	227	8

The findings of these two small samples of the 1930s were validated in 1944 when financial hardship was the overwhelming reason given by 1,400 women for limiting their family size. Dr Cumpston, in an analysis of the statements they gave to the National Medical and Research Council, indicated that eugenic reasons were only given 'in a few cases'.¹⁰⁸⁵

Schools for mothers

¹⁰⁸⁰Victor Hugo Wallace, *Women and Children First!* (Melbourne: OUP, 1946), 46.

¹⁰⁸¹NHMRC Report of the 18th Session, November 1944, Appendix 1. *Interim Report of the NHMRC Council On the Decline in the Birth Rate*, 9-96.

¹⁰⁸²Wallace (1946), 42.

¹⁰⁸³These were not the 'charitable cases' Wallace had seen at the clinics of the District Nursing Society or Social Hygiene Society and were 'representative of the married women of Australia', *Ibid*, 43-44. Wallace's complete table is on page 66 and his analysis is on pages 46-79. I have amalgamated three categories under 'health'. There were other categories such as 'housing', 'transport' and 'job'. The women gave multiple responses.

¹⁰⁸⁴RHA Annual Report (Birth Control Clinic), year ended 30 June 1939, 13. Other 'causes' were listed as 'spacing, 90; advice, 724 and correspondence, 398'.

¹⁰⁸⁵J H L Cumpston, comp., 'Statements made by women themselves in response to a public invitation to state their reasons for limiting their families', NHMRC, 18th Session, November 1944, Annexure G, 74. Cumpston noted that the decision was made for eugenic reasons only 'in a few cases', for example, where there was a family history of mental or other disorders which might appear in the children, or because the husband was an alcoholic or had VD and the 'wife refused to have children to such a father'.

The emphasis of social reformers before World War I on the environment, included plans for instructing mothers in the arts of child care. In his 1908 pamphlet *The Child, the Home and the State*, the radical unionist William Spence (1846-1926) took a broad view of what was required to raise healthy children. He argued that in order to produce 'the highest type of man and woman possible' it was necessary to improve the environment, provide pure food and take better care of mothers:

The fault is not always with the parents; it is with society ... The mother is swindled by adulterated food, and when the baby is made sick and the doctor is called the prescription is useless because of fraudulent drugs. Worry and loss to parents and loss of good citizens to a Commonwealth which is crying out for additional population is the result. We take more care of cattle, sheep, or pigs than we do of our own flesh and blood. We call upon the women electors to help bring the remedy into operation.¹⁰⁸⁶

In a 1910 Presidential address to the SA Branch of the British Medical Association, William Verco suggested such measures as female inspectors visiting each home prior to and after a baby was born, dairy inspection, and the supply and distribution of sterilized bottles of milk for babies would produce infants 'saved and made strong'. The beneficial consequences that would flow from these measures would 'amply compensate the State' for the effort.¹⁰⁸⁷ As well, many reformers were concerned with the benefits of teaching women 'mothercraft', basing the instruction on the model provided by Britain in 1907 with its School for Mothers.¹⁰⁸⁸ The training included large doses of patriotism in which mothers were reminded of their imperial obligations,¹⁰⁸⁹ their duty to Australia¹⁰⁹⁰ and the need to comply with the mother-focused 'purity feminism'.¹⁰⁹¹ In 1913 the redoubtable American author Jessie Ackermann scoffed at the 'usual groan of the alarmist' that these Australian reforms were 'saving the unfit'.¹⁰⁹² She was sure that women had 'come to feel' that it was better to rear three or four healthy children than to 'swell the increasing flood of poorly equipped specimens of humanity'. This perceptive social critic was adamant that 'no railing or wailing'

¹⁰⁸⁶W G Spence, *The Child, the Home and the State* (Sydney: Worker Print, 1908), 5.

¹⁰⁸⁷William A Verco, 'The influence of the medical profession upon the national life in Australia', *AMG*, 20 July 1910, 340.

¹⁰⁸⁸Davin (1978), 38-43.

¹⁰⁸⁹*Ibid*, 9-65.

¹⁰⁹⁰Kerreen M Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home: Modernizing the Australian Family, 1880-1940* (Melbourne: OUP, 1985).

¹⁰⁹¹Frank Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-moral Politics in England Since 1830* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), 153-209. See Figure 16 and the entry for 'purity feminism' in the Appendix.

¹⁰⁹²Jessie Ackermann, *Australia: From a Woman's Point of View* (Sydney: Cassell Australia, 1981) [London: Cassell, 1913], 96.

or 'abuse' [from the pronatalists] would 'move women in their fixed and determined purpose to safeguard the future generations'.¹⁰⁹³

Figure 16: Purity feminism: family values not debauchery¹⁰⁹⁴



In example of propaganda for wholesome family life is shown in this figure. Such exhortations were accompanied by practical efforts to improve the health of mothers and babies. The most important of these was the work of Dr William George Armstrong (1859-1941), a public health pioneer in Australia, and probably the first in the world to make concerted efforts to reduce infant mortality. Armstrong was assisted in his infant welfare crusade by the Alice Rawson School for Mothers, the first of which was opened in one of Sydney's inner suburbs in 1908 at the instigation of the National Council of Women.¹⁰⁹⁵ In 1909 the Women's Christian Temperance Union ran a School for Mothers as an adjunct of the free kindergarten it had in Richmond, Victoria.¹⁰⁹⁶ Dr E Sydney Morris noted that in 1903, four years before Dr Truby King's well publicised

¹⁰⁹³Ibid, 98-99. Ackermann, in her praise for the spirit of Australian women, had modified her earlier condemnation of Australians generally. She had cited the decision to appoint Chicago's Walter Burley Griffin to design Canberra as 'proof of what is so often said' about Australians as being 'mere imitators' who were 'positively unable to originate', Ibid, 31.

¹⁰⁹⁴Herman Rubin, *Eugenics and Sex Harmony: The Sexes, their Relations and their Problems*, 2nd edn. (New York: Pioneer Publications, 1942), 493.

¹⁰⁹⁵Sydney's first school for mothers was in Bourke Street, Darlinghurst and additional schools were opened in Newtown and Alexandria.

¹⁰⁹⁶Anthea Hyslop, in Bevege (1982), 239.

campaigns, Armstrong's 'Advice to Mothers' pamphlet was sent to every address at which a birth had been registered.¹⁰⁹⁷

Figure 17: The unwanted baby¹⁰⁹⁸



In 1918 the Royal Society for the Welfare of Mothers and Babies was established to co-ordinate the different associations in this field.¹⁰⁹⁹ It built on the work of child rescue institutions such as the Benevolent Society of New South Wales, which advertised (see left) that since 1813 it had provided 'shelter' and 'motherly care' for the 'unwanted baby'.

Jethro Brown acknowledged that women who entered the professions and were absorbed by their work were a 'superior type'.¹¹⁰⁰ He quoted a British professor's proposal in 1909 that women with ability as chemists should not be allowed to work but encouraged instead to become the mothers of future chemists.¹¹⁰¹ In Australia women were discouraged from all

¹⁰⁹⁷E Sydney Morris, 'Obituary. William George Armstrong', *MJA*, 28 February 1942, 273. See also Claudia Thame's entry for Armstrong, *ADB*, vol 7, 97-98.

¹⁰⁹⁸*The Charities' Gazette and General Intelligencer*, 3 May 1919. Unfortunately, as indicated in the footnote for Figure 14, the likelihood that a newly-admitted infant would live beyond its first birthday was extremely low.

¹⁰⁹⁹Armstrong (1938?), 7.

¹¹⁰⁰Brown, 'Economic welfare and racial Vitality', *Economic Record*, vol 3 (May 1927), 19.

¹¹⁰¹Brown (1912), 204-05. He was quoting Professor H E Armstrong who, according to Mabel Atkinson, had addressed the British Association 'last summer', *Sociological Review*, vol 3 (January 1910), 1.

paid employment, with the exception of domestic service. For instance, a 1912 editorial in the *Australasian Medical Gazette* opposed girls' employment in factories: they would become 'puny, anaemic [and] dyspeptic' and 'quite unfit for motherhood' and their choice not to act as servants for 'middle and higher classes of society' would 'prevent conception, as these women are unable to bear children and attend to household duties as well'.¹¹⁰² The author thought that the remedy, 'obvious' but 'unlikely' with a Labor Government, was that laws should bar women from all trades and factories and girls should be compelled 'to serve a training in domestic economy'. If this was done, 'an improved birth rate, and a healthier race of children would soon be apparent'.¹¹⁰³ Feminist Dr Roberta Jull also proposed conscription for domestic service, suggesting it would increase births more effectively than the methods proposed by the 1904 Royal Commissioners.¹¹⁰⁴

Drysdale had railed against the proposition that race improvement demanded 'the sacrifice of women to passive and unlimited maternity'¹¹⁰⁵ but the New Zealand eugenicist Sir Frederick Truby King (1858-1938) considered women to be primarily the 'mothers of the race'. He warned delegates at the 1914 *Australasian Medical Congress*: 'if an undue proportion of the energies and blood-supply go to the brain and the voluntary muscles, there will not be enough left over for the rest of the system.' Such folly would swell the numbers of 'flat-chested over-pressured girls' who would be unfit for maternity. In King's opinion women should wear loose clothing and train to become good mothers because by 'giving them a greater interest' by 'introducing matters connected with home life', educators would be 'doing an enormous benefit to the women, and prospectively to the race'.¹¹⁰⁶

While King had been 'all enthusiasm' for women's higher education, he changed after hearing a paper read at a Conference on Infant Mortality and Child Welfare in London by a Chicago doctor, Caroline Hedger.¹¹⁰⁷ In her study of female graduates from Wellesley College, Hedger found that fewer of them were married or had children. Those who had children had 'inferior' ones, and few of these mothers could breast feed.¹¹⁰⁸ Even Saleeby,

¹¹⁰²'Female labour and the birth rate', *AMG* (6 January 1912), 13.

¹¹⁰³*Ibid.*, 13-14.

¹¹⁰⁴Jull, 1916, quoted in Kay Daniels and Mary Murnane (comps.), *Uphill All the Way: A Documentary History of Women in Australia* (St Lucia: UQP, 1980), 133-34.

¹¹⁰⁵Drysdale (1911), 21.

¹¹⁰⁶Truby King, 'Education and Eugenics', *AMCT* (1914), 85.

¹¹⁰⁷Drs Mary Booth and W Perrin Norris were the Australian delegates at the Fourth English-speaking Conference on Infant Mortality, held in London on 4-5 August 1913. Booth, in *Infant Mortality: Report by Dr Mary Booth*, CPP, vol 3 (17 December 1913), 66, praised Hedger's paper, 'Relation of the education of the girl to infant mortality'.

¹¹⁰⁸King, 85-86. For a discussion of this view that higher education harmed women's motherhood abilities, and an 1890 study which refuted it, see Daniel Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics*

the staunch supporter of environmental eugenics, indicated that his liberal views did not extend to women by commenting that 'the education of a girl must be to prepare her for womanhood, and not to show that at a pinch she could be a boy'.¹¹⁰⁹ King supported his opposition to women's education by quoting Dr Robert Murray Leslie,¹¹¹⁰ the British eugenicists quoted in Chapter 1, who had claimed (wrongly) that as a result of enfranchising women, the Australian birth rate was 'almost the lowest in the world'.¹¹¹¹

At the Congress, King was supported by the Section in which he spoke but the Congress overall did not endorse the resolution he proposed which had attempted to limit girls' education to domestic science.¹¹¹² Surprisingly, the feminist campaigner Dr Mary Booth (1869-1956), agreed with King's view,¹¹¹³ despite having benefited herself from a higher education.¹¹¹⁴ Ironically, she did not favour other women being able to receive similar opportunities. After graduating in Arts from the University of Sydney in 1890, and medicine from the University of Edinburgh in 1899, she worked in the Victorian Department of Education, where she helped to establish the state's first school medical service in 1910. The eugenic interests of this 'incorrigibly active' woman were expressed in her concern for determining the extent of mental deficiency. She also joined the University of Sydney's Society for Combating Venereal Diseases and was awarded an OBE in 1918.¹¹¹⁵

Despite her feminism, education and career, Booth opposed 'high pressure of education' for girls because, if exposed to demanding school work 'she was divorced from home interests and therefore lost taste for a contented home life'. In Booth's view education should not 'set the woman seeking for interests outside her home life'.¹¹¹⁶ She established a college of home economics in 1936.¹¹¹⁷ There were other women who shared Booth's broad aims

and the Uses of Human Heredity (New York: Knopf, 1985), 89.

¹¹⁰⁹King, quoting Saleeby, *AMTC* (1914), 87.

¹¹¹⁰King, quoting Leslie, *ibid*, 88.

¹¹¹¹R Murray Leslie, 'Women's progress in relation to eugenics', *ER*, 2 (1910-11), 291 and *ER*, 3 (1912-13), 353. The anti-feminist Robert Murray Leslie (1866-1921) was Chairman of the Council of the Women Imperial Health Association of Great Britain and, in 1917, published *The Health of a Woman*.

¹¹¹²*AMTC* (1914), 42-44.

¹¹¹³*Ibid*, 87.

¹¹¹⁴See Ruth MacKinnon, *Dr Mary Booth, OBE, BA, MB CM: A Biography* [1969], 10, ML Doc 1530. Booth was 'a pioneer of the National Council of Women; doctor in the Victorian Education Department, Pankhurst suffragette; fervid supporter of the war; worker for town planning, domestic science, Australian history and nature conservation', 1. Her life 'cascaded with interests' and 'she was one of four women who unsuccessfully contested the 1920 State elections, the first in which women were eligible to stand for election. As an independent candidate for [Sydney's] North Shore, with ... essentially a feminist platform, she won 1,610 first preference votes'.

¹¹¹⁵Jill Roe's entry for Booth, *ADB*, vol 7, 346.

¹¹¹⁶*Ibid*, 87.

¹¹¹⁷Mary Vinter (comp.), *Naming North Sydney* (North Sydney: Stanton Library, 1985), 101-02. From

and were similarly dedicated to supporting the domestic arts. In 1910 Dr Edith Barrett proposed to the National Council of Women that 'household science' should be taught at university.¹¹¹⁸ From 1927 to 1935 Jessie Street had operated the House Service Company to train and supply domestic workers and in 1937 she suggested to the NSW Premier that a federal grant should be provided to train girls for domestic service.¹¹¹⁹

In 1922 William Blocksidge (who later adopted the name Baylebridge), in rhetoric which preceded that of Hitler, described women as 'the sacred vessels of maternity'.¹¹²⁰ In Blocksidge's scheme, all the 'sound' women would find 'their highest duty and pleasure in producing and bringing up the largest number of efficient citizens that their health and means would permit'.¹¹²¹ The view that healthy married women should be mothers was widely accepted and not only the preoccupation of pronatalists and eugenists.¹¹²² Because this was the norm, the RHA was guarded in its advocacy of birth control and stressed in 1955 that the organization only worked to prevent abortions or pregnancies which would 'not end happily'.¹¹²³ Initially, the RHA maintained that it did not knowingly give advice to the unmarried and consistently emphasized that birth control was only used as a strategy to space births or to prevent them in the case of disease or economic hardship.

National fitness

Plans to protect and improve national fitness began with the recognition by the colonial authorities that disease control was necessary, particularly in the tropics, and that, despite being an island continent, quarantine was also important. In 1832 a Quarantine Act was passed in NSW and in 1838 a shipload of typhus-infected immigrants was quarantined. In 1908 Federal Quarantine Acts replaced state ones, and in the new national system all ships were medically inspected and special plague protection was introduced. Sir Thomas Fitzgerald, in his Presidential address to the 1889 Intercolonial Medical Congress, warned that 'fever stalks' each year, although medicine continued to advance, making it imperative

1936 until 1952 Booth's Memorial College of Household Arts and Science, in Kirribilli, provided courses for girls which aimed to upgrade their status as housewives. In an ironic twist, in 1961 College funds were used, not for home economics but to endow a scholarship for female economics students at the University of Sydney.

¹¹¹⁸Anthea Hyslop, 'The Social Reform Movement in Melbourne, 1890-1914' (PhD thesis, LaTrobe University, 1980), 292, quoting *Age*, 2 April 1910.

¹¹¹⁹Street, quoted in Daniels and Murnane (1980), 234-36.

¹¹²⁰William Blocksidge, *National Notes*, new edn. [Sydney: privately printed, 1922], 39.

¹¹²¹*Ibid.*, 37, 40-41.

¹¹²²For instance, Barrett, Hughes and Beale vociferously opposed contraception.

¹¹²³Lotte A Fink, 'The Racial Hygiene Association of Australia', in Gregory Pincus (ed.), *Proceedings of the 5th International Conference of Planned Parenthood* (London: IPPF, 1956), 289. See also Figure 17.

for good sanitation to accompany the 'educational progress and mental improvement of the people'.¹¹²⁴ A major step towards this goal was the establishment in 1921 of the Commonwealth Department of Health, and in 1936, the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). Dr Emanuel Sydney Morris, a talented public health administrator, stressed in his 1933 Presidential Address to the Health Inspectors' Association that social progress was dependent on good 'hygiene', which comprised the collective measures needed to safeguard the public's health.¹¹²⁵

Infant deaths had begun to decrease by the early 1900s. However, despite progress in medical practice in the first 25 years of the century, Dr Morris, then the Senior Officer of the NSW Department of Health, noted in a prize-winning essay, published in the September 1925 issue of the *Medical Journal of Australia*, that women's death rate from childbirth-related infections had shown 'no noteworthy diminution' and had shown 'a very serious increase' in several states.¹¹²⁶ He reported that 700 mothers 'in the hey-day of their lives' died annually while 'carrying out the highest and most important function'.¹¹²⁷ Risks were greatest if women were attended by doctors not midwives and for births in city hospitals. Morris complained that the medical profession had contempt for their 'inferior' public health colleagues, such as him.¹¹²⁸ However, after publication of these damning statistics, the 'superior' academics and private practitioners might have changed their attitudes to ones of anger or denial because of their fear that public outrage might follow the revelations.

Some of his colleagues attempted to ignore the evidence which Morris had presented. Defensiveness, or a lack of candour, is evident in an October 1925 speech to nurses given by John C Windeyer (1875-1951), Professor of Obstetrics at the University of Sydney, in which he complained about press reports of 'alleged excessive maternal mortality'.¹¹²⁹ Windeyer had also boasted of founding Australia's first antenatal clinic in 1912,¹¹³⁰ while not

¹¹²⁴Thomas Naughton Fitzgerald, *IMCAT*, January 1889, 16.

¹¹²⁵E Sydney Morris, 'Hygiene and Social Progress', *Health Inspectors' Association of Australia, NSW Branch, 22nd Annual Conference* (Sydney, 25-30 September 1933), 9.

¹¹²⁶Sydney Morris, 'An Essay on the causes and prevention of maternal morbidity and mortality', *MJA* (12 September 1925), 314.

¹¹²⁷Morris, *ibid*, 301. 'From 1909 to 1920 the combined number of illegitimate births and births occurring under nine months after marriage comprise over 54% of the total first births', 313. This high rate of unplanned or unwanted births is linked with the difficulties in obtaining contraception or abortion.

¹¹²⁸Sydney Morris, *The State, the Public and the Medical Profession*, in NHMRC, 1st Session (February 1937), Appendix, 3, 5.

¹¹²⁹John Cadell Windeyer, 'Maternal mortality and measures which should be adopted in order to reduce it', *Australasian Nurses Journal* (15 October 1925), 484. 5.

¹¹³⁰Windeyer claimed that his antenatal clinic at the Royal Hospital for Women was the second in the world. Edinburgh had the first.

mentioning the international record set in Sydney in 1904 by Armstrong's launching of the infant welfare movement.¹¹³¹ Such medical rivalry must have slowed progress and it was not until the late 1930s and early 1940s that improved obstetric services, and the use of antibiotics and blood transfusions, caused a massive reduction in the maternal death rates.

In 1938, at the recommendation of the newly-established National Health and Medical Research Council, a National Council for Physical Fitness was set up.¹¹³² Efforts to increase national fitness, by expanding endowment and other public health measures, were intensified by concerns about the war. The sudden increase in concerns for national fitness is demonstrated in statements made by Dr Morris, who had become the NSW Director-General of Public Health. In 1937 he was pessimistic: 'While private medical practitioners frequently opposed Baby Health Centres, public support for them had become insistent and politically significant'. But despite the public demand for such preventive services Morris had 'no doubt that the [medical] profession as a whole in Australia is neither sympathetic nor tolerant towards public health colleagues'.¹¹³³ His pessimism was short-lived because, as the probability of war increased, the role of public health increased. In 1938 Morris stated that 'one of the most potent national urgings towards physical fitness has been the desire to provide a race of strong, virile, stalwart individuals who would provide an invincible bulwark for defence in times of crisis or emergency'. He noted that the renewed interest in physical education had coincided with the 'troubled international relationships'. Although primarily an individual responsibility, Morris added that physical fitness was 'obviously a matter of direct concern to the state' since it was 'an essential qualification of socially efficient citizenship'.¹¹³⁴

By 1939 Morris reported: 'The State is slowly but surely taking upon itself the management of the physical life of the individual from the moment of conception until he has shuffled off his mortal coil'.¹¹³⁵ He contended that Australia could no longer rely on its natural advantages of sunshine, climate and good food, and that the State had to improve the 'unfit',

¹¹³¹William George Armstrong, 'The beginnings of baby health centres in NSW', *MJA* (29 April 1939), 672. In the campaign 28,000 newborn babies were visited in inner city areas. See also *AMCT*, 1905, 'Some lessons from the statistics of infant mortality in Sydney' and *Infant Welfare Movement in Australia*, by W G Armstrong [1938?], Circulars to Baby Health Centres, AA/NSW, I-G of the Insane, 7/9997.

¹¹³²NHMRC, 5th Session (November 1938), Resolution 2, 'Physical fitness', 11.

¹¹³³Sydney Morris (February 1937), 5.

¹¹³⁴Sydney Morris, *Physical Education: An Outline of its Aims, Scope, Methods and Organization*, in NHMRC, 5th Session (November 1938), Appendix 1, 13.

¹¹³⁵Sydney Morris, 'Physical education in relation to national fitness', Section I. Medical Science and National Health, *ANZAAS*, Report of the 24th meeting, Canberra (January 1939), 195.

who were an 'incubus' borne by the 'industrious and able sections of the community'.¹¹³⁶

Perhaps alarmed by his zeal, the NHMRC Council noted:

It is a particular attribute of the British character that voluntary organizations have often shown themselves more ready to undertake activities essential to the welfare of the nation than governments have been to enforce them by legislative measures. Thus, in the field of physical education, there are numerous bodies so engaged from the Boy Scout and Girl Guide organizations to church groups and sporting clubs and associations.¹¹³⁷

The high priority on national fitness lasted for the duration of the national emergency. The Commonwealth National Fitness Act was passed in 1941 and National Fitness Councils were established in all states.¹¹³⁸ Kathleen M Gordon, who was appointed National Fitness Officer, presented reports¹¹³⁹ in which she acknowledged that many of her proposals were based on work which, from 1903, Edith Onians had directed in Melbourne's City Newsboys' Club. Gordon, with three others in 1951, had investigated social problems in British, American and Australian communities. They were sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the team recommended that 'Australia should co-ordinate and extend its present services for youth'. This work had significance for eugenists and indeed the editor of their report was Dr Kenneth Cunningham, Director of the Australian Council for Educational Research and President of the ESV.¹¹⁴⁰ After the war, National Fitness changed its emphasis to children's leisure activities such as national fitness camps and swimming classes.¹¹⁴¹

The Women's movement and eugenics

Many scholars of the early feminist, birth control and eugenics movements have criticised these groups from their own 1970s, 1980s or 1990s perspectives. Don Kirschner examined the 'ambiguous legacy' of the Progressive reformers. At the time, they were portrayed 'almost as saints'. However, 'in the hands of several recent [1960s] scholars' they appear

¹¹³⁶Ibid, 194.

¹¹³⁷NHMRC, Session 5 (November 1938), 10.

¹¹³⁸National Fitness Act 1941, noted in NHMRC, 11th Session (July 1941), Minutes, 3.

¹¹³⁹See Kathleen Gordon, *Community Centres*, paper presented at the 7th Session of the Commonwealth National Fitness Council, Canberra (29 September 1943) and Gordon, *Youth Centres* (Canberra: Govt. Pr., 1944). She also contributed to *The Adjustment of Youth*, Kenneth Stewart Cunningham (ed.), (Melbourne: MUP, 1951).

¹¹⁴⁰Cunningham (1951), 252.

¹¹⁴¹*History and Structure of the National Fitness Council* (Sydney: Department of Education, 1959). In 1939 the body was called the New South Wales Council of Physical Fitness, changing to the National Fitness Council of NSW in 1940. In 1976 the functions transferred to the NSW Department of Sport and Recreation.

'as detached as a group of engineers redesigning a worn-out mechanism'.¹¹⁴² For some, the saints have become sinners.

In Pasadena, Ellen Chesler criticised the critics at the 1992 launch of her book *The Battle For Reproductive Freedom: Margaret Sanger and Her Legacy*.

Birth control has fundamentally altered private life and public policy in this country. Kennedy found Sanger too hot. Sanger was too cool for Linda Gordon. The view of Sanger as a racist had been propagated by the New Right. Angela Davis was also critical and such criticisms have had a profound impact.¹¹⁴³

Chesler did not write as a Sanger sycophant but to unmask myths as promoted by these three critics she mentioned: David M Kennedy who claimed 'Sanger turned women's concerns back to the personal, and that the personal is not political. I believe that the personal *is* political; this is the second stage of feminism';¹¹⁴⁴ Linda Gordon who claimed that Sanger deserted feminism and socialism to further male eugenicists' aims to control the poor¹¹⁴⁵ and Angela Davis who claimed that white birth controllers were part of a genocidal plot to eliminate blacks.¹¹⁴⁶ Such critics ignore the fact that Sanger's statements need to be read in their historical context when eugenics was a respectable 'scientific reform' while birth control and feminism were not.¹¹⁴⁷

In 1993 Deborah Cohen found flaws in the accepted negative views about Marie Stopes.¹¹⁴⁸ She examined the Mothers' Clinics records of staff and patients, and found that despite historians' extensive writing about Stopes and the birth control movement, their views were 'remarkably lopsided': by ignoring the clinics, they had 'wrongly identified a critical *characteristic* of birth control propaganda as the most important *outcome* of its practice'.¹¹⁴⁹ Cohen demonstrated that Stopes' 'practical work in the clinics was governed not by her

¹¹⁴²Don S Kirschner, 'The ambiguous legacy: Social justice and social control in the Progressive era', *Historical Reflections*, 11 (Summer 1975), 70.

¹¹⁴³Compiled from notes which I took at the launch of Chesler's book at the California Institute of Technology, 4 November 1993. Chesler was introduced by Daniel Kevles, who reviewed her book in the *New York Times Book Review*, 28 June 1992.

¹¹⁴⁴*New York Time*, *ibid*, 34, Chesler quoting Kennedy, who wrote a biography of Sanger.

¹¹⁴⁵Linda Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America* (New York: Grossman, 1976).

¹¹⁴⁶See also Donald Aul, 'Margaret Sanger labelled "racist"', *American Journal of Public Health*, 71 no 1 (January 1981), 91.

¹¹⁴⁷D Wardell, responding to Aul, *ibid*.

¹¹⁴⁸Deborah A Cohen, 'Private lives in public spaces: Marie Stopes, the Mothers' Clinics and the practice of contraception', *History Workshop: A Journal of Socialist and Feminist Historians*, Issue 35 (Spring 1993), 95-116.

¹¹⁴⁹Cohen, *ibid*, 97.

loudly-proclaimed eugenic allegiances, but by her concern for the happiness and health of the individual woman'.¹¹⁵⁰ The distorted views about Sanger prompted Chesler's response. I was similarly stimulated to defend the RHA from Margaret Conley's harsh evaluation.¹¹⁵¹ Her tone is evident in this extract:

The RHA demonstrated no interest in increasing the individual freedom of women, and despite their concern with physical and genetic transference of disease, they were primarily interested in health only as an indicator of genetic fitness. The primary concern of the RHA and the state to which they pledged allegiance (because of their economic status under its regime) was population control.¹¹⁵²

In her 1981 article, Conley provided little evidence to substantiate these perceptions. The operation of the RHA's tiny birth control clinic from 1933 to 1939 was 'not responsible for the falling birth rate'¹¹⁵³ and 'the state' was in 'populate or perish' mode. There was no 'allegiance' to a 'regime' other than the usual obligation to be law-abiding. Also, a feminist wish to improve women's health was the primary concern at the RHA clinic.¹¹⁵⁴ A similar concern motivated Dr Arthur, the state's Health Minister, who in 1928 proudly called himself a feminist because he was 'in sympathy with so many women's movements'.¹¹⁵⁵ Conley stated that Arthur's Liberal-Nationalist government provided the RHA's subsidy in the two years to 1930, when it was withdrawn by the Labor Minister for Health, a Roman Catholic, because the Labor Party was 'not at liberty' to support an organization which might offend its Catholic supporters.¹¹⁵⁶ The undisclosed purpose of the subsidy was probably to support their anti-VD campaigns, not to promote the 'contentious' RHA birth control clinic,¹¹⁵⁷ which did not open until 1933: the Depression rather than birth control probably explains the 1930

¹¹⁵⁰Cohen, *ibid*, 111.

¹¹⁵¹Conley, "Citizens: Protect your birthright". The Racial Hygiene Association of NSW', *Bowyang*, 6 (1981), 8-12. Margaret Conley is spokesperson for the Canberra-based Public Health Association of Australia.

¹¹⁵²Conley, *ibid*, 11.

¹¹⁵³RHA (Birth Control Clinic) Report for the year ended 30 June 1938, 3.

¹¹⁵⁴The Birth Control Clinic properly managed by expert medical women, assisted by nurses, does good work and saves many women from unwanted children, and from illegal abortions. Children who cannot be fed, clothed and educated, should not be born, and if an ordinary middle class working pair have more than four children, it is impossible to give those children a decent chance in life', RHA, *ibid*, 30 June 1940.

¹¹⁵⁵When his opponents said he was returned to office by the women's vote, he said this 'showed the good sense of women'. "A feminist" and proud of it. Dr Arthur's avowal', *Evening News*, 23 March 1928.

¹¹⁵⁶Conley, quoting Margaret Ripper's 1977 BA thesis (1981), 9, 11. The opposition to contraception was expressed by many at this time, not just the Catholic church.

¹¹⁵⁷According to the Security Service, 23 July 1943, AA, SA: D1915, Item 22063: 'The Objects of the Association was initially to commence a State wide campaign against venereal disease [and to do this the RHA] received for some time a grant of £500 from the NSW State Government. This was discontinued when the Association included in its activities a birth control clinic, the Government taking the view that the Association was not expending the whole of the subsidy in the manner in which the £500 was granted. ... The establishment of the clinic is regarded as a contentious point among medical men'.

decision. According to Conley 'the Association was not the object of the hostility experienced by reformers such as Marie Stopes and Margaret Sanger', dismissing RHA workers as 'God's Police': politically conservative middle class women bent on eliminating the unfit and controlling the poor.¹¹⁵⁸ Birth control was taboo,¹¹⁵⁹ the Association had to struggle for finances and acceptance, and Goodisson, sometimes with the support of Labor voters such as Piddington and Street, were definitely 'reformers'.¹¹⁶⁰ Table 5, giving women's reasons for using contraception, indicates that eugenic reasons were rarely given but the RHA had to disclaim such reality and adopt 'one of the standard protective tactics - providing information and services through a network of sympathetic practitioners, while appearing virtuous in public'.¹¹⁶¹

Anthea Hyslop, in her 1980 thesis which analysed social reform movements in Melbourne early this century, concluded that comments by radicals and conservatives about public health and child welfare could be 'almost indistinguishable' and that their views on racial improvement and national vigour were 'surprisingly similar': 'Liberals, radicals and conservatives' all agreed on the need for a 'larger, healthier, racially pure population, and for the preventive and scientific treatment of social problems'.¹¹⁶² She rejected the 'sterile dichotomy' in which Progressivism was dismissed as a self-serving middle class attempt to manipulate workers.¹¹⁶³ While the 'progressive measures of the early 20th century were chiefly instigated by middle class people', their measures and goals 'had the endorsement, and in some instances the active support of the Labor Party'.¹¹⁶⁴ The same applied to the RHA which had both radical and conservative supporters and opponents. There are dangers in trying to make retrospective judgments about motivation. In any case, as honesty would have been dangerous, the RHA pragmatically adopted a tactic of being

¹¹⁵⁸Conley (1981), 11.

¹¹⁵⁹For instance, Cecil E Skitch's book, *Woman's Destiny and Birth Control* (Adelaide: Vardon and Sons, 1928) was barred from transmission by post because an advertisement on the final page gave an address for readers to contact if they 'desire to exercise care in their matrimonial relationships!', AA Victoria, Accession MP 33/1, PMG's Department, Item 28-463. In 1934 Jessie Street told Edith How-Martyn that 'more harm than good' would follow publicity for birth control, quoted in Daniels and Murnane (1980), 152.

¹¹⁶⁰Recently, radicals such as Piddington and Street have also been dismissed by some contemporary scholars as middle class feminists. Winifred Mitchell told me that she found this 'as silly as labelling Marx, Engels and Lenin middle class philosophers'.

¹¹⁶¹Erica Fisher, 'Opposition to family planning in Australia', ESEAOR [East and South East Asia and Oceania Region of the International Planned Parenthood Federation] Workshop, Kuala Lumpur and provided to Council members of the FPA ACT, 23 October 1987, 2.

¹¹⁶²Hyslop (1980), 12.

¹¹⁶³Ibid, 403, quoting Kirschner (1975), 69-88.

¹¹⁶⁴Hyslop (1980), 400, 402.

'careful about what they said and even more careful about what they wrote'.¹¹⁶⁵ As Cohen demonstrated in her study of Stopes, a more accurate picture of her achievement is provided by examining the work of the clinics rather than by considering the rhetoric of the birth controllers.

It is true that the relationship of birth control, feminism and eugenics is fraught with ambiguity and conflict. However, as Nancy Leys Stepan has noted in tracing the development of eugenics in Latin America, at times eugenics societies offered women new opportunities for social action,¹¹⁶⁶ an observation which was widely applicable. It was certainly true of Jane Clapperton, a British feminist and socialist eugenicist¹¹⁶⁷ who, in 1885, wrote *Scientific Meliorism and the Evolution of Happiness*¹¹⁶⁸ 'the first eugenic discussion of birth control'.¹¹⁶⁹ She believed that laws should be amended to allow 'greater freedom' in marriage and 'greater strictness' about 'parentage', on the grounds that marriage was a private matter, whereas childbirth touched the 'interests of the whole nation'.¹¹⁷⁰ Clapperton also proposed to merge the eugenics and birth control movements in an attempt to alter the 'confused sentiment, illogical thought, and disastrous action in the field of eugenics, to clearness of purpose and consistency of life'.¹¹⁷¹ Her advice was ignored, and during the infancy of the eugenics movement in Britain and America most eugenicists did not share her optimism about such a merger. A 1911 editorial in the *American Breeders' Magazine* typifies this pessimism:

With the rapid increase of wealth a large number of women of well-to-do families go into the leisure class, producing, often, neither children nor other forms of national wealth. But the great change has been from work in the home, usually the farm home, to work as an employee. ... Contemporaneous with this stupendous economic, educational, social, and political movement of women is a very strong tendency to reduction of the birth rate. And those with splendid eugenic heredity ... use their knowledge to lessen the birthrate.¹¹⁷²

¹¹⁶⁵Ruby Rich discussing the early days of the RHA, Pers. comm, 24 November 1987.

¹¹⁶⁶Nancy Leys Stepan, *'The Hour of Eugenics': Race, Gender and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 108-09.

¹¹⁶⁷Donald MacKenzie, 'Eugenics in Britain', *Social Studies of Science*, 6 (1976), 511. Others were Karl Pearson, and Fabian Society members, Sidney Webb, George Bernard Shaw and H G Wells.

¹¹⁶⁸Jane Hume Clapperton, *Scientific Meliorism and the Evolution of Happiness* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1885), vii-viii, indicated that the word 'meliorist' was coined by her 'early teacher' George Eliot who objected to the word 'optimist', preferring 'meliorist', a belief that life could be made better.

¹¹⁶⁹Samuel Holmes, *A Bibliography of Eugenics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1924), 342.

¹¹⁷⁰*Ibid*, 320.

¹¹⁷¹*Ibid*, 429.

¹¹⁷²The woman (sic) movement and eugenics', *American Breeders' Magazine*, vol 2 (third quarter 1911), 225-26.

Similarly, in Australia the various social and reform movements provided many capable women with their first opportunity to be involved in the public sphere and many of them did so. In his speech at the 1893 Congress of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, Henry Rusden claimed it was fortunate that many women were 'alive' to the need for an 'improved choice of mates' but felt that the young should be 'better instructed'.¹¹⁷³ Others disparaged women's 'sterile independence'.¹¹⁷⁴ Similar antagonism was described in 1910 by the British suffragist Mabel Atkinson: 'Many eugenists and men of science regard the feminist movement with critical not to say unfriendly eyes'.¹¹⁷⁵ By the 1930s there was an interaction between the women's movement and eugenics. Feminist initiatives resulted in a transformation similar to that described by Barry Butcher in which 19th century Australian anthropologists' data provided roots for Darwin's studies and were returned, value added, to legitimise social Darwinism in the 20th century.¹¹⁷⁶

In her 1975 thesis on eugenics and the American women's movement, Martha Ellen Bettes has made the sweeping claim that most eugenists sensed the urgency of convincing feminists to have children as they were aware that feminism had 'particular appeal for precisely those women they labelled "superior stock"'.¹¹⁷⁷ According to Bettes, the women's movement had emerged a generation before eugenics and, while some feminists had tailored their eugenics so as not to conflict with their feminism, very few of the ardent, active eugenists were female. Most progressive women gravitated either toward the women's or the birth control movements where the effect on their status was more overt.¹¹⁷⁸ While Bettes' hypothesis is plausible, few of the major figures have responded in this way. For example, Margaret Sanger contradicts the model as she could fit better into Searle's paradigm, either as a 'weak' or 'medical' eugenist, because she adapted eugenics to her primary birth control purpose, guided by her feminist belief that 'no woman can call herself free who does not own and control her body', and by her wish to improve women's health.

The polarity which Bettes described was apparent in 19th century Australia when suffragists normally distanced themselves from birth control advocacy, fearing perhaps that association

¹¹⁷³H K Rusden, 'The Survival of the unfittest', AAASC (1893), 523.

¹¹⁷⁴Mabel Atkinson, 'The feminist movement and eugenics', *Sociological Review*, 3 no 1 (January 1910), 51, quoting the chemistry professor, H E Armstrong.

¹¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*

¹¹⁷⁶Barry Butcher, 'Darwinism, Social Darwinism and the Australian Aborigines: A reevaluation', in Roy MacLeod and Philip Rehbock (eds.), *Darwin's Laboratory: Evolutionary Theory and Natural History in the Pacific* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 389.

¹¹⁷⁷Martha Ellen Bettes, 'A Marriage of Motives: Relationships Between Eugenics and the Woman's Movement' (BA Hons thesis, University of Pennsylvania, May 1975), 38.

¹¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 23, 24, 42.

with it would harm their cause. An atypical figure was Brettina Smyth (1842-1898) who, as a campaigner for women's health rights, defied convention by supporting suffrage and contraception. She was a 'feminist, free-thinker, phrenologist, eugenicist, self-taught health reformer, birth-control advocate, conventional moralist and political campaigner, who made a singular contribution to Melbourne's social and cultural life in the 1880s and 1890s'.¹¹⁷⁹

As Meredith Foley has argued in her 1985 thesis on the women's movement in New South Wales and Victoria from 1918 to 1938, women's 'impetus and labour' frequently initiated many of the 20th century social and political reforms.¹¹⁸⁰ These women were not faced with the suffragettes' dilemma of votes or birth control, nor with the choice which Bettina mentioned between eugenics or birth control. In my view, the women running the RHA adapted, or added value to, eugenics, making it a framework for the birth control movement. As a result, the RHA survived while 'pure' eugenics groups did not. The continuing legacy of Margaret Sanger and Marie Stopes suggests two other instances in which eugenicists subverted eugenics to serve their primary birth control interests.

Suitability of immigrants

In the 19th century, Malthus' theories stimulated British fears about over-population. The fears abated when it was realised that a symbiotic relationship could be established in which surplus people in Britain could be used to stock the Empire, particularly under-populated Australia.¹¹⁸¹ Some Australian eugenicists worried about this 'surplus' disposal. Migration was a prime concern for Australian governments and, while there was no choice in the days of convict transportation, they have attempted to regulate, encourage or assist migration. As Bettina Cass has noted, 'fear of population decline, or at least fear of reduced population growth, prompted an almost continuous government interest in immigration policies'.¹¹⁸² When the Australian economy prospered in the period between 1909 and 1913, the boom was accompanied by a massive increase in immigration. The prosperity and optimism of this period made its mark on the newly-established eugenics movement. In four years from 1911 to 1914, 234,000 immigrants arrived, half of them with some form of assisted passage,

¹¹⁷⁹Farley Kelly, 'Mrs Smyth and the body politic. Health reform and birth control in Melbourne', in Margaret Bevege, et al., *Worth Her Salt: Women At Work in Australia* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1982), 215.

¹¹⁸⁰Meredith Anne Foley, 'The Women's Movement in New South Wales and Victoria, 1918-1938' (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, August 1985), 44.

¹¹⁸¹Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834) published his *Essay on the Principle of Population* anonymously in 1798 and revised it in 1803.

¹¹⁸²Cass (1993), 25.

compared with only 100, in the 20 years from 1891.¹¹⁸³ This did not please everyone and some Australians worried about relying on migration to increase the population; some preferred the increase to be home-grown. For example, Australia's first medical Rhodes Scholar, Harvey Sutton, commented:

The child born in Australia comes into the world with many natural advantages. Hereditarily 'sprung of the earth's first blood' with 'titles manifold', belonging to one of the whitest races on the globe - 98% British - the Australian babe is widely and rightly acclaimed as Australia's best immigrant.¹¹⁸⁴

This claim that Australian babies were the best immigrants was first expressed in 1905 by left-wing politician, W A (Bill) Holman (1871-1934), an 'orator of eloquence and fire'.¹¹⁸⁵ In 1905 the federal and state governments encouraged immigration but the Labor Party actively discouraged it,¹¹⁸⁶ even though this was later denied in 1910.¹¹⁸⁷ Political ambivalence towards local versus imported population growth was indicated by a conservative politician's reiteration that the best immigrant was the Australian baby. It was made by former Prime Minister, Sir Joseph (Joe) Cook (1860-1947) in an advertisement, shown in Figure 2, appealing for funds for Sydney's Renwick Hospital for Infants. Using the pronatalist rhetoric 'People or Perish', he urged readers to 'Pay! Pay!! Pay!!!' to ensure that 'the lives of tiny tots are preserved and they are kept for the nation'. In addition, he

¹¹⁸³Ken Buckley and Ted Wheelwright, *No Paradise for Workers: Capitalism and the Common People In Australia, 1788-1914* (Melbourne: OUP, 1988), 225.

¹¹⁸⁴Harvey Sutton, 'The Australian child and the progress of child welfare', *MJA* (14 November 1931), 612.

¹¹⁸⁵More people. A Labor view. "Baby the best immigrant", *Telegraph*, 18 September 1905, 7 and Johns (1914). Holman was a member of the 1904 RCDBR.

¹¹⁸⁶Rydon and Spann (1962), 59.

¹¹⁸⁷*Ibid*, 123.

appealed to patriotism with the exhortation to 'Keep Australia white' and to economics, with the reminder that 'the greater the number the smaller the burden of taxation'.¹¹⁸⁸ Paradoxically, Cook, a 'ready and dashing debater of the aggressive type', also used almost identical rhetoric to support conventional adult immigration.¹¹⁸⁹ He changed again in 1925, when as the High Commissioner of Australia, he supported one of Britain's (now notorious) child migration schemes.¹¹⁹⁰ Ironically, his pleas for funds to help 'tiny tots' had appeared in the newsletter of the Benevolent Society of NSW, whose Sydney Asylum had a death rate of 86% of 'foundlings' (under the age of one) who were admitted in 1896.¹¹⁹¹

Migration was favoured by the conservative Prime Minister Stanley Bruce who told delegates at the 1926 Imperial Conference in London that the need for 'a better distribution of the white population' was the greatest problem facing the British Empire.¹¹⁹² Australian eugenists and immigration groups often shared common ground. For example, the RHA affiliated with the New Settlers' League in 1929.¹¹⁹³ In the same year, Dr Richard Granville Waddy, an ophthalmic surgeon and a Council Member of Sydney's pro-immigration Millions Club, complained that Britain was not sending Australia her 'thoroughbreds': being white and British was not enough. Britain's unskilled labourers were not desirable contributors to Australia's national 'stock'.¹¹⁹⁴

This eugenic concern was exacerbated by changes in Australian and American immigration policies. Although Australian immigration practically ceased during World War I the *Eugenics Review* reported that a Mrs Gordon Wasche had 'considered the conditions of life in Australia' at the British Emigration Conference held in 1917.¹¹⁹⁵ The magazine also noted that 6,918 Australian soldiers had married British women by December 1918 and, when they returned home, this would be 'better from every point of view than an immigration scheme'.¹¹⁹⁶ When official immigration resumed in 1920, applications were accepted from other national groups as well as the British. Before the war many unskilled migrants went to

¹¹⁸⁸Appeal in the Newsletter of the Benevolent Society of NSW, 25 September 1919.

¹¹⁸⁹See Johns (1914) and 'Keeping Australia White, an appeal by Sir Joseph Cook', *Millions*, 1 (1 November 1919).

¹¹⁹⁰A photograph of Joe Cook addressing Barnardo boys leaving for Australia in 1925 is included in Margaret Humphreys, *Empty Cradles* (London: Doubleday, 1994), 10-11.

¹¹⁹¹For details of this death rate, see the footnote to Figure 14.

¹¹⁹²Imperial Conference (1926), 19.

¹¹⁹³RHA, Annual Report (1930), 3.

¹¹⁹⁴Waddy, 'Eugenics' in *ARHC* (1929), 63.

¹¹⁹⁵*ER*, 9 (January 1918), 295.

¹¹⁹⁶'Inter-Imperial migration', *ER*, 11 (1919-1920), 49-50.

America but much of this ceased in 1924 after the introduction of the Johnson Act with its quota system.¹¹⁹⁷ After this, many central and southern European labourers applied to come to Australia during a period when resources were stretched to assist returned soldiers.¹¹⁹⁸ The otherwise liberal A B Piddington used his *Smith's Weekly* column to complain that Australia's 'manhood standard' would decline as a consequence of the government's policy of subsidizing the immigration of 'human derelicts' and 'paupers'.¹¹⁹⁹ He warned that Australia was accepting 'the sweepings of the Mediterranean' which American immigration officials had rejected.¹²⁰⁰ The *Labor Daily* reported a complaint that mental hospitals were filled with 'insane aliens', followed by a curious denial from officials that 'about 80% of overseas inmates of these asylums originate in Britain'.¹²⁰¹ Apparently, these officials considered 'aliens' to be non-British. Dr Ernest Jones recalled that 18 years before, he was 'the unfortunate person who in 1910 directed the attention of the Victorian State Parliament to the large number of mentally deficient people among the immigrants'.¹²⁰²

A South Australian doctor said that Australia needed to become 'the home of a virile race' which would be 'physically fit, mentally robust, morally clean [and] commercially sound'.¹²⁰³ In 1913 a Melbourne doctor stated that 'a great wave of immigration was beginning' and urged the government to select immigrants from Britain and European countries that 'breed good colonists'. He urged strict medical screening for immigrants: 'While we are prepared to extend a warm welcome to all who are in earnest to make Australia their home and add to her strength and wealth, yet we have an equal right to refuse to allow any to make our country the scene, either of their ineffectiveness, their follies, or their crimes'.¹²⁰⁴

¹¹⁹⁷Phillip Reilly argued in *The Surgical Solution: A History of Involuntary Sterilization in the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 72, that eugenists' claims that immigrants could weaken American stock, provided part of the rationale for the restrictive Immigration Act of 1924.

¹¹⁹⁸Phillips and Wood (1928), 35.

¹¹⁹⁹A B Piddington, 'Importing human derelicts to reduce Australian manhood standard. State and Federal governments offer £11 a head for adult paupers. Australia House and its farcical "medical examinations"', *Smith's Weekly*, 27 September 1924, 9 (c).

¹²⁰⁰A B Piddington, 'Turn off the Mediterranean tide. What the USA dams back will flood Australia. 280,000 new voters at next Federal elections now on the alert. If Dagoes come, Mr Bruce will go', *Smith's Weekly*, 4 October 1924, 13 (b).

¹²⁰¹*Labor Daily*, 5 October 1925, 4 (d).

¹²⁰²'Mental deficiency. Federal Inquiry. Diversity of treatment' *SMH*, 14 August 1928, 15 (e).

¹²⁰³William Verco, 'The influence of the medical profession upon the national life in Australia', *AMG* (20 July 1910), 344.

¹²⁰⁴Albert Weißen, 'Medical inspection of immigrants to Australia', *AMCTC* (September 1911), 638, 645.

In 1927, a bizarre scheme for 'checking degeneracy' was proposed by Ernest MacBride, Professor of Zoology at Britain's Imperial College of Science and an office bearer of the Eugenic Society.¹²⁰⁵ He doubted whether Australia's tropical sun and luxurious vegetation were suitable for white races which had 'evolved in a struggle with grey skies and invigorating climate'.¹²⁰⁶ Despite this, he suggested 'that if numbers of British city people were transported to the wilder parts of Australia and left to their own resources they would in two or three generations again develop into quite respectable people'.¹²⁰⁷ Perhaps because of MacBride's proposal, in June that year Judge Walter Bevan was reported to favour 'exhaustive mental tests' for immigrants to ensure that Australia did not receive migrants known to be mentally deficient.¹²⁰⁸ The following month it was announced that Australian doctors had been appointed in three British immigration ports to provide health screening to prospective Australian migrants.¹²⁰⁹ In 1928 the RHA urged the Commonwealth Government to employ a female doctor at Australia House to screen female immigrants.¹²¹⁰ Lillie Goodisson warned that those with VD were unwelcome because 'we have quite enough of our own'.¹²¹¹

Concerns about 'inferior sections of humanity' being transferred to 'relatively empty countries' were expressed in 1928 by Sir George Knibbs, the only Australian who had made a significant contribution to world debate on eugenics.¹²¹² Knibbs had assured Margaret Sanger that her work would 'bear fruit rapidly' and that there would be an end to the Comstock¹²¹³ Laws' ban on birth control. He felt the world was 'in for a very hard time' unless 'we are to improve and make the lot of humanity more satisfactory by being governed by the more intelligent and altruistic (the few), instead of by the ignorant and selfish masses'.¹²¹⁴ Knibbs was appointed as Australia's representative on the General Council of

¹²⁰⁵Soloway (1990), 176.

¹²⁰⁶ER, 18 (1926-1927), 134.

¹²⁰⁷'City Populations. Checking degeneracy. Professor's theory', *SMH*, 5 January 1927, 13 (a).

¹²⁰⁸*Labor Daily*, 23 June 1927, 9 (e).

¹²⁰⁹Migrants and health. Medical examinations', *SMH*, 27 July 1927, 15 (g).

¹²¹⁰Correspondence', RHA Annual Report (1928-1929).

¹²¹¹Goodisson, 'Racial Hygiene Association', *Progressive Journal* (10 March 1936), 32.

¹²¹²Knibbs, *The Shadow of the World's Future or the Earth's Population Possibilities and the Consequences of the Present Rate of Increase of the Earth's Inhabitants* (London: Benn, 1928), 114.

¹²¹³Anthony Comstock (1844-1915), the founder of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, was the driving force behind the Comstock Law, 'An Act for the Suppression of Trade in, and the Circulation of Obscene Literature and Articles of Immoral Use'. The prudish 'Comstockery' mentality equated contraception with vice.

¹²¹⁴Library of Congress. George Knibbs to Margaret Sanger, 13 December 1927, Sanger Papers, vol 21.

the 1927 World Population Conference in Geneva¹²¹⁵ and he offered a paper on population and migration.¹²¹⁶ He was carefully silent about birth control as the organizers had excluded this topic but, despite his caution, the paper 'was cut out of the conference'.¹²¹⁷ It appeared in the *Eugenics Review* but, possibly to ensure its publication, Knibbs did not mention his Australian links nor make it explicit that his criticism was directed at Britain:

If nations could be permitted to rid themselves of their very poor or derelict members, by simply sending them to other lands, such nations would escape the discipline to which they ought undoubtedly be subject, from the presence of such persons in their midst; and they would impose troubles elsewhere. The result from the world point of view, would on the whole be unquestionably disadvantageous. Communities which have built up commendable standards of living, and desirable social developments generally, will necessarily be hostile to all proposals that they should receive the moral, intellectual, economic and social defectives of other peoples. ... No community, in any way interested in building up its social life, in organising its educational system, and in moulding the ideals of its growing generations, can for a moment admit the claims of other peoples to send their surplus of population, merely on the grounds of its numerical capacity to absorb them.¹²¹⁸

Ironically, his arguments against receiving Britain's unwanted were almost the mirror image of Deakin's 1901 speech which stressed that Australia's future depended on remaining white and British. Knibbs' successor as Statistician in 1922 was Charles Wickens (1872-1939) whose paper was read at the Population Conference.¹²¹⁹ In 1928 Wickens observed that Australia was 'like the boa-constrictor' which habitually bolted its immigrants and then rested until they were digested. 'Such a process of alternate gorging and inertness does not seem the most desirable way to organize the development of the country'.¹²²⁰

Australia received a flood of immigrants once Britain's Empire Settlement Act came into force in 1922. It was passed after consultation with Australia, New Zealand and Canada and specified that assisted migrants should comply with 'standards of physique etc'.¹²²¹ Britain agreed to contribute up to half the expense of emigration and land settlement. This scheme was meant to reduce Britain's problems of unemployment and urban crowding, by increasing

¹²¹⁵Margaret Sanger (ed.), *Proceedings of the World Population Conference*, 29 August - 3 September 1927 (London: Edward Arnold, 1927), 12.

¹²¹⁶In Knibbs to Stopes, 11 July 1927, BL, Stopes Papers, Add MS 38,573, f. 25, Knibbs informed Stopes that he had sent a paper to Sir Bernard Mallett for the Geneva Conference covering population and migration but not 'birth control'. Knibbs added, 'I understand that that question has to be evaded for diplomatic reasons. It is a mistake to omit it.'

¹²¹⁷*Ibid*, 13 December 1927, f. 40.

¹²¹⁸Knibbs, 'The fundamental elements of the problems of population and migration', *ER*, 19 (April 1927-January 1928), 267-89.

¹²¹⁹Wickens, 'Australia and its immigrants' in Sanger (1927), 312-24.

¹²²⁰Wickens, in Phillips and Wood (1928), 54.

¹²²¹Imperial Conference (1926), 272.

white settlement in other parts of the Empire. However, despite government assistance, in the 1920s most of Australia's immigrant and soldier-settlement schemes failed.¹²²² In 1950 the Council For New Era Emigration was launched in London. The Chairman, Air Commodore Sir Frank Whittle, said that the Council's object was to ensure that Britain survived the third world war by encouraging British migration to under-populated Commonwealth countries.¹²²³ This body, known as the Migration Council from 1951, had branches in Australia and New Zealand and enjoyed close links with the Eugenics Society.¹²²⁴ Britain had had several earlier plans for using the empire as a resource: in 1890 Sir Charles Dilke proposed a 'Greater Britain' solution to what he believed was a coming world crisis, in which all the world's English-speaking people would be marshalled against the Russian Empire.¹²²⁵

¹²²²On 19 October 1926 the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Board of Australia indicated that its 1925 debts exceeded £4,000,000.

¹²²³Frank Whittle, a British aircraft engineer and jet plane pioneer, was quoted in 'Population and the Commonwealth. New era campaign', *Times*, 25 November 1950.

¹²²⁴Blacker to Whittle, 28 November 1950, 'Your organisation is reported to have an object with which I am in close sympathy', SA/EUG, D122. There are 434 pages of Council papers from 1950 to 1958, D122-28.

¹²²⁵Robert Colls in Colls and Dodd (1986), 45-46. Dilke (1843-1911) was a rich British lawyer and a radical Liberal MP.

Child migrants from Britain

Another plan involved children. Until recently, few people knew about the British children who came as migrants without family support. They were sponsored by religious and charitable organisations with the approval and financial support of the British and Australian governments.¹²²⁶ Britain sent thousands of children from orphanages or destitute families to various colonial countries. The imperial motive was to send these little 'bricks for Empire building' under the philanthropic guise of 'child rescue'.¹²²⁷ The eugenic motive was to transplant children, rather than adults, from slums in the belief that, if taken away from their parents at an early age, they would escape slum-induced degeneration.¹²²⁸ There are no accurate records of the numbers of children Britain sent to Australia but it is likely that at least 30,000 arrived. They were mostly sent to remote rural areas to swell the population and boost the unskilled work-force. According to one source, 'from 1800 to 1853 Britain exported 500 to 1,000 children a year, most of them to Australia'.¹²²⁹ However, from the 1850s, when the Australian gold rushes began, to the 1900s, Britain sent children to other parts of the Empire where they were considered to be less exposed to moral temptations.¹²³⁰

A different account is given by Margaret Humphreys, the British social worker who revealed some of the schemes' shameful secrets and was awarded an Order of Australia for her services on behalf of child migrants. She reported that 'between 1900 and the Depression of the 1930s, children were primarily sent to Canada, but after the Second World War the charities and agencies began to concentrate on Australia and, to a much lesser extent, Rhodesia and New Zealand. ... The last child went out in 1967'.¹²³¹ Religious and charitable organizations often deceived the children and their relations in a number of ways. For example the children's names were changed, or the children were told that their parents were dead and the relatives that the children had been adopted in Britain. In a number of cases, the family records were destroyed. Revelations of these practices in the last decade have had considerable legal and political ramifications.

¹²²⁶Report of Oversea Settlement Special Sub-Committee', Appendix X, Imperial Conference (1926), 266-90.

¹²²⁷Quoted in Philip Bean and Joy Melville, *Lost Children of the Empire: The Untold Story of Britain's Child Migrants* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 1, 78.

¹²²⁸Caleb Saleeby, *The Progress of Eugenics* (London: Cassell, 1914), 113-14.

¹²²⁹Bean and Melville (1989), 37.

¹²³⁰Gillian Wagner, *Barnado* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1979), 33.

¹²³¹Humphreys (1994), 56-57.

In 1910 Sir George Reid (1845-1918), the Australian High Commissioner in London, appealed for young migrants to go to Australia.¹²³² This proposal was endorsed by Professor Anderson Stuart who became President of the British Immigration League of Australia in 1907.¹²³³ Adolescent boys began arriving in NSW in 1911 under the Dreadnought Scheme and received farm training, with about 7,000 of these boys settling in Australia by 1930.¹²³⁴ In 1912 the South African-born Kingsley Fairbridge (1855-1924) wrote to Dr Arthur asking for details of the Pitt Town training school, one of Arthur's schemes to give farm training to city boys.¹²³⁵

In July that year, Fairbridge and his wife established the first of their farm schools, in Pinjarra, Western Australia, on land offered by the State's Premier.¹²³⁶ The school prospered while Fairbridge was alive and the boys fondly remembered their training.¹²³⁷ A memorial plaque at another of these schools in Molong, NSW, suggests tranquillity: 'On this 1,500 acre Fairbridge Farm from 1938 to 1973 some 12,000 British and Australian boys and girls were brought up to love the country and to learn country skills and ways in keeping with the ideals of Kingsley Fairbridge, founder of the Fairbridge Farm schools of Australia and Canada'.¹²³⁸ However, one report claims that many adults look back bitterly on their days at Molong where most received minimal education.¹²³⁹

Other charity-operated child migration schemes began in the 1920s. In London, the Oversea (sic) Settlement Special Sub-Committee informed delegates at the 1926 Imperial Conference that there were 'practically unlimited openings overseas under schemes which afford satisfactory guarantees for the [British juvenile] migrant'.¹²⁴⁰ In Australia several of these schemes were promoted by the Millions Club which was established in 1919 to promote the settlement of a million farmers on a million farms. The Millions Club and the RHA had links of membership and ideology. For example, Dr Arthur was a Vice President of

¹²³²1 April 1910 entry in *Chronicle* (1990).

¹²³³William Epps, *Anderson Stuart, MD: Physiologist, Teacher, Builder, Organizer, Citizen* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1922), 139.

¹²³⁴Fraser (1984), 68. The scheme ceased in World War I and resumed in 1921.

¹²³⁵Kingsley Fairbridge to Richard Arthur, 13 February 1912 letter, Arthur Papers.

¹²³⁶Frank Reginald Beasley, 'Kingsley Fairbridge: The fulfilment of a vision splendid', *Australian Quarterly* (December 1929), 82.

¹²³⁷Mabel Creelman, 'a surrogate parent approach to child emigration: the first Kingsley Fairbridge Farm School, 1912-1924', in Penelope Hetherington (ed.), *Childhood and Society in Western Perth* (Perth: UWAP, 1988), 127-43.

¹²³⁸Quoted by David Rutherford (Molong: Molong Historical Society, 1983), 137, 140.

¹²³⁹Bean and Melville (1989), 126-29.

¹²⁴⁰Imperial Conference (1926), 275.

the Club and the RHA Patron in 1930. He was the President of the Immigration League of Australia and 'a strenuous advocate of immigration and defence'.¹²⁴¹ In 1921 the Club inaugurated the Barnardo's scheme in Australia which arranged for approximately 3,000 children to be sent here.¹²⁴² In 1925 the Millions Club President, Sir Arthur Rickard, launched the Big Brother Movement.¹²⁴³ This scheme selected adolescents (who had some choice in the decision to migrate) and trained them as farm hands under the direction of a 'big brother': by 1982 more than 10,000 Little Brothers had arrived in Australia.¹²⁴⁴

During the period in which this migration operated, poverty, marriage breakdowns and high rates of illegitimacy produced a massive child exodus from Britain. Many were sent to Australia, which was used 'virtually as a dumping ground' for the 'most seriously deprived institutional children'.¹²⁴⁵ In 1944 the Australian Government recommended that 51,000 child migrants should be received in three years immediately after the war.¹²⁴⁶ While nowhere near this number arrived, child migration did increase post-war with the Catholic Church sending the most. The Fairbridge Society sent the next largest number, followed by Barnardo's and the Salvation Army.¹²⁴⁷ The 1905 claim that 'the best of all immigrants is the Australian baby' was pragmatically reversed in the 1940s to 'the child, the best immigrant'.¹²⁴⁸

The needs of the Empire, not of individuals or eugenics,¹²⁴⁹ were the primary consideration in this Anglo-Australian undertaking. Some children were abused in West Australian orphanages operated by the Christian Brothers.¹²⁵⁰ Details of the deception and trauma relating to some of these schemes have recently been publicised by the Child Migrants

¹²⁴¹RHA Annual Report (1931) and entry for Arthur in Johns (1914).

¹²⁴²Reported by J B Rickard [not the President, Sir Arthur Rickard], in *Millions*, 15 September 1924, 21 and also by Bean and Melville (1989), 120.

¹²⁴³Arthur Rickard, a Sydney 'Realty specialist', was an RHA subscriber and one of the Vice Presidents in 1928-1929. See also *The Big Brother Movement: British Youth Migration, 1925-1987* ([Sydney?]: The Movement, 1987).

¹²⁴⁴Fraser (1984), 69. The scheme ceased in the 1930s but resumed after World War II.

¹²⁴⁵Quoted by Bean and Melville (1989), 110, and by Barry Michael Coldrey in *Child Migration, the Australian Government and the Catholic Church, 1926-1966* (typescript), (Box Hill, Vic: Tamanarai Publishing, 1992), 69.

¹²⁴⁶Quoted by Coldrey (1992), 35-36.

¹²⁴⁷Bean and Melville (1989), 131.

¹²⁴⁸Initially made by Holman in the *Telegraph*, 18 September 1905. The reversed quotation is cited by Coldrey (1992), 42, 44-48. Also see Figure 14.

¹²⁴⁹Australian eugenists who felt that biology was paramount may have considered that these children were 'unfit'. Although environmentalist eugenists might have favoured such migration schemes, there is no evidence that the first NSW Eugenics Society was involved.

¹²⁵⁰Bean and Melville (1989), 114-18, 127-29.

Trust, in books and in harrowing television programs.¹²⁵¹ At first the Catholic Church defended its role in child migration.¹²⁵² In July 1992 Christian Brother Dr Barry Coldrey produced a history 'in haste' of the Church's role in child migration and was investigating allegations of priests' abuse of boys.¹²⁵³ A year later the Christian Brothers publicly admitted that some boys were abused but forced one publisher to withdraw a book about this.¹²⁵⁴ Legal action against the order is still proceeding in 1996.¹²⁵⁵

¹²⁵¹Publicity about this migration was initiated in books such as Gillian Wagner's *Children of the Empire* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1982); Bean and Melville (1989) and Humphreys (1994). The publicity was intensified by the award-winning joint ABC-BBC mini-series *The Leaving of Liverpool*, screened on ABC TV on 8-9 July 1992 and the BBC documentary *Lost Children of the Empire*, screened on 12 July 1992.

¹²⁵²Silvia Dropulic 'Church defends its child migration', *Australian*, 11-12 July 1992, 4.

¹²⁵³Coldrey, Pers. comm. 15 July 1992.

¹²⁵⁴Graham Duncan, 'Brothers regret abuse of boys', *SMH*, 5 July 1993, 5. Robert Pullan, in 'Christian Brothers gag orphan's expose', *SMH*, 8 July 1994, 1, indicated that Harper/Collins withdrew from sale *When Innocence Trembles: The Christian Brothers' Orphanage Tragedy - A Survivor's Story*, by Kate Davies. The book was later published by Angus and Robertson and reviewed by Mary Rose Liverani, 'A childhood betrayed', in the *Australian Weekend Review*, 31 December 1994 - 1 January 1995, 4.

¹²⁵⁵Richard Guilliat, 'Brotherly Love', *SMH* (V), 22 July 1995, 4A, reported a legal firm's discovery that Coldrey, who wrote the official history for the Order (*The Scheme*), had also written a separate report containing the damning material left out of this history. Matthew Russell, in 'Sex abuse: Brothers to pay \$3.5m', *SMH*, 1 August 1996, 1 and 5, indicated that the Christian Brothers have agreed to pay \$3.5 million to 210 men who alleged that as children they were physically and sexually abused by the Brothers while in their care. This is 'one of the biggest class actions in Australia's legal history'.

Conclusion

There were only two significant designated attempts to promote positive eugenics in Australia: Bailey's Hopewood House environmental/nurtural wholesome diet experiment and the Mitchell bequest competition sponsored in a disguised form in a women's magazine. Although there was little interest in schemes such as these to systematically promote children's health or to encourage eugenically desirable parenthood, the pronatalist imperative to boost the population by births and immigration was extremely strong for the first half of this century. This chapter examined the extent to which eugenics was a consideration in the measures to boost population and keep it fit, in programs for maternity allowances, schools for mothers, national fitness and migration. It also considered interactions between feminism and eugenics and examined recent criticism of these two movements.

Barry Smith wrote 'They [the British 'measurement' crusaders] joined the eugenists (they were often the same people)'.¹²⁵⁶ In Australia, in the first half of this century, the same could be said about many prominent public health officials, educators and feminists. Even those who did not call themselves eugenists were in sympathy with its broad aims.¹²⁵⁷ Their eugenics-influenced views were incorporated in plans for maternity allowances and the legacy of these pioneers remain, particularly in public health services. In the case of the RHA, eugenics provided the foundation from which the birth control movement was launched. Eugenics can also be identified as the catalyst for developments in such fields as genetics, reproductive technology, psychology and educational psychology.

¹²⁵⁶F B Smith, *The People's Health, 1830-1910* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1990), 121.

¹²⁵⁷I have demonstrated this. See also James A Gillespie, *The Price of Health: Australian Governments and Medical Politics 1910-1960* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), 32-36.

Chapter 5

Combating Social Evils

Because of their importance, I have devoted two chapters to the theories and strategies of negative eugenics - the movement's now notorious plans for the 'unfit'. Chapter 5 outlines theories relating to the preventive aspects of negative eugenics which aimed to 'protect parenthood' by opposing racial poisons¹²⁵⁸ such as venereal diseases (VD), tuberculosis (TB) and alcoholism. Chapter 6 examines attempts to implement strategies to minimise or eliminate the unfit.

This chapter first examines definitions of degeneracy theory¹²⁵⁹ and eugenics, beliefs about acquired inheritance, and the vitally important nature-nurture debate. It then examines eugenicists' responses to racial poisons, including VD, TB, prostitution, degenerate drinking, criminality, pauperism and other social ills.

Definitions and concepts

Between 1860 and 1910 psychiatrists and neurologists frequently claimed that acquired characteristics were passed from parents to offspring, so that individuals with nervous dispositions would have children with emotional disturbances, grandchildren who were paupers or criminals, and sterile idiots by the fourth generation, unless there was positive intervention.¹²⁶⁰ Degeneracy theory has been summarised in an 1885 paper by Dr Frederick Manning, NSW's Inspector-General of the Insane: 'It is well known that any morbid tendency existing in each parent is transmitted with great certainty, and usually in intensified degree, to the offspring'.¹²⁶¹

Steven Gelb noted that some of the studies which Nicole Hahn Rafter included in *White Trash: The Eugenic Family Studies, 1877-1919* were by eugenicists with 'a substratum of degeneracy thinking', while others were 'prime examples of degeneracy theory'.¹²⁶² He

¹²⁵⁸See Appendix on terminology for a definition of racial poisons.

¹²⁵⁹Degeneracy theory is also defined in the Appendix.

¹²⁶⁰Eugene Talbot, quoted by Steven A Gelb, in 'Degeneracy theory, eugenics, and family studies', *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 26 (July 1990), 243.

¹²⁶¹Manning, *A Contribution to the Study of Heredity* (Sydney: Govt. Pr., 1886), 7.

¹²⁶²Gelb (1990), 243, 245.

commented on the irony of eugenists' appropriation of degeneracy theory because it 'was inherently subversive to the eugenics movement; if the propagation of inferiority was really self-limiting, one rationale the movement was based on would be undercut'.¹²⁶³ Acceptance of degeneracy theory was widespread within and outside the eugenics movement. Elements of it are recognisable in discussions about the inheritance of acquired characteristics and in the nature versus nurture debate. Degeneracy theorists attempted to improve social conditions and health generally, in the belief that this would prevent the problems of one generation from becoming progressively worse.¹²⁶⁴ In contrast, most eugenists believed that the degeneration resulting from the 'bad' heredity in sections of the community could only be reduced if these people did not breed.

In 1924, Samuel J Holmes, Professor of Zoology at the University of California, defined negative eugenics as the term 'generally employed to designate those procedures whose aim is to promote racial improvement, or check racial deterioration, by preventing the multiplication of inferior hereditary stocks'. Holmes listed works on racial poisons and proposals by the champions and opponents of segregation and sterilization, commenting 'there has been much discussion of the legal aspects of different proposed remedies'.¹²⁶⁵ This stemmed from eugenists' difficulties in defining what constituted 'fitness' or 'unfitness'. In London in 1904 Francis Galton was much less specific about the characteristics of the unfit than of the fit when he presented his paper on eugenics at a meeting of the newly-formed Sociological Society. He said that it would be easy to compile 'a considerable list of qualities which most people apart from "cranks" would consider when selecting the best specimens of his class'. This list would include 'health, energy, ability, manliness and courteous disposition' and those chosen would have more vigour, ability and consistency of purpose, 'all qualities that are needed in a State'. He believed the community could be trusted to reject criminals and other undesirable types. Galton concluded 'the aim of Eugenics is to bring as many influences as can be reasonably employed, to cause the useful classes in the community to contribute

¹²⁶³Ibid, 245.

¹²⁶⁴Carroll, in *Science of Man* (1 October 1908), 93, rejected nurture's influence but also argued that good food would prevent children from degenerating and training would make brain-damaged children normal (1 January 1907), 7-8 and (20 August 1908), 51-52.

¹²⁶⁵Samuel J Holmes, *A Bibliography of Eugenics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1924), 496.

more than their proportion to the next generation'.¹²⁶⁶ Such public assurance contrasted with his private admission that he knew the 'worthlessness of most official data on heredity'.¹²⁶⁷

The imprecision and lack of any 'criterion of fitness' was criticised by Prince Peter Kropotkin, a Russian anarchist and philosopher¹²⁶⁸ but despite this, most eugenists believed that their superior qualities would benefit society and posterity. Two contrary claims were made. The first mention of a eugenically-flawed eugenist was made in 1930 by the Eugenics Society in London about Henry Twitchin after his death. This may relate more to the Society's need for publicity than to Twitchin's genetics. A second claim was made in 1949 by Dr Norman Haire, who claimed that he had remained childless after discovering two relatives had epilepsy.¹²⁶⁹ Homosexuality, rather than genetics, may explain his decision.¹²⁷⁰

The British ambivalence about definitions was also evident in Australia. One exception was Dr Alan Carroll who was forthright but wrong. He defined the differences between defectives, deficientes and degenerates, and proposed that affected children should be identified in order to 'train them again into healthy conditions of body and mind'.¹²⁷¹ Although Dr Arthur joined Carroll in a deputation calling for measures to reduce the infant death rate, they had very different ideas about the 'unfit'.¹²⁷² In November 1912, Dr Arthur advocated policies to encourage 'the elimination and the prevention of being born to all those who are manifestly unfit to

¹²⁶⁶See Francis Galton, *Essays in Eugenics* (London: EES, 1909), 37-38. His ideal citizens were male and similar to Plato's guardian class in *The Republic*.

¹²⁶⁷See Galton's 14 March 1905 response to Alexander R Urquhart, from James Murray's Royal Asylum, Perth [Scotland]. Urquhart had given Galton 'hints about trustworthy data' on 7 March 1905 (London: Galton Papers, University College London Library), 133/5A.

¹²⁶⁸Peter Kropotkin, in 'Discussion on "Eugenics"', *BMJ* (2 August 1913), 230.

¹²⁶⁹Haire (as 'Dr Wykeham Terriss') in the Australian magazine, *Woman*, 17 October 1949.

¹²⁷⁰Haire's homosexuality is discussed in Jeffrey Weeks' *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain From the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (London: Quartet Books, 1977), 134, 137, 139-40 and 151-55. George Munster, *SMH*, 24 September 1983, 38 wrote that homosexuality was a 'subject which [Haire] knew most from personal experience, but on which he said least in public and about which he was guarded in private'. This was disputed by (the late) Dr Frank Forster, who began writing Haire's biography after winning Haire fellowships in 1978 and 1979. He considered Haire's childlessness related to his being the youngest of 11 children, not to 'family genetics', Pers. comm., 29 June 1993.

¹²⁷¹'The defectives, deficientes and degenerates', *Science of Man* (21 December 1899), 205.

¹²⁷²*Ibid*, 24 October 1903, 130-31.

become future citizens of any community'.¹²⁷³ The following month the Eugenics Education Society of NSW was established, with Arthur as President. Secretary Eldridge favoured a wider approach: 'encouraging worthy parenthood', 'discouraging unworthy parenthood', and 'opposing the racial poisons'.¹²⁷⁴

In February 1914 Robert Irvine, the Society Vice-President, was cautious in his comments to the *Sydney Morning Herald*.¹²⁷⁵ Two days later, in statements which appeared to distance him from eugenics, he warned readers that there was insufficient knowledge to select those human qualities which would benefit society. He added 'as Bateson, a man of wise caution, says "we have little to guide us in estimating the qualities for which society has, or may have, a use"'.¹²⁷⁶ He was referring to William Bateson (1861-1926) who coined the term 'genetics' in 1905 and was described as 'Mendel's British champion'.¹²⁷⁷ Bateson visited Sydney in 1914 and delivered the presidential address at the British Association of the Advancement of Science Congress.¹²⁷⁸ On the same day Irvine, in what may have been his last involvement with eugenics, concluded that some serious physical and mental defects, vice and criminality could be eradicated 'if society so determined'.¹²⁷⁹

In 1914 another attempt to define unfitness appeared in what the *Eugenics Review* described as the 'rather disappointing' report, 'Care of the Feeble-minded in Australasia'.¹²⁸⁰ Based on a survey which had received few responses from school principals and answers from only 211 of the 2,450 doctors approached, it was the work of an Australasian committee delegated by the Australasian Medical Congress in 1911 to find out the extent of the problem. The committee planned to achieve this by implementing a public education campaign with support from the medical profession, education bodies, eugenics societies,

¹²⁷³Report of Address on Eugenics by Dr Richard Arthur, MLA, Sydney, 18 November 1912, 5.

¹²⁷⁴Eldridge, in *Navy*, 17 May 1915, 3, quoting Saleeby.

¹²⁷⁵Eugenics Society. 'Modern ancestor worship. Limitations of science', *SMH*, 24 February 1914, 12.

¹²⁷⁶R F Irvine, 'Eugenics Education Society', *SMH*, 26 February 1914, 5.

¹²⁷⁷One of Bateson's first students, W E Agar, indicated to Dr Ernest Babcock in a letter on 21 December 1947 that Bateson's antagonism to the chromosome theory of heredity had caused 'the decline of importance of British genetics for so many years after such a promising start' (Berkeley: University of California, Babcock and Clausen Collection).

¹²⁷⁸Bateson, *MJA* (22 August 1914), 173-81 and (29 August 1914), 187-204. Bateson indicated on page 201 that he shared eugenists' views on the 'definitely feeble-minded', commenting 'the union of such social vermin we should no more permit than we would allow parasites to breed on our bodies'. Editorial comment is *ibid*, 183-84. Bateson said he was not a member and took no part in the EES activities, *ER*, 13 (1921-1922), 325.

¹²⁷⁹'Socialism and eugenics', *SMH*, 22 August 1914, 9 (c), indicated that Irvine chaired a joint meeting of the Economics and Commerce Association and the EES.

¹²⁸⁰'The Feeble-minded in Australasia', *ER*, 6 (July 1914), 156.

kindergarten unions, children's departments, charitable hospitals and homes, social workers, the National Council of Women, churches and the press.¹²⁸¹

Dr John Yule, a committee member representing Victoria, agreed that it was a 'perfectly legitimate eugenic aspiration' for any country to select the fittest individuals to produce future citizens. However, he worried about the difficulty of trying to balance the eugenic value of certain characteristics as 'many a mental and spiritual genius would be excluded were we to mate on a basis of bodily perfection alone, and many a deplorable physical weakling [would be] included if the mental and spiritual traits alone received recognition'. Yule worried that it would be hard to even think about positive measures: because of the difficulties of implementing laws to stop the unfit mating, he concluded 'the most casual observer can see a monstrous tyranny and folly possible in this way, or a deeper degradation of the worst class of the population'.¹²⁸² In 1912 a Sydney newspaper editorial expressed similar concerns: eugenics was a principle which people rejected for themselves while conceding that was 'all right' for 'other people's children'. The editor stressed that in marriage selection, the danger posed if 'temperamentally and sentimentally incompatible' people mated was much greater than any threat posed by the marriage of the physically and mentally unfit because, in spite of this, the 'physique of the white race was improving, not deteriorating'.¹²⁸³

In 1929 eugenisists still agonised about definitions: 'Even if we knew how to improve the race by scientific genetics, what are we to take as a model, a Mussolini or a Gandhi, a Darwin or a Ford - a tall man or a short one, a giant in brawn or a giant in intellect - a prohibitionist or an anti-prohibitionist?'.¹²⁸⁴ In 1943 Professor Agar warned people not to 'waste time' over such objections because 'we must surely agree that, say, a population of high average intelligence is better than one of low average intelligence'.¹²⁸⁵ There was disagreement about which people to include in the 'social problem' groups because terms such as 'mental deficiency' meant different things to different people. 'New and better definitions' were needed which 'should be psychiatric and not legal or popular'.¹²⁸⁶ There was also confusion between insanity and mental deficiency: from the 1880s Dr John Fishbourne had been urging authorities to make this distinction, pointing out that each country had different

¹²⁸¹'Care of the Feeble-minded in Australasia', *AMCT* (1914), 701-02.

¹²⁸²*Ibid*, 722-23.

¹²⁸³'The Eugenics Congress', *Telegraph*, 27 July 1912, 12.

¹²⁸⁴Linda Littlejohn, 'Marriage and Divorce', *Australian Racial Hygiene Congress. Report*, 15-18 September 1929 (Sydney: [RHA], 1929), 7. Subsequently cited as ARHC.

¹²⁸⁵W E Agar, *Science and Human Welfare* (Melbourne: MUP in assocn with OUP, 1943), 9.

¹²⁸⁶'The control of the mentally defective', *MJA* (24 June 1916), 502.

interpretations of the 'true meaning' of mental deficiency.¹²⁸⁷ The 1908 report of the British Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-minded listed six categories: 'Persons of unsound mind, persons of mental infirmity, idiots, imbeciles, feeble-minded and moral imbeciles'.¹²⁸⁸

Richard James Arthur Berry (1867-1962) was a British-born anatomist, neurologist and anthropologist with a great interest in mental deficiency and the correlation between brain size and intelligence.¹²⁸⁹ He conducted research on these topics as Professor of Anatomy at the University of Melbourne from 1905 to 1929 and published a report on mental deficiency in Victoria.¹²⁹⁰ In *The Mental Defective: A Problem in Social Inefficiency*,¹²⁹¹ published shortly after he returned to England in 1931, Berry and R G Gordon noted that before 1899 the British did not differentiate between 'unsanity' (presumably mental deficiency) and insanity.¹²⁹² This was corrected by J Shaw Bolton who introduced the term *amentia* (from Latin, meaning without a mind) and *moron* (from the Greek word for a fool) was coined by a once noted but now discredited psychologist, Dr Henry H Goddard.¹²⁹³ Berry, then Director of Medical Services of the Stoke Park Colony For Mental Defectives near Bristol, and Gordon, the Colony's neurologist, agreed with Karl Pearson, who wanted to substitute the words 'social inefficient' for the term 'mental defective'.¹²⁹⁴ While he was in Australia, Berry, with his researcher Stanley Porteus as the junior author, noted in 1918 that mentally deficiency terms should be expanded to include 'previously unrecognized' feeble-minded people and those who could not play a useful part in the community because of 'defective will control' or 'abnormal instincts'.¹²⁹⁵ In 1920 Porteus defined feeble-

¹²⁸⁷Fishbourne, 'The segregation of the epileptic and feeble-minded', *AMCT*, 2 (1911), 893. Edward M Steven had made the same point after a world trip, *ibid*, 893 and E Morris Miller complained about this confusion about terminology in *MJA* (7 February 1925), 134.

¹²⁸⁸Cited in Charles Mackellar and David Welsh, *Mental Deficiency: A Medico-sociological Study of Feeble-mindedness* (Sydney: Govt. Pr., 1917), 21.

¹²⁸⁹See Mary Cawte, 'Cranimetry and eugenics in Australia: R J A Berry and the quest for social efficiency', *Historical Studies*, 22 (April 1986), 35-53. Stanley D Porteus (who had a small head), stated in *A Psychologist of Sorts: The Autobiography and Publications of the Inventor of the Porteus Maze Tests* (Palo Alto, Ca: Pacific Books, 1969), 51, that his former colleague, big-headed Berry was 'perhaps over interested' in the possible relationship between the size of the brain and intelligence.

¹²⁹⁰R J A Berry, *Report to the Edward Wilson (of the Argus) Trust on Mental Deficiency in the State of Victoria, with Suggestions for the Establishment of a Child Guidance Clinic* (Melbourne: Wilson and MacKinnon, 1929).

¹²⁹¹R J A Berry and R G Gordon, *The Mental Defective: A Problem in Social Inefficiency* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1931).

¹²⁹²*Ibid*, 9.

¹²⁹³*Ibid*, 16-17.

¹²⁹⁴*Ibid*, 19-20.

¹²⁹⁵R J A Berry and Stanley D Porteus, 'A practical method for the early recognition of feeble-mindedness and other forms of social inefficiency', *MJA* (3 August 1918), 87.

mindfulness as applying to any person 'who by reason of mental defects other than sensory cannot attain to self-management and self-support to the degree of social sufficiency'.¹²⁹⁶

In 1916 the definition of mental deficiency was 'so wide it could be applied to the majority of people'.¹²⁹⁷ As well, there were hazy boundaries between fitness and unfitness: William Dawson, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Sydney, reminded doctors who were about to diagnose mental deficiency to consider the possibility of 'certain physical handicaps' including 'malnutrition, rheumatism, chorea, rickets, epilepsy, tonsils and adenoids, defective vision, hearing and speech, and an uneasy adolescence, environmental and social handicaps including poverty (insufficient food, clothing and sleep), overwork outside school, and unsettled or inharmonious home conditions'.¹²⁹⁸ There was also the risk that malnourished children might become 'functionally mental defectives'.¹²⁹⁹

One witness at the 1904 Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth-rate commented that Australian children were less sturdy and more anaemic than the 'home-born' [meaning British] children'.¹³⁰⁰ Racial decay became an obsession with one of the Commissioners, Octavius Charles Beale (1859-1930), a father of ten who considered that feminism was a 'formidable adversary of fecundity' and had to pay for his book *Racial Decay* to be published in 1910.¹³⁰¹ Neville Hicks has noted the 'significant fact' that although Beale had argued in favour of the orthodox pronatalist view of that time, he had gained negligible support from his colleagues and his book was ridiculed and unpopular.¹³⁰² However, in 1911 it prompted the former American President Theodore Roosevelt (1859-1919) to write at length about race decadence, in which he made a passing reference to Beale's book, noting that while it was 'not good in form', it deserved studying more 'than any other book that has been written for years'.¹³⁰³ Six years later, in what may have been Beale's only Australian support, a

¹²⁹⁶Ibid, 265.

¹²⁹⁷'The control of the mental defective' (1916), 502.

¹²⁹⁸William Siegfried Dawson, 'Mental deficiency', *MJA* (15 August 1931), 313.

¹²⁹⁹Sir John Gorst, quoted by Dr Arthur, in *State Endowment For Families* (Sydney: Govt. Pr., 1919), 5. See also 'Undernourished, not defective. Why some children are backward. Eat more prunes, he [Dr Arthur] says', *Guardian*, 25 September 1929.

¹³⁰⁰Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth-rate and on the Mortality of Infants in New South Wales (Sydney: Govt. Pr., 1904), Question 4098, by Annie Duncan, a Public Service Inspector of Factories and Shops.

¹³⁰¹Octavius Charles Beale, *Racial Decay: A Compilation of Evidence from World Sources* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1910), 99.

¹³⁰²This response to Beale's book is discussed in detail by Neville Hicks, in *'This Sin and Scandal': Australia's Population Debate, 1891-1911* (Canberra: ANUP, 1978), 100-102. The publishers reduced its price but in 1917, 635 copies were returned to the author.

¹³⁰³Theodore Roosevelt, 'Race decadence', *Outlook* (New York), vol 97 (8 April 1911), 763-69. Johns' (1914) entry for Beale misquoted Roosevelt and omitted the President's negative comments

Catholic tract praised the 'monumental work' as having been 'conceived in a spirit of lofty patriotism'.¹³⁰⁴ Peter Fryer was closer to the mark in 1966 when he described it as 'quite the oddest book on contraception ever published, in a field where competition is heavy'.¹³⁰⁵

Articles promoting racial health and motherhood, and sterilization of the unfit, were prevalent in Australian medical journals until the 1940s.¹³⁰⁶ The pervasiveness of debates about increasing racial vitality is illustrated by James Gillespie's analysis of the Australian medical profession's support, in the 1920s and 1930s, of state-regulated 'national hygiene'. Public health doctors hoped that by adopting such a policy, degeneracy would be eliminated and a superior race would be built.¹³⁰⁷ Debate about racial decay was intense in Britain, where public and parliamentary demands were prompted by the high rejection rates of recruits and by the reverses British troops suffered in the Boer War (1899-1902). This prompted a drive for national efficiency and the establishment in 1903 of an Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. The Committee (drawn from the Home Office and the Local Government Board) published a Report in 1904, emphasising the environmental causes of health deterioration suffered by some newborn babies.¹³⁰⁸ Despite the rejection of propaganda that the urban poor were degenerating, this continued to be 'put about and widely believed'.¹³⁰⁹ Many people used the word 'deterioration' interchangeably with 'degeneracy' and 'decadence'.¹³¹⁰

Fears about the threats to the Empire were compounded by British fears about internal collapse. Distrust and disgust were feelings which many of Britain's well-off had for the urban poor. While many Australian's shared the fears about the Empire's future, few expressed the extreme negativity about the poor which was commonplace in Britain. For

about Beale's book.

¹³⁰⁴Reverend Eustace Boylan, *Factors in National Decay* (Melbourne: Australian Catholic Truth Society, 1917), 6.

¹³⁰⁵Peter Fryer, *The Birth Controllers* (New York: Stein and Day, 1966), 360. Of course, Beale had written a diatribe against contraception.

¹³⁰⁶For example, Stanley Boyd, 'A plea for racial health', *MJA* (8 March 1941), 285-89 and 'Sterilization of the unfit' [editorial and articles], *MJA* (9 March 1935), 295-321.

¹³⁰⁷James A Gillespie, *The Price of Health: Australian Governments and Medical Politics 1910-1960* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), 31-56.

¹³⁰⁸Richard Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth Century Britain* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990) 44-45.

¹³⁰⁹Donald MacKenzie, 'Eugenics in Britain', *Social Studies of Science*, vol 6 (1976), 515. In *The Task of Social Hygiene* (London: Constable, 1912), 24, Havelock Ellis correctly reported the findings but Berry repeated the myth in *MJA* (7 February 1920), 140.

¹³¹⁰Samuel Hynes, quoted by Robert A Nye, in *Crime, Madness, and Politics in Modern France: The Medical Concept of National Decline* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 332. See also Geoffrey Russell Searle, in *Eugenics and Politics in Britain, 1900-1914* (Leyden: Noordhoff, 1976), 20-33.

example, Cecil Rhodes advised that if the British wanted to 'avoid civil war', they had to 'become imperialists'¹³¹¹ and Scouting leader Baden-Powell, who was admired by Pearson and Saleeby, sought to harness the rabble and 'churn out admirably obedient lads'.¹³¹² John Carey demonstrated that 'dreaming of the extermination or sterilization of the mass' was the 'imaginative refuge' for many of Britain's literary intelligentsia.¹³¹³ The President of the Eugenics Society in London wrote to all Commonwealth Heads of State at the 1926 Imperial Conference, enclosing an outline of the Society's eugenics policy and warned leaders about the 'probability that racial deterioration was now actually taking place'.¹³¹⁴ Two years later, Dr Charles Bond gave the 1928 Galton Lecture on the causes of this decay and called for a national 'stock taking'.¹³¹⁵

In contrast, fewer Australians feared civil war but many people worried that an increasingly degenerate population would prompt an Asian invasion. Archibald Brockway, a British-trained surgeon, told the Queensland Branch of the BMA in 1910 that although city people needed to improve their fitness, Australia had not reached, and was never likely to reach Britain's 'deplorable state' of physical degeneration. He considered that physical education was the most important part of girls' upbringing. This, he said, would ensure their fitness to become mothers of the sons of Australia, as he believed that sons, not daughters, inherited their mothers' physical attributes.¹³¹⁶ In 1939 Dr Sydney Morris was confident that the 'average' Australian's 'physique' compared 'very favourably' with other nations' but believed 'we should lead the world in physical fitness'.¹³¹⁷ However, this aim was deplored by Dame Enid Lyons (1897-1981) who became the first female politician in the Commonwealth Parliament. In an apparent criticism of both eugenics and birth control, she claimed in a 1944 radio debate that Australians were stressing physical beauty to the same extent as the Ancient Greeks, with the result that 'we feel that unless a child is 100% perfect it is better for it not to be born'.¹³¹⁸

¹³¹¹Rhodes, quoted by Robert Colls, in Colls and Philip Dodds (eds.), *Englishness: Politics and Culture, 1880-1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 46.

¹³¹²Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell and the Origins of the Boy Scout Movement* (London: Collins, 1986), 8. See also 150-60, 189.

¹³¹³John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice Among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1939* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), 15. See also 12-14, 62-63, 124-25, 202-03.

¹³¹⁴Leonard Darwin, 24 November 1926 letter to the Heads of State attending the Imperial Conference. Eugenics Society Archives SA/EUG D166.

¹³¹⁵Charles Bond, *Some Causes of Racial Decay: An Inquiry Into the Distribution of National Capacity in the Population: The Need for a National Stock Taking* (London: ES, 1928).

¹³¹⁶Archibald Brockway, 'Physical education', *AMG* (21 March 1910), 123-25.

¹³¹⁷Sydney Morris, 'Physical education in relation to national fitness', *ANZAASR* (January 1939), 194.

¹³¹⁸*The Nation's Forum of the Air*, vol 1 (no 2), August 1944, 6. The debate on 'Population Unlimited?' was held in the Assembly Hall, Sydney on 23 August 1944 and was subsequently published by the

Acquired inheritance

An unusual variation on degeneracy theory was outlined to a Sydney audience in 1893 by British Theosophist Isabel Cooper-Oakley. She warned that people who did not try to improve the conditions in slums might be doomed to inhabit a slum when they were reincarnated.¹³¹⁹ Similarly, Australian Theosophists (some of them eugenicists) were usually opposed to VD on health grounds and because a disease-ravaged corpse would make an undesirable start in the next life.¹³²⁰

In 1897 Dr William Cleland (1847-1918) told the Criminological Society of South Australia that he supported the nurture position and urged authorities not to house children with 'bad heredity' in barracks but in surroundings which were 'as natural and healthy as possible'. Cleland, who had become the Colonial Surgeon in 1896 and had been the Chief Medical Officer of the South Australian Lunacy Department since 1878, suggested that 'heredity need not be looked upon as a tyrant with inflexible power driving the offspring to destruction'. Although 'acquired peculiarities' might be transmitted, it was only a tendency to transmit 'a predisposition', which could be modified by surroundings, with the result that people had to struggle, not with fate but with 'flexible powers', thus justifying treatment and hope.¹³²¹

Australians shared the overseas scientific and popular interest in Lamarck's theory of acquired inheritance.¹³²² An 1883 American home medical guide by Dr John H Kellogg (Australian edition 1904), claimed that a man's finger deformity, the result of a shooting incident, had been inherited by all his descendants.¹³²³ He reiterated the theory about the degeneracy continuing 'until the line becomes extinct', unless there was 'some intervening influence of a redeeming character', because parents transmitted 'moral as well as mental qualities' to their children.¹³²⁴ One sceptic noted: 'wooden legs don't run in families, but wooden heads do'.¹³²⁵

Australian Broadcasting Commission.

¹³¹⁹Jill Roe, *Beyond Belief: Theosophy in Australia, 1879-1914* (Kensington: UNSWP, 1986), 80.

¹³²⁰*Ibid.*, 231-32.

¹³²¹William Cleland, *The Chronic Insane, the Habitual Offender and the Endemic Unemployed, with a View to Treatment: A Comparative Study of Degenerates* (Adelaide: Webb, 1897).

¹³²²Jean Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829) a French naturalist who coined the term 'biology', proposed that variations in species were primarily due to their environment, and that such adaptive changes were hereditary.

¹³²³John H Kellogg, *Ladies' Guide in Health and Disease* (Melbourne: Echo, 1904), 386-87.

¹³²⁴*Ibid.*, 298, 389. See also Mrs Irvén Mackenzie, *Soft Persuasion: Tale of Prenatal Culture*, 2nd edn. (Adelaide: Century, 1914).

¹³²⁵Quoted by Lawson Crowe, in *Social Biology*, 32, nos 3-4 (1985), 158.

In 1890 tentative approval was expressed for Weismann's chromosomal theory of heredity by Edward Stirling, Professor of Physiology at the University of Adelaide.¹³²⁶ In 1899 it was dismissed by Dr Ramsay Smith.¹³²⁷ In 1902 Professor Henry Laurie, Australia's first Professor of Philosophy, considered that the theory had been found to be misleading.¹³²⁸ In 1914 Professor Dakin could 'see no reason yet for believing that acquired characteristics were not inherited'.¹³²⁹ A novel twist was added by Dr Charles Bage, a member of the Australian Health Society. According to the pronatalist Bage, childless people 'die out, leaving no descendants, but only the pernicious influence of their bad example'.¹³³⁰

This 'old controversy' of acquired inheritance was 'revived' at the Second International Eugenics Congress¹³³¹ in 1921 and at the third in 1932.¹³³² In 1931 Professor Agar refuted Lamarckian claims following methodical research he had conducted over many years¹³³³ and since the 1930s most biologists have tacitly accepted Weismann's theories and rejected those of Lamarck. However, support has been growing for challenges to this orthodoxy which were first made in 1979 by an Australian immunologist, Ted Steele¹³³⁴ who, with colleagues, is continuing to explore the possibility that some forms of experience can be passed on in genes.¹³³⁵

Liberal eugenists have admitted that a 'great deal of rubbish' has been written about eugenics.¹³³⁶ A particularly good example of such silliness is a proposition made by Dr

¹³²⁶August Weismann (1834-1914), a German geneticist, argued that hereditary material is contained in chromosomes. See Stirling, 'Weismann's theory of heredity', *Royal Society of South Australia. Transactions*, vol 13, Part 2 (December 1890), 257-68.

¹³²⁷William Ramsay Smith, *The Practical Aspects of Heredity and Environment* (Adelaide: Whilas and Ormiston, 1899), 16-17.

¹³²⁸Henry Laurie, 'The theory of use inheritance, psychologically considered', *AAASR*, vol 9 (1902), 778.

¹³²⁹William Dakin, *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Western Australia*, vol 1 (1914-1915), 239.

¹³³⁰Charles Bage, 'Race suicide' in *Social Sins*. A series of sermons and addresses on social evils, St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne, Lent 1912, for the Social Questions Committee. Melbourne Diocesan Synod (Melbourne: Church of England Messenger, 1912), 21.

¹³³¹*New York Times*, 20 November 1921, Section 7, 13 (a).

¹³³²'Acquired character transmission' (leading article), *Times*, 12 October 1932, 13 (c) and correspondence, 18 October 1932, 10 (e) and 11 (e).

¹³³³See W E Agar's article, 'A Lamarckian experiment involving a hundred generations with negative results', *Journal of Experimental Biology*, 8 (1931), 95-107.

¹³³⁴Edward John Steele, *Somatic Selection and Adaptive Evolution: On the Inheritance of Acquired Characters* (Toronto: Williams and Wallace International, 1979).

¹³³⁵The ideas of the 'arch-radical' Steele are discussed by Nicholas Rothwell in 'Come the evolution', *Weekend Australian Review*, 4-5 May, 1996, 5.

¹³³⁶Holmes (1924), 2. In *Sociological Review*, 7 (1914), 128, Saleeby wrote that judging from the

Ellice Hamilton in a lecture to a WEA Eugenics Study Circle in 1922. She quoted an unspecified 'scientist' who concluded that eye colour indicated temperament and ability, after observing portraits in London's National Gallery and finding that all the famous soldiers and sailors had blue eyes, while the eyes of all actors, orators and clergymen were brown. Hamilton 'substantiated' this finding with Australian 'evidence' in which 40% of 'city folk' had brown eyes, as orators and actors 'naturally' congregate in cities. As well, the eyes of 40% of 'our country brothers' were blue and they had been the valiant defenders of the Empire.¹³³⁷

There were equally nonsensical examples of anti-eugenic claims. For example, Dr James Purdy, the NSW Health Department's Chief Medical Officer, stated in 1929 that frequently 'the progeny of two people united solely for the purpose of [eugenic] breeding, are mentally defective'.¹³³⁸ There are also similar instances which have been published more recently. For example, in 1994 Rob Watts accorded eugenists much greater influence than seems appropriate, giving them credit for having 'proselytised' for 'National Parks' [national fitness?] and claimed that 'it was not exaggerating to see the first half of this century as the age of eugenics'.¹³³⁹

Nature versus nurture

Central to eugenic debate is the 'convenient jingle of words', 'nature and nurture', which Francis Galton made popular in 1874.¹³⁴⁰ Ruth Schwartz Cowan's study of Galton indicated that his plan for a eugenic society was based on the belief that heredity is 'omnicompetent' in determining the character of the human race, or in other words that nature is much more important than nurture. To prove this, Galton joined the debate which had gained additional impetus with the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*.¹³⁴¹ *Heredity Genius* in 1869

news published about the First International Eugenics Congress, 'almost nothing but nonsense was reported'.

¹³³⁷Ellice Hamilton, 'Heredity in relation to eugenics', *Australian Highway* (1 December 1922), 176. Dr Hamilton, a Physiology Demonstrator at the University of Sydney, was called 'Harrison' in Part 1. Parts 2 and 3 appeared in January and February 1923.

¹³³⁸ARHC (1929), 11.

¹³³⁹Rob Watts, 'Beyond nature and nurture: Eugenics in twentieth century Australian history', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 4 no 3 (1994), 319. Also Frank Moorehouse, in the 'historical notes' appendix of his book *Grand Days* (Sydney: Macmillan Australia, 1993), 543 and 566, claimed that Francis Galton 'together with Florence Nightingale created the eugenicist movement'. The history of the eugenics movement and biographical details of the individuals indicate that Nightingale did not play this role.

¹³⁴⁰Francis Galton, quoted by William Bateson in Part 2 of his Presidential address delivered at the Melbourne meeting of the BAAS, *MJA* (29 August 1914), 203.

¹³⁴¹Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *Sir Frances Galton and the Study of Heredity in the Nineteenth Century* [PhD thesis, Johns Hopkins University, 1969] (New York: Garland, 1985), i-iii.

summarized Galton's attempts to statistically prove his theory and his 1874 publication, *English Men of Science: Their Nature and Nurture*, also attempted to prove the predominant influence of heredity.¹³⁴² Galton's view was contrary to the prevailing belief from the 1860s to the end of the century, with the most extreme of the environmentalists likening the brain at birth to a *tabula rasa* on which impressions and abilities were gradually imprinted throughout life.¹³⁴³

In essence, the debate is between those who believe that improving the environment will have a genetic benefit because acquired characteristics would be passed on to future generations, and those who believe that nature is predominantly or solely responsible, thus making improvements to the environment futile, as advances in one generation would not be inherited by the next. The elements of the debate have been outlined by Peter J Bowler as 'nature' in this context meaning genetic inheritance, which determines a person's character so that it can only be minimally changed by environmental factors and education, and 'nurture' meaning environmental factors. Biologists and psychologists emphasized 'nature' to support the claim they 'have the key to understanding how human nature may be controlled'. Not surprisingly, social scientists such as educators and sociologists support 'nurture', believing that social rather than biological measures will benefit humanity.¹³⁴⁴ Eugenists have supported both sides of the debate.

In 1855 Gobineau declared that human inequality was determined by inherited racial characteristics, not environment. The controversy about the relative contributions of nature and nurture was a crucial eugenic consideration between 1900 and 1940;¹³⁴⁵ in the 1990s the extent to which genes determine human behaviour is still contentious.¹³⁴⁶ A 1949 study of the writings of 24 prominent British and American scientists who were major contributors to these debates considered the relationship between their scientific opinions and their political orientation. The findings were that 11 of the 12 environmentalists were politically either liberal or radical and 11 of the 12 hereditarians were conservative.¹³⁴⁷

¹³⁴²Ibid, xi.

¹³⁴³Ibid, 12-15.

¹³⁴⁴Peter J Bowler, *The Mendelian Revolution: The Emergence of Hereditarian Concepts in Modern Science and Society* (London: Athlone Press, 1995).

¹³⁴⁵Nicholas Pastore, *The Nature-nurture Controversy* (New York: King's Crown, Columbia University, 1949).

¹³⁴⁶John Horgan, 'Trends in behavioral genetics. Eugenics revisited', *Scientific American* (June 1993), 92-100.

¹³⁴⁷Pastore (1949), 176.

Conventionally, hereditarian-conservative links were most evident in ultra-right wing groups such as the fascist population policies of Hitler and Mussolini which were underpinned by a belief that inequality was hereditary and 'natural'.¹³⁴⁸ However, in Australia, the relationship was less clear-cut: biological determinists could be found amongst both radicals and conservatives and the same political diversity was true of people with an environmentalist perspective.

In 1897 Catherine Helen Spence (1825-1910), suffragist, feminist, reformer and journalist, argued nature's case in an address to the Criminological Society of South Australia. She complained about the rigidity of Calvinistic teaching which was 'paralysing to human effort' but found it less harsh than the law of heredity as portrayed by Zola and Ibsen, pessimists who claimed people 'inherit only the vices, the weaknesses, and the diseases of our ancestors'. Spence added that if this really were the case, the world would have become progressively worse.¹³⁴⁹ She gave the example of Ibsen's tragedy *Ghosts* in which the son exhibits the qualities of his evil father, not the good qualities of his mother who had raised him. Spence concluded that heredity 'need not be regarded as an over-mastering fate' because every one 'has an almost limitless parentage to draw upon'. Spence said she inherited her crooked little fingers from her father's mother, but not the tuberculosis which had killed her and most of her children. She had inherited most of her good qualities from her mother, but she had inherited hope, 'which is invaluable for a social and political reformer', from her 'much too speculative father and grandfather'.¹³⁵⁰

Spence then considered one of the Zola series which referred to a tragic family history, similar to the one outlined in Richard Dugdale's history of the Jukes, first published in 1877.¹³⁵¹ Spence noted that although people continually cited the book as a proof of the importance of heredity, those who had read the book attentively, 'instead of merely accepting allusions to it which are one-sided and defective', would 'see clearly that it forms the strongest argument for change of environment that ever was brought forward'. She pointed out that 'no helping hand removed the children from their vicious and criminal

¹³⁴⁸Paul Weindling, 'Fascism and population in comparative European perspective', in Michael S Teitelbaum and Jay M Winter (eds.), *Population and Resources in Western Intellectual Traditions* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), 111.

¹³⁴⁹Catherine Helen Spence, *Heredity and Environment*. Delivered before the Criminological Society of South Australia, 23 October 1897 (Adelaide: Webb and Son, 1897). Ramsay Smith responded with *The Practical Aspects of Heredity and Environment*, *ibid*, 2 September 1898 (Adelaide: Whillans and Ormiston, 1899).

¹³⁵⁰Spence (1897), 2. The Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen wrote *Ghosts* in 1881.

¹³⁵¹Richard L Dugdale, *The Jukes: A Study in Crime, Pauperism, Disease and Heredity*, 6th edn. (New York: Putnam's, 1900). Dugdale showed (on pages 66 and 113) that heredity was dependant on the environment.

surroundings; neither Church nor school compelled them to come in'.¹³⁵² Spence had correctly interpreted the book.¹³⁵³

Twelve years later, Dr Ramsay Smith was responding to the shifted interpretation of the 'facts' about the Jukes family when he argued that Dugdale's hereditarian conclusions were not justified.¹³⁵⁴ Many others were not so critical and indeed, 'the systematic misuse of his conclusions by succeeding generations' is 'perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Dugdale's work'.¹³⁵⁵ Daniel Kevles, like Spence, pointed out that in his book Dugdale *had* emphasised the part played by the 'degradation of their environment' in the Jukes family's misfortunes, adding that 'the misinterpretation of his work simply reflected the mounting hereditarian propensity of the day'.¹³⁵⁶

Emphasis on heredity began with the rediscovery in 1900 of Mendel's laws of heredity¹³⁵⁷ which had created a 'conceptual revolution' whose implications equalled those of the 'Darwinian revolution'.¹³⁵⁸ Preoccupation with inheritance ignored the influence of income, nutrition, hygiene, knowledge and adequate pre- and post-natal care in the production of healthy children. In the 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th, the focus on nature and neglect of nurture may also have 'relieved the social conscience and reinforced the moral complacency of the well-to-do in an age noted for its sentimentality and optimism on the one hand and its lack of compassion for human suffering on the other'.¹³⁵⁹

Dr Cumpston had focused on health considerations in a 1909 lecture he delivered in Perth, *The Architect as a Factor in Social Progress*.¹³⁶⁰ Public health was always his primary

¹³⁵²Spence (1897), 4, referring to the first volume of the 19-volume work by Emile Zola, *La Fortune des Rougon*, published in 1871, which chronicled the histories of a family.

¹³⁵³Similarly, Ellis (1912), 42 found it 'noteworthy' that Dugdale 'was concerned to prove the influence of bad environment rather than of bad heredity'.

¹³⁵⁴William Ramsay Smith, *On Race-Culture and the Conditions that Influence it in South Australia* (Adelaide: Govt. Pr., 1912), 22.

¹³⁵⁵Charles E Rosenberg, quoted by Gelb (July 1990), 243

¹³⁵⁶Kevles (1985), 71.

¹³⁵⁷Gregor Johan Mendel (1822-1844), an Austrian monk and biologist, published studies on inheritance in 1866 and 1896, which were rediscovered and publicized around 1900. In the 1930s the famous British statistician and eugenist Ronald A Fisher was shocked to find that the odds were 10,000 to 1 that this hero of modern science had falsified his data.

¹³⁵⁸Bowler (1995), viii.

¹³⁵⁹Crowe (1985), 159. This distancing or victim-blaming technique continued to be used in the 20th century by some hereditarian eugenists. For example, in *The Mental Defective: A Problem in Social Efficiency* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co 1931), 155, Richard Berry and R G Gordon wrote 'it is not the slum that makes the mental defective, but the mental defective who makes the slum'.

¹³⁶⁰Dr Cumpston on Rational Dwellings', *Daily News*, 19 August 1909, in Cumpston Papers, NLA, MS

interest, although Michael Roe has argued that Cumpston, on joining the medical service in Western Australia in 1907, had 'caused some controversy by his espousal of eugenics - and was forever to remain a fairly tough hard-liner on this subject'.¹³⁶¹ Roe has cited the Cumpston Papers in the National Library as his reference but they do not provide this evidence. Neither had Cumpston mentioned eugenics in any of his lectures while in Western Australia.¹³⁶² The only thing remotely resembling a 'controversy' was generated by the newspaper itself because of its annoyance that Cumpston did not share its 'hard-line' position on eugenics. While the editorial approved of his advocacy of larger, better designed and well ventilated bedrooms, it added a section on 'Government and Eugenics' because the editor 'was inclined to differ' from Cumpston about the 'influence of environment on men and women'. Cumpston had written:

Why should it not be possible to alter the environment, and by improving the congenial elements and eliminating the antagonistic to produce in a short space of time those successful types which were considered desirable? Students of sociology were fully cognisant of the fact that the fitness of the individual or of the community was a quality that should be cultivated and improved so that the chance of a survival in the struggle for existence became very much greater, and it was realised that the best, if not the only, way to accomplish this was by providing a congenial environment. In proportion as the conditions under which the individual spent his existence could be improved so would the physique, the resistance to disease, and the general well-being of the individual be correspondingly improved.

The Perth newspaper countered with the old alarmist argument that such improvements would 'keep alive a large number of weakly individuals who, under less favourable conditions, would be eliminated' and that their survival could explain the 'remarkable increase in insanity during the last 100 years'. The editors concluded that 'Eugenics must go hand in hand with social improvements. Something must be done sooner or later to encourage the multiplication of the best and to discourage the multiplication of the worst, if the human race is to enjoy permanently the full benefits of improved environment'.

Alison Turtle, after commenting on the fact that 'a strong environmentalism flourished in Australia at the turn of the century', considered the nature-nurture debate and found that the

613, MS 434. A Librarian from the NLA's Manuscripts Section added the note: 'The *Daily News* may not be the name of a newspaper, but of the column', Pers comm., 16 January 1992.

¹³⁶¹Michael Roe, 'The establishment of the Australian Department of Health: Its background and significance', *Historical Studies*, 17 no 69 (1976), 185. Cumpston fits Searle's category of 'medical' eugenis who considered eugenics as a branch of public health which, with government support, could improve people's health or reduce suffering.

¹³⁶²Eugenics was not mentioned in Cumpston's lecture 'Infantile Mortality', in *The Kalgoorlie Miner* [1909], 2, neither was there any reference to controversy in the unsourced article, 'A popular public servant. Dr Cumpston complimented' - apparently a report of the farewell when he left WA. These are also in the Cumpston Papers.

Australian debate, like many others, 'was remarkable neither for the logic nor the consistency with which individuals expounded their views, any more than for a clear understanding of the scientific position to which such views related'.¹³⁶³ Similar comments can be made about more recent debates on this issue. In 1980 Carol Bacchi, in a wide-ranging paper which kindled historical interest in eugenics, argued that the political and social climate played a part in the more optimistic environmental theory adopted by Australian eugenicists before 1914 and that 'hereditary determinism found fewer adherents [in Australia] than in England or America'.¹³⁶⁴ Her views on the importance of the nature-nurture debate in Australia, particularly the pre-1914 preference for environmentalist eugenics, were widely accepted in the 1980s.¹³⁶⁵

In 1984 Stephen Garton found that Bacchi's hypothesis was 'convincingly argued'.¹³⁶⁶ However, he had reversed his opinion by 1994 in an article which Michael Roe described as a 'major new substantial piece on eugenics'.¹³⁶⁷ Garton then protested that 'this idea (nature *versus* nurture) has contaminated (following Derrida) many fields of enquiry'.¹³⁶⁸ Similarly, Rob Watts criticised the 'numerous historians' who 'followed Bacchi into the bog of this oppressive dichotomy'.¹³⁶⁹ As well, Garton and Watts both criticised Bacchi's emphasis on the importance of environment to Australian eugenicists before 1914. My own assessment, after a close examination of archival material, is that Bacchi is correct on both accounts, in emphasizing the importance of the nature/nurture debate and in concluding that, in comparison with Britain and America, there were fewer advocates of hereditary determinism in Australia from 1900 to 1914.

This debate had particular importance in the early years of the eugenics movement in Australia and was hotly argued here as well as by eminent scientists overseas.¹³⁷⁰

¹³⁶³Alison Turtle, 'Anthropometry in Britain and Australia: technology, ideology and imperial connection', *Storia della Psicologia*, 2 (no 2) (1990), 136.

¹³⁶⁴Carol Bacchi, 'The nature-nurture debate in Australia, 1900-1914', *Historical Studies*, 19 (October 1980), 212.

¹³⁶⁵Those accepting Bacchi's views include Graeme Davison, 'The city-bred child and urban reform in Melbourne 1900-1940', in Peter Williams (ed.), *Social Process and the City* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1983), 153; Stephen Garton, 'Insanity in New South Wales: Some Aspects of its Social History, 1878-1958' (PhD thesis, UNSW, 1984), 318; Marilyn Lake, *The Limits of Hope: Soldier Settlement in Victoria, 1915-38* (Melbourne: OUP, 1987), 20; Milton Lewis, *Managing Madness: Psychiatry and Society in Australia 1788-1980* (Canberra: AGPS, 1988), 130 and Grant McBurnie, 'Constructing Sexuality in Victoria 1930-1950: Sex Reformers Associated with the Victorian Eugenics Society' (PhD thesis, Monash University, 1989), 81.

¹³⁶⁶Garton (1984), 318 and footnote 17.

¹³⁶⁷Pers. comm., 17 February 1995.

¹³⁶⁸Garton, 'Sound minds and healthy bodies: re-considering eugenics in Australia, 1914-1940', *Australian Historical Studies*, 26 (October 1994), 163.

¹³⁶⁹Watts (1994), 320.

¹³⁷⁰Pastore (1949), 176.

Evidence for this is the endorsement of the environmental wing of eugenics by the Eugenics Education Society of NSW from 1914 until it ceased in 1922. Leonard Darwin had urged eugenists to 'avoid such phrases as the relative influence of heredity and environment' and, instead, 'pay attention to methods of doing good by attending to both'.¹³⁷¹ Neo-Malthusians stressed that 'good heredity and good environment, or eugenics and eutropics [from the Greek words for good rearing] are equally important for the advancement of the human race'.¹³⁷² Charles Davenport wrote of the 'fundamental difference' between the standpoint of 'euthenists' (supporting improvements in the environment or living conditions) and eugenists.¹³⁷³ Sanger was irritated by the 'age-old discussion' and agreed that the forces could not be disentangled. She added, 'to the foetus, the mother is both "environment" and "heredity"'.¹³⁷⁴

In 1926 Agar warned sociology students at Melbourne University that 'endless discussion' about whether 'heredity or environment' were the most important in 'moulding the chromosomes of man' could 'never head anywhere'.¹³⁷⁵ He stressed that environment was 'very important socially and individually' but it had little relevance for eugenics: 'good environment allows the inborn patent of individuals to develop to the utmost but the next generation starts independent of the environment to which their parents were subjected'.¹³⁷⁶

The debate's importance is demonstrated by the controversies which erupted in the 1970s and have continued in response to publications such as the 1994 best-seller *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*, by the late Richard J Herrnstein and Charles Murray.¹³⁷⁷ In Britain the debate had important ramifications in the early years of the eugenics movement. Dorothy Porter has argued that eugenists had very little political impact in Britain before or after 1914 because of their hereditarian stance. Their

¹³⁷¹Leonard Darwin, 'Heredity and environment', *ER*, 5 (1913), 153-54.

¹³⁷²Charles V Drysdale, *Neo-Malthusianism and Eugenics* (London: Bell, 1912), 13.

¹³⁷³Charles B Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1912), iv.

¹³⁷⁴Sanger, *Dangers of Cradle Competition* (1922), in Carl Jay Bajema (ed.), *Eugenics. Then and Now* (Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania: Dowden, Hutchinson and Ross, 1976), 188.

¹³⁷⁵Norman D Harper, 'Notebooks', Sociology (Hons) Course, University of Melbourne, (1926), 18. Course taught by Professor J A Gunn. Dr Helen Bourke generously gave me photocopies of Harper's extensive notes. She said that 'these lectures on eugenics were almost certainly given by Professor W E Agar'.

¹³⁷⁶*Ibid*, 21.

¹³⁷⁷See for example Steven Fraser (ed.), *The Bell Curve Wars: Race, Intelligence and the Future of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1995). While Herrnsteinn re-ignited this controversy, numerous (frequently fraudulent) studies with similar intent had already been conducted by researchers such as Sir Cyril Burt, Raymond B Cattell, Hans J Eysenck and Arthur R Jensen. An intensive exposé of such studies is given by Stephen Jay Gould in *The Mismeasure of Man* (London: Penguin, 1984) and William H Tucker in *The Science and Politics of Racial Research* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

membership never exceeded 700 and, unlike eugenists in Germany and America, they failed to collaborate with the large network of public health officials who successfully influenced politicians to support environmental reforms.¹³⁷⁸ There was antipathy between the groups: medical officers considered eugenists threatened their role and career prospects.¹³⁷⁹ British eugenists complained that the medical profession was too 'engrossed' with environmental issues to support eugenics.¹³⁸⁰

In Britain the environmental cause was strengthened early this century by the rise of the garden city movement, which profoundly influenced town planning throughout the world.¹³⁸¹ Australia became involved in similar reforms for housing but in 1900 the stimulus was the bubonic plague which caused 103 deaths among 303 sufferers in The Rocks, a Sydney harbourside slum.¹³⁸² Efforts to combat the plague expanded into national quarantine regulations and the formation of the Commonwealth Department of Health. The Australian housing (or town planning) movement incorporated public health and eugenist aims for building attractive, clean, disease-free suburbs which would reduce infant mortality and produce a virile, white race.¹³⁸³ These model communities would enjoy moral health and social stability because the new housing would avert 'degeneration', 'disintegration of character' and revolutionary 'isms' which were thought to be associated with slums and poverty.¹³⁸⁴ Diverse groups supported the town planning movement, one of the great progressive causes which developed in parallel with the 'country life' movement.¹³⁸⁵ While they emerged at the same time, they developed in tandem because, although most people live in a detached house on a quarter-acre in the suburbs, many of them harbour fantasies of life in the bush. The reforms which encouraged home ownership were fostered by the ethos that country life was noble, healthy and quintessentially Australian - a 'legend' or

¹³⁷⁸ 'Enemies of the race: Biologism, environmentalism, and public health in Edwardian England', *Victorian Studies*, 34 (Winter 1991), 159-78.

¹³⁷⁹ Geoffrey R Searle, 'Eugenics and class', in Charles Webster (ed.), *Biology, Medicine and Society 1840-1940* (Cambridge: CUP, 1981), 223-25.

¹³⁸⁰ *BMJ* (2 August 1913), 230.

¹³⁸¹ Robert Freestone, 'The new idea: The garden city as an urban environment ideal 1910-1930', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 73 (October 1987), 94-108.

¹³⁸² J H L Cumpston and F McCallum, *The History of Plague in Australia, 1900-1925*, Commonwealth Department of Health (Melbourne: Govt. Pr, 1926), 16.

¹³⁸³ J M (Max) Freeland, in *Architecture in Australia: A History* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1968), 226, wrote that the May 1901 plans by the Rocks Resumption Board initiated town planning in Australia. In 1913 the Town Planning Association of New South Wales produced a pamphlet with the caption 'degeneracy stamped in every line. Man is the product of his environment: and like begets like - or worse!', quoted by Freestone (1987), 98.

¹³⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 99

¹³⁸⁵ Roe (1984), 15. Supporters included eugenists, Arthur, Eldridge, Irvine and Barrett; Labor politicians, John D Fitzgerald, J R Dacey and John C Watson; planners, Sir John Sulman, Marion and Walter Burley Griffin; and public health official, Dr James Purdy.

'Arcadian mystique' - which was promoted by artists, writers and poets in the early decades of this century.¹³⁸⁶ Although Robert Irvine's garden suburb 'new idea' was no longer considered the answer to society's ills after 1916, its legacy remains dotted in the suburbs of many Australian cities.¹³⁸⁷ While it is impossible to gauge eugenists' influence in these environmental reforms, the planners' success is visible in suburbs and in cities such as Adelaide and Canberra.

Despite the fact that eugenics organisations in Australia did not exist until the last four years of the 1900 to 1914 period which Bacchi studied, the optimism she described was widely felt and not just by fledgling eugenists.¹³⁸⁸ For example, Dr James Jamieson found the 'modern tendency' to minimise the part played by heredity in disease, 'a happy one'.¹³⁸⁹ Although there were some dissenting views,¹³⁹⁰ Professor Henry Laurie welcomed the new century's promise of 'brighter hopes for the prevention of disease and vice in spite of an adverse heredity'.¹³⁹¹

Eleven years later, Ramsay Smith summed up the position of 'a white population' which was 'working out its destiny in new and strange surroundings' and concluded:

Judging from what is already known, environment will modify the physical structure of the race, the bones, the form of the head, the vocal organs, the appearance of the skin, hair and eyes; it will change the times during childhood at which maximum growth occurs; it will modify the time of adolescence and the climacteric; it will influence the mental and moral characters, the appetites, passions and aspirations, of the young and the old; it will reduce the birth-rate; it will modify our medical pathology. All these changes, under intelligent and judicious guidance and by rational living, according to wisely directed education, will contribute to the well-being of the people and expand national life to its fullest possible development.¹³⁹²

¹³⁸⁶Russell Ward, *The Australian Legend* (London: OUP, 1958) and P R Proudfoot, 'Arcadia and the idea of amenity', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 72 (June 1986), 3-18. The myth denied the reality that Australia has long been one of the most highly urbanised countries in the world; it is the driest inhabited continent and has the least land available for agricultural cultivation. See also Figure 3.

¹³⁸⁷Freestone (1987), 105.

¹³⁸⁸The first eugenics organization was established in South Australia in 1911 and the NSW Eugenics Education Society began in 1912.

¹³⁸⁹James Jamieson, 'Heredity in disease', *Intercolonial Medical Journal of Australasia*, vol 5 (no 2), 20 September 1900, 428.

¹³⁹⁰Stanley S Argyle, 'Heredity in disease: A rejoinder', *ibid*, (no 10), 20 October 1900, 469-72.

¹³⁹¹Laurie (1902), 771.

¹³⁹²Smith (1912), 10 and 15.

Mary Cawte has argued that Bacchi's assessment ignored two important hereditarian influences at work in Australia: the social Darwinist treatment of Aborigines and the attempts to segregate or sterilize the unfit.¹³⁹³ In addition, Bacchi's generalisation that the nurture position was more gentle and humane than the nature position with its harsh 'biological determinism' has been dismissed as a myth by Mark Adams, who argued that the supporters of the Lamarckian (nurture) and the Mendelian (nature) theories could both be 'strident advocates of eugenic sterilization'.¹³⁹⁴ Australasian examples confirm Adams' claim.

One man who blurred these distinctions was Dr Truby King who said in 1914 that he was 'in sympathy' with the remark 'environment can knock heredity into a cocked hat'.¹³⁹⁵ He was reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* which described his Medical Congress paper as 'one of the most interesting' but conceded that not all would agree with his strong pro-environment 'plea'. King argued that mothers' ignorance and improper infant feeding, not heredity, which caused a large proportion of 'imbecility or idiocy'.¹³⁹⁶ However, he also 'strongly deprecated procreation of the unfit' and proposed to 'segregate defectives' to prevent them having children.¹³⁹⁷

Similarly, in 1907, Mackellar had argued that environment was 'the explanation *par excellence* of the good or evil in child-life: supervise the environment and you supervise the development of the child'.¹³⁹⁸ By 1917 he had taken the opposite position, however, and advocated compulsory 'sterilization of the unfit', a phrase which British eugenicist Arnold White had coined in 1910.¹³⁹⁹ Although for many years Mackellar had been 'strongly inclined to believe' that environment 'was much the more potent influence', by 1917 'greater experience and a close study of the subject' had caused him to 'materially alter' his views and state that '*the primary factory is usually found in heredity*'.¹⁴⁰⁰ This is contrary to

¹³⁹³Cawte (1986), 35, acknowledged that these hereditarian influences continued or developed after the period Bacchi studied.

¹³⁹⁴Adams, 'Towards a comparative history of eugenics', in Adams (ed.), *The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil, and Russia* (New York: OUP, 1990), 218.

¹³⁹⁵This phrase from the game of ninepins means to beat someone in a contest of skill, by a wide margin. It was quoted by King, in *AMCT* (February 1914), 84 and by Eldridge, in *Navvy*, 3 (17 May 1915), 3.

¹³⁹⁶King (1914), 95. See also *SMH*, 12 February 1914.

¹³⁹⁷Quoted in Bacchi (1980), 204.

¹³⁹⁸Mackellar, *The Child, the Law and the State* (Sydney: Govt. Pr., 1907), 19.

¹³⁹⁹Mackellar and Welsh (1917), 28 and 62. White is quoted in Searle (1976), 93.

¹⁴⁰⁰Mackellar felt that environmental factors were of primary importance 'until at least 1912'. After this, 'enquiries abroad caused him to modify his views', *ADB* vol 10, 298.

Garton's assertion that Mackellar's work 'retained environmentalist principles'.¹⁴⁰¹ David Welsh claimed 'the careful view of neurologists had established that the outstanding cause of feeble-mindedness is heredity'.¹⁴⁰²

Similar claims, some with statistics, continued to be put forward for many years.¹⁴⁰³ As early as 1902, Professor Laurie had commented 'towards the close of the century it had become the fashion to exalt nature unduly over nurture. Recently the pendulum has been swaying back again'.¹⁴⁰⁴ Many British doctors kept the debate oscillating: in 1913 a medical eugenicist complained that his fellow doctors were 'so engrossed with the environment' that they ignored the future.¹⁴⁰⁵ The 'tinkering' of social reformers who had concentrated on nurture, were blamed in 1935 for causing Britain's problems: 'heredity had been forgotten'.¹⁴⁰⁶ In his pioneering history of contraception, Dr Norman Himes directed a 'blast' in 1936 at the 'misleaders of the people' who were 'preaching unalloyed environmentalism'.¹⁴⁰⁷

There were similar nature-nurture fluctuations in Australia. In 1914, W A (Bill) Holman 'rejoiced' to hear Truby King deprecating 'the dismal fatalism' produced in the last 20 years by some doctors' 'misguided study' of heredity. Holman believed it was not medical writing but 'another influence, that of Ibsen', which had been largely responsible for the changes in public thinking.¹⁴⁰⁸ Holman, like Spence, felt that Ibsen's *Ghosts* had caused this widespread fatalistic acceptance of heredity. Meredith Atkinson pointed to the success of Australian soldiers in World War I, claiming that this provided an unparalleled 'demonstration of the efficacy of good food, comfortable homes, shorter hours, higher wages, open-air life, universal education and political freedom'. This, he said, proved that 'pseudo-scientific pessimists' who preached 'hereditarian dogmatism' were wrong. 'Australia has

¹⁴⁰¹Garton (1984), 349.

¹⁴⁰²Walsh, in Mackellar and Welsh (1917), 54.

¹⁴⁰³For example, William A T Lind cited the British biologist Sir E Ray Lankester as stating that 'imbecility in 90% of cases is an hereditary taint', *MJA* (15 April 1922), 405. For a description of the debates in America, see Sturtevant (1966) and Hamilton Cravens, *The Triumph of Evolution: American Scientists and the Hereditary-Environment Controversy 1900-1941* (Philadelphia: UPP, 1978).

¹⁴⁰⁴Henry Laurie, 'The theory of use-inheritance psychologically considered', *ANZAAS*, 9 (1902), 771.

¹⁴⁰⁵Sir James Barr, *BMJ* (2 August 1913), 230.

¹⁴⁰⁶Lord Horder, quoted in *MJA* (5 October 1935), 438.

¹⁴⁰⁷Norman Himes, in *Medical History of Contraception* [1936] (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), 419, footnote 34, said that he felt entitled to this display of emotion after 'having devoted 500 pages to fact reporting and cautious comment'.

¹⁴⁰⁸*AMCT* (1914), 90. An example of the continuation of this theme is Neil Benjamin, 'The influence of heredity and environment in the development of the individual', *Sydney University Medical Journal* (1925), 11-26.

demonstrated beyond question the supreme and infinite potentialities of social environment'.¹⁴⁰⁹ A year later Griffith Taylor observed that environment had the greater influence because when it changed 'so does the civilization wax and wane, and so different races rise to eminence and then sink into oblivion'.¹⁴¹⁰

Popular opinion finally shifted from a belief in the dominance of biology once the 1929 Depression showed that economics, not genetics, had caused the financial chaos which could also affect the 'fit'. The readiness to promote remedial action was further reduced once it was known that fit parents could produce unfit offspring, a possibility which was discussed in 1930 in a Melbourne monthly, *Stead's Review*.¹⁴¹¹ Scottish-born Sir John Macpherson (1858-1942), the first Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Sydney, dispelled the myths about mentally defective children being more likely if parents were poor, unhealthy, or drunken, with the comment that such births could happen 'just as frequently' if parents were rich, healthy and sober.¹⁴¹² Macpherson was given credit for the 'initiation, framing and frictionless passage of the 1913 Mental Deficiency and Lunacy (Scotland) Act'.¹⁴¹³

Racial poisons:

Venereal diseases - the sins of the fathers

Figure 18: The sins of the fathers¹⁴¹⁴

¹⁴⁰⁹Meredith Atkinson, *Australia: Economic and Political Studies* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1920), 19.

¹⁴¹⁰Taylor, quoted by Christie, in MacLeod and Rehbock (1994), 449.

¹⁴¹¹The discussions are in articles by R G MacLachlan, *Stead's Review* (1 January 1930), 38 and (1 August 1930), 52.

¹⁴¹²Quoted in *SMH*, 17 April 1925, p. 12 (e).

¹⁴¹³*Lancet* (5 September 1942), 296.

¹⁴¹⁴Herman H Rubin, *Eugenics and Sex Harmony: The Sexes, their Relations and Problems*, 2nd edn. (New York: Pioneer Publications, 1942), 31.



Some eugenis adopted the purist approach that venereal diseases (VD) lay 'outside the pale of eugenics in its strictest sense' because genetics was not involved.¹⁴¹⁵ However, most eugenists were concerned about VD because it caused 'sterilization of the fit': infected women were likely to become sterile, to miscarry or to have stillbirths and congenital syphilis caused many infant deaths.¹⁴¹⁶ Before the outlook for VD sufferers was improved by treatment with antibiotics, this ancient disease was feared and stigmatised as 'the sins of the fathers' with references in Greek, Roman and Biblical texts, and Shakespeare.¹⁴¹⁷ The allusion to the Bible was also clear in a reference to VD as 'the Herod of the modern world'.¹⁴¹⁸

Sir Thomas Fitzgerald (1838-1908), in his presidential address to the Sanitary Science and Hygiene Section of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science in 1902,

¹⁴¹⁵Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1912), 2.

¹⁴¹⁶W Atkinson Wood, 'The feeble-minded', *Australian Medical Journal* (10 August 1912), 641.

¹⁴¹⁷'The Gods visit the sins of the fathers upon the children' (Euripides, *Phoenix*); 'For the sins of your fathers, you though guiltless, must suffer' (Horace, *Odes*); 'I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me' (Exodus, Chapter 20); 'The sins of the fathers are laid upon the children' (*The Merchant of Venice*, Act III, Scene V). See also *Teaching of Sex Hygiene* (1918), 8 and *AMG* (21 September 1908), 453.

¹⁴¹⁸Welsh, in *Teaching of Sex Hygiene* (1918), Intro.

stated 'syphilis is undoubtedly hereditary'.¹⁴¹⁹ For others, it was doubly feared because it combined the effects of nature and nurture: 'the environment of to-day will become the heredity of tomorrow'.¹⁴²⁰ Venereal disease was found among the convicts in April 1788.¹⁴²¹ Despite the 'anxious care' to prevent its introduction to the settlement, it continued to be a problem and was of great concern to eugenists. Dr Charles (Later Sir Charles) Mackellar, the Medical Adviser to the NSW Government, reported in 1883 that VD was a serious problem.¹⁴²²

A similar warning was given to the Melbourne public in 1894 by Brettana Smyth, the self-acclaimed 'pioneer Australian lecturess and female instructor in matters pertaining to health and disease, and the improvement of the race'.¹⁴²³ Several medical witnesses at the 1904 Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth-rate said that it contributed to the population decline.¹⁴²⁴ Two of them provided statistics from the Sydney Hospital for Sick Children which estimated that the death rate from VD was at least 60 per 1,000 babies treated for the disease: 'after they have contracted it, they are born with it and they die as a result of it'.¹⁴²⁵ In 1917 Professor Anderson Stuart reported that ten cots in a Sydney hospital were filled with children infected with VD, transmitted by 'low-down' men who believed intercourse with a virgin would cure their VD.¹⁴²⁶ George Black, the dissolute NSW Minister for Public Health, proposed to usher in 'an era of sexual sanitation' to end such acts by 'diseased and depraved men'.¹⁴²⁷ He believed that 'pure blood is more valuable to the State than pure

¹⁴¹⁹Fitzgerald, *AAAS* (1902), 721.

¹⁴²⁰Tredgold quoted by Mackellar and Welsh (1917), 57. An example of concern about a combination of these two factors is the anti-war slogan, 'radiation fades your genes'.

¹⁴²¹John Cobley, 'Medicine in the first 20 years of the colony in New South Wales', *MJA* (7-21 December 1987), 567, quoting David Collins, Judge Advocate and Secretary to Governor Arthur Phillip.

¹⁴²²Charles K Mackellar, *Management of the Sydney Hospital: Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Certain Complaints* (Sydney: Govt Pr., 1983).

¹⁴²³Brettana Smyth, *The Social Evil: Its Causes and Cure* [Melbourne: Rae Brothers?, 1894], title page.

¹⁴²⁴See for example these doctors' responses to questions: Stanham MacCulloch, Q 2517; Andrew Watson-Munro, Q 2785-89; George Taylor, Q 3690-97 and Fourness Barrington, Q 3442 in *RCDBR*, vol 2 (1904).

¹⁴²⁵*Ibid*, evidence of Drs William Litchfield and Charles MacLaurin, Q 2380-2405. The threat was also discussed by E Sydney Morris, *MJA* (12 September 1925), 301-45.

¹⁴²⁶*Stages in a Woman's Life*, Lecture at the Salvation Army Congress, Sydney (29 May 1917) by Sir Thomas Anderson Stuart, University of Sydney Archives.

¹⁴²⁷Black, *The Red Plague Crusade* (Sydney: Govt. Pr, 1916), 25. Black's disrepute was shown by Sally McInerney in *The Confessions of William James Chidley* (UQP, 1977, xxii). After *Truth* attacked Black's morals in 1892 he sued them for £5,000. The judge awarded him damages of a farthing because Black and the paper were both morally reprehensible. In 1925 Black unscrupulously lied to Havelock Ellis, by saying that Chidley died of syphilis.

gold'.¹⁴²⁸ In Western Australia Edith Cowan (1861-1932) urged schools to teach 'sex hygiene' and 'scientific temperance' because:

there are no two racial poisons to be compared with alcohol and the sex diseases in the awfulness of their results, and it has become unthinkable that men and women can continue, like ostriches, to bury their heads in the sands of ignorance and yet hope the nation can remain unscathed.¹⁴²⁹

Reginald C Everitt Atkinson, the State's Commissioner of Public Health, and Professor Dakin, appear to have been influenced by Cowan in a book they wrote on sex hygiene and sex education in 1918. They claimed that any man or woman who married, despite knowledge of 'a defective gift', was 'a selfish brute' guilty of 'almost criminal' deceit. They also criticised victims because, by not discovering their prospective partner's defectiveness, they were 'deplorably selfish' and 'sublimely ignorant'.¹⁴³⁰ In 1917 feminists including Cowan were divided about compulsory notification of VD which followed the introduction of the WA Health Act.¹⁴³¹ However, almost all women's organisations were hostile to the discriminatory nature of VD legislation and the provisions such as those described by Everitt Atkinson in his 1924 report on anonymous notification of women suspected of having VD.¹⁴³²

In 1913 there was a Sydney production of *Damaged Goods*, a well-known play about VD by the French dramatist Eugène Brieux (1858-1932).¹⁴³³ Increasing evidence of the harm which VD caused World War I troops, and fears about the consequences when they returned, prompted Commonwealth and State governments to establish committees to deal with the problem.¹⁴³⁴ In 1915 Dr Arthur founded and chaired a NSW Legislative Assembly

¹⁴²⁸Ibid, 23.

¹⁴²⁹Edith D Cowan, *Light! Light! Let There Be More Light! For Parents* (Perth: Colortype Press, [1913?]), 4. Cowan, a member of the Nationalist Party, was elected to the Western Australian Legislative Assembly in 1921, the first woman to enter the Australian Parliament and the second to do so in the British Empire.

¹⁴³⁰Reginald Everitt Atkinson and William Dakin, *Sex Hygiene and Sex Education* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1918), 133.

¹⁴³¹Margaret Steadmen's entry for Edith Cowan, in Heather Radi (ed.), *200 Australian Women* (Sydney: Women's Redress Press, 1988), 77.

¹⁴³²Reported in *Journal of Social Hygiene*, 10 (1924), 187. For women's responses see Ada Bromham, quoted in Kay Daniels and Mary Murnane (comps.), *Uphill All the Way: A Documentary History of Women in Australia* (St Lucia: QUP, 1980), 110-12.

¹⁴³³*Damaged Goods* [*Les Avariés*, produced in 1901] translated by John Pollock (Sydney: WE Penfold for J C Williamson, 1913). The film *Damaged Goods* was produced in 1937.

¹⁴³⁴Shock of finding soldiers returning, 'not wounded but invalided by syphilis', galvanised support for the Act. See 'The spread of syphilis', *MJA* (27 February 1915), 1196.

Select Committee on the Prevalence of Venereal Diseases which produced two reports. Michael Roe has described these as 'fine social documents' which 'led nowhere'.¹⁴³⁵ However, his assessment may be questioned as Arthur's campaigns, which started with 'purity pamphlets' in 1903,¹⁴³⁶ raised awareness and prompted the important recognition that gonorrhoea harmed public health more than syphilis, and played a role in the eventual passing of legislation.¹⁴³⁷ Dr Arthur also deserves credit for influencing the University of Sydney in 1916 to take the unprecedented step of forming a Society for Combating Venereal Diseases in the belief that it could 'make a valuable contribution'.¹⁴³⁸

There were 300 students, staff and graduates at the first meeting, chaired by Anderson Stuart, who agreed with Professor Welsh's proposals that the Society should study 'the problems of venereal diseases, prostitution and kindred evils', and apply all effective measures to educate the public and 'secure suitable legislation'.

Office bearers included prominent eugenists such as Meredith Atkinson, Secretary, assisted by Ralph Noble and Jessie Street, with Professors H Tasman Lovell and R F Irvine on the Council. This active Society published papers and participated in the WEA's 1916 *Teaching of Sex Hygiene* Conference, the first on VD ever held in Australia.¹⁴³⁹ Following this conference, Maybanke Anderson produced the WEA's first pamphlet, an inexpensively produced tract about the menace of VD. She asked 'why prate about a White Australia and erect fine buildings for posterity' when society was 'diseased and dying?' If nothing was done to 'kill this secret enemy', attempting to defend Australia would be 'hardly worthwhile' and it would be a 'mockery to talk about prosperous Australia'.¹⁴⁴⁰ In fact there was public

¹⁴³⁵Roe (1984), 168. The Committee's Progress Report and minutes of evidence was published in 1916, followed in 1919 by its *Report of Existing Facilities for the Treatment of Venereal Diseases in NSW, with Recommendations for their Extension and Treatment*.

¹⁴³⁶For example, see Richard Arthur, *The Choice Between Purity and Impurity: An Appeal to Young Men*, Australian White Cross League, Purity Series no 3 (Sydney: William Brookes, 1903). Another pamphlet which Arthur wrote for the League, possibly in 1916, had the title *Purity and Impurity: Written Especially for Giving Lads of 15 Years and Upwards who are Going Out into the World*.

¹⁴³⁷At the 1914 Medical Congress Barrett stressed the harmfulness of gonorrhoea and was quoted in *Argus*, 18 February 1914, 10 (b). Arthur wrote, 'It is being realized that, of all the racial poisons [the most potent are] syphilis and gonorrhoea', *MJA* (28 October 1916), 361. In 1917 Arthur became President of the White Cross League which promoted chastity for boys and men - to minimise VD. See also 'purity feminism' in the Appendix.

¹⁴³⁸Meredith Atkinson, et al, in *Proceedings of the University of Sydney Society for Combating Venereal Diseases* (Sydney, 1916), 3, indicated that the effort was initiated by the University's fifth year medical students.

¹⁴³⁹Jill Roe (1986), 231. Street's 12-page paper, 'The place of treatment of venereal disease in social reform' advocated preventive sex education and selective 'universal free treatment' - for 'innocent' sufferers, but not for the 'promiscuous' (Canberra: NLA, Street Papers, MS2683, Box 1, 10-11). Street's paper was not published in the 1916 WEA Conference Report but it was mentioned in *SMH*, 27 November 1916, 3 (g).

¹⁴⁴⁰Mrs Francis [Maybanke] Anderson, *The Root of the Matter: Social and Economic Aspects of the*

debate about VD in Australia from 1916, which, although several years behind Britain, was almost 20 years ahead of America where the words 'syphilis' or 'venereal disease' did not appear in the index to the *New York Times* until 1935.¹⁴⁴¹

Anderson's proposals to overcome the problems were also advocated by many women who are now described as 'purity feminists'. By implementing measures such as early marriage, sex education and higher wages for women, they hoped to eliminate prostitution. Membership of the University's anti-VD society was over 600 in 1917 and 1918 but the society appeared to have disbanded after 1920.¹⁴⁴² A similar fate was suffered by other societies with similar aims, such as the NSW Social Hygiene Association (the forerunner of the RHA) which was established in 1916 by the feminists Street, Golding and Dwyer, and Victoria's Association to Combat the Social Evil which ran on the same lines as the RHA.¹⁴⁴³ Street later claimed that her 1916 association foundered because it lacked public support.¹⁴⁴⁴

Despite the controversy which the coercive aspects of the Contagious Diseases Acts sparked in the 1860s in Britain, Australia copied its legislation.¹⁴⁴⁵ Queensland had the first such laws in 1868, followed by Tasmania in 1879, giving police the power to detain prostitutes if they were suspected of having VD. By 1917 four states had CD Acts but not NSW, one of the 'laggards'.¹⁴⁴⁶ However, Judith Allen has noted that two Bills were passed in NSW in 1908, the Police Offences Amendment Bill and the Prisoners' Detention Bill. Both provided for the extension of a convicted person's sentence if they were found to have VD.¹⁴⁴⁷ Politically conservative women's groups remained silent but Rose Scott's Women's Political and Educational League argued against these de facto VD laws. However, after Sir Charles Wade, the state's Liberal Premier, took Scott on a guided hospital tour in 1908 to

Sex Problem, WEA Pamphlet no 1 (Sydney: WEA, 1916), 4.

¹⁴⁴¹'Syphilis' was mentioned in the index to London's *Times* in 1908 and an explicit series about VD (by Prof D A Welsh) appeared in the *SMH* on 22, 23 and 24 November 1916.

¹⁴⁴²Quoted in Clifford Turney et al., *Australia's First: A History of the University of Sydney, volume 1, 1850-1939* (Sydney: University of Sydney, 1991), 422-23.

¹⁴⁴³RHA Annual Report (1920), 7. If Goodisson 'was' the RHA, Mrs James [Angela] Booth personified the Association to Combat the Social Evil. Booth wrote *The Prophylaxis of Venereal Disease: A Reply to Sir James Barrett* (Melbourne: Norman Bros, 1919), which was distributed by the Victorian Association.

¹⁴⁴⁴Jessie Street, *Truth or Repose* (Sydney: Australasian Book Society, 1966), 79.

¹⁴⁴⁵F B Smith, *The People's Health, 1830-1910* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1979), 166. See also 'Venereal disease in Australia', *ER*, 10 (April 1918-January 1919), 241.

¹⁴⁴⁶Welsh, 'The Prevention of venereal disease', in *The Public Health*. From the Addresses at the Health Congress, Sydney, 25-27 July 1917 (Sydney: Govt. Pr., 1918), 19.

¹⁴⁴⁷Judith Allen, in Kay Daniels (ed.), *So Much Hard Work: Women and Prostitution in Australia* (Sydney: Fontana/Collins, 1984), 210.

see children with congenital syphilis, she made a 'dramatic turnabout' and 'repudiated her position on pragmatic and ultimately eugenic grounds'.¹⁴⁴⁸

In 1912 Dr Arthur used similar shock tactics. He gave a shilling to an 'innocent' VD-ravaged boy to accompany him from Sydney Hospital to the neighbouring Parliament House where the patient was paraded at a gathering of politicians who were instructed to 'look at that!'. Arthur boasted 'this was undoubtedly the most eloquent speech ever made in my life'.¹⁴⁴⁹ The NSW Venereal Diseases Act was passed in 1918 and began operating in 1920, making it mandatory for infected people to receive medical treatment until cured and preventing unqualified people from treating VD. Arthur played a significant role in the passing of the Act, campaigning for it for 15 years and drafting the legislation with help from the Society for Combating Venereal Diseases.¹⁴⁵⁰

Treatment for VD was initially provided in segregated lock hospitals.¹⁴⁵¹ In 1899 a lock hospital for women was proposed in Sydney.¹⁴⁵² Instead, a lock ward was established in Sydney Hospital which functioned 'under a cloud', as few people would admit to having been treated there.¹⁴⁵³ This reluctance was related to the widely held idea that these diseases were only 'contracted by the lewd' and formed a 'salutary punishment for sin'.¹⁴⁵⁴ Prior to World War I, the extent of the problem was unknown because hospital statistics were 'valueless' as 'syphilis' was only recorded in the 'gravest cases'.¹⁴⁵⁵ To avoid hurting relatives' feelings, doctors usually avoided writing 'syphilis' or 'alcoholism' on a death certificate.¹⁴⁵⁶

In 1925 the NSW Board of Health funded a VD clinic, one of the finest in the Commonwealth according to Dr John Cooper Booth, the Board's Director of the Division of Venereal Diseases at Sydney's Rachel Forster Hospital.¹⁴⁵⁷ He believed that 'coercive legislation'

¹⁴⁴⁸Rose Scott, 'On the Social Evil', unpublished 1908 speech in Rose Scott Papers, quoted by Allen (1984), 212.

¹⁴⁴⁹Report of an Address by R Arthur, 18 November 1912, 7.

¹⁴⁵⁰'Supreme urgency. Dr Arthur's plea', *Telegraph*, 3 July 1924, 6 (h).

¹⁴⁵¹Special 'lock' hospitals were first used in the Middle Ages to treat people with leprosy. In 18th century England they were used to treat people with VD.

¹⁴⁵²'A lock hospital for female patients in Sydney', *AMG* (20 December 1899), 555-56.

¹⁴⁵³*RCDBR*, vol 2 (1904), Qs 3006 to 3010.

¹⁴⁵⁴B Burnett Ham, 'The Prevention of venereal disease', *AMCT*, vol 1 (1911), 705.

¹⁴⁵⁵Peter B Bennie, *AMCT*, vol 3 (October 1908), 10.

¹⁴⁵⁶*RCDBR*, vol 2 (1904), Dr John Harris, Qs 3840 and 6594.

¹⁴⁵⁷John Cooper Booth, in *ARHC* (1929), 40, said that many people did not know the Rachel Forster

was 'the basis of all control'.¹⁴⁵⁸ Welsh had warned a health congress audience in 1917 about the need to wage two wars 'to defend our homes and our race' from external military aggression and the internal attack from venereal diseases.¹⁴⁵⁹ War, as well as eliminating the best of the race, was blamed for maximizing the impact on the community of the racial poisons TB, VD and alcohol.¹⁴⁶⁰ In a paper presented at the 1920 Australasian Medical Congress, Cumpston commented that 59,274 pensions were paid to war widows, but no help or effective protection was given to the women and children of 55,000 soldiers who had contracted VD on overseas military service, or to the unknown numbers of infected people in Australia.¹⁴⁶¹

In 1908 surgeon Peter B Bennie (1852-1932) had claimed that 25% of the sick children in Melbourne had VD.¹⁴⁶² The National Health and Medical Research Council stated that Bennie's 1908 proposal to the Australasian Medical Congress was the first official action to reduce the incidence of VD by educational means.¹⁴⁶³ This was cited in the NHMRC's review of educational approaches and publications about VD which must have pleased the RHA whose educational approach was very similar.¹⁴⁶⁴

In 1920 the *Eugenics Review* outlined a Queensland plan for nationalising medical services and a proposed American anti-VD consultancy in Australia. The first item described a deputation which the Australian Natives' Association made to Queensland's Labor Premier, 'Red Ted' Theodore, asking the State to manage health institutions and to provide dentistry, pharmacy and ambulance services. This suggestion was not considered feasible.¹⁴⁶⁵ The second item reported that Major W A Sawyer, President of the American-based Social Hygiene Association, had been subsidised by the Rockefeller Foundation's International Health Board to spend five years in Australia organising an American-style anti-VD campaign.¹⁴⁶⁶

VD clinic was part of a general hospital.

¹⁴⁵⁸NHMRC, 9th Session, (November 1940), Appendix III, 25.

¹⁴⁵⁹Welsh (1918), 8-9, 17, spoke about homes 'made desolate, a nation defrauded by gonorrhoea'.

¹⁴⁶⁰Victor Roberts, 'Peace and racial improvement', *AHRC* (1929), 54.

¹⁴⁶¹Cumpston, 'The new preventive medicine', *MJA* (4 September 1920), 221.

¹⁴⁶²Bennie (1908), 10. His obituary is in *MJA*, 5 November 1932, 584-86. In 1927 Harvey Sutton stated that 15% of Sydney children had VD, *Labor Daily*, 23 June 1927, 9.

¹⁴⁶³The proposal was not in Bennie's paper but occurred in the 'Recommendation by the Section of Diseases of Children', *AMCT*, 3 (1908), 22.

¹⁴⁶⁴'Review of education approaches in control of venereal diseases', *NHMRC*, 16th Session (1943), 1.

¹⁴⁶⁵'Health work as a national business in Australia', *ER*, vol 11 (1919-1920), 168-69.

¹⁴⁶⁶'Eugenic news of the world', *ibid*, 169.

While I was unable to establish whether or not Sawyer proceeded with his campaign, American funding for related projects, and the crisis of war-related illnesses (particularly influenza and VD), resulted in the formation of the Commonwealth Department of Health in 1921.¹⁴⁶⁷ The role VD took in this decision is significant and became a catalyst for the Commonwealth's involvement in the provision of health services. Allan Brandt has noted that state intervention for the 'future of the race' was central to Progressive ideology which lay at the heart of debates about VD.¹⁴⁶⁸ An additional influence in Australia was the fact that the American aid was conditional on the Commonwealth Government's promise to initiate and maintain its health commitment.

Anti-VD strategies formed the most important part of the RHA's work. In 1926, at its inaugural meeting in NSW, co-President Dr Ralph Lyndal Worrall emphasized that 'sex is the mainspring of life, but it is treated like a skeleton in a cupboard. Nothing could be more fatal than the association of immorality with venereal disease'.¹⁴⁶⁹ In fact the organization was so closely identified with this anti-VD work that in 1929 Dr Cooper Booth reminded delegates at the Australian Racial Hygiene Congress that people did not seem to realise that the RHA dealt with 'other matters' as well as VD.¹⁴⁷⁰ During the 1930s the RHA sold many American and British pamphlets in connection with their anti-VD propaganda.¹⁴⁷¹ Such education was a high priority and included sponsoring the play *Just One Slip*, showing propaganda movies in country areas and interstate and pressuring the Board of Health to open a 'continuous' VD clinic in June 1933. In one instance Dr Lane from the warship *Canberra* thanked the RHA for lending the 'talkie picture' *Damaged Lives* which he showed to sailors. He said it was useless expecting the boys to read pamphlets but they had to 'sit out the picture'.¹⁴⁷²

¹⁴⁶⁷See Gillespie (1991), 36-38, and Michael Roe (1976), 189-81.

¹⁴⁶⁸Allan Brandt, *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States Since 1880* (New York: OUP, 1985), 48.

¹⁴⁶⁹Dr Ralph Worrall, quoted in 'Women and hygiene: men absent', *Sun*, 24 June 1926.

¹⁴⁷⁰AHRC (1929), 38.

¹⁴⁷¹For example, the RHA sold pamphlets by the British Social Hygiene Council and the play *Just One Slip* by Dr Stewart MacKay was sponsored by the RHA six times at Sydney's Playbox Theatre, RHA Annual Report (1930), 6 and staged at the Savoy Theatre in 1931.

¹⁴⁷²RHA Annual Report (1936), 5, indicated that *Damaged Lives* was privately screened at the Columbia Theatre in the hope of interesting other film companies but did not 'meet with their commercial approval'. Leslie Halliwell's *Film Guide*, 7th edn. (London: Paladin Grafton Books, 1989), 242 described *Damaged Goods* (US 1937, 56 minutes) and *Damaged Lives* (US 1937, 61 minutes plus a 29-minute lecture) as two 'awful warning' films about a man infecting his wife and child with VD. Halliwell indicated that both were 'naïve even at the time', and had trouble with the censors, but were 'not otherwise notable'.

The RHA had arranged showings of American anti-VD propaganda films in the 1930s. However, there is no record that they tried to do this in 1940 in the case of *Dr Ehrlich's Magic Bullet*. This was a film about a cure for VD which provided a biographical account of the German scientist Paul Ehrlich (1854-1915) who developed the drug salvarsan which provided the first effective treatment for VD. While the RHA enthusiastically promoted films which provided awful warnings, they may have felt that there was no educational value in one which dealt with the possibility of a cure for the disease.

The need for prestige, publicity and information are the probable reasons why the RHA attempted to establish links with counterpart overseas organisations. A few members became affiliated with the American Social Hygiene Association¹⁴⁷³ in 1929, and between 1928 and 1935 Ruby Rich, while in London, acted as the RHA representative on Britain's Social Hygiene Council. The RHA even appropriated some of the Council's booklets¹⁴⁷⁴ and proudly announced in their 1938 Annual Report that an address by Dame Maria Ogilvie Gordon, a Vice-President of the Council, had been their 'big share of the Sesquicentenary celebrations'. The image of the RHA's high-level international connections was shattered by Dame Maria who announced that she was 'quite unaware of the work [the RHA was] doing in Sydney'. Surprisingly, this humiliatingly public rebuff was quoted in the Annual Report.¹⁴⁷⁵

Just as in recent discussions about 'medically acquired AIDS' and condom use, there was polarisation among anti-VD campaigners who divided sufferers into categories of 'innocent victims' or 'sinful profligates', and they argued whether condoms diminished or exacerbated the problem.¹⁴⁷⁶ Those promoting chastity included Street, Piddington and Angela Booth.¹⁴⁷⁷ After the experiences of World War I, many medical writers and the New Zealand campaigner Ettie Rout advocated the use of condoms to prevent VD.¹⁴⁷⁸ In 1929

¹⁴⁷³Brandt (1985), 38, noted the amalgamation of America's Vigilance Association and Federation for Sex Hygiene to become the American Social Hygiene Association in 1913.

¹⁴⁷⁴For example, these 1933 booklets by the British Social Hygiene Council were reprinted without acknowledgement in Sydney with RHA logos: *Sex in Life: Young Men*, by Douglas White and Dr Otto May; *Sex in Life: Young Women*, by Violet D Swaisland and Mary B Douie, and *What Parents Should Tell Their Children*, by Mary Scharlieb and Kenneth Wills. Britain's National Council for Combating Venereal Disease and the Society for the Prevention of Venereal Disease amalgamated in 1925 as the Social Hygiene Council. The RHA affiliated with the Council from 1928 to 1930 with Ruby Rich representing the RHA in London from 1929 to 1935.

¹⁴⁷⁵RHA Annual Report (1938), 4.

¹⁴⁷⁶Dennis Shoesmith, 'Nature's Law': The Venereal Disease Debate, Melbourne, 1918-1919', *ANU Historical Journal*, 9 (December 1972), 20-23.

¹⁴⁷⁷Those opposing condoms included Street (1916); Angela Booth (1919) and Piddington in her 1930 articles in *HPC* (August), 10, 44; (September), 10, 44, 46-47.

¹⁴⁷⁸Those favouring condoms included Arthur, in *MJA* (20 May 1916), 411-14 and (28 October 1916), 361-65; Barrett, in *Eighty Eventful Years* (Melbourne: Stephens, 1945), 102-06 and W J Thomas,

RHA opinion about condoms (medical prophylaxis) was divided.¹⁴⁷⁹ Booth and Piddington opposed their use but, while Piddington claimed that 'medical prophylaxis' was 'tired-out, ineffectual, devitalising and degenerate', she promoted a far more radical scheme she called 'parental metaphylaxis' (or 'after-guarding') in which 'a disinfectant in the possession of parents, applied within an hour to that part of the body which has been exposed to infection will save the boy or girl from venereal disease'.¹⁴⁸⁰ Piddington also tried to interest the British Eugenics Society in 'metaphylaxis' and the need to rouse parents to their responsibility to save adolescents from VD.¹⁴⁸¹ However, the Society tactfully replied that they did 'no anti-VD work in the technical sense' or they might have made 'much wider use of her excellent pamphlets'.¹⁴⁸²

Piddington's post-exposure plan has presumably been overlooked by Michael Roe or he would not have claimed that Piddington felt that 'chemico-medical prophylaxis against infection was vile, morally and physically'.¹⁴⁸³ Rather than the use of medical prophylaxis (condoms), Piddington had long argued for 'racial prophylaxis', which she described in her 1926 book *Tell Them!* as the only way 'to see the curse of venereal disease removed for ever from the human race'.¹⁴⁸⁴ There has been a similar misreading of Piddington's position by Joseph Pugliese in a recently published book. Although he cites the page in which Piddington outlined her views in *Tell Them!*, he stated that she had advocated a solution to the 'eugenic problem' by 'maintaining "racial purity" through socially sanctioned forms of breeding'. Clearly Piddington was referring to VD-related problems but he claimed that 'under the guise of teaching children sex education' Piddington advocated 'what she termed "racial prophylaxis" in order to prevent white Australia "acquiring the characteristics of racial inferiority" in which 'the products of 'misalliances' are marked by the stigma of 'miscegenation'.¹⁴⁸⁵ Pugliese was disingenuous and wrong. A full reading of the passage, which he selectively quoted, shows that Piddington was not talking about 'race' and that her warning referred to the stigmata of VD, not the 'stigma of miscegenation'.

Venereal Disease: A Social Problem (Sydney: Corson, 1922). See also Tolerton (1992).

¹⁴⁷⁹See 'Prophylaxis', RHA Annual Report (1928-1929).

¹⁴⁸⁰*HPC* (1 September 1930), 44.

¹⁴⁸¹M P to Cora Hodson, Sec EES, 29 September 1930, SA/EUG, E2.

¹⁴⁸²*Ibid*, Hodson to M P, 3 November 1930.

¹⁴⁸³Roe (1984), 232.

¹⁴⁸⁴Marion Piddington, *Tell Them! Or the Second Stage of Mothercraft* (Sydney: Moore's Book Shop, 1926), 156.

¹⁴⁸⁵Joseph Pugliese, 'Language and minorities', in Shirley Fitzgerald and Garry Wotherspoon, (eds.), *Minorities: Cultural Diversity in Sydney* (Sydney: State Library of NSW Press in assocn with the Sydney History Group, 1995), 208.

Dr Joseph Goldsmid suggested in a 1933 speech to the Brisbane Rationalist Society that the rates of prostitution, VD and illegitimacy would be reduced by 'companionate' (non-procreative) marriages.¹⁴⁸⁶ This proposal was advocated by an American judge, Ben B Lindsey, whose work in children's courts had been praised by Edith Onians, after she met him in 1912.¹⁴⁸⁷ In the 1930s Piddington and the RHA worried that such unions would foster sexual licence.¹⁴⁸⁸ Lindsey had attempted to avoid such misapprehensions by defining his concept as 'legal marriage, with legalized birth control, and with the right to divorce by mutual consent for childless couples, usually without the payment of alimony'.¹⁴⁸⁹

In a 1937 paper on the causes and prevention of blindness in Tasmania, two doctors proposed to the NHMRC that 'voluntary sterilization should be available for carriers and sufferers of [VD-caused] hereditary eye diseases'.¹⁴⁹⁰ While not prepared to do this, the NHMRC passed two resolutions in May 1943 urging severe restriction on the sale of alcohol for consumption by women and young girls, and stricter control by authorities of loose conduct, especially by young women in public places.¹⁴⁹¹

From 1942 to 1947 state VD legislation was replaced by the wartime National Security (Venereal Diseases and Contraceptives) Regulations. In 1943 Dr Cumpston admitted the difficulty of trying to control 'the irresponsible promiscuous girl' and received 'vigorous protests, especially from women's organisations'. He explained that 'my Government has proceeded along lines which it felt in duty bound to follow despite these protests'.¹⁴⁹² In 1948 Dr Edith Anderson informed the RHA that VD had increased after the wartime regulations were lifted.¹⁴⁹³ While this may have been true, the death rate from VD also had decreased dramatically.¹⁴⁹⁴ Once penicillin was introduced in 1943, there was less talk of VD as God's 'scourge for sinners', fewer calls for moral solutions, and less anxiety about female morality. Probably one of the last of the old-style anti-VD campaigns was heard in a

¹⁴⁸⁶Joseph Goldsmid, *Companionate Marriage: From the Medical and Social Aspects* (London: Heinemann, 1934), 38.

¹⁴⁸⁷Edith Onians, *The Men of To-morrow* (Melbourne: Lothian, 1914), 50.

¹⁴⁸⁸'Companionate marriage', *HPC* (July 1930), 16-17, 57; RHA Annual Report (1938), 8 and 'Trial marriage not approved. Mrs Goodisson in reply', *Sun*, 25 March 1938, 9 (d).

¹⁴⁸⁹Ben B Lindsey and Wainwright Evans, *Companionate Marriage* (New York: Brentano's Ltd, 1928), Preface, v.

¹⁴⁹⁰J B Hamilton and W D Counsel, NHMRC, First Session (February 1937), Appendix 2.

¹⁴⁹¹NHMRC (May 1943), 6.

¹⁴⁹²Cumpston, 20 January 1943 to the Qld Branch of the Australian Workers Union, AA/461, Item R347/1/7.

¹⁴⁹³RHA *Monthly Bulletin*, no 6, October 1948.

¹⁴⁹⁴See Wray Vamplew, (ed.), *Australians: Historical Statistics* (Sydney: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon, 1987), 317, Tables HM-17-34.

1950 radio broadcast by the RHA in which listeners were urged to 'Protect your family - Stamp out VD'.

The taint of tuberculosis

While a high death rate from tuberculosis (TB) might have been expected in densely populated Europe, it was also a major problem in Australia, where from the first European settlement, Australian colonists and Aboriginals were plagued by uncontrolled infections including TB. While each colony attempted to isolate or care for people with TB, there was no major co-ordinated attack on this disease until the 1950s.¹⁴⁹⁵ John Pearn has described early charitable care for consumptives, which was augmented by some ingenious government financing. In 1877 a philanthropist established what was probably Australia's first sanatorium at Picton, NSW. In 1897 the NSW Government issued the world's first charity postage stamps, with an added surcharge which was given to help care for the sufferers.¹⁴⁹⁶ In 1917 Professor Welsh selected TB and VD as the 'two most wasteful and devastating diseases'.¹⁴⁹⁷ Deaths of more than 3,000 Australians from pulmonary TB were reported in 1921.¹⁴⁹⁸ In 1993 the World Health Organisation declared that TB was a 'global emergency' affecting more than a third of the world's population.¹⁴⁹⁹ Unfortunately, in the 1990s many antibiotics are ineffective against drug-resistant TB and VD.¹⁵⁰⁰

Susan Sontag has discussed the 'causes' of TB which were given in an 1881 medical text. These included 'hereditary disposition', 'unfavourable climate', 'sedentary indoor life', 'defective ventilation', 'deficiency of light' and 'depressing emotions'.¹⁵⁰¹ In 1882 German bacteriologist Robert Koch (1843-1910) discovered the bacillus causing the disease and established that it was transmitted by infection and not heredity. Within a decade Anderson Stuart had made an Australasian report on Koch's treatment.¹⁵⁰²

In 1911, Leonard Hobhouse, an early critic of eugenics, told a British audience that it was 'well within the bounds of possibility' that scientific advances might, 'instead of eliminating

¹⁴⁹⁵Philip Woodruff, 'Revolutions in health in the Australian colonies', *MJA* (7-21 December 1987), 572-73. The Commonwealth Tuberculosis Acts 1945 and 1946 provided grants to the states to launch mass TB diagnosis and treatment campaigns. They were launched nationally in October 1948.

¹⁴⁹⁶John Pearn, 'Phthisis and philately - an account of the Consumptives Home stamps of NSW: the world's first charity stamps', *MJA* (7-21 December 1987), 575-78.

¹⁴⁹⁷Welsh (1918), 9.

¹⁴⁹⁸'The Public Health Association', *MJA* (4 June 1921), 465.

¹⁴⁹⁹Fiona Godlee, 'Tuberculosis - a global emergency', *BMJ* (1 May 1993), 1147.

¹⁵⁰⁰Deborah Smith, 'Superbugs: how they beat drugs', *SMH*, 16 June 1993, 17.

¹⁵⁰¹Susan Sontag, *Illness As Metaphor* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1983), 58.

¹⁵⁰²Anderson Stuart, *Report to the Governments of New South Wales, South Australia and New Zealand on the Koch Method of Treating Tuberculosis* (Sydney: Govt. Pr., 1891).

the tubercular stock', successfully eliminate the tubercle. Hobhouse claimed that if this happened, tuberculosis would no longer be ranked as a defect. But if such people had been forbidden to marry, society would 'have lost all that they might have contributed to the population and its well-being for the sake of no permanent gain'.¹⁵⁰³ Delegates at the 1911 Australasian Medical Congress were reminded that 'many philosophers, poets, scientists, economists, historians and warriors have been tubercular, alcoholic, or insane or degenerate'.¹⁵⁰⁴ A Sydney newspaper quoted a 'famous [but anonymous] West Australian doctor' who opposed eugenic sterilization on the grounds that it might eliminate gifted people such as Robert Louis Stevenson, Elizabeth Browning, Keats, Chesterton, Byron and the Brontes, all of them sufferers from 'inherited tuberculosis'.¹⁵⁰⁵

However, the dread which TB inspired, and eugenists' inclusion of it as one of the 'racial poisons', indicate a widespread reluctance to accept these findings until an effective cure was available. In 1910 Karl Pearson claimed that TB tended to affect especially first and second born children, increasing eugenists' early aversion to contraception.¹⁵⁰⁶ However, by 1945 more reasoned advice about TB was given by Eulalia Richards, who the RHA claimed was one of their 'oldest members':¹⁵⁰⁷

Whether or not a harvest of disease results depends upon the character of the soil upon which the seeds fall. Tubercle bacilli cannot grow and thrive in a healthy body ... but when ... the body becomes weakened and the blood impure, the seeds of tuberculosis find suitable soil for growth, and thus begin to multiply and manufacture poisons. These poisons soon cause fever and wasting, or consumption, of the body.¹⁵⁰⁸

¹⁵⁰³Leonard Hobhouse, 'The value and limitations of eugenics', *Sociological Review*, vol 4 (October 1911), 284.

¹⁵⁰⁴*AMTC*, vol 1 (1911), 100.

¹⁵⁰⁵Would class great men as mental defectives. Doctor's warning to eugenists. End disease and you may end genius. Tells WA Govt to tread warily. Restrictive law', *Guardian*, 31 October 1929, 8 (d).

¹⁵⁰⁶Pearson, first study of the statistics of pulmonary tuberculosis', *ER*, vol 2 (1910-1911), 3. Pearson's claim was much quoted, for example by William A Lind, in 'Aetiology of congenital mental deficiency', *MJA* (14 October 1916), 316.

¹⁵⁰⁷Richards, *Ladies' Handbook of Home Treatment*, rev. edn. (Victoria: Signs, 1945). First edn. 1917 [?]. *RHA Monthly Bulletin*, January 1950, no 1, claimed that Richards was an RHA member but RHA records do not verify this.

¹⁵⁰⁸Richards (1945), 656-57.

In Australia, mortality from TB has always been much higher than for VD.¹⁵⁰⁹ However, the moral aspects of VD, not the death risk, influenced eugenists to focus their attention on VD and they virtually ignored TB. While the RHA's primary aim was the elimination of VD, its aims did not even mention TB. One of the RHA's few TB-related activities was a lecture given by Dr John Hughes in September 1935 which prompted a 'very animated discussion' about heredity and contagion.¹⁵¹⁰ Another was the inclusion of a chest X-ray which the RHA provided from 1936 in their poorly patronised pre-marriage advisory service. If the X-ray indicated that either partner had TB, the couple would be advised not to marry or to postpone childbearing until the disease was cured. This was sometimes proposed for married people with the disease, but even then contraceptives were hard to obtain.¹⁵¹¹ This difficulty caused a Tasmanian doctor to write to Marie Stopes in 1922 in the hope she would help him to buy British supplies for a consumptive patient.¹⁵¹²

Prostitution, a threat to the family

Eugenists, pronatalists and purity feminists were united in their belief that prostitution was an evil which threatened domesticity and the race. Joseph Kirby (1837-1924), a South Australian pastor, was possibly the most implacable opponent of this 'vice', although he also had extremist views on prohibition, sterilization and the dangers of Chinese invasion.¹⁵¹³ He appears to have been a relentless campaigner, publishing his first anti-prostitution lectures in 1882 and 1883.¹⁵¹⁴ In 1898, an Adelaide magazine had published a lampoon of Kirby by a writer who favoured regulating prostitution as part of a Contagious Diseases Act.¹⁵¹⁵ Kirby, who vehemently opposed such regulation, suggested instead that young people should sign a pledge, similar to the temperance declaration, which would be an effective deterrent from 'seduction and fornication'.¹⁵¹⁶ In the name of racial hygiene, in the 1920s and 1930s Germans encouraged nudity as a healthy alternative to prostitution and so

¹⁵⁰⁹See Vamplew (1987), 317, Tables HM 17-34.

¹⁵¹⁰RHA Annual Report (1936), 5.

¹⁵¹¹'Birth control. Dr Arthur's advice: Will instruct wives' [but only in cases of TB], *Sun*, 1 August 1928. Also *Guardian*, 1 August 1928, in Arthur's Scrapbook, ML.

¹⁵¹²Dr Eric Jeffrey to Dr Marie Stopes, 30 November 1922, quoted in Daniels and Murnane (1980), 180.

¹⁵¹³'The Chinese invasion of Australia', *Adelaide Observer*, 4 February 1888.

¹⁵¹⁴See Rev Joseph Kirby, *Three Lectures Concerning the Social Evil: Its Causes, Effects and Remedies* (1882), and his *Remedies for the Great Evil Which Injures Social Purity* (1883). Both published in Port Adelaide, South Australia by E H Derrington.

¹⁵¹⁵Anon, 'Letters to Public Men. The Reverend J C Kirby, Congregational Minister', in *Quiz and Lantern*, 27 October 1898. South Australia's VD Act was not passed until 1920.

¹⁵¹⁶Kirby (1882), 44.

that 'hidden defects' such as VD could be revealed and mate selection would be amongst those with 'positive' genes.¹⁵¹⁷

In a paper on prostitution given to the 1916 WEA Conference, Angela Booth, Honorary Secretary of the Association to Combat the Social Evil, made an unusual objection: as a man's bones did not 'set' until he was 25 or 30, 'what injury must result, physically, to a youth who begins the sexual life at 16 and 17 years of age!' If a prostitute's child was fathered by a mentally and physically stunted youth, the baby 'would swell the list of the inefficient'.¹⁵¹⁸ She considered the 'traffic in sex' were the 'foci' and 'nursery' of VD and that 'where lust is rife, drink is abundant; where alcohol flows, continence is impossible'.¹⁵¹⁹ She warned too, of alcohol's 'blighting effect' on both sperm and foetus. Booth was quoting Professor Forel [Auguste-Henri Forel (1848-1931)] who insisted on this topic 'almost to weariness'.¹⁵²⁰ Some claimed that prostitutes were mentally defective.¹⁵²¹

Feminists were greatly worried about the risks of VD which 'innocent' women and children faced from infectious men. A major aspect of feminists' sex education and anti-VD campaigns - as shown in Figures 8, 16 and 19 - focused on attempts to prevent or minimise VD by teaching children to be chaste before marriage and faithful after. Booth warned that previous attempts to eradicate prostitution had failed because they focused on women and had ignored 'the chief provoking cause, the demand in the male'.¹⁵²² She, like many purity feminists, believed that prostitutes sent 'disease, sterility, deformity and death' to the 'best of homes' and the 'best stocks'.¹⁵²³

¹⁵¹⁷Kruger (1991), 156.

¹⁵¹⁸Booth, in *Teaching of Sex Hygiene* (1918), 17-18.

¹⁵¹⁹Ibid, 14, 21.

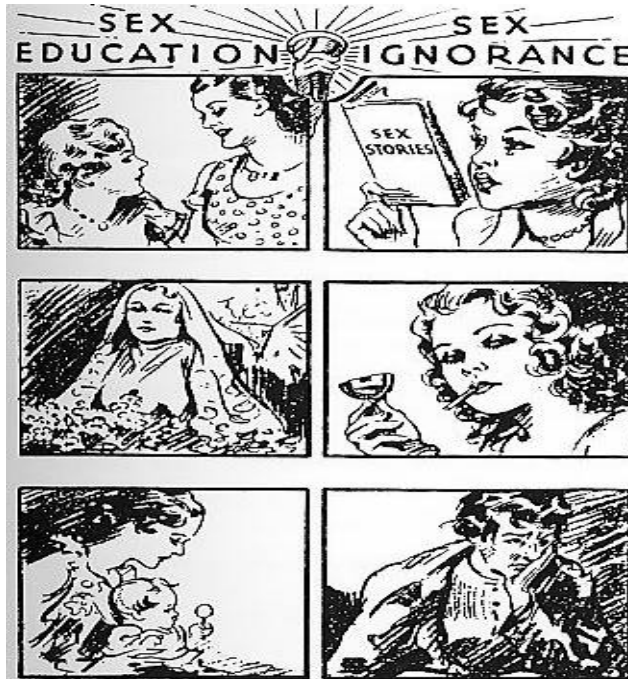
¹⁵²⁰Ibid, 26. In Harmsworth's *Popular Science*, edited by Arthur Mee (London: Educational Book Co [1912?], vol 6, page 3771, Saleeby outlined Forel's theory that alcohol caused 'germ-cell-poisoning' (which he called 'blastophthoria') of the foetus. Forel was Professor Psychiatry at the University of Zürich from 1879. Forel may be right: the relationship of a woman's drinking in pregnancy to 'foetal alcohol syndrome' has been acknowledged.

¹⁵²¹For example, M S Wallace, 'Prostitution and venereal disease', *MJA* (19 July 1919), 59 and 'Feeble-mindedness and prostitution', *ibid* (26 July 1919), 71-72 and (13 March 1920), 240.

¹⁵²²Booth, *MJA* (9 August 1919), 123.

¹⁵²³Booth (1918), 32.

Figure 19: Sex education versus sex ignorance¹⁵²⁴



In 1926 Piddington praised Booth for her years of 'unswerving courage' in urging educational measures of reform.¹⁵²⁵ Piddington made similar efforts, invoking Saleeby's cry that 'we are hastening to the Niagara of Racial Ruin' in her warnings about the racial disaster posed by prostitution and 'irregular unions'.¹⁵²⁶ In 1928, after referring to the work by Josephine Butler (1828-1906) in Britain, Goodisson stated that the RHA had realized that it was useless to try and stop prostitution, and that the greater danger to society was posed by the young promiscuous girl.¹⁵²⁷

A 1934 'Open Letter to Young Men' did not mention this possibility, merely warning them about VD and the moral, social and physical evils of prostitution. They were advised to have no contact with prostitutes other than attempting to rescue them from the 'mire' or to end the 'cursed trade'.¹⁵²⁸ The RHA and other women's groups sought to end sexual double standards and acknowledged that many women were poor (and might be lured into prostitution) because they lacked economic independence.¹⁵²⁹ In 1936 RHA Vice-president

¹⁵²⁴Rubin (1942), 387.

¹⁵²⁵Marion Piddington, *Tell Them!* (Sydney: Moore's Book Shop, 1926), 191.

¹⁵²⁶Piddington, *The Unmarried Mother and Her Child* (Sydney: Moore's, 1923), 13.

¹⁵²⁷Goodisson, in 'Racial hygiene', *Advance! Australia* (May 1928), 221, referred to Josephine Butler who had helped destitute women and whose efforts to prevent women-only compulsory medical examinations had led to the repeal of Britain's CD Act in 1886.

¹⁵²⁸White (1934), 11-12.

¹⁵²⁹Linda Littlejohn, in *ARHC* (1929), 8, claimed that 90% of prostitution had 'poverty as its driving force'. This link was also emphasized by Maybanke Anderson (1916), 12-13.

Ruby Rich gave a speech entitled 'Prostitution and its attendant evils'.¹⁵³⁰ However, RHA actions were more radical than this title might suggest, with Rich visiting Raphael Cilento in Queensland three months later in an attempt to have compulsory medical examination of prostitutes abolished.¹⁵³¹

In her autobiography published in 1966, Jessie Street mentioned her 1916 efforts, coupled with those of sisters Annie Golding and Kate Dwyer, to create the NSW Social Hygiene Association which aimed to combat 'commercialised prostitution'. She said the Association failed because of people's prudishness and reluctance to be identified with prostitution.¹⁵³² Street shared this prudishness by not mentioning that VD was the main threat the Association aimed to combat.

Degenerate drinkers

Figure 20: Alcoholism produces degeneracy¹⁵³³



In 1905 Dr George Archdall Reid gave an influential address to the Sociological Society in London, in which he contended that each race's resistance to disease or adverse conditions varied according to the extent and duration of their prior exposure. He argued that excessive drinkers of alcohol were 'weeded out to a greater extent', leaving moderate drinkers and those who were not susceptible to alcohol. Reid

¹⁵³⁰RHA Annual Report (1937), 4.

¹⁵³¹Ibid, 2.

¹⁵³²Street (1966), 79.

¹⁵³³Rubin (1942), 411.

concluded that 'if only a race goes downhill long enough, it will ultimately arrive at the top. It is literally inconceivable that evolution can have resulted from continuous degeneration'.¹⁵³⁴

Temperance eugenicist Saleeby was bitter about the use made of this theory by advocates of what he called the 'better-dead' school of eugenicists, who argued that if alcohol eliminated the unfit, society would be better off.¹⁵³⁵ Reid's theory was described by Harvey Sutton as 'one of the most interesting applications' of the 'survival of the fittest' theory.¹⁵³⁶ Even more interesting is the fact that a theory identical to Reid's was quoted in Australia, four years before Reid's paper.¹⁵³⁷ The writer, Dr John Flynn (1859-1926) - not Flynn of the Inland but an Irish-born surgeon and anatomy demonstrator at the University of Sydney - was quoting a theory by unspecified researchers about the transmission of alcoholism, noting that their reasoning had 'considerable weight'. His well-researched study of heredity and disease was published in 1901 in both the *Australasian Medical Gazette* and the *Australasian Catholic Record*.¹⁵³⁸ Sir Thomas Fitzgerald (a sanitary hygienist who argued in 1902 that VD was 'undoubtedly hereditary') stated in the same paper that 'strong drinkers are frequently strong thinkers' who deserved help to ensure they contributed to society and to protect their offspring who, if conceived while their parents were drunk, would usually be 'unsound in their mental organisation'.¹⁵³⁹ In his view, if philanthropists relieved workers' boredom or gave them bicycles, it would do more good than a week of temperance lectures.¹⁵⁴⁰

A 1905 editorial in the *Australasian Medical Gazette* claimed that 'numerous [unspecified] observations from all parts of the world' justified the conclusion that 'ova or spermatozoa are directly poisoned' by alcohol with the result that families of alcoholics contain many idiots, imbeciles, epileptics and neurasthenics.¹⁵⁴¹ Havelock Ellis considered that chronic drunkards 'largely belong to the same great family, and do not so much become feeble-minded because they drink, but possess the tendency to drink because they have a strain of

¹⁵³⁴George Archdall Reid, 'The biological foundations of sociology', in *Sociological Papers*, vol 3 (London: Macmillan and Co., 1907), 7-8, 9. Reid's paper was read before a meeting of the Sociological Society at the University of London's School of Economics and Political Science on 24 October 1905. The meeting was chaired by Sir John A Cockburn, who in 1912 represented Australia at the First International Eugenics Congress.

¹⁵³⁵Caleb Saleeby, *The Progress of Eugenics* (London: Cassell, 1914), 240-41.

¹⁵³⁶Sutton, *Lectures in Preventive Medicine* (Sydney: Consolidated Press, 1944), 7.

¹⁵³⁷John Flynn, 'Heredity and disease', *AMG* (20 March 1901), 103.

¹⁵³⁸Flynn, *ibid*, 94-109; 20 June, 225-38; 20 September, 376-81; 21 October, 430-40 and 20 January 1902, 18-23 and *Australasian Catholic Record*, 7 (1901), 57-121.

¹⁵³⁹AAASR (1902), 720, 727. It is now acknowledged that abnormalities known as the 'foetal alcohol syndrome' can occur if a pregnant woman drinks alcohol.

¹⁵⁴⁰*Ibid*, 729.

¹⁵⁴¹'Alcohol as a factor in heredity', *AMG* (20 April 1905), 164-5.

feeble-mindedness from birth'.¹⁵⁴² Others debated whether alcoholism was a cause or a symptom of degeneracy.¹⁵⁴³ Some members of the medical profession worried whether natural selection should be allowed to operate in the case of alcohol, which could possibly be more 'stringent' than TB in 'weeding out the susceptible'. According to this logic, racial decay would be accelerated by treating the alcoholic or the consumptive but the race would be strengthened if nature eliminated such people.¹⁵⁴⁴ The only course likely to be approved by biology, morality and humanity was to care for the 'individual degenerate' and to 'prevent such individuals from multiplying'.¹⁵⁴⁵ This prompted a Sydney newspaper to publish a convoluted ultimatum to doctors, urging them to decide whether to accept eugenic doctrines or to oppose them by saving individuals and thus weakening the race by weakening the force of disease.¹⁵⁴⁶

In popular 19th century opinion, sobriety was equated with virtue, and drunkenness with sin. Roy MacLeod has identified two ideas which reformers had about the causes of alcoholism. Some argued that it was acquired as a result of defective social environment; but the predominant view, supported by most eugenists, was that it had been inherited either directly or as a predisposition passed on from father to son.¹⁵⁴⁷ Many reformers of both persuasions were disconcerted when the Francis Galton Laboratory for National Eugenics in 1910 released findings of an inquiry into alcoholism which, according to the *Argus*, were 'completely subversive' of the 'cordial agreement' of science and religion that the sins of alcoholism were 'visited upon the children'.

The statement came from what appears to be the first ever editorial on eugenics in an Australian newspaper.¹⁵⁴⁸ This scholarly article began 'Eugenics is a modern study, and by some enthusiasts regarded as the password to the millenium'. It then outlined an inquiry by Ethel Elderton, the second Galton Research Scholar, and Karl Pearson, Professor of Mathematics at the University of London, comparing children of alcoholic parents with those springing from a sober stock.¹⁵⁴⁹ The editorial quoted the conclusions, as reported in the

¹⁵⁴²Ellis (1912), 41.

¹⁵⁴³Lind (1916), 316 and Dawson in *ARHC* (1929), 49.

¹⁵⁴⁴Francis A Pockley, President's Address, *AMCT*, vol 1 (1911), 98-99.

¹⁵⁴⁵*Ibid*, 100.

¹⁵⁴⁶J C Powell, 'The medical profession and eugenics', *Telegraph*, 23 September 1911, 22

¹⁵⁴⁷Roy MacLeod, 'The edge of hope: Social policy and chronic alcoholism, 1870-1900', *Journal of the History of Medicine* (July 1967), 244.

¹⁵⁴⁸*Argus*, 16 July 1910, 18 (d). Previously the Australian press had reported the proposed formation of a Eugenics Fellowship in Britain, prompting T F MacDonald to apply. University College London, Archives, Galton Papers, Item 133/5A, 7 January 1905.

¹⁵⁴⁹The *Argus* was reviewing a report written by Ethel M Elderton with the assistance of Karl Pearson:

Times, that parental alcoholism did not affect the intelligence or physique of the offspring whose health was 'as good [as], or on the whole slightly better than, that of the children of the sober, and that parental alcoholism is not the source of mental defects in progeny'. The *Argus* wrote that because of the study's hopeful message, 'the drunkard would no longer be able to sit helplessly before his failing and say it was his by birth, and that his name was written already in the book of doom. With courage born of new conviction he might march once more breast-forward holding that "we fall to rise, are baffled (sic) to fight better"'. The wealth of medical detail in the article suggests that its author was activist physician Sir James Barrett, who approved of practical eugenics and in 1913 wrote an *Argus* article on environmental reforms.¹⁵⁵⁰ This Melbourne newspaper appears to provide the only comment on the Elderton and Pearson findings. While these 'subversive' findings were widely reported in Britain and caused a furore,¹⁵⁵¹ in Australia the strength of the prohibitionist movement may explain why other newspapers remained silent.

The prohibitionist campaigns of the extremist Rev Kirby have been outlined by Milton Lewis. In 1911 Kirby organised a petition requesting hotels to reduce their opening hours and he followed this in 1912 with a deputation to Archibald Peake, the new South Australian Liberal Premier. Peake was sympathetic until he was lobbied by a rival deputation from the Licensed Victuallers' Association. He then revealed his pro-industry stance by speaking against a private Bill to reduce trading to the hours of 8 am until 8 pm which Labor MHA Thomas Smeaton had introduced.¹⁵⁵² The strength of feeling at this time is shown by the fact that Anderson Stuart, who said he drank wine with meals, called a meeting in 1915 to propose that the Sydney audience should 'follow the [British] King', who was practising temperance for the duration of the war. Popular support for the Temperance Movement peaked in 1916 when 6 pm hotel closing was introduced in four states.¹⁵⁵³ Lewis commented that in 1944 the 'former Conservative Premier, Sir Benjamin Fuller' favoured

A First Study of the Influence of Parental Alcoholism on the Physique and Ability of the Offspring, Eugenics Laboratory Memoirs, no 10 (London: Dulau, 1910).

¹⁵⁵⁰For example, Barrett in *Argus*, 26 July 1913, 9 (g) and in *The Twin Ideals: An Educated Commonwealth* (London: H K Lewis, 1918), 307. Examples of medical evidence cited were discussions by Britain's Royal Society of Medicine concluding that heredity was not an important factor in TB or cancer and quoting F W Mott, a moderate medical eugenist in England, who did not find post-mortem evidence of alcoholism in the insane.

¹⁵⁵¹The furore this study caused in Britain has been used as a case study in Lyndsay Farrall's thesis, *The Origins and Growth of the English Eugenics Movement, 1865-1925* (New York: Garland, 1985), 250-82.

¹⁵⁵²Milton Lewis, in *A Rum State: Alcohol and State Policy in Australia, 1788-1988* (Canberra: AGPS, 1992), 63. Smeaton was President of the SA Temperance Alliance and a member of the Eugenics Committee of the SA Branch of the British Science Guild in 1916. Rev Kirby also assisted this Committee.

¹⁵⁵³Lewis (1992), 62. These were NSW, Vic, SA and Tas. Early closing was originally meant to be only for the duration of World War I.

later hotel closing.¹⁵⁵⁴ However, Sir Benjamin Fuller (1875-1952) was a theatrical entrepreneur who was the RHA President in 1928-1930 and 1932: it was Sir George Warburton Fuller (1861-1940), the leader of the Nationalist-Progressive Party in NSW who had twice been Premier, for only one day on 20 December 1920 and then from April 1922 to June 1925.

Temperance workers lectured, produced pamphlets and regularly published *Grit: A Journal of National Efficiency and Prohibition* and many other organisations incorporated this ideal. For example, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, which established a Sydney branch in 1882, fought for women's suffrage in the belief that this would end the misery caused by 'strong drink', and during World War I the Women's Reform League resolved to 'support all movements calculated to minimise social evils' by campaigning for 'liquor traffic reform' and social purity.¹⁵⁵⁵ In 1928 a Theosophist magazine urged NSW readers to vote for prohibition, reminding them that families who avoided 'coarse food' such as meat and alcohol had 'finer' children. It also suggested that Australia was losing the 'most desirable' migrants who, attracted by prohibition, made their home in 'Dry America'.¹⁵⁵⁶ Those opposing prohibition won overwhelmingly at the NSW referendum on 5 September 1928.¹⁵⁵⁷ Combating alcoholism was never a high priority for the RHA, with notable exceptions such as Canon R B S Hammond and Dr Arthur.¹⁵⁵⁸ As early as 1912, Arthur had stressed eugenics in his warning that alcoholism was a great plague of civilisation in which the 'habitual inebriate', whose offspring were of no value to the State 'but simply a great incubus', should sacrifice themselves by remaining childless 'for the sake of the race'.¹⁵⁵⁹

Journalist Linda Littlejohn told the audience at the Australian Racial Hygiene Congress that reform of the liquor trade was urgently needed and Arthur, the NSW Minister for Health, praised the 'extreme value' of the RHA's work and advocated 'combating the trade in alcohol' in every way possible 'along the lines followed by this Association'.¹⁵⁶⁰ While Arthur might have been trying to encourage the RHA to involve itself with temperance work, their records show that they did not, although in 1930 the Victorian Prohibition League reprinted a tract by

¹⁵⁵⁴*Ibid*, 76.

¹⁵⁵⁵The Women's Reform League [leaflet] (Sydney: WRL, [1917?]).

¹⁵⁵⁶'Prohibition and the new race', *Advance! Australia* (July 1928), 25.

¹⁵⁵⁷Lewis (1992), 64, indicated that in the referendum on prohibition, 358,000 voted in favour and just under 897,000 voted against it.

¹⁵⁵⁸Robert Brodribb Stewart Hammond (1870-1946), a reformer and idealist, was a leader of the Prohibitionist Movement in NSW and edited their journal, *Grit*. He addressed the RHA in 1931 about the 'slow poison'. See also *SMH*, 27 February 1934, 10 (h).

¹⁵⁵⁹'Report of Address on Eugenics by Dr R Arthur', 18 November 1912, 6, ML.

¹⁵⁶⁰*AHRC* (1929), 8, 31. *Grit* published an obituary for Arthur on 2 June 1932.

Saleeby which had originally been called 'Eugenics and prohibition'.¹⁵⁶¹ Arthur's attempts to forge an alliance between temperance and eugenics had failed in Australia as they had elsewhere.

A tendency to crime, pauperism and other ills

In 1848 Orson Squire Fowler (1809-1887), who is said to have 'phrenologised America and Americanised phrenology',¹⁵⁶² stated that as the inhabitants of NSW had been 'parented mainly by criminals' their 'general degradation and viciousness' was 'in perfect keeping' with the doctrines of 'idiocy and propensities hereditary (sic)'.¹⁵⁶³ In the 19th century, although it was commonly accepted in Australia that the race was decaying or degenerating, there were differing views about the extent of the problem. Dr Alan Carroll had been the first President of the Sydney Theosophical Society in 1891: this experience appears to have influenced him to compile a curiously-spelt list in 1903 in which he classified degenerates as those 'raving atheists and fanatics and propounders of new sects and religions, such as the Mahomedans, the Irvinites, the Mormans, [and] the Spiritualists'.¹⁵⁶⁴

Papers on degeneracy and acquired inheritance featured in the British Association for the Advancement of Science meeting which was held in Sydney from 28 July to 31 August 1914, an important event for the local scientific community. The prestigious overseas speakers included two eminent eugenists, Charles Davenport from the Eugenics Record Office, and anthropology professor Felix Von Luschan from the University of Berlin. While it was widely believed that 'tendencies' or 'traits' such as criminality or tuberculosis could be inherited, Davenport may have startled the audience when he identified a new 'trait' which parents could inflict on their children, that of 'nomadism or the impulsion to wander'.¹⁵⁶⁵ Unfortunately, only the abstract of his paper appears to have survived. In the case of Von Luschan's paper, all that is known is the title, 'Culture and degeneration'¹⁵⁶⁶ and a brief item

¹⁵⁶¹Saleeby's 1922 Canadian address on eugenics and prohibition was abridged as a four-page pamphlet called 'Guard Your Race' and reprinted in Victoria in 1930. Articles in 1935 issues of *Grit* include Cora Stoddard's 'Parental alcoholism and the child' (6 June 1935), 12, and John Cooper Booth's, 'A health certificate' (14 November 1935), 9-10.

¹⁵⁶²Quoted in the exhibition on phrenology, 'Ruling Heads and Ruling Passions', 2 March to 18 August 1995, Macleay Museum, University of Sydney.

¹⁵⁶³Orson Squire Fowler, *Hereditary Descent* (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1848), 159.

¹⁵⁶⁴Sydney Theosophical Society. President's address by Alan Carroll (Sydney: W S Ford, 1891). His denunciation is in the *Science of Man*, 25 May 1903, 59.

¹⁵⁶⁵Charles Davenport, 'Heredity of some emotional traits' [Abstract], Report of the 84th meeting of the BAAS, Australia: 28 July - 31 August 1914, Transactions of Section D, (London: John Murray, 1915), 419.

¹⁵⁶⁶BAAS, *ibid*, Section H, 529. A librarian who searched these Transactions, which are held by the University of Oxford's Bodleian Library, was unable to establish whether the article by each of these

about it in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 22 August 1914. Von Luschan's speech on eugenics was an 'effort to ward off the spectre of degeneration', with the proposal that 'the way to cure crime was the complete and utter isolation of the criminal'.¹⁵⁶⁷ The fact that these two papers were by eugenists at the 'nature' end of the eugenics spectrum might explain the otherwise curious silence about them by the both the local press and the 'nurture'-oriented Eugenics Education Society of NSW.¹⁵⁶⁸ A report of a 'large gathering' which welcomed the visiting scientists made no mention of the two eugenics-related papers, despite the fact that the meeting was chaired by Professor Robert Irvine, a Vice-President of the Eugenics Education Society.¹⁵⁶⁹

Religion aroused strong feelings, with some people believing that those of their faith were the chosen 'fit', while all others were 'unfit'. Sectarian divisiveness was evident in an 1870s book by an American doctor, John Cowan, which was being sold in Melbourne in the 1880s. He argued that Catholicism caused unfitness and worried that if Protestant women continued to have abortions while Roman Catholics did not, the religious balance would be tipped in favour of Catholics, who would 'attain the ascendancy of this continent, and so hold the balance of power in its management - truly not a desirable prospect'.¹⁵⁷⁰ Catholics who obeyed church doctrine and avoided contraception usually had large families. Similar fears were expressed in the late 1920s by eugenists who complained about Mussolini's use of the Catholic Church to keep the Italian birth-rate as high as possible.¹⁵⁷¹ An allied concern was raised in a paper at the First International Eugenics Congress in which an American statistician claimed that the higher birth-rate of foreign-born women in the 'originally Protestant State' of Rhode Island, was a 'menace to British influence' and that the 'State was in a fair way of becoming Roman Catholic'.¹⁵⁷² An Anglican Bishop said the Catholic opposition to birth control was really 'based on a desire for power'.¹⁵⁷³ Religious antagonisms were often intense and in 1914 this hatred motivated Ulster Protestant Ernest

men had been published, Pers. comm., 2 February 1993.

¹⁵⁶⁷*SMH*, 22 August 1914, 9 (d). Professor Von Luschan was asked by the New Zealand government to do 'anthropometrical work among the Maoris' but the war forced him to return to Austria. His views on racial problems in the Pacific were published in *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, no 129 (March 1924), 78-79.

¹⁵⁶⁸Sydney's EES was active in this period and had celebrated a 'Galton Day Dinner' on 23 February 1914.

¹⁵⁶⁹'Socialism and Eugenics', *SMH*, 22 August 1914, 9 (c). It reported a meeting of the Economics and Commerce Association, in conjunction with the EES NSW, held the previous night in the King's Hall.

¹⁵⁷⁰John Cowan, *The Science of a New Life* (Melbourne: Ferguson and Mitchell, 1882), 303. First published in 1869 in New York by the phrenologists, Fowler and Wells.

¹⁵⁷¹Knibbs to Stopes, 11 July 1927, Stopes Papers, Add MS 58,573, ff. 25-26.

¹⁵⁷²Dr Frederick L Hoffman's paper was reported in the *Times*, 27 July 1912, 4 (a).

¹⁵⁷³*SMH*, 13 May 1932, 10 (f).

MacBride to join Britain's Eugenics Society to campaign for compulsory sterilization of Irish Catholics.¹⁵⁷⁴ Few Catholics supported eugenics and Papal encyclicals in the 1930s and 1940s, as well as prohibiting birth control, directed them to reject eugenics and sterilization.¹⁵⁷⁵

In 1923 delegates at the Australasian Medical Congress were warned by the President, Sir George Syme, that it was 'harmful' to add to the population 'those who cannot or will not work'. Sterilization was the best option for such 'drones' because 'incapacity for work is largely due to impaired physical condition, inherited or acquired'.¹⁵⁷⁶ This view resembled those presented in a paper by Ernest Lidbetter on heredity and pauperism which caused intense debate at the World Population Conference in Geneva in 1927.¹⁵⁷⁷ The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that no Australians had attended, although two statisticians did: Wickens who gave a paper¹⁵⁷⁸ and Knibbs who was a member of the Conference's General Council.¹⁵⁷⁹ The controversial paper about 'destitute dependants' was presented by Lidbetter who, with financial support from Henry Twitchin, had spent many years compiling 'pauper pedigrees' in the East End of London and had concluded that poor people did not benefit from welfare assistance.¹⁵⁸⁰ Lidbetter's early work was summarised in the *Times* in 1910 as showing:

The existence amongst us of a definite race of chronic paupers, a race parasitic upon the community, breeding in and through successive generations. The existence of families of habitual criminals, preying upon the public in a somewhat similar manner, has long been known - but the analogous facts in relation to pauperism have perhaps never before received the full recognition to which they appear to be entitled. The subnormals are unable to appreciate the significance of social relationships and

¹⁵⁷⁴Peter J Bowler, *Biology and Social Thought: 1850-1914* (Berkeley, Ca: Office of History of Science and Technology, University of California at Berkeley, 1993), 83, quoting MacBride, *Textbook of Embryology* (London, 1914), vol 1, 662. Bowler states that MacBride later embarrassed the Eugenics Society by writing to the *Times* praising Hitler. His plan for sending degenerate people to Australia was discussed in Chapter 4.

¹⁵⁷⁵Papal encyclicals are outlined in the terminology Appendix.

¹⁵⁷⁶Syme, *MJA* (16 February 1924), 5 also reported in *ER*, 16-17 (1924-26), 67-68.

¹⁵⁷⁷E J Lidbetter, 'Heredity, disease and pauperism', in Margaret Sanger (ed.) *Proceedings of the World Population Conference* (London: Arnold, 1927), 326-47. See also Lidbetter, *Heredity and the Social Problem Group*, vol 1 (London: Edward Arnold, 1933).

¹⁵⁷⁸'Australia and its immigrants', in Sanger (1927), 312-24. Knibbs indicated that his paper was excluded from the Conference.

¹⁵⁷⁹*SMH*, 4 January 1928, 11, published a correction stating the RHA had been asked to send a delegate who was unable to attend the Conference. The *SMH* and the RHA were apparently unaware that Knibbs and Wickens did attend.

¹⁵⁸⁰Lidbetter (1927), 333-36. Leonard Darwin, 9 June 1922, suggested that Twitchin should financially support these studies and he agreed, 19 November 1923, SA/EUG, C.87.

duties. In all respects they are mentally primitive; this is why they are so prolific and thus constitute a most serious menace to our civilization.¹⁵⁸¹

Delegates were divided in their responses to Lidbetter's paper, but Jean Bourdon made a liberal plea, reminding the audience that although Nietzsche's father had died in an asylum and he had gone mad himself, his 50 years of sane work, 'although open to criticism from certain moral points of view', was 'far superior to that of an ordinary individual'.¹⁵⁸² Cora Hodson agreed it was 'a difficult case since Nietzsche was an unfortunate syphilitic who ended his life as a paralytic' but she concluded that it was 'not of the same order as cases of real heredity'.¹⁵⁸³ The debate about degenerates' offspring followed similar lines in Australia and Lidbetter's influence is apparent in a *Smith's Weekly* column which A B Piddington wrote in 1932:

In every part of Australia there are families of feeble-minded persons living and multiplying. Baby after baby is born either to inherit definite feeble-mindedness or become future carriers of the trait which will appear in their descendants. Tubercular parents are passing on to their children the predisposition for future tubercular infection. Alcoholic parents are transmitting such scourges as epilepsy, feeble-mindedness and weakened resisting powers. Criminal parents bring babies into the world with antisocial propensities inimical to society and the race.¹⁵⁸⁴

Dr Stanley Boyd was one of the few Australian eugenicists to balance the scientific evidence in a considered assessment of the impact of both parents' health on their offspring. In a book published in 1944, he wrote that alcohol, syphilis, gonorrhoea, lead and certain radiations were rightly described as racial poisons because of the effect they have even when only the male parent is exposed to them.¹⁵⁸⁵ More recently, researchers have reached similar conclusions after monitoring data on reproductive risks from exposure to a wide range of toxic substances. In Britain, Sir Thomas Oliver and in America, Professor Alice Hamilton and Dr William Rom, were among the first to document the effects of lead on male and female reproduction.¹⁵⁸⁶ They confirmed findings in the 1860s that workers

¹⁵⁸¹Lidbetter, quoted by L J J Nye, in the *International Knowledge for Living Series* (no 5: The May Book - 'Sex, Marriage and Eugenics') 3rd edn. (Brisbane: Smith and Paterson, 1961), 43.

¹⁵⁸²Jean Bourdon [French delegate], in Sanger (1927), 341-42,

¹⁵⁸³Cora Hodson [British delegate and ES secretary], in Sanger (1927), 344.

¹⁵⁸⁴*Smith's Weekly*, 20 February 1932, 19.

¹⁵⁸⁵Stanley Boyd, *Doctor's Conscience: Or all Illness is Preventable* (Sydney: Currawong, 1944), 76.

¹⁵⁸⁶See Thomas Oliver, 'Lead poisoning and the race', *ER*, vol 3 (1911-1912), 83-93; Alice Hamilton, *Industrial Toxicology* (New York: Macmillan 1934); William Rom, 'Effects of lead on the female and reproduction: a review', *Mount Sinai Journal of Medicine*, 43 (1976), 542-52. Hamilton (1869-1970)

exposed to lead in Britain's potteries had higher rates of sterility, miscarriage, stillbirth and infant deaths than other workers. Most importantly, these problems were above the norm when males were exposed, higher still among females and were highest of all if both partners worked in the potteries.

was a pioneer of industrial medicine and the first woman to be appointed to Harvard University's Medical Faculty.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the variety of definitions and concepts connected with negative eugenics all influenced the British and Australian campaigns to eliminate 'racial poisons'. The moral values associated with these perceptions only diminished when medical treatment made them irrelevant. As well, knowledge that environment and disease, not biology, caused most of the racial poisons, including pauperism, alcoholism and 'a tendency to criminality', removed most of the rationale for eugenists' concern. Contrary to the claims by Garton and Watts, the nature-nurture debate was of central importance to the Australian eugenics movement and this debate continues to be fiercely argued, particularly in America.

While many eugenists were involved with anti-VD campaigns, and all Australian states passed laws to deal with VD, no laws specifically relating to eugenics were ever passed. The secret of the anti-VD campaigners' success is that they were a single-issue lobby group with clear objectives to eradicate a universally feared, congenital or sexually transmitted disease. Their message was easily communicated and was widely accepted as being of general benefit.

In contrast, as will be shown in Chapter 6, the unsuccessful eugenics groups had multiple, ill-defined and abstract goals, such as improving the race or preventing racial decay. While eugenics-related groups mostly operated over a longer time span than groups established by anti-VD reformers, the eugenists achieved few tangible results. This was mainly because their messages were often perceived as being negative, confused or controversial.

Chapter 6

Eliminating the 'Unfit'

Following an examination of the theoretical aspects of negative eugenics in Chapter 5, this complementary chapter examines the strategies which were proposed for minimising or eliminating the unfit. These endeavours had started in the 1880s, before the eugenics movement began. In Australia these attempts continued until the 1940s and included schemes to estimate the extent of unfitness and to establish its likely consequences. Eugenists were sure that the 'unfit' had larger families than the 'fit' and, in an attempt to reverse this, lobbied with other groups for marriage restrictions. In addition, eugenists were some of the strongest proponents of legislation for the care, control or sterilization of mentally defective people. Daniel Kevles has noted that the Depression stimulated support for sterilization in the United States and Britain which 'went far beyond eugenicists'.¹⁵⁸⁷ This broad support was also evident in Australia in the 1930s where a wide range of politicians, women's groups and churches - often with no known sympathy for eugenics - clamoured for this form of negative eugenics. Ultimately, for a variety of reasons, Australia followed the British example of rejecting regulatory solutions.

Fertility of the unfit

In 1907 Professor David Starr Jordan argued in *The Human Harvest* that 'the survival of the unfittest is the primal cause of the downfall of nations'.¹⁵⁸⁸ John Laurent quoted evidence of this idea being used as early as 1872¹⁵⁸⁹ and Dr William Chapple said much the same at the 1899 *Intercolonial Medical Congress of Australasia*.¹⁵⁹⁰ The proponents of this view feared that misguided social welfare efforts had allowed the unfit to survive and then outnumber the fit. They argued that this had caused racial decay which would escalate if the unfit continued to have large families while the fit limited theirs.

¹⁵⁸⁷Daniel J Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1985), 115.

¹⁵⁸⁸Quoted by John Laurent, in Roy MacLeod and Philip F Rehbock, *Darwin's Laboratory: Evolutionary Theory and Natural History in the Pacific* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 492.

¹⁵⁸⁹Rev Charles Kingsley, quoted by Laurent, *ibid*.

¹⁵⁹⁰William A Chapple, 'The fertility of the unfit', *ICMCAT* (1899), 474-82. Chapple's book (with the same title) was published in Melbourne by Whitcombe and Tombs in 1903.

In addition to these generalised social Darwinian and eugenic fears, Australians had an extremely specific fear: that the declining birth rates of all groups (as shown in Table 1) would cause racial suicide. Ideas about unfitness were revised once the world-wide Depression in 1929 forced the shocked realization that unemployment was related to economics, not heredity. But old prejudices lingered as shown in a 1945 University of Sydney debate in which, not surprisingly, Jeff Wilkinson, a science student and a member of the Catholic Newman Society, opposed contraception, while Paul Foulkes, a science graduate, defended it 'on eugenic grounds', for use by the 'lower classes' who were 'unfitted to support children'. Wilkinson argued that contraception was morally wrong and an offence against nature and the church, and he rejected Foulkes' suggestion that Catholic antagonism to birth control was prompted by a 'vested interest in souls'.¹⁵⁹¹ There are two unusual features in Foulkes' comments: they provide a rare example of class being raised as a eugenics consideration in Australia and it is strange to hear such an argument in 1945. At this time few people bothered about eugenics because the fears in World War II about immediate survival replaced concerns about possible future harm to the Imperial race.¹⁵⁹² Even so, Richard Soloway stated that the racial suicide myth was not finally 'laid to rest' until the post-war baby boom.¹⁵⁹³

During the five decades when beliefs about racial decay and racial suicide were current in Australia, they evoked fearful and extreme responses. Assumptions that the feeble-minded were 'markedly more prolific than those normally constituted' were widely publicised by leading figures such as the Sydney physician, politician and businessman Sir Charles Mackellar, who from 1903 to 1904 was the dominant figure in the NSW Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth-Rate.¹⁵⁹⁴ Dr Chapple claimed in his 1903 book that society had to accept 'the startling fact that this army of defectives' was 'increasing in numbers and relative fertility' because all of them were prolific and transmitted their 'fatal taints'.¹⁵⁹⁵ Fearfulness was intensified in 1908 by findings in the Report of the *Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-minded*, a British study which stimulated Australia to produce a similar one in 1914.¹⁵⁹⁶ The Australian Committee on the Feeble-minded,

¹⁵⁹¹'Murder ... or not', *Honi Soit*, 12 July 1945, 1. It was followed by 'Wilson [the female editor] must go, Catholics demand - "Blasphemous, obscene"', *ibid*, 19 July 1945, 1.

¹⁵⁹²Victor Hugo Wallace, 'The Eugenics Society of Victoria (1936-1961)', *ER*, vol 53 (January 1962), 217.

¹⁵⁹³Richard A Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birth-rate in Twentieth Century Britain* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), xv.

¹⁵⁹⁴Charles Mackellar and David Welsh, *Mental Deficiency: A Medico-sociological Study of Feeble-mindedness* (Sydney: Govt. Pr., 1917), 8 and 64.

¹⁵⁹⁵Chapple (1903), xii, xiii.

¹⁵⁹⁶David Barker, in 'The biology of stupidity: Genetics, eugenics and mental deficiency in the inter-war years', *British Journal for the History of Science*, vol 22 (September 1989), 348-49, noted that Dr

appointed by the Australasian Medical Congress in 1911, concluded after four years' research that the hereditary character of feeble-mindedness was an 'ascertained fact confirmed by numerous far-reaching [but unspecified] inquiries, particularly in America'. Nor was any reference given for such statements as 'the exceptional fertility' of the feeble-minded could be 'taken as proved' and 'the sexual instinct in particular is apt to be utterly uncontrolled in feeble-minded persons'.¹⁵⁹⁷ Committee members worried that few outside the medical profession realised the gravity of this problem.¹⁵⁹⁸ Dr Harvey Sutton was a Committee member who continued to worry long after these ideas were discredited. In 1944 his views about 'differential fertility' were almost identical with his 1911 comments that 'the families of [the] feeble-minded are large, and often mentally defective. Their numbers exceed the average number of the ordinary family, so that our problem increases with each generation'.¹⁵⁹⁹

Phillip Reilly, in his history of sterilization in America, referred to Dr Walter Fernald's pioneering scientific surveys of the feeble-minded, published in 1919, which showed that, contrary to accepted opinion, feeble-minded people had a low marriage rate and a very low birth rate. Fernald noted that eugenists had not distinguished between the fertility rates of the feeble-minded and those of the poor.¹⁶⁰⁰ Gradually, scientists throughout the world accepted such findings. In Australia, one of the first to explode the myth of the copious fertility of the unfit was Edmund Morris Miller, from 1924 the Chairman of the Mental Deficiency Board of Tasmania. In 1929 he wrote that most of the feeble-minded did not have excessively large families, and that the old 'scarifying figures' had been due to questionable estimates which 'had not been scientifically determined'.¹⁶⁰¹ This appears to be one of the few instances where thinking in Australia was more advanced than in the 'mother' country. It was another three years before Berry, as Chairman of the British Medical Association's Committee on Mental Deficiency, reported that the often-repeated statements and assumptions about the excessive fertility of the feeble-minded were not

Alfred Tredgold claimed that normal couples had four children, while defectives had seven. Tredgold's claim was extensively cited.

¹⁵⁹⁷'Care of the Feeble-minded in Australasia', *AMCT* (1914), 719.

¹⁵⁹⁸Doctors in Congress. Care of the mentally unfit. Facing a grave problem', *Argus*, 12 February 1914, 8.

¹⁵⁹⁹Harvey Sutton, *Lectures in Preventive Medicine* (Sydney: Consolidated Press, 1944), 26, and 'The feeble-minded - Their classification and importance', *AMCT*, 1 (1911), 905.

¹⁶⁰⁰Quoted in Philip Reilly, *The Surgical Solution: A History of Involuntary Sterilization in the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 122. Edith Onians visited Fernald's school in Massachusetts and in *The Men of To-morrow* (Melbourne: Lothian, [1914]), 100-03, expressed the wish for normal children to 'have the advantages of 1,500 of the sub-normal children receiving Montessori education in this school'.

¹⁶⁰¹'Mental defectives. Differential treatment. Professor Miller's views', *SMH*, 23 May 1929, 10 (g).

supported by 'recent critical examination' of data on this subject.¹⁶⁰² In 1934 Paul Dane, a psychiatrist, introduced this topic to the Australian public, dismissing claims about the fertility of the unfit as an idea 'brazened forth' by scaremongers, adding that 'the truly mental defective person does not breed', so that 'their stocks as a rule tend to die out'.¹⁶⁰³ Much earlier, another writer questioned the received wisdom by pondering whether the high fertility rate of the unfit might be 'handed on to the eventual benefit of the race'.¹⁶⁰⁴

Detecting unfitness

Anxiety about the calibre and size of the Australian population was a 19th century preoccupation: concerns were expressed by the Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, Sir Redmond Barry (1813-1880), who has been described by Stuart Macintyre as a 'memorable eccentric' of 'antique enthusiasms and immense dignity'.¹⁶⁰⁵ In 1875 Barry made a comparative study of the physique of Victorian and American young men in an attempt to discover whether 'the race in its transplantation to Australian soil retains undiminished the vigour and fire and stamina of the strong old stock of which it is an offshoot'.¹⁶⁰⁶ Twenty years later Dr Joseph Ahearne compared chest measurements of British and North Queensland school boys and concluded that the heat and taxing educational requirements in the tropics had sapped their physiques.¹⁶⁰⁷

By the early 1900s there were frequent attempts to determine the extent of mental and social unfitness and, while it was not often voiced, there appears to have been particular concern about unfit women. For example, while a writer appeared to be gender neutral in describing blind, deaf, epileptic and mentally defective people as the 'dregs of the human species', the proposal that they would be 'better protected than pregnant',¹⁶⁰⁸ identifies women as the focus. In 1908 a doctor from Victoria suggested that 'the first practical step' to lessen 'crime and immorality' would be to study defective children and provide institutions for

¹⁶⁰²*Report of the Mental Deficiency Committee*, BMA (London: BMA, July 1932), 34.

¹⁶⁰³*Argus*, 20 January 1934, 20 (f).

¹⁶⁰⁴*AMJ* (13 December 1913), 1342. A Melbourne lecturer and surgeon, Alexander Lewers was probably the writer as these same passages were in his book, *Medicine and Mediation: Occasional Writings* (Melbourne: Ford, 1915), 14-15.

¹⁶⁰⁵Stuart Macintyre, *A History for a Nation: Ernest Scott and the Making of Australian History* (Melbourne: MUP, 1994), 185. Barry was the judge at the 1880 Ned Kelly trials.

¹⁶⁰⁶*Australasian*, 1 January 1876, quoted by William F Mandle, in *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* (December 1973), 235. Mandle, 244, footnote 36, was unable to find whether any results had been published for Barry's questionnaire on boys' age, height, weight and measurement of chest and limbs.

¹⁶⁰⁷*AAASR* (1895), 787-97.

¹⁶⁰⁸Anon, quoted by William Ramsay Smith, in *Peace: An Address delivered at the University of Adelaide on Peace Day, 9 November 1910* (International Peace Society, Adelaide Branch), 5.

them¹⁶⁰⁹ and in 1908 and 1910 the NSW Department of Public Instruction carried out medical inspections of school children.¹⁶¹⁰ The Sydney Branch of the British Science Guild described the Department's 1908 survey as 'incomplete' and began a 1909 investigation into the physical condition of children and proposed to improve their health by encouraging physical fitness.¹⁶¹¹ The authors, prominent doctors and educationalists, made graphs from the data collected by Australian, American and British statisticians, in their attempts to compare the vital statistics of local boys and girls with the American and British ones.¹⁶¹² They concluded that the 'tendency of Australian youth towards narrowness of the chest was a serious evil in national life' and suggested the extensive provision of playing fields would help to overcome this problem.¹⁶¹³

In 1911 Labor Prime Minister Andrew Fisher, most state governments, the Royal Anthropological Institute, the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science and the Australasian Medical Congress all agreed on the desirability of 'periodic measurement of all children and adults', in order to determine whether 'all the races of the Empire' were improving or deteriorating.¹⁶¹⁴ Concern about women's child-bearing capacity appears to be behind a 1945 National Fitness Council recommendation that school medical services should investigate whether gymnastics and competitive athletics affected the growth of children, 'particularly adolescent girls'.¹⁶¹⁵

Two items in the Galton Papers at University College London indicate that this had long been an Australian interest. While in London in 1892, Professor T P Anderson Stuart had left a visiting card at Galton's Anthropometrical Laboratory stating that he planned 'to

¹⁶⁰⁹Dr James McCreery, 'The psychology of crime', *AMTC*, 8th session, III (1908), 266.

¹⁶¹⁰Reports by J A Hogue, NSW Department of Public Instruction 'upon the physical condition of children attending public schools in NSW (with special reference to height, weight and vision), based upon statistics obtained as a result of ... medical inspection, with anthropometric tables and diagrams', 1908 and 1910.

¹⁶¹¹British Science Guild (Sydney Branch). *Report of Sub-Committee Upon the Provision of Open Spaces for the Use of School Children in Sydney and Suburbs* (Sydney: British Science Guild, 1 October 1909).

¹⁶¹²BSG Sub-Committee members were Dr George Abbott, Rev John Marden (linked with a Presbyterian girls' school), Rev Charles Prescott (headmaster of a Methodist boys' school) and Dr William Quaife. They consulted the statistics of W S Christopher, Smedley and McMillan (Child Study and Education Departments in Chicago, 1893 to 1903); Porter, Bowditch et al (American Statistical Assocn in Boston, 1894); Arthur McDonald (US Bureau of Education in Washington, 1899) and 'older studies' by Charles Roberts in London.

¹⁶¹³BSG, *ibid*, 18.

¹⁶¹⁴W Ramsay Smith, *On Race-Culture and the Conditions that Influence it in South Australia* (Adelaide: Govt. Pr., 1912), 3.

¹⁶¹⁵NHMRC, Session 20, November 1945, 10. See also Session 21, May 1946, 6. A Conference of School Medical Officers decided in 1946 that Cumpston 'should take whatever action he considers necessary'.

establish one in Sydney'.¹⁶¹⁶ Two years later, E F J Love, a 'renowned British anthropometrist',¹⁶¹⁷ had informed Galton that an AAAS Committee had been formed in Melbourne to 'consider the best means of promoting psycho-physical and psychometric investigations' of Australian primary school children. Love reported that these investigations would be helped because Australian state-aided education was provided for all classes, unlike the situation in Britain, and because the Committee had the support of State Education Departments including Dr Ramsay Smith, the Head of the South Australian Department of Public Health.¹⁶¹⁸

Alison Turtle indicated that these early tests probably emulated British methods to a greater extent than in any other field of Australian science.¹⁶¹⁹ In 1914 Professor Robert Irvine had complained that Australian universities had a pupil relationship with English and, to a greater extent, with Scottish universities, absorbing not the current thinking of these universities but that of the 1850s and 1860s. This was brave criticism and it indicates the vitality of the eugenicist Irvine who, like Sir James Barrett, was enthusiastic about advances in Britain, Germany and America, and decried the backwardness and conservatism of Australian universities.¹⁶²⁰ Despondency about Australian philosophers' need 'to conform to the tasks which are set for us' was expressed in 1929 by Edmund Morris Miller, Professor of Psychology and Philosophy at the University of Tasmania. He noted that this period of 'tutelage' would pass¹⁶²¹ but it rarely did in the case of eugenics.

A conviction that there were many unfit children was followed by demands that authorities should detect the 'unfit', determine the extent of the problem and rectify it. An enterprising but unorthodox advocate of this view was Alan Carroll, a medical practitioner, anthropologist and philanthropist, who arrived in Sydney in the 1880s and, in the 1890s, founded the Child Study Association of Australia and the Anthropological Society. He had high-level support and planned to establish a laboratory and a school to measure and test children. He also

¹⁶¹⁶Stuart to F Galton, 1892, Galton Papers (London: University College London), 196/8.

¹⁶¹⁷Alison Turtle, 'Education, Social Science and the "Common Weal"', in Roy MacLeod (ed.), *The Commonwealth of Science* (Melbourne: OUP, 1988), 228.

¹⁶¹⁸Love to Galton, 14 April 1896, *ibid.*

¹⁶¹⁹Turtle (1988), 228-30. She noted that no reports of the AAAS Committee's measurements and mental testing are available, although the old racial betterment objectives were still evident in a 1932 AAAS Report (Section I) which maintained that considerations of racial improvement or deterioration were of primary importance and 'frequently asked about tropical Australia'.

¹⁶²⁰Robert Francis Irvine, *The Place of the Social Sciences in a Modern University* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1914), 7.

¹⁶²¹*AJPP* (December 1929), 245.

made the extraordinary claim of being also able to reverse the brain damage of children who suffered from this.¹⁶²²

In 1890 an Act had absolved the Victorian Government from any responsibility to educate defective children and for the next 11 years this was left to charities,¹⁶²³ such as Melbourne's Idiot Asylum in Kew which operated privately from 1887 to 1908 and again from 1929.¹⁶²⁴ Education was also provided from 1897 in Moonee Ponds by Dr John Fishbourne (1843-1911) who, with his daughter, operated the first residential school in Australia for mentally defective children.¹⁶²⁵ After Fishbourne's death the school closed, making it seem that his 25-year 'labours did not bear much fruit'.¹⁶²⁶ This was not really true because he did persuade the 1911 Australasian Medical Congress to seize an 'unparalleled opportunity' to make a national census of school children. Fishbourne, who died a few days after giving the paper, had the gratification of knowing that the AMC had resolved to appoint a special committee to estimate the extent of feeble-mindedness in all states.¹⁶²⁷

Assistance for children who were 'heavily handicapped' in 'life's race'¹⁶²⁸ was advocated by the feminist journalist Alice Henry (1857-1943) and the National Council of Women of Victoria.¹⁶²⁹ They were supported by eminent doctors including John Springthorpe (1855-1933), who was revered as the 'great Springy', and a specialist in children's diseases, Sir Richard Stawell (1864-1935), who wrote an article in 1900 on the 'Physical signs of mentally defective children'. In it he stressed the need for reformers to emulate Britain's Departmental Committee on Defective and Epileptic Children, which aimed to provide

¹⁶²²Alan Carroll (c 1823-1911, né Samuel Mathias Curl), edited *The Science of Man*. After his death, a sycophantic view of him was given by the journal's sub-editor, Mrs D Izett, in *Health and Longevity According to the Theories of the Late Dr Alan Carroll* (Sydney: Epworth, 1918). Mulvaney, in MacLeod (1988), 202-03, wrote that Carroll's 'useful facts and idiotic theories ... were not supported by leaders in the field'. For Carroll's 'idiotic theories' see *Science of Man* (21 July 1899), 100-01; (21 December 1899), 205-06; (21 July 1902), 90-91; (22 November 1902), 158-59.

¹⁶²³Brian Williams, *Education With Its Eyes Open: A Biography of Dr K S Cunningham* (Camberwell, Victoria: ACER, 1994), 66.

¹⁶²⁴John William Yorke Fishbourne, 'The segregation of the epileptic and the feeble-minded', *AMCT*, vol 2 (1911), 890.

¹⁶²⁵Alice Henry, 'Brightening the dull', *Argus*, 27 May 1899.

¹⁶²⁶'Mental defectives', *AMG* (19 October 1912), 405.

¹⁶²⁷Mary Booth, 'The need for educating public opinion on the problem of the feeble-minded' *AMG* (12 October 1912), 378. For Fishbourne's obituary, see *Argus*, 27 September 1911, 13 (a).

¹⁶²⁸Richard A Stawell, 'Physical signs of mentally defective children', *Intercolonial Medical Journal of Australasia*, 5 (no 10) 20 October 1900, 476.

¹⁶²⁹For Alice Henry's articles and cuttings, see ML, QA 823/H-CY, Reel 145. See also Diane Kirby, *Alice Henry: The Power of Pen and Voice. The Life of an Australian-American Labor Reformer* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991).

'favourable surroundings' and special education so that these children 'may take their place in the world' rather than 'become inmates of workhouses, asylums, or prisons'.¹⁶³⁰

Some historians have implied that such actions were reprehensible. This was done in 1995 by Paul Ashton whose chapter in *Minorities: Cultural Diversity in Sydney* was introduced with these words: 'nowhere is it more clearly spelt out how misconceptions and prejudices can blight lives'.¹⁶³¹ Ashton selectively quoted from Stawell's article in a way which implied that doctors who 'drew up lists' of 'signs' might be involved in musters of the feeble-minded 'who could sometimes remain undetected in society'.¹⁶³² I have found many 'misconceptions and prejudices' such as this in recent writing about eugenics.

¹⁶³⁰Stawell (1900), 473.

¹⁶³¹Shirley Fitzgerald and Garry Wotherspoon (eds.), *Minorities: Cultural Diversity in Sydney* (Sydney: State Library of New South Wales Press in associationn with the Sydney History Group, 1995), Introduction, 13.

¹⁶³²Paul Ashton, 'Changing approaches to the developmentally-disabled', *ibid*, 145.

The need for a survey of mental defectives was stressed in 1912 by Dr Mary Booth, who informed delegates at the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science that eugenists relied on such data to study 'what the race may become'.¹⁶³³ The following year Booth, in her role as Honorary Secretary of the AAAS-appointed Central Committee on the Care and Control of the Feeble-minded, stated that as no special investigation had been made, it was impossible to know the extent of mental deficiency in NSW. As 'eugenics is a difficult word that is beginning to have a fascination for the public', she recommended a census of the feeble-minded as an 'indispensable preliminary to theorising'.¹⁶³⁴ In 1913 details of surveys were published. Booth appeared unaware that some states had examined children from the 1880s, and that the first systematic survey was made in Sydney in 1901, 18 years after Galton had opened his Anthropometric Laboratory in London. The results showed that boys in Sydney were taller than English boys but their 'chest expansion was small in comparison with European figures'.¹⁶³⁵ Booth advocated increasing anthropometrical studies so that 'the future of the British race in Australia' could be properly studied.¹⁶³⁶ Eldridge described these surveys as 'one of the most important events' in NSW's history.¹⁶³⁷ The desirability of such surveys was emphasized by eugenists and the RHA made the extraordinary suggestion that university entrants should be medically examined.¹⁶³⁸

In 1918 Dr Richard Berry, with Stanley David Porteus (1883-1972), a researcher seconded from the Victorian Education Department, claimed after examining nearly 10,000 Victorian school children, that at least 15% of them were mentally subnormal. Berry was confident that, as methods of diagnosis improved, 'the percentages of feeble-minded will be found to be higher' and, like Carroll, called for the establishment of a child study clinic and a segregation colony.¹⁶³⁹ The following year, Porteus moved to America as Director of Research at the Vineland Training School for Feeble-minded Boys and Girls in New Jersey. Despite his lack of academic qualifications, his invention of the Porteus maze intelligence tests earned him world fame and, at the age of 39, he became Professor of Clinical

¹⁶³³Mary Booth, 'School Anthropometrics: the importance of Australasian measurements conforming to the schedule of the British Anthropometric Committee, 1908', vol 13, *AAASR* (1911), 690.

¹⁶³⁴Booth (1912), 378-79.

¹⁶³⁵Ahearne (1895), 787-97, had found similar results in his Queensland surveys.

¹⁶³⁶*Commonwealth Yearbook*, no 6 (1913), 1103-05.

¹⁶³⁷*Navvy*, 14 March 1916, 7,

¹⁶³⁸An item headed 'Racial Hygiene', *SMH*, 13 June 1928, 16 (f), reported that the Senate of the University of Sydney had decided to inform the RHA that it could not give approval to their proposal to medically examine all matriculated students.

¹⁶³⁹Berry and Porteus, 'A practical method for the early recognition of feeble-mindedness and other forms of social inefficiency', *MJA* (3 August 1918), 88. See also Berry, 'One of the problems of peace: Mental deficiency', *MJA* (14 December 1918), 487 and 490.

Psychology at the University of Hawaii in 1922.¹⁶⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Berry, with Wilfred Agar as his new research partner, embarked on another extensive examination of children in 1922, with support from the Melbourne *Herald*.¹⁶⁴¹ In 1925 Berry demonstrated the part that skull-measurements (craniometry) played in his estimates of children's intelligence and exhorted paediatricians to diagnose mental deficiency early in a child's life, to protect society from trauma, to save siblings from an unfair upbringing and because 'aments' (people with mental deficiency) were unsuitable subjects for surgery. The rivalry which developed between Berry and his former partner suggests that Berry may have been aiming his criticism at Porteus when he railed against 'extravagant literature' and 'mere ephemeral rubbish' produced by 'lay psychologists'.¹⁶⁴²

Porteus concluded in his first Vineland study that 'head capacity alone cannot be used as a measure of intelligence'.¹⁶⁴³ In his autobiography published when he was 86, Porteus commented on a 'startling' study which had been released in 1912 by Dr Henry Goddard, his predecessor at Vineland. After noting the tendency of 'that age' (meaning the early 1900s) to blame feeble-mindedness as the 'root cause' of all 'social insufficiency' (unfitness), Porteus commented that Goddard's *The Kallikak Family, a Study in the Heredity of Feeble-mindedness*

was a most impressive demonstration, and Australians, including Berry, were fully convinced that if legislative action could stop the propagation of such cases, a host of social problems would be solved.¹⁶⁴⁴

¹⁶⁴⁰Williams (1994), 70-71. See also Stanley D Porteus, *A Psychologist of Sorts: The Autobiography and Publications of the Inventor of the Porteus Maze Tests* (Palo Alto, Ca: Pacific Books, 1919). Saul Dubow indicated in *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), 222, that in 1937 Porteus used his experience in Australia and South Africa (which he toured on a Carnegie grant in 1934) as a platform to attack 'race-levellers' who argued that there were no race differences in mentality.

¹⁶⁴¹Berry, in *MJA* (14 December 1918), 488, acknowledged the newspaper's 'generous financial assistance'.

¹⁶⁴²The Melbourne Paediatric Society: Mental and physical testing', *MJA* (12 September 1925), 352.

¹⁶⁴³Porteus (1969), 262.

¹⁶⁴⁴*Ibid*, 60. Berry was born in Britain and educated in Scotland, although 24 of his 95 years were spent in Australia as Professor of Anatomy at the University of Melbourne (1905 to 1929) before returning to Britain. Porteus' comment about Australians' sycophantic admiration for Goddard's work may well have been true in Berry's case.

This provides a tantalising fragment in the history of Australian-American eugenic relations. Possibly expatriate Porteus felt that his talents had not been appreciated at home, forcing him to go abroad to win recognition. Perhaps Porteus was hitting back at Berry or felt inferior about his origins. He may have thought that truth might offend Americans and considered it more tactful to imply that Australians were the only gullible people to have been deceived by Goddard. This was not so: while many Australian reformers discussed Dugdale's 1877 study of the Jukes family, in 1912 they scarcely mentioned Goddard's Kallikak study.¹⁶⁴⁵ There were also Australian criticisms of Goddard's work.¹⁶⁴⁶ However, in other parts of the world, this 'functioned as a primal myth of the eugenics movement for several decades'.¹⁶⁴⁷ Its impact was greatest in America and Britain where Goddard's 'research impressed the corps of people' who concerned themselves with 'social deviants'.¹⁶⁴⁸ The comments which Porteus made about legislation are particularly ironic as no eugenics-related laws were passed in Australia, but Goddard's work helped to create a favourable climate for the passage of harsh sterilization and immigration laws in many American states.

In 1925 Morris Miller, on behalf of the Tasmanian Psychological Clinic, replicated and expanded the 1917 to 1918 studies which had been conducted by Berry and Porteus. Miller measured the skulls of more than 4,000 schoolboys and university students from Victoria and Tasmania and compared them with the skull sizes of retarded children and prisoners in Hobart's gaol.¹⁶⁴⁹ He agreed with Montessori's findings that food and mental stimulation influenced brain development, but rejected Karl Pearson's view that there was only a 'slight correlation between the size of head and intelligence'.¹⁶⁵⁰ Miller argued that his evidence demonstrated a physical basis for providing higher education.¹⁶⁵¹ Conversely, he found that his prisoner subjects were 'much smaller-headed than the law-abiding members of the community' and concluded that this demonstrated 'a physical basis for mental deficiency,

¹⁶⁴⁵Initially, the only Goddard advocate in Australia appeared to be W A Wood, in *Australian Medical Journal*, 20 July 1912, 601-05. Much later, Piddington quoted Goddard as being the world's 'highest authority' on feeble-mindedness, in *HPC* (January 1930), 12.

¹⁶⁴⁶In *AJPP*, vol 9 (March 1931), 124-25, Pierre Molitor Bachelard also criticised the 'implicit faith' which many Americans accorded Goddard's work. Harold S Wyndham, in *Ability Grouping* (Melbourne: MUP, 1934), 35, commented on the intense publicity surrounding Goddard's and Vineland's publications which 'seem to have been penned with the proselytizing zeal of the devotees of a new faith'.

¹⁶⁴⁷Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (London: Penguin, 1981), 168 and 158-74.

¹⁶⁴⁸Kevles (1985), 79. See also Barker (1989), 347-75.

¹⁶⁴⁹Edmund Morris Miller, *Brain Capacity and Intelligence: Including a Comparison of Brain Measurements of Tasmanian School Boys ...* (Sydney: Australasian Association for Psychology and Philosophy, 1926). Also quoted in *ER*, 18 (1926-1927), 151-52.

¹⁶⁵⁰Miller (1926), 77-78.

¹⁶⁵¹*Ibid.*, 41-42, 49.

pauperism and delinquency'.¹⁶⁵² Quotes such as these cast doubt on Stephen Garton's description of Miller as being 'cautious and sceptical' and a 'far remove' from the 'alarmist views' of early eugenists in the conclusions he drew from his use of mental testing.¹⁶⁵³ Indeed, Miller's conclusions about the relationship of head size to crime are not those of a cautious scientist but exemplify thinking which preceded eugenist ideology, particularly the since discredited theories promulgated by the Italian criminologist, Cesare Lombroso (1836-1909).

Also in 1925, a three-year survey of mentally defective children in NSW government primary schools was undertaken by Dr Harvey Sutton and the Department of Public Health's School Medical Division.¹⁶⁵⁴ In 1927 Sutton stated in a letter to Graham Butler, President of the Queensland Branch of the BMA, that it was difficult to describe the attempts being made to educate 'markedly retarded or mentally deficient children'. He listed seven residential schools in Sydney which provided Montessori-style education. Others included a new school in rural Glenfield for 128 children; Brush Farm, an institution run by the Child Welfare Department in Eastwood; two others at Mittagong and Carlingford; about 300 children under the jurisdiction of the Lunacy Department at Newcastle and 'a large number of male juvenile insane including difficult sex cases' at Rabbit Island (now called Peat Island) on the Hawkesbury River, north of Sydney.¹⁶⁵⁵ Rabbit and the adjacent Milson Island accommodated mentally defective males once they became too old for Newcastle; Stockton (another mental asylum) did the same for females.¹⁶⁵⁶ In this way, life-long segregation was achieved for a few hundred mentally defective people who were detained under a variety of laws and whose care was administered by three separate authorities. Eugenists would have liked a co-ordinated approach in which a single law would be passed and administered by one authority which would segregate and care for all mentally deficient people.

In 1927 Sutton showed that he was statistically innumerate by quoting 'progress figures' of 'somewhere about 3.4% or 7.4% per thousand' (sic) school children who were mentally defective. He claimed that this would 'work out at a figure of between 2.5 and 5 per 1,000 in

¹⁶⁵²Ibid, 57, 67.

¹⁶⁵³Stephen Garton, 'Sound minds and healthy bodies: Re-considering eugenics in Australia, 1914-1940', *Australian Historical Studies* (October 1994), 172.

¹⁶⁵⁴Reported by Arthur Edward Machin, 'The problem of mentally-defective children in NSW from the educational and vocational points of view', *MJA* (17 March 1934), 371.

¹⁶⁵⁵Sutton to Butler, 12 May 1927, State Archives of NSW, Inspector General of the Insane, 2/8566.5. Subsequently cited as State Archives (I-G). A clipping from the *Daily Telegraph*, 27 November (?) 1905, reported that Rabbit Island had been completed as an 'Asylum for Inebriates', Newspaper Cuttings, vol 151 (1905-06), 13, ML.

¹⁶⁵⁶Letter from I-G of Mental Hospitals [NSW] 21 January 1935 to Dr Byam Ellerton, Inspector of Asylums, Mental Hospitals, Qld, *ibid*, 5/5908.

the general population'.¹⁶⁵⁷ In 1931 Dr Ernest Jones estimated that school-age mental defectives in Australia (in schools, mental hospitals and institutions) were about 22,217 or 2.89% of all children.¹⁶⁵⁸ In the same year Judge Walter Bevan called for 'fully 50%' of NSW children to be examined to ensure that no defective ones would be 'left out'.¹⁶⁵⁹ The possibility of defective children being amongst the 50% not examined apparently did not occur to the judge, who in 1932 called for records to be kept of the 'mentality' of all school children 'as a help towards preventing maladjustments'.¹⁶⁶⁰

In 1934, psychiatrist Ralph Noble reported that approximately 5% of Australian children were mentally defective and should receive special instruction.¹⁶⁶¹ In 1935 there were only two institutions in NSW exclusively for mental defectives, although 603 male and 816 female mentally defective adults were 'scattered throughout our institutions'.¹⁶⁶² A year later, Glenfield was the only state school in NSW for mentally deficient children under the age of 12.¹⁶⁶³ However, there are only imprecise statistics for the feeble-minded in private institutions because some people refused to give information.¹⁶⁶⁴ There had been a low response rate to the 1914 survey of school children, making it likely that there would have been even smaller responses to subsequent surveys as the fortunes of eugenics progressively declined.¹⁶⁶⁵

In 1988 Stephen Garton reported that a Commonwealth Government survey 'in 1927 and 1928' had 'concluded that feeble-mindedness was not as rampant in New South Wales as many eugenicists had argued'.¹⁶⁶⁶ Garton indicated that, 'more importantly, it showed that feeble-mindedness was not increasing as prophets of radical decline had predicted'.¹⁶⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵⁷Public Health - Division of School Medical and Dental Services 1928-1929. Sutton, *ibid*, 2/8566.5. These were typed notes, transcribed from a record of Sutton's dictation.

¹⁶⁵⁸Quoted by Frank R Kerr, in *The Sterilization of Mental Defectives*, Federal Health Council, Report of the 6th Session 21-23 February 1933 (Canberra: Govt. Pr., 1933), Appendix II, 22.

¹⁶⁵⁹RHA One Day Conference, 14 October 1931, 13.

¹⁶⁶⁰*MJA* (28 May 1932), 780. Judge Bevan was speaking on behalf of the RHA at the first meeting of the Council For Mental Hygiene for NSW, a body first proposed in 1929.

¹⁶⁶¹'Mental defectives. Among children. Doctor's survey', *SMH*, 16 May 1934, 13.

¹⁶⁶²I-G to Ellerton, 21 January 1935, State Archives (I-G), 5/5908.

¹⁶⁶³Minutes of *The Conference of the Directors of Education* (Brisbane, October 1936), 14.

¹⁶⁶⁴For example, Dr Lorna Hodgkinson refused on the grounds that it would breach the confidentiality of families with relatives in her privately-run institution. Solicitors on behalf of Hodgkinson - reply to the I-G of Mental Hospitals, 23 February 1929, State Archives (I-G), 12/1399.2.

¹⁶⁶⁵*ER*, 6 (July 1914), 156.

¹⁶⁶⁶Stephen Garton, *Medicine and Madness: A Social History of Insanity in NSW 1880-1940* (Kensington: UNSWP, 1988), 85, footnote 53, page 95.

¹⁶⁶⁷Garton (1988), 85.

Garton's statement attracts attention for a number of reasons. There was no Commonwealth Government survey in 1927 and the government reached a quite different conclusion to the reassuring one which Garton has suggested.¹⁶⁶⁸ In 1928, the government was alarmed that it had very little evidence about mental deficiency, which they described as a 'problem' of 'supreme national importance' because of its impact on the physical and mental health of individuals and on the country's 'economic prosperity and efficiency'.¹⁶⁶⁹ Clearly, finding a solution to this problem was an urgent priority for the government which, in response to a resolution passed by the Federal Health Council at its second session in 1928, moved swiftly to initiate a national inquiry to establish the causes of mental deficiency so that effective 'preventive measures' could be implemented.¹⁶⁷⁰ The Inquiry was led by Dr William Ernest Jones (1867-1957), a psychiatrist with eminent credentials in this field,¹⁶⁷¹ whose appointment was announced on 3 August 1928 and was ordered to report back at the next session of the Council.¹⁶⁷² The inquiry findings were released on 23 December 1929 and they affirmed that feeble-mindedness was a widespread and serious problem.¹⁶⁷³ Jones, in his 1929 *Report on Mental Deficiency in the Commonwealth of Australia*, concluded after his examination of local and overseas studies, that 'five active steps appear to be indicated'. His response, which must have delighted eugenists, included proposals for the detection and segregation of the unfit, their sterilization, preventing marriage of the unfit, eliminating syphilis and the control or prohibition of alcohol. His main recommendation was for Psychological Clinics to be established in each state to examine all mentally defective children and young adults.¹⁶⁷⁴

¹⁶⁶⁸Garton (1988), 85, footnote 53, page 95, cites references to 'Commonwealth Department of Health Files A/1928/860/10 and A/1928/443/11'. This appears to be an error as they are unrelated to the topic: Australian Archives staff confirmed that the first reference deals with quarantine in 1910-1911, the second with the creation of the Commonwealth Department of Health.

¹⁶⁶⁹William Ernest Jones, *Report on Mental Deficiency in the Commonwealth of Australia* (Canberra: Australian Department of Health, 1929), 3.

¹⁶⁷⁰Ernest Jones, *ibid.* This inquiry was held after following resolution was passed by the Federal Health Council at its second session in 1928: 'In view of the incompleteness of information concerning the extent of mental deficiency in Australia, and the urgent need for having this available, the Council requests the Commonwealth Government to arrange for an inquiry to be made and for a full report on this subject to be compiled for the next session of the Council'.

¹⁶⁷¹In 1913, while in Britain, Jones commented on eugenics discussion papers given by members of the BMA and had subsequently warned his Australian colleagues about the sterilization 'red herring'. *BMJ* (2 August 1913), 231 and *AMJ* (3 January 1914), 1371. Jones became Victoria's Inspector-General of the Insane.

¹⁶⁷²'Mental deficiency'. Commonwealth Inquiry. Dr W E Jones appointed', *SMH*, 3 August 1928, 14 (f) and 'Mental deficiency. Federal inquiry. Diversity of treatment', *SMH*, 14 August 1928, 15.

¹⁶⁷³Mental defectives. Clinics in each state. Dr Jones's recommendation', *SMH*, 23 December 1929, 12 (e).

¹⁶⁷⁴W Ernest Jones, *Report on Mental Deficiency in the Commonwealth of Australia* (Canberra: Australian Department of Health, 1929), 16.

Such clinics operated in Tasmania and in 1929 the Tasmanian Mental Defectives Board, the body established to administer the Tasmanian Mental Deficiency Act (passed in 1920 with amendments in 1925 and 1929), listed its main work as 'the ascertainment of which persons in the State were mental defectives'.¹⁶⁷⁵ Jones was the Chairman of the Board and it is not likely that such a task would have been undertaken if it had already been done, or if officials felt that unfitness was not a problem. The public continued to see mental deficiency as a problem. For example, in 1927 and 1928 delegations from women's organizations in NSW advised the Minister for Health that 'there was a strong need for a census of all mentally-defective people in the State'.¹⁶⁷⁶ In 1930 Mr Drummond, the NSW Minister for Education, gave details to the *Sydney Morning Herald* of his Department's policy on mental defectives, which involved psychologically testing children who had been identified by headmasters as 'mentally subnormal, epileptic, nervously unstable or eccentric'.¹⁶⁷⁷ The decision by the Federal Health Council in 1931 to instigate an inquiry into sterilization of mental defectives indicates that, in contrast with Garton's conclusion, feeble-mindedness continued to cause widespread concern in the 1930s.¹⁶⁷⁸

Angela Booth commented that the British government would not have initiated a Royal Commission into degeneracy 'unless unquestionable evidence had been submitted to it'.¹⁶⁷⁹ Australian governments shared this concern with many other governments in the 1930s. A strange catalogue of 'practical difficulties' in introducing sterilization was listed at the 1930 Australian Directors of Education Conference in Tasmania, in a paper purporting to summarise the religious and popular views, and legal opinions, about this proposed practice:

- 1 There is the necessity of favourable public opinion. [In Tasmania] a large body of public opinion ... is in favour of it, and one hears little expressed opinion against it. The need is for enlightenment.
- 2 There is the fear of religious difficulties. It appears that this fear is unnecessary. Most churches have humanitarian and welfare organizations with them, and when the facts of deficiency become known, in the majority of cases religious objections disappear. I know of no case of a social welfare worker who is not in favour of the practice.
- 3 It is supposed that sterilization means castration. Information on this point is needed to overcome many scruples.

¹⁶⁷⁵'Mental defectives. Differential treatment. Professor Miller's views', *SMH*, 23 May 1929, 10 (g).

¹⁶⁷⁶*SMH*, 22 November 1927, 10 (e) and 17 March 1928, 12 (d).

¹⁶⁷⁷Quoted in 'Mental defectives. Education Department's policy', *SMH*, 25 June 1930, 15.

¹⁶⁷⁸Kerr (1933), 16-32. The inquiry was made 'in accordance with the request made by Resolution 13 at the 5th Session of the FHC, 24-25 March 1931'.

¹⁶⁷⁹*Argus*, 26 January 1934, 8 (e).

- 4 There is extensive ignorance of the meaning and extent of mental deficiency. Where deficiency is associated with crime, there is little prejudice against the practice of sterilization, but the tendency is to look on the operation as a punishment, instead of being, as it is, a means to a happier and more self-dependent life.

The author - probably the Tasmanian Director-General of Education - concluded that a combined plan of segregation and sterilization was 'probably the most effective', following the Californian model of offering 'release or parole' to a mentally defective person 'provided they submitted to sterilization'.¹⁶⁸⁰ He appeared to be confused or vague about the intended 'beneficiaries' and whether the proposals were to be voluntary or compulsory.

¹⁶⁸⁰The problems of the mental deficient, [a 10-page paper] presented at the Australian Directors of Education Conference, Hobart, 1930 (Tasmania: Archives Office, Ed.73).

Feared consequences of unfitness

Chapter 5 examined fears that racial poisons would cause reductions in intelligence and fitness which would result in escalating economic burdens for the fit.¹⁶⁸¹ Ignorance and utopian dreams also made eugenics popular. The eugenic utopias (or 'eutopias')¹⁶⁸² found in Plato's *The Republic*, Thomas More's *Utopia*, and Galton's unpublished *Kantsaywhere*, were revisited in William McDougall's *Eugenia* and H G Wells' 'forays into the future'.¹⁶⁸³ The Greek word for utopia can mean either 'nowhere' or 'good place' and while some Australians at the turn of the century travelled to Paraguay in search of utopia, others hoped to create a 'Workers' Paradise' at home.¹⁶⁸⁴ Many Australians boasted of their pre-1914 image as the 'social laboratory of the world'.¹⁶⁸⁵

Roe rather inaccurately referred to Dr Cumpston's 1920 dreams of 'leading this young nation of ours to a paradise of physical perfection'.¹⁶⁸⁶ Such dreams were replaced by fears that population losses from diseases, wars, and women's use of contraception and abortion, would lead to racial suicide. Newly emerging reproductive technology and genetic engineering utopias, as Charles Kerr warned, may 'have a tendency to end in nightmares'.¹⁶⁸⁷ He reminded Australian high school students in 1981 that it was necessary to ask the 'central and age-old' questions about eugenics:

¹⁶⁸¹Berry, in 'Medical Association of Victoria' [on eugenics], *AMG* (14 September 1912), 283, warned of the need to cure the 'evil' of mental deficiency 'at its root'. See also Berry (1918), 490 in which he quoted the large amounts of money which were spent in Australia and the United States for the upkeep of 'human failures'.

¹⁶⁸²Thompson (1906), 185.

¹⁶⁸³Michael Freeden, 'Eugenics and progressive thought: A study of ideological affinity', *Historical Journal*, 22 (1979), 660. See also John Maynard Smith, 'Eugenics and utopia', *Daedalus* (Spring 1965), 487-505. Elazar Barkan, in *The Retreat of Scientific Racism* (New York: CUP, 1992), 237, mentioned other popular British utopians including Aldous Huxley, J B S Haldane, Lancet Hogben and H J Muller.

¹⁶⁸⁴In 1893 a group left Sydney with William Lane to establish the utopian New Australia in Paraguay. In the preceding year Lane's book *The Working Man's Paradise* had been published under a pseudonym. Australia as 'God's domain' was mentioned in the *Argus*, 27 November 1913, 10 (c) and the idea is discussed by Richard White in *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1788-1980* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1981), 35, 40-46, 139. Irvine claimed, in *National Efficiency* (Melbourne: Victorian Railways Institute, 1915), 6, that utopia would be an 'unutterably stupid place'. In the 1920s Irvine argued that 'Australia, instead of being a Paradise, was a working man's hell', quoted by Bruce McFarlane, in *Professor Irvine's Economics in Australian Labour History 1913-1933* (Canberra: Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 1966), 10-11.

¹⁶⁸⁵Irvine (1914), 8.

¹⁶⁸⁶Roe, in *Historical Studies*, 17 (1976), 186, cited *MJA* (4 September 1920), 223. The correct page is 218 and the full quote is: 'It is fitting that we, who aspire to use this opportunity, who dream of leading this young nation of ours to a paradise of physical perfection, should critically examine ourselves and our methods in order to assess our fitness to point to the people the paths they must tread to that paradise'. Roe gave other variants of this in *Nine Australian Progressives* (1984), 131 and *ADB*, vol 8, 175.

¹⁶⁸⁷Charles B Kerr, 'Negative and positive eugenics', in Harry Messel (ed.), *The Biological Manipulation of Life* (Pergamon Press, 1981), 281.

'What qualities are desirable or undesirable?', 'To what ends are eugenic policies to be directed?' and 'Who is going to make the decisions?'. [He concluded] Eugenics is an idea which ebbs and flows with the times. The cranks, bigots, racists and opportunist politicians who perverted the former version are still with us.¹⁶⁸⁸

Such prejudices were common in the 1920s and 1930s. For example, some eugenisists, including Margaret Sanger, considered that being poor, unemployed or working class indicated unfitness,¹⁶⁸⁹ and Havelock Ellis claimed that the 'lower classes' procreated 'most copiously, most recklessly, and most disastrously'.¹⁶⁹⁰ Two slogans by eugenists who rejected the need for environmental reforms were particularly blatant: 'Don't waste a \$2,000 education on a \$2 boy' and 'the fit turn a slum into a palace but the unfit turn a palace into a slum'. While such extremes were rare in Australia, the echo of the British elitism is clear in this Australian eugenist's comment:

By inferior [stock] we are entitled to refer to the labouring classes, not in the sense of social distinction, but in regard to unskilled and inefficient workers. The lower class are the labouring class, the higher strata are there because they merit being there.¹⁶⁹¹

An Australian counter-claim was made that the behaviour of the rich was an indication of their unfitness.¹⁶⁹² Perhaps sensitivity to such charges prompted Leonard Darwin to comment in 1914 'if the wastrel was replaced by capable men' the working classes would benefit most because 'the rates of insurance would fall or the benefits available would be increased'.¹⁶⁹³ Others claimed that the 'really poor' would breed less if they became richer.¹⁶⁹⁴ The term 'gene' was coined in 1909 by Wilhelm Johannsen and for the next three decades, values rather than science provided the basis for studies of human genetics.¹⁶⁹⁵ Evidence provided by David Barker indicates that although Daniel Kevles and

¹⁶⁸⁸Ibid, 282, 308.

¹⁶⁸⁹Sanger, in *Margaret Sanger: An Autobiography* (London: Gollancz, 1939), 366, used the words 'rich' and 'poor' as though they were synonymous with 'fit' and 'unfit', commenting that birth-controllers, rather than encouraging larger rich families, wished 'first to stop the multiplication of the unfit'.

¹⁶⁹⁰Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (New York: Random House, 1937), vol 2, Part 3, 623.

¹⁶⁹¹Richard Granville Waddy, in *ARHC* (1929), 63.

¹⁶⁹²'The "Unfit"', *Australian Worker*, 10 June 1920, 13. *Times*, 30 July 1912, 4, reported that Russia's 'Anarchist Prince', Peter Kropotkin was cheered for raising these questions at the Eugenics Congress.

¹⁶⁹³L Darwin, in 'The legislative value of eugenics', *MJA* (14 November 1914), 486.

¹⁶⁹⁴William Jethro Brown, 'Economic welfare and racial vitality', *Economic Record*, 3 (May 1927), 32-33.

¹⁶⁹⁵Geoffrey Russell Searle, in *Eugenics and Politics in Britain 1900-1914* (Leyden: Nordhoff, 1976), 100, quoted J B S Haldane as saying that it was not until 1938 that genetics became a recognised part of the British medical syllabus. According to Dr K F Dyer, in *Australian Science Teachers Journal*, 27, no 2 (1981), 13, genetics did not have 'departmental representation' in any Australian university prior to 1960 and, in 1960, one out of the ten universities included genetics, rising to seven out of 19 in 1980.

Kenneth Ludmerer claimed that British and American geneticists began to publicly distance themselves from eugenics in the 1920s, a 'concerted and effective critique did not develop until after 1930'.¹⁶⁹⁶ Before the 1940s Australia was particularly reliant on overseas news and this explains how assertions which now appear dubious, were frequently made and believed. For example, no one questioned the accuracy of the conclusions reached by a committee of experts who claimed at the 1914 *Australasian Medical Congress* that their Report indicated that 'undoubtedly, a very large proportion of our habitual criminals, drunkards, prostitutes and wastrels are feeble-minded'.¹⁶⁹⁷

Mackellar and Welsh reiterated these views in a booklet which was 'intended to show that, in the absence of provision for its legal control, we are directly fostering the increase of Mental Deficiency with all the evils that follow in its train'. This, Mackellar claimed, would 'provide an ever-increasing burden of work for the philanthropists of the next generation'. Welsh, almost paraphrasing the conclusion of the 1914 Report, claimed that 'the class of the feeble-minded forms a vast recruiting ground for the criminal, the pauper, the vicious, the prostitute, and the habitual drunkard'.¹⁶⁹⁸ Dr Lorna Hodgkinson added VD, bad housing and poor sanitation to this list of 'evils'.¹⁶⁹⁹

Even in war time, some people worried about the feeble-minded. For example, in December 1914 Berry delivered an address entitled 'One of the problems of peace: mental deficiency'. In 1920 he stated that military records revealed an 'unduly large and increasing proportion' of unfitness in the population, making it 'impossible to make good the ravages of war'.¹⁷⁰⁰ In 1923, Ralph Noble warned 'if nothing was done for the retarded children of Australia, Bolshevism would spread'.¹⁷⁰¹ Similar statements had been made as early as 1876 by an Australian public servant and polemicist Henry Keylock Rusden, in 1930 by a writer in the Sydney magazine *Millions*, and by the British scientist Julian Huxley.¹⁷⁰² Possibly, Noble

¹⁶⁹⁶Barker (1989), 375. On page 348 Barker questioned the 'recent orthodoxy' (made popular by Ludmerer and Kevles) which maintains that geneticists 'became increasingly disillusioned with the eugenics movement from the early 1920s, if not earlier'. Barker provided evidence to refute this orthodoxy. The literature lends support to Barker. For example, Raymond Pearl, in 'The Biology of superiority', *American Mercury* (November 1927), 260, was one of the first geneticists to publicly disown eugenics. Although Kevles (1985), 122, cited Pearl, the article's date supports Barker's position, not Kevles'.

¹⁶⁹⁷'Care of the Feeble-minded' (1914), 719.

¹⁶⁹⁸Mackellar and Welsh (1917), foreword, 8 and 47-48.

¹⁶⁹⁹Hodgkinson, 'Mental deficiency as a problem of racial hygiene', *AHRC* (1929), 35-36.

¹⁷⁰⁰Berry (1918); *MJA* (14 December 1914), 485-90 and *MJA* (7 February 1920), 140.

¹⁷⁰¹'BMA News. 'Intelligence tests', *MJA* (2 June 1923), 621.

¹⁷⁰²Rusden entry, *ADB* vol 6, 73-74. He argued in 'Labour and capital', *Melbourne Review*, 1 (1876), 81-82, that letting the unfit survive would lower the quality of the race and destroy it 'almost as effectively as if we were openly to resort to Communism'. A Netzer, 'Eugenics', *Millions* (15 March

felt that assisting such children would maintain the status quo and avoid conflict. Dr Arthur, Chairman of the NSW Parliamentary Enquiry Into Lunacy Law and Administration in 1922 to 1923, warned about the apparently normal 'higher grade of defectives' who formed the 'derelict elements in the community'.¹⁷⁰³ In 1924 Gregory Sprott, President of the Tasmanian branch of the BMA, reiterated a eugenic refrain: 'The reproduction of the unfit only creates further burdens and has a demoralizing and degenerating effect on the whole race'.¹⁷⁰⁴ Few were as overtly elitist as James Edmund Ferguson Stewart who, in his 1926 Presidential address to the WA Branch of the BMA, expressed dismay that the intelligent shouldered the expense of supporting the 'comparatively useless progeny of the proletariat'.¹⁷⁰⁵ Although such examples of class eugenics were frequent in Britain, they were rare in Australia.

The *Australasian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy* published an article in 1928 with the title, 'Psychology, leadership and democracy' because of its 'special applicability to Australasian conditions'.¹⁷⁰⁶ It was reprinted with the permission of the author, William D Tait, who was Chairman of the Department of Psychology at McGill University, then an important centre of Canadian eugenic thought.¹⁷⁰⁷ It is important as a rare example of Australian-Canadian contact, rather than for its reiteration of stale arguments about the harm caused by misguided maternal mollicoddling of misfits and the need to save the race, not the individual. The article stimulated John Anderson (1893-1962), a frequently controversial Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sydney, to respond:

There is in America a body known as the Ku Klux Klan, whose mission is to suppress all deviations from right thinking and right living by chastising, sterilizing or annihilating the deviator. ... To Dr W D Tait ... it would no doubt appear that there is all the difference in the world between the operations of the Klan and the system of scientific tests which he proposes. But the claim to be scientific is hardly supported by the character of the argument that he puts forward.¹⁷⁰⁸

1930), 20, claimed that eugenics offered 'the only solution to the problems that confront us and the only alternative to anarchy and the horrors of Communism'. Huxley is quoted in Barkan (1992), 188.

¹⁷⁰³Arthur, 'Idiocy. Its alarming inroads in NSW. Suicidal policies', *Sunday Times*, 26 October 1924.

¹⁷⁰⁴*MJA* (22 March 1924), 281.

¹⁷⁰⁵*MJA* (19 June 1926), 690.

¹⁷⁰⁶*AJPP*, 6 (March 1928), 28.

¹⁷⁰⁷Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada 1885-1945* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990), 24-25, 109.

¹⁷⁰⁸John Anderson, 'Another outbreak of virtue', *AJPP*, 6 (June 1928), 151-52. At a WEA Conference, Anderson described the 'notion of the superior, better-bred people' as 'capitalist' and urged working-class people to oppose eugenics, *SMH*, 27 March 1933, 10. His stance was greeted with 'startled astonishment' by Lilius Jerrold-Nathan, a nurse who had trained in a large British hospital, *SMH*, 3 April 1933, p. 4 (d).

Recently Anderson's 'review' has attracted the attention of David McCallum who has made a Foucaultian analysis of Australian eugenics.¹⁷⁰⁹ He argued that Anderson, representing those opposed to the hereditarian position, had 'identified eugenicist thinking with the activities of the Ku Klux Klan, and accused the eugenicists of flabby logic'.¹⁷¹⁰ McCallum's conclusions require some correction. Anderson did not explicitly connect theories proposed by Tait or other eugenists with the Klan, and Anderson's comments related to Tait, not to eugenists in general. McCallum was also wrong to suggest that Anderson's idiosyncratic response was shared by all of those eugenists who opposed the hereditarian position.

¹⁷⁰⁹David McCallum, 'Knowledges, schooling, power: questions about the eugenics movement in Australia', in *Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society Conference* (Adelaide: October 1992), 75-97.

¹⁷¹⁰McCallum, *The Social Production of Merit: Education, Psychology and Politics in Australia, 1900-1950* (London: Falmer Press, 1990), 67.

Marriage restrictions

Eugenists and the many others who supported marriage restrictions were ready to advise on the ways in which such practices should be applied to other people. In 1900 Carroll warned that it was more important to prevent the unfit marrying than to worry about preventing undesirable aliens into the country.¹⁷¹¹ Most eugenists considered that controlling or restricting marriage was a prerequisite for a successful policy of negative eugenics and there was medical and popular support for this view. When in 1912 Galton considered introducing pre-marital health checks, Havelock Ellis warned him about the obstacle of expense.¹⁷¹² The zeal of the newly-formed Eugenics Education Society was threatening to sour its relations with the British medical profession and Galton's proposed campaign might have further antagonised doctors.¹⁷¹³

In contrast, medical alienation was not a problem in Australia. In 1912 most of the medical profession either were eugenists or believed that eugenics would help foster greater national fitness. One writer, probably Berry, prophesied a future in which 'medicine and eugenics [would] advance hand in hand, for their missions, if not identical, will, I venture to think, be in complete sympathy'.¹⁷¹⁴ In 1914 the Melbourne physician and lecturer, John William Springthorpe, who had supported the 1900 attempts to assist epileptic children, included a section on eugenics in what John Powles has identified as Australia's first textbook on hygiene. It urged doctors 'to do all in their power to learn its laws and advance its claims in every reasonable and tactful manner'. He added that considerations about child-bearing by the unfit were 'difficult, complex and even uncertain'.¹⁷¹⁵

A 1912 editorial in the *Australian Medical Gazette* quoted Dr Henderson, Professor of Sociology at the University of Chicago, 'in recent years the futility of such legislation has become apparent. Propagation of the irresponsible, abnormal, and criminal goes on without regard to legal wedlock'.¹⁷¹⁶ Plans to restrict marriage were utopian as it was naive to imagine that such regulation would prevent illegitimacy or ensure 'celibacy of the

¹⁷¹¹*Science of Man* (22 January 1900), 223-24.

¹⁷¹²Havelock Ellis, *The Task of Social Hygiene* (London: Constable, 1912), 203.

¹⁷¹³Searle (1976), 100 and *BMJ* (2 August 1913), 230.

¹⁷¹⁴'Eugenics and medicine', *AMJ* (19 October 1912), 742. The comment about letters with pedigrees reaching his laboratory, suggests the author was Berry who had established an anthropology laboratory.

¹⁷¹⁵John William Springthorpe, *Therapeutics, Dietetics and Hygiene: An Australian Text-Book, vol 1 - Hygiene and Dietetics* (Melbourne: James Little, 1914), 38. Comments by Powles, in MacLeod (1988), 294, 296-97, 300.

¹⁷¹⁶'The problem of the feeble minded', *AMG* (29 June 1912), 681.

diseased'.¹⁷¹⁷ In 1913 criticism of proposed Victorian legislation to impose marriage permits included the comment that 'irregular unions among the rejected might prove to be worse than the marriages'.¹⁷¹⁸ As well, preventing marriage would not prevent procreation.¹⁷¹⁹ The *AMG*, commenting on a Bill in Pennsylvania which aimed to prevent marriage 'between people with transmissible diseases, or between people not mentally or physically sound'. While the editorial agreed that marriage of the unfit should be prohibited by law, it disagreed with Dr Morris, a 'social reformer', at a medical convention in Chicago, who proposed to 'breed' people as though they were animals.¹⁷²⁰ As late as 1949 an RHA doctor was quoted as finding it unfortunate that people were interested in 'pure breeding' of animals but did not think about it in their own case.¹⁷²¹ Such an idea was forcefully rejected by Sir Macfarlane Burnet, who in 1961 suggested that any such breeding scheme for humans would be 'fantastically wrong'. 'It is fortunate that no opportunity is ever likely to arise which will allow deliberate breeding of human stock towards a desired pattern. It would only be too easy to make terrible mistakes'.¹⁷²²

In contrast however, a number of prominent Australians had earlier believed that human breeding could and should be controlled. Suggested ways of doing this are scattered through a British book reprinted in Melbourne in 1898 by 'Oxoniensis', a pen name chosen by David Ritchie to indicate that he had been to Oxford University. Although he favoured women's rights and the use of contraception, he believed that people should marry young and that marriage should be controlled by state laws providing a medical board with authority to issue licences to people who passed stringent fitness tests.¹⁷²³ This board would refuse licences to people with TB, physical disabilities or where there was a history of a 'well-defined family taint', such as insanity, drunkenness, or 'habitual criminality'. He suggested minimum and maximum ages for marriage and supported the Neo-Malthusian position that all classes should have fewer children; 'we want far fewer babies born and finer

¹⁷¹⁷Quoted in *ER*, 13 (1921-1922), 476.

¹⁷¹⁸'Permits to marry. Health Board's proposal. Ministers unconvinced', *Argus*, 4 April 1913, 12 (h).

¹⁷¹⁹Eldridge, 'Eugenics', *Navvy*, 23 May 1916, 6 and 6 June 1916, 6.

¹⁷²⁰'Eugenics and marriage', *AMG* (20 September 1913), 271.

¹⁷²¹Dr Phyllis Burton, in 'Planned parenthood', by Staff Correspondent, *SMH*, 14 January 1949, 2 (d).

¹⁷²²Frank E Macfarlane Burnet, in 'Migration and race mixture from the genetic angle', *ER*, 53 (April 1961), 97. In *SA/EUG*, E4, Dr Blacker to Dr Wallace, 29 March 1961, 2, Blacker wrote 'We have printed contributions from [Burnet] three times in the *Review* recently, 'Biology and Medicine' in October 1957, and 'Migration and Race Mixture' in July 1959 and [in April 1961]. We have also made him a member of our Consultative Council. We have a high regard for him indeed'.

¹⁷²³Oxoniensis (David George Ritchie), *Early Marriage and Late Parentage* (Melbourne: Saunders, 1898), 129-30. A shorter version had been published in London in 1883.

ones at that! Sickly men and women should not marry. People should be ashamed to have a puny baby'.¹⁷²⁴

In 1912, Dr Arthur proposed in a speech on eugenics that 'every man, before he is allowed to marry, should have to produce a certificate of a clean bill of health'.¹⁷²⁵ Tensions between Arthur and Professor Anderson Stuart, prominent members of the Eugenics Education Society of NSW, are suggested by comments made in 1914 at an EESNSW dinner which was chaired by the President, Dr Arthur. In Anderson Stuart's opinion:

The idea of demanding a medical certificate of fitness before either party to a marriage should be permitted to contract a union, would present such complications as to be quite impossible. That, however, was quite apart from what this Society proposed to advocate.¹⁷²⁶

This public contradiction of the Society's President, and a later comment by the RHA's Lillie Goodisson, reveal ambiguity about what legitimately constituted eugenics work: Goodisson told the British Eugenics Society in 1939 'though [the RHA] is not a Eugenic Society, we decidedly do a good deal of eugenic work and our pre-marital health examinations have been very successful'.¹⁷²⁷

David Walker has recently argued that Billy Hughes was 'a little cauldron of eugenic theories and degenerationist anxieties'.¹⁷²⁸ However, while Hughes was a member of three political parties, he never joined a eugenics society and the views he expressed were widely shared from the 1890s to the early 1900s.¹⁷²⁹ In 1913 Hughes drafted a Federal Bill proposing that only couples who had both produced certificates of good health could marry. He had to abandon the Bill, following strong pressure from church groups and even his own party at that time.¹⁷³⁰ Three years later the South Australian Branch of the British Science Guild published a report which recommended that marriage licences should be denied to people with 'eugenic unfitness' (defined as TB, epilepsy, insanity, VD, confirmed criminal tendency, sex perversion and confirmed alcoholism), unless they could produce a certificate of cure,

¹⁷²⁴Oxoniensis (1898), 116, 117.

¹⁷²⁵Arthur (1912), 7. He was addressing the Women's Liberal League.

¹⁷²⁶*Telegraph*, 24 February 1914, 9.

¹⁷²⁷Goodisson to Dr Blacker, 21 June 1939, London, Eugenic Society SA/EUG, D69.

¹⁷²⁸David Walker, 'White peril', *Australian Book Review*, September 1995, 33.

¹⁷²⁹Politicians who were members of eugenics societies included Deakin, Arthur, Eldridge, T H Smeaton and F W Young. Eugenist views were also expressed by Parkes, Barton, the Commissioners of the RCDBR and in the *Bulletin*.

¹⁷³⁰William Farmer Whyte, *William Morris Hughes: His Life and Times* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1957), 163-64.

signed by two doctors.¹⁷³¹ A similarly worded resolution 'in the interests of the community and the future of the race' was passed by delegates at the Health Congress in Sydney in 1917.¹⁷³² In 1922 the Report of the Commonwealth and States Conference on Venereal Disease recommended that pregnant women should be tested for syphilis and that tests indicating freedom from VD should be compulsory for people wishing to marry.¹⁷³³ Such recommendations may have been prompted by news that a number of American states had implemented 'practical eugenics' laws relating to marriage and sterilization.¹⁷³⁴ In Australia, nothing resulted from any of these proposals.

In 1925-26 an extremist proposal was made in Victoria for a Qualification of Marriage Bill. Its intent was revealed in an accompanying Memorandum which mentioned an 'alarming' and 'appalling' increase of degenerates (deformed, consumptive and diseased) who were 'degrading and perverting' the 'sacred institution of marriage'. This was considered to be a 'very grievous evil' from the economic perspective and the 'very essence of folly' politically: once enfranchised, those 'most unfitted to exercise such power' were likely to be controlled by 'incompetent, tyrannical and irresponsible [political] juntas'.¹⁷³⁵ Lionel Lewis, who sent this Memorandum and Bill to the Eugenics Education Society in London, stated in a cover note that the Bill was 'very strongly and decisively supported' both by 'the Eugenists' and by 'representative men' in Australia.¹⁷³⁶ While he claimed that all necessary steps had been taken for the Bill's enactment in the Commonwealth Parliament, he requested the EES to support the Bill's discussion at the International Eugenics Congress and the League of Nations. Doubt is cast on the reliability of Lewis' claims in a 1925 letter from the Agent-General for Victoria, informing the EES that 'there is no Qualification of Marriage Act in operation in Victoria, nor is anything known of any proposal to restrict marriages either by reason of any medical or physical defects on the part of the contracting parties'.¹⁷³⁷

Jethro Brown in 1927 proposed that 'within limits', 'rational selection' should supplement 'natural selection'. He was not suggesting that 'a scientist should go around with an axe and

¹⁷³¹Negative eugenics, national aspect of parentage', in *Race Building*, *Adelaide's Mail* (1916), 19-21.

¹⁷³²Reported in the *Argus*, 30 July 1917, 8 (d).

¹⁷³³John Cooper Booth, 'Address on the Control of Venereal Disease', quoted in *NHMRC*, 9th Session November 1940, Appendix III, 26.

¹⁷³⁴Described by W E Agar, 'Practical eugenics in the United States', *New Outlook*, 12 May 1923, 164-65.

¹⁷³⁵A Proposed Bill for the Qualification of Marriage Act. Memorandum by Lionel Lewis, 4 The Avenue, East St Kilda, Victoria, 25 August 1925, SA/EUG, E3B.

¹⁷³⁶Lewis to Sec EES, 16 June 1926, *ibid*. He said that Lady Forster, the wife of the former G-G of Australia, had the material and would 'probably' contact the EES directly.

¹⁷³⁷Office of the Agent-General for Victoria to Sec EES, 21 October 1925, SA/EUG E3B.

a bath, smashing half the men and drowning half the women' because such things were 'not done in polite society'.¹⁷³⁸ His recommendations were for both pre-marriage certificates and segregation or sterilization of 'obviously defective types' as 'any religious or humane objection scarcely deserves consideration'.¹⁷³⁹ In 1928 Cumpston was reported to be in favour of 'the production of the medical certificate declaring the absence of certain obvious physical defects such as venereal disease in communicable form, epilepsy, deaf-mutism, and feeble-mindedness should be made a legally essential condition of marriage'.¹⁷⁴⁰ The following year Cumpston's evidence on the importance of eugenic considerations was quoted in the report of the Royal Commission on Child Endowment or Family Allowance. In 1928 he gave his opposition to 'undesirable marriages':

For this purpose it would be necessary that the Commonwealth should exercise its constitutional powers in relation to marriage and divorce, as such legislation could only be effective if it were applicable to the whole Commonwealth. It would also be desirable that revision should be made of the position in respect of feeble-mindedness and the segregation and control of those individuals declared to be feeble-minded.¹⁷⁴¹

At the 1929 *Australian Racial Hygiene Congress*, Arthur and Hughes both favoured such testing; Hughes hoped that the Association would 'get a law passed' for a 'compulsory certificate of health before marriage'.¹⁷⁴² Barrett said that his organisation had repeatedly asked couples to make pre-marriage health declarations.¹⁷⁴³ However, when Hughes was asked in 1937 whether he would revive his 1929 proposal, he replied 'once bitten, twice shy'.¹⁷⁴⁴ Curiously, perhaps dishonestly, the RHA Marriage Advisory Centre leaflet contained a claim that Hughes continued to be 'strongly in favour' of compulsory health certificates before marriage. The leaflet quotes Hughes as stating this in a May 1937 letter and confirming it in a deputation which 'waited on him' on 22 July 1937.¹⁷⁴⁵ From its inception in 1926, the RHA stressed the 'necessity of a health examination before marriage'.¹⁷⁴⁶ Goodisson claimed that certificates of health before marriage were almost

¹⁷³⁸Brown (1927), 28-29.

¹⁷³⁹Ibid, 30-31.

¹⁷⁴⁰'Control of marriage', *SMH*, 18 January 1928, 16 (c).

¹⁷⁴¹Report of the Royal Commission on Child Endowment or Family Allowances, *CPP*, vol 2 (1929), 1359. H. Eugenic Control, Section 630, Question 12,022.

¹⁷⁴²*AHRC* (1929), 27 and 32.

¹⁷⁴³Ibid, 11.

¹⁷⁴⁴'Health pass to marriage. Hughes has doubts' [*SMH*, 1937?], United Associations of Women news cuttings, ML. In fact Hughes had twice been 'bitten', in 1913 and 1929.

¹⁷⁴⁵SA/EUG. D 69. Correspondence. Foreign Countries. The RHA's Marriage Advisory Centre leaflet is attached with Lillie Goodisson's 21 June 1939 letter to Dr C P Blacker.

¹⁷⁴⁶Goodisson, 'Health examination before marriage', *Progressive Journal* (5 November 1935), 3 and 48.

unknown in NSW until 1929 but had 'increased enormously' since the RHA began advocating them in that year.¹⁷⁴⁷

Figure 21: RHA pre-marital health examinations¹⁷⁴⁸



¹⁷⁴⁷*SMH*, 17 October 1931, 17.

¹⁷⁴⁸RHA Annual Report (1938-39).

While the RHA tests were voluntary, she made contradictory statements about this. In 1936 she noted that 'only a Hitler' could compel such measures.¹⁷⁴⁹ A year later she said that tests would 'probably' become compulsory once the necessity was appreciated by the government, as it had been by Argentina's President in 1937.¹⁷⁵⁰ Ironically, the RHA's marriage certificates were based on a British motion which in 1934 was almost immediately withdrawn because Lord Kilmaine, who proposed it, accepted that his scheme was unworkable. The RHA's mistakes in reporting this, suggest that they had not read the Hansard record. For example, page six of the 1938 RHA Annual Report described the proposal as having been 'introduced into the House of Commons by Lord Kilmainham', and the RHA's Marriage Advisory Centre leaflet indicated that 'Lord Kilmain' had proposed it in the 'House of Lords in November 1935'. In fact, the RHA certificate specifying four levels of fitness was based on Lord Kilmaine's November 1934 Motion to Amend the Marriage Act.¹⁷⁵¹

Figure 22: RHA Marriage Certificate for Health and Fitness

Marriage Certificate for Health and Fitness

This is to certify that Mr./Mrs./Miss..... has been examined, and the results of the Medical Examination and Tests which this day have been completed, are as follows: It is our opinion

That

She/he is free from hereditary disease
" " " not free from hereditary disease
" " " has a tendency to hereditary disease

She/he is free from contagious disease
" " " not free from contagious disease

She/he is fit for marriage
" " " not fit for marriage

She/he is fit for parentage
" " " not fit for parentage

Date.....

on behalf of the Racial Hygiene Association of N.S.W., 14 Martin Place, Sydney.

Signed.....

¹⁷⁴⁹'Marriage', *SMH*, 28 October 1936, 10.

¹⁷⁵⁰RHA Annual Report (1937), 3.

¹⁷⁵¹Lord Kilmaine (John Edward Deane Brown, 1878-1946), 'Marriage Laws', House of Lords, 14 November 1934, Session 1933-34, vol 5, 423-31. The RHA Marriage Certificate for Health and Fitness was in the historical collection of the FPA NSW Library.

The RHA provided their tests from 1936 until the 1950s, issuing a certificate (as shown in Figure 22) to an engaged couple who had undergone their medical and mental tests. The general examinations included 'Blood tests, chest X-Ray, blood pressure, diabetes, bodily defects'. The special tests included 'Perversions, alcoholism, epilepsy, speech defects, intelligence test, inherited diseases and tendencies'.¹⁷⁵² There are no records of their testing methods.

Calls for marriage control continued through the 1930s and 1940s. The Presbyterian Church in Queensland made a 1934 proposal, which echoed the one made by Arthur in 1912, for 'health certificates for bridegrooms'.¹⁷⁵³ Perhaps they, like legislators in some parts of North and South America, believed that an examination of both parties would be an affront to a 'pure' woman.¹⁷⁵⁴

A conference on *The Need for a Health Certificate Before Marriage*, organised by the NSW Health Week Committee, was held on 14 October 1935. It was chaired by Jessie Street with papers offered by Dr Andrew Davidson, President of the BMA, Dr Cooper Booth, Director of the Venereal Diseases Clinic, and Dr Frances Harding, an RHA honorary medical officer.¹⁷⁵⁵ Two years later, representatives from 15 women's organisations planned a meeting with Mr Fitzsimons, the NSW Minister for Health, to ask him to urge Parliament to impose compulsory pre-marriage health certification.¹⁷⁵⁶ Norman Haire argued in 1941 that if Australia had 'not the courage' to legislate to make these certificates compulsory 'at least we might provide facilities for voluntary examination before marriage'.¹⁷⁵⁷ This might have been intended as a snub of the RHA's pre-marriage checks, which is understandable considering the RHA's refusal to publicly associate with him.

The report of the first session of the Commonwealth Government's National Health and Medical Research Council included a report on causes and prevention of blindness, 40% of

¹⁷⁵²The RHA Annual Report (1938), 6, 7 stated that 65 people had had their pre-marriage tests in the first 8 months and that they had been asked by the ES in London to send a copy of their questionnaire. Dr Lotte A Fink, in 'The Racial Hygiene Association of Australia', *Fifth International Conference on Planned Parenthood*, Report of the Proceedings (London: IPPF, 1955), 287-90, said that the RHA's examinations were suspended during the war and listed the numbers of certificates issued as 44 in 1952-1953, 37 in 1953-1954 and 47 in 1954-1955. Piddington also favoured such tests, *HPC* (August 1930), 10.

¹⁷⁵³Reported in *Sun*, 24 May 1934 and the *Australian Women's Weekly*, 9 June 1934.

¹⁷⁵⁴Allan M Brandt, *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States Since 1880* (New York: OUP, 1985), 148-49.

¹⁷⁵⁵Reported in *Progressive Journal* (10 March 1936), 12, 16.

¹⁷⁵⁶Reported in *Sun*, 20 May 1937.

¹⁷⁵⁷Norman Haire, 'Australia's population problem', *General Practitioner* (May 1941), 4. Haire Papers, Rare books, Fisher Library.

which was said to be 'preventable'. In response, the NHMRC proposed federal implementation of 'voluntary sterilization' for 'carriers and sufferers from hereditary eye diseases' [including those with VD], the prohibition of 'consanguineous marriages' and the implementation of 'voluntary premarital certification'.¹⁷⁵⁸ The NHMRC believed in 1943 that the public had to be 'steadily educated' so that they would agree to 'voluntarily subject themselves to medical examination before marriage'.¹⁷⁵⁹ At a 1949 Hobart meeting of the Australasian Association of Psychiatrists, Dr Charles Brothers joked that 'Cupid was never taught genetics' and he proposed to remedy this by extending the work of Marriage Guidance Councils to 'control marriages'.¹⁷⁶⁰ He recognised that 'in the present state of our civilization' this would have to be advisory because 'compulsion' was not yet 'practicable'.¹⁷⁶¹

Eugenic thinking played a definite part in attempts to bar the unhealthy from marriage in the hope that this restriction would prevent them having children. Many 'purity feminists' gave support, promoted by alarm about the high levels of VD-related maternal and infant deaths and the wish to save women and children from infected and infectious men.¹⁷⁶² Those exerting such pressure included Piddington, Street and Preston Stanley, and organisations in which women predominated, such as the RHA and the United Associations of Women.¹⁷⁶³ Almost all of them made deputations to politicians recommending marriage restrictions. The Eugenics Society of Victoria did not appear to favour restriction or inspections, but wrote approvingly of this being done by 'some progressive eugenic centres'.¹⁷⁶⁴

¹⁷⁵⁸J B Hamilton and W D Counsel, NHMRC, First Session, February 1937, Appendix.

¹⁷⁵⁹Resolutions. No 1, Venereal Diseases', NHMRC, 15th Session, May 1943, 7.

¹⁷⁶⁰The first of the Marriage Guidance Councils was established in Sydney in 1948.

¹⁷⁶¹Charles Brothers, 'Psychiatry and eugenics', *MJA* (5 August 1950), 213.

¹⁷⁶²See *Smith's Weekly*, 23 January 1932, 23; *Guardian*, 21 September 1929, 6; State Archives (I-G), 12/3476, 28 September 1933 and 2 March 1936, W Ernest Jones, Victoria to Dr John A Wallace, Sydney re NSW Cabinet's proposed Bill on 'the control of mental defectives who are criminally inclined', *ibid*, 5/5916.

¹⁷⁶³The United Associations of Women was formed in 1929 from an amalgamation of three feminist women's groups: the Women's Service Club, the New South Wales Women Voters' Association and the Women's League of New South Wales. According to the *Sun*, 20 May 1937, the UAW was 'sponsored by the standing committee of women's organisations formed for the purpose of combating material [sic] and infant mortality'.

¹⁷⁶⁴Victor Hugo Wallace, *Women and Children First!* (Melbourne: OUP, 1946), 45.

Legislation for care, control or sterilization

Legislative backing was a necessary prerequisite for the implementation of negative eugenics policies. However, Roe changed this sequence in his claim that the Eugenics Education Society of NSW was 'founded in 1912 as a result of the Government's planning to legislate on mental defectives'.¹⁷⁶⁵ The more likely sequence is that a group of people, having decided that the legislation was needed, formed the Society to lobby the NSW Government to take action. In 1913 a doctor (probably Alexander Lewers) stated that the 'somewhat excited demand for drastic action under the heading of Eugenics which rose up suddenly a year or two ago has apparently subsided in the same remarkable manner'.¹⁷⁶⁶ One of these demands was made in South Australia by the Reverend Joseph Coles Kirby (1837-1924), a prohibitionist who endorsed the extremist proposals for compulsory sterilization made in 1903 by a notorious British surgeon, Robert Rentoul.¹⁷⁶⁷

The most extreme Australian proposals for controlling the unfit began in the 19th century. For example, Henry Keylock Rusden (1826-1910) wrote a pamphlet in 1872 advocating the use of convicted criminals 'as subjects for physiological, medical and surgical experiment',¹⁷⁶⁸ and in 1876 argued that criminals and lunatics 'when selected by law for extrusion [expulsion] should be permanently eliminated'. Others he wanted 'pressed out or down' were 'the lunatic, the stupid, the weak, the diseased and the incompetent'.¹⁷⁶⁹ In 1893, Rusden claimed that he had convinced 'Mr Darwin' of the 'importance of extinguishing the breed' of habitual criminals.¹⁷⁷⁰ Similarly, Henry Gyles Turner (1831-1920), a banker and historian, made a suggestion in 1899 which resembles the recently announced American policy of 'three strikes and you're out'. Turner's plan was to supply essentials to offenders with three convictions and deport them to an island. He wanted them to be 'self-

¹⁷⁶⁵Roe (1984), 165.

¹⁷⁶⁶Anon, [Alexander Lewers ?], 'Eugenics' *AMG* (13 December 1913), 1342. Lewers (1915), 12, used these exact words in his 1915 book.

¹⁷⁶⁷Joseph Kirby, *The State and the Sterilization of Defectives* (Semaphore, South Australia: Kirby, [1912?]). Archival papers in State Archives (I-G), 12/1212.1, include urgent requests in 1912 to obtain Rentoul's *Race Culture or Race Suicide: (A Plea for the Unborn)*. Rentoul's books were criticised in *BMJ* (12 March 1904), 626, by a reviewer who did not like the 'public executioner' role Rentoul proposed for doctors.

¹⁷⁶⁸Rusden, *The Treatment of Criminals in Relation to Science: Or Suggestions for the Prevention of Cruelty to Honest Men and Women* (Melbourne: George Robertson, 1872).

¹⁷⁶⁹Rusden (1876), 79.

¹⁷⁷⁰Rusden, 'The Survival of the Unfittest', *AAASR* (1893), 524. Bill Bynum, on the Board of the Darwin Papers Project at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London, could not find any trace of correspondence between Rusden and Charles Darwin, Pers. comm., 18 and 22 June 1992. In response to my request to staff at the ADB, Barry Smith indicated that 'Rusden would have been bold enough to write to Charles Darwin and possibly bold enough to misrepresent Darwin's reply', Pers. comm., 13 July 1992.

supporting, if possible', but kept from 'licentious freedom and its concomitant brood of demoralised and demoralising offspring'.¹⁷⁷¹ Rusden and Turner were members of the Eclectic Association of Victoria which was founded by a group of Melbourne's free-thinkers, rationalists and humanists in 1867. Turner was the Society's President, and Rusden its Secretary and Treasurer. As late as 1950, a psychiatrist complained that sterilization of criminals was 'an old perennial blazoned forth every now and then by the lay Press'.¹⁷⁷²

Even more extreme proposals were made by Dr Chapple who in 1899 and 1903 advocated 'the painless extinction' of the unfit, defined as 'all those mental and moral and physical defectives who are unable or unwilling to support themselves'. This included criminals, paupers, idiots, imbeciles, lunatics, drunkards and 'the deformed and the diseased'.¹⁷⁷³ In 1911 Scottish-educated Dr Edward Steven questioned the wisdom of any nation which allowed a 'palpable imbecile' to survive. For the sake of the nation's progress and prosperity, 'emasculat[i]on' or sacrifice of lives should be considered for 'your cretins, idiots [and] imbeciles'.¹⁷⁷⁴ In 1912 Berry, in his address as the retiring President of the Victorian branch of the BMA, agreed with Professor Doncaster from Cambridge who proposed legal restriction to prevent mentally defective people from reproducing, thus 'curing the evil at its root'.¹⁷⁷⁵ Zealots such as these suggested to the public that eugenists were 'a savagely tyrannical clique who regard the lethal chamber as more valuable than the hospital, and castration the greatest good to be got out of a surgeon'.¹⁷⁷⁶

A more moderate position of segregating the feeble-minded was proposed in 1912 by the *Australian Medical Journal* and similar discussions about eugenics were held in Britain in 1913 by the newly-established Medical Sociology Section of the BMA's Annual Conference.¹⁷⁷⁷ Some felt that birth control would solve the problem. Eugenists were divided and changed their views about birth control over time. For example, Dr Arthur, who became a fervent supporter, said in 1922 that birth control would be 'sheer madness' in

¹⁷⁷¹Henry Gyles Turner, 'The treatment of paupers and criminals', *Bankers' Magazine of Australasia* (25 April 1899), 617-18. This view was also expressed by Carroll in *Science of Man* (30 January 1904), 186-87.

¹⁷⁷²Charles R Brothers, 'Psychiatry and eugenics', *MJA* (5 August 1950), 211-15.

¹⁷⁷³Chapple entered the New Zealand Parliament in 1908 and in 1910 became a British MP. He wrote 'The fertility of the unfit', *Intercolonial Medical Congress of Australasia* (1899), 474-85 and *The Fertility of the Unfit* (Melbourne: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1903).

¹⁷⁷⁴*AMCT*, vol 2 (1911), 893.

¹⁷⁷⁵*AMG* (14 September 1912), 283.

¹⁷⁷⁶Edgar Schuster, in 'BMA, 81st annual meeting, Section of Medical Sociology. Discussion of eugenics. The scope of the science of eugenics', *BMJ* (2 August 1913), 223. At this time, some doctors failed to distinguish between castration and sterilization.

¹⁷⁷⁷*BMJ*, *ibid*, 223-31.

Australia, and in 1928 agreed with Mussolini that it 'should not be encouraged among healthy people'.¹⁷⁷⁸ Some favoured a combination of segregation and sterilization measures.¹⁷⁷⁹ Others seemed to be confused about what they were advocating. For example, in 1899 Dr Carroll made a bizarre proposal for segregating and supervising 'degenerates' so that they could lose their 'hereditary abnormality' and be trained 'into a moral character'.¹⁷⁸⁰

There was a proposal in 1921 (possibly by Berry) in the Workers' Educational Association newsletter for sterilization of mental defectives or the establishment of a lethal chamber, with the disclaimer that such extreme measures would not be needed if an Act allowing segregation were passed.¹⁷⁸¹ The subject was extensively discussed in 'medical periodicals' and in the Australian 'lay press' in the 1920s.¹⁷⁸² In Britain a plea for moderation was made in 1921 by the geneticist William Bateson who expressed alarm about American proposals to sterilize habitual criminals. He stressed the lack of scientific justification for this and cautioned, 'proscription is a weapon with a very nasty recoil'. Bateson argued that 'war-mongers' were 'infinitely more dangerous' than criminals.¹⁷⁸³

The author Xavier Herbert (1901-1984), who knew of Berry in the 1920s and found his 'irascible ways' amusing, wrote a biographical sketch about him in *Smith's Weekly* and illustrated it with a caricature of his skull, horn-rim glasses and cigarette in a long holder.¹⁷⁸⁴ In 1930 Berry returned to England and was alleged to favour the implementation of a state-controlled 'lethal chamber' to painlessly exterminate 'the grosser types' of mentally defective people. This drew a highly critical response from the editor of the *Eugenics Review*.¹⁷⁸⁵ Berry replied that he had not 'seriously suggested this' but acknowledged he had

¹⁷⁷⁸Control of birth. Church opposition. Strong Sydney views', *Daily Mail* [17 July 1922]. This undated item was published 'the day after Bishop Kelly laid the foundation stone at St Augustine's Presbytery, Balmain': the stone was laid on 16 July 1922. See also 'Birth control by TB parents. Dr Arthur says Govt. instruction available for mothers. No advice, however, for healthy husbands and wives. English custom to be followed', *Guardian*, 1 July 1928. Both items were in Dr Arthur's scrap-book, ML.

¹⁷⁷⁹For example, see W Verco *AMG* (20 July 1910), 342 and G A Syme *MJA* (16 February 1924), 10. H H Goddard, quoted by Edward J Larson, in *Sex, Race, and Science: Eugenics in the Deep South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 29, indicated that 'it is not a question of segregation or sterilization, but segregation and sterilization'.

¹⁷⁸⁰*Science of Man* (21 July 1899), 101.

¹⁷⁸¹ASW, 'What of the feeble-minded?', *Australian Highway* (1 August 1921), 6-7.

¹⁷⁸²Sylvester John Minogue, 'Mental deficiency among the criminal insane', *MJA* (27 October 1923), 438.

¹⁷⁸³Bateson, *ER*, 13 (1921-1922), 327.

¹⁷⁸⁴Xavier Herbert, in the autobiography of his first 24 years, *Disturbing Element* (1963), 262, claimed that this was plagiarised by *Smith's* editor and his sketch was redrawn.

¹⁷⁸⁵*ER*, 22 (April 1930), 6.

commented in the *Times* that 'such an act of extinction would be the kindest, wisest, and best thing we could do for all concerned', pondering why people should be 'so anxious to preserve the life of the almost brainless, senseless, speechless idiots and imbeciles when it seems almost pathetic to condemn them to live their lives as helpless automata?'. He concluded, 'politicians and people will both have to face all three - sterilization, segregation and the lethal chamber'.¹⁷⁸⁶

Extremist proposals were also made by Australians such as Angela Booth, who in 1916 quoted 'advice' from 'biologists' not to be concerned about the unfit but to prevent their 'continuance', and complained that London's *Spectator* had refused to publish a letter by a 'Melbourne physician' [W Atkinson Wood] who advocated the 'reform' of sterilizing the unfit.¹⁷⁸⁷ In 1929 she suggested that humanitarianism had gone mad in keeping people alive who should never have been born or who should have been allowed to die.¹⁷⁸⁸ Booth urged delegates at the *Australian Racial Hygiene Congress* to act swiftly before the unfit multiplied to the extent they had in America which, despite its wealth, had had to adopt sterilization policies because the expense of segregation could not be borne. She added 'though sterilization of the insane might rob the world of some future genius, sterilization of the feeble-minded would not, [as] feeble-minded parents only produce feeble-minded progeny'.¹⁷⁸⁹

Dr Waddy, another speaker, argued that as 90% of the feeble-minded had inherited their condition, 'measures' to eliminate them from the community 'would be very desirable'. He said 'If people are unhealthy, you can't tell them they must not marry! You can't tell them they must be continent! But you can sterilize them, or, by teaching them methods of birth control, restrict the size (sic) of their offspring'. Sterilization of people with mental deficiency, epilepsy and 'nervous debility' would 'be good for the community'.¹⁷⁹⁰ There is no way of knowing the audience's reaction to the extremist comments made by Victor Roberts in a 1932 speech at the end of his term as President of the RHA, in which he unequivocally stated his opposition to the state providing food to the 'thousands of mental defectives'.

¹⁷⁸⁶Berry, 'The lethal chamber proposal', *ER*, 22 (July 1930), 155-56.

¹⁷⁸⁷Quoted by Angela Booth in her paper 'Prostitution', in *Teaching of Sex Hygiene*. Report of a Conference by the Workers' Educational Asscn of NSW, 23-25 November 1916, 2nd edn. (Sydney: Burrows, 1918), 32. Dr W A Wood, in 'Recognition, results and prevention of feeble-mindedness', *Australian Medical Journal*, 20 July 1912, p. 604, complained of this refusal of his letter by the *Spectator* which had published 'mild' articles on the topic.

¹⁷⁸⁸Booth, 'Medical prophylaxis and venereal diseases', in *AHRC* (1929), 25.

¹⁷⁸⁹Booth, 'The Subnormal class', in *AHRC* (1929), 55.

¹⁷⁹⁰*Ibid*, 62-63. Richard Granville Waddy, a Rhodes Scholar, lectured in Ophthalmology at the University of Sydney from 1922 to 1939.

Roberts, who ironically was affiliated with the Peace Society,¹⁷⁹¹ urged the RHA to try to 'change the way of thinking' of those 'mentally wanting' persons who favoured such government support.¹⁷⁹²

By July 1938 Angela Booth had modified her sterilization message. In the first publication issued by the ESV, she stressed that it should be voluntary 'as recommended by the famous Brock Report in England, and not compulsory sterilization as practised in Germany'.¹⁷⁹³ In September 1938 Booth received a letter from Dr Blacker at the Eugenics Society in response to her query about delays in introducing the Sterilization Bill into the House of Commons. He explained that it was because the government was 'acutely aware' of Roman Catholic and Labour Party opposition, as both considered the Bill to be 'a potential threat to the working class' which, with 'the example of the compulsory methods employed by the Germans', referred to it as the 'thin edge of the wedge'.¹⁷⁹⁴ Fears that 'unemployed workers' or the 'poor but normal' might be sterilized had been expressed in Australia much earlier than this.

The need for segregation was frequently emphasized.¹⁷⁹⁵ Australian proposals for special schools and colonies for the unfit had begun in the 1890s and continued for the next three decades, with South Australia (in 1898) and NSW (in 1908) being the first states to provide them.¹⁷⁹⁶ In 1927, one doctor reminded delegates at the Australasian Medical Congress of the 'ludicrous situation' which would occur if attempts were made to segregate the many thousands of mentally defective children.¹⁷⁹⁷ Reality did not deter delegates at the 1928 Conference of the National Council of Women who urged the government to establish 'residential centres' for mentally defective children and colonies for adults.¹⁷⁹⁸ Many women's groups favoured such segregation, fearing that the alternative of the feeble-minded being sterilized and living in the community might have the result that feeble-minded men

¹⁷⁹¹See RHA Minute Book 1929. The suffragette Rose Scott formed the Peace Society in Sydney in 1908 as a branch of the London Peace Society.

¹⁷⁹²Quoted in *SMH*, 19 July 1932, 4 (f).

¹⁷⁹³Booth, *Voluntary Sterilization for Human Betterment* (Melbourne: Brown, Prior, Anderson, 1938), 5.

¹⁷⁹⁴Letter from C P Blacker to Mrs A Booth, 23 September 1938, SA/EUG, E 3.

¹⁷⁹⁵For example, Arthur (1912), 5-6. Leonard Darwin, quoted in *MJA* (14 November 1914), 486.

¹⁷⁹⁶A report about a home for 24 feeble-minded children, built near Parramatta by the State Children's Relief Board, appeared in the *AMJ* (20 February 1909), 87. See also *SMH*, 28 June 1911, 5 (b), and 11 May 1928, 15 (a). *MJA* articles include (27 February 1915), 196-97; (5 March 1927), 341-42 and (16 April 1927), 581-82.

¹⁷⁹⁷Oliver Latham in *MJA* (8 October 1927), 282.

¹⁷⁹⁸*SMH*, 19 July 1928, 5 (d).

would commit sexual crimes and the women would behave promiscuously and become 'a focus for contagion', spreading venereal disease.¹⁷⁹⁹

The RHA modified its position in 1931 with the acceptance that it was not possible nor desirable to accommodate all mentally defective people in institutions 'as we formerly thought they should be'. However, they did want this to apply to the 'worst' cases and an RHA Advisory Board Member proposed that 'mental clinics' should be established to 'deal with all school age mental defectives in NSW'.¹⁸⁰⁰ In 1933 Goodisson wrote to Dr Hogg (NSW Inspector-General of Mental Hospitals) expressing pleasure that he and Mr Weaver (the State's Minister for Health) were 'in favour of a farm colony for the mentally defective members of the community'.¹⁸⁰¹ In 1935 the Annual General Convention of the conservative United Australia Party, supported by John A L Wallace, Inspector-General of Mental Hospitals, called on the Under Secretary of the NSW Department of Public Health to enact a Bill for the segregation of the unfit.¹⁸⁰² The advocates did not achieve their objectives.

¹⁷⁹⁹At their 1931 Annual General Conference, three branches of the Country Women's Association of NSW passed pro-segregation resolutions, State Archives (I-G), 12/3464. Also see minutes of the executive of The National Council of Women of NSW, 28 June 1923, 1 April 1937, 1 December 1938 and 1 June 1939.

¹⁸⁰⁰Dr Fanny Reading, in RHA One Day Conference (14 October 1931), 13.

¹⁸⁰¹State Archives (I-G), 12/1399.2.

¹⁸⁰²Ibid, 5/5911.

As well as segregation within Australia, one doctor urged authorities in 1913 to provide a 'second form of segregation' by rejecting undesirable migrants.¹⁸⁰³ Ernest Jones complained that in 1910 he had been the 'unfortunate' person with the task of informing the Victorian Parliament that large numbers of immigrants were mentally defective.¹⁸⁰⁴ At that time, proposals to segregate Australia's unfit had widespread support. For example, in 1911 Dr Andrew Davidson told the Health Society of NSW that 'a complete system for the control of mentally-defective children from childhood upwards' would soon be established, which, although causing the State 'some initial expense' would be more than repaid by the reduction in the amount of money needed for the maintenance of 'weak-minded criminals, inebriates, and the illegitimate children of the feeble-minded'. Davidson assured the Society that the initial opposition would 'die down, and the excellent results would lead those who in ignorance objected to heartily support'.¹⁸⁰⁵ The following year, Dr Arthur Palmer delivered a paper on 'the mentally defective prisoner' in which he suggested they should be compulsorily detained in colonies.¹⁸⁰⁶ No such system was ever established.

Eugenics was frequently described as a branch of preventive medicine because one of its aims was to prevent the unfit from breeding.¹⁸⁰⁷ In 1935 Lord Horder told a Melbourne audience that 'eugenics was the soundest and most profitable form of preventive medicine'.¹⁸⁰⁸ Before 1920 this goal resembled a religious crusade for some: 'each defective strain, as it makes its appearance, must come to an end. There need be no inhumanity. There must be no compromise'.¹⁸⁰⁹ Such views were expressed but Claudia Thame is incorrect in her claims that 'the extreme position of sterilization of the unfit was held by only a small minority of zealots' and that 'the *Medical Journal of Australia* published only two articles advocating the "scientific improvement of the race" during the 1920s and 1930s and made no editorial comment on the subject at all'.¹⁸¹⁰

¹⁸⁰³Albert Wallace Weiher, 'The medical inspection of immigrants to Australia', *AMCT* (1911), 635.

¹⁸⁰⁴*SMH*, 14 August 1928, 15.

¹⁸⁰⁵Andrew Davidson, 'Feeble-minded children', *AMG* (21 August 1911), 441.

¹⁸⁰⁶*AMG* (12 October 1912), 379-80.

¹⁸⁰⁷See Schuster (1913), 223 and William Baylebridge, *National Notes*, 3rd edn., (Sydney: Tallabilla Press, 1936), 30.

¹⁸⁰⁸Horder, *MJA* (5 October 1935), 438

¹⁸⁰⁹Mackellar and Welsh (1917), 64.

¹⁸¹⁰Thame, 'Health and the State: The Development of Collective Responsibility for Health Care in Australia in the First Half of the Twentieth Century' (PhD thesis ANU, 1975), 156.

Neither was McCallum correct in his claim that 'ideas about sterilization did not gain much acceptance in Australia'.¹⁸¹¹ An examination of the literature disproves both claims: during the 1920s and the early 1930s there was intense debate and extensive writing about this contentious issue and many of the articles appeared in the *Medical Journal of Australia*.¹⁸¹² For example, the prestigious surgeon Sir George Syme (1859-1929) recommended in his Presidential address to the 1923 Australasian Medical Congress that voluntary sterilization 'could and should be tried'.¹⁸¹³ Syme's comments were reported in the *Eugenics Review*,¹⁸¹⁴ under the heading 'Sterilization: Views in Australia'. The extent of high-level support by Australian psychiatrists and eugenicists for sterilization from the 1890s until the late 1930s is also indicated in articles which Garton cited.¹⁸¹⁵

In 1929 unanimous support for sterilization at the *Australian Racial Hygiene Congress* astounded the organiser who said 'Dr Addison's paper on sterilization was the surprise of the Congress. We all expected much hot discussion on this debatable subject, but not so, his seven resolutions were carried without any objection at all'.¹⁸¹⁶ The audience was not 'a small minority of zealots'; it included such prominent citizens as Sir Thomas Henley, Dr Richard Arthur, Dr Sydney Morris, Sir James Barrett, Sir Benjamin and Lady Fuller, Mrs Angela Booth, Mr Cresswell O'Reilly and Dr Lorna Hodgkinson. The author of the surprise paper was Phillip Addison, surgeon, reserve army captain and member of the RHA's Advisory Board. These are his seven overlapping resolutions, many of which related to compulsory sterilization:

- 1 That the general public should be educated to the facts that it is in the interests of the common weal and posterity that those individuals who come from hereditary (sic) defective families should be sterilized
- 2 That the sterilization should be voluntary
- 3 That individuals convicted of criminal offences and found to be mentally defective, should be compulsorily sterilized

¹⁸¹¹McCallum (1990), 17.

¹⁸¹²*MJA* material includes eugenics editorials: (21 November 1931), 655-56 and (5 October 1935), 438; letters: (26 December 1931), 825-6; (23 January 1932), 143; (6 February 1932), 211 and (27 February 1932), 311-12; articles: (9 March 1935), 295-305 and 318-21.

¹⁸¹³Sir George Aldington Syme, Presidential Address, *MJA* (16 February 1924), 10.

¹⁸¹⁴'Sterilization: Views in Australia', *ER*, vol 16-17 (1924-1926), 67-68.

¹⁸¹⁵Stephen Garton, 'The rise of the therapeutic state: psychiatry and the system of criminal jurisdiction in NSW, 1890-1940', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 32 no 3 (1986), 380-81. The references he cited are in *Intercolonial Medical Congress of Australasia. Transactions* (1899), 474-82; *AMG*, 29 (1910), 1-6; *MJA* (1927), 255-60 and 325-28 and *MJA*, 2 (1931), 210-13.

¹⁸¹⁶The decision at the ARH Congress in September 1929 appears to have been more extreme than that of the RHA's own Advisory Board, which noted in their minutes of 8 August 1929, 'It was felt that [sterilization] was a dangerous matter and that some of the American States have rescinded their laws on the subject'.

- 4 That the group of submental (sic) defective adults and children committed to the care of the state, if there is any likelihood of their returning to everyday society, should be compulsorily sterilized
- 5 Strict enforcement of immigration laws, not only in relation to British born subjects, but also aliens; if found deficient within a certain period, they should be either deported or sterilized
- 6 The vigorous enforcement of the VD Act as a contributory factor to sterilization
- 7 That any person found to be a menace to society should be compulsorily sterilized.¹⁸¹⁷

These resolutions were reaffirmed by the RHA at their One Day Conference on 14 October 1931.¹⁸¹⁸ Later that day an attempt to overturn this decision was proposed by the Rev H N Baker but his motion was narrowly defeated - by nine votes to eight - a marked shift from the unanimous support expressed in 1929.¹⁸¹⁹ The fact that only 17 people voted on such a contentious issue emphasizes the small size of the RHA membership.¹⁸²⁰ The sterilization debate continued in subsequent RHA annual reports: in the 1931 report Dr H G Wallace criticised the resolutions at a meeting of the Newcastle Branch of the Association but almost all of the audience disagreed with him, and in the 1932 report the Rev Baker again warned about the dangers of bringing sterilization into general use. In 1929 Ralph Noble had reminded Congress delegates of the need for a Mental Defectives Bill, which 'for years past had been promised by successive Ministers for Health'.¹⁸²¹ Millicent Preston Stanley, President of the Feminist Club, said that the Club had worked 12 years for such legislation.¹⁸²² Noble had changed his stance: in 1924 he urged doctors to 'encourage the intelligent use of segregation' to prevent 'lay extremists' from succeeding in their 'clamour for sterilization'.¹⁸²³ Typical of such views was a speech by Preston Stanley in which she

¹⁸¹⁷AHRC (1929): Addison's resolutions, 65-66 and Goodisson's response, 68. RHA Annual Report (1934) 4, indicates that Addison also addressed the RHA on this topic in November 1933.

¹⁸¹⁸Motion proposed by Goodisson, RHA One Day Conference (14 October 1931), 8.

¹⁸¹⁹Ibid, 16.

¹⁸²⁰The RHA listed 100 subscribers in their 1928-29 Annual Report but the small membership was also noted in *ARHC* (1929), 13. Only 25 financial members were listed in the RHA (1931) Annual Report, 5.

¹⁸²¹Noble was quoted in *SMH*, 18 September 1929, 19 (c). In 1926, a NSW Mental Deficiency Bill was prepared - see *Commonwealth Yearbook* (1926), 477.

¹⁸²²'Mental Hygiene', *Telegraph*, 25 July 1933. Other women's deputations on this topic are listed in *SMH*, 22 November 1927, 10; 17 March 1928, 12; 18 May 1928, 8.

¹⁸²³Noble, *MJA* (12 July 1924), 31-35. Professor William Osborne in *SMH*, 12 August 1929, 15, also warned of the dangers of sterilization. A similar criticism appeared in *MJA* (21 November 1931), 655-56.

asked 'what are we doing to dam the endless stream of degenerate and moron human stocks?'¹⁸²⁴

In June 1934 a special meeting of the RHA Executive tried to gain agreement about whether to segregate or sterilize the 'mentally unfit' and which persons had 'the right to be sterilized'.¹⁸²⁵ In 1936 the RHA discussed the issue 'several times' but noted that the lack of any legal ruling was 'very unsatisfactory'.¹⁸²⁶ In 1950 Dr Brothers, Chairman of the Tasmanian Mental Deficiency Board, praised Britain for 'her usual wise conservatism' in refraining from passing any laws about sterilization, although the subject had been 'discussed for many years'.¹⁸²⁷

There was widespread Australian debate about sterilization.¹⁸²⁸ However, as lawyer Jeff Goldhar has noted, no Bill for the sterilization of defectives was ever passed in NSW, despite mistaken reports by some researchers that Dr Arthur had done so.¹⁸²⁹ In 1929, Arthur said 'sterilization is an inevitable necessity, but the time is not ripe for its introduction' [as legislation].¹⁸³⁰ *Hansard* shows that Arthur 'was inclined to accept an amendment in connection with sterilization if such was moved'.¹⁸³¹ No one proposed such an amendment but even without it, the Bill would have lapsed because of the expense of educational and institutional care and because of the opposition from Arthur's own party.¹⁸³² The extensive publicity for this Bill may have influenced Cora Hodson, Secretary of the Eugenics Society in London, to mistakenly include NSW in a list of countries with sterilization laws. She apologised after learning from the NSW Government offices 'that no such Act appears in their legislation lists'.¹⁸³³

¹⁸²⁴Quoted in *Labor Daily*, 28 September 1925, 5 (d).

¹⁸²⁵RHA Annual Report (1935), 3.

¹⁸²⁶*Ibid* (1936), 3.

¹⁸²⁷Brothers (1950), 215.

¹⁸²⁸In 1930 pro-sterilization articles appeared in: *Guardian*, 7 May, 1; *SMH*, 23 May, 15; 4 June, 15, and 25 June, 15. Opposition was expressed in *Labor Daily*, 14 June, 10 and 21 June, 17.

¹⁸²⁹Jeff Goldhar, 'The sterilization of women with an intellectual disability', *University of Tasmania Law Review*, 10 no 2 (1991), 171. Bacchi (1980) 205, wrote 'In 1930, as Minister for Health in the Bavin administration, Arthur presented a Bill calling for the sterilization of defectives'. Her mistake was repeated by Cawte, in *Historical Studies* (April 1986), 38 and by Lewis, in *Managing Madness: Psychiatry and Society in Australia 1788-1980* (Canberra: AGPS, 1988), 130.

¹⁸³⁰'Danger of the half-wit. Sterilization must come, says Minister', *Telegraph*, 15 July 1929, 4 (d).

¹⁸³¹NSWPD, 27 March 1930, 4182 and *SMH*, 1 February 1930, 18.

¹⁸³²'Minister is opposed by own party', *Labor Daily*, 23 May 1930, 5 (f).

¹⁸³³Cora Hodson, 'Sterilization laws', *ER*, 21 (January 1930), 324.

In March 1931, the Federal Health Council, a body of Commonwealth and state Ministers for Health, adopted a resolution requesting the Commonwealth Department of Health to gather information from countries with laws relating to sterilization of mental defectives and 'to obtain any related information from the various States'.¹⁸³⁴ Concerns about sterilization were also publicly expressed. William Dawson, the Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Sydney, noted in a 1932 Health Week address that although some American states had passed sterilization legislation 'very few medical men would venture to suggest it' as too little was known about heredity to suggest this 'dangerous course'.¹⁸³⁵ Earlier that year Dr Cumpston had contacted Australia House in London for clarification about the legal status in Britain of eugenic sterilization. In response to his letter, Frank McCallum, the Chief Medical Officer for the Commonwealth, wrote that 'it would appear that a "mark time" policy has been adopted' in Britain. This was 'understandable', he wrote, because enthusiasm for sterilization was largely confined to people whose zeal was greater than their scientific knowledge.¹⁸³⁶ Frank Kerr, a Medical Officer with the Commonwealth Department of Health, presented the findings of this investigation to the Council in 1933. His *Federal Inquiry into the Sterilization of Mental Defectives* recommended laws to allow selective voluntary sterilization of people with, or likely to transmit, a mental defect or disorder. The report proposed that sterilization should first be approved by state boards, with provision for appeal.¹⁸³⁷

Neither the Commonwealth nor individual states acted on this report. Cumpston had changed his opinion since advising the *Royal Commission on Child Endowment* in 1929 that the Commonwealth should exercise its constitutional powers on the matter. In 1934, the Inspector-General of Mental Hospitals in NSW obtained an opinion from the State Crown Solicitor's Office about the legality of sterilizing a man who had requested this procedure. The Office advised that such an operation would not be lawful, either for 'healthy' individuals who could give informed consent or for mentally defective people who lacked the capacity to do this. The Crown Solicitor stated that any such operation would amount to a 'maiming'

¹⁸³⁴Resolution 13 at the 5th Session of the Federal Health Council of Australia, 24 and 25 March 1931, 4.

¹⁸³⁵*Sun*, 11 October 1932, 9 (g). Yorkshire-born William Siegfried Dawson (1891-1975) was appointed to the chair of psychiatry at the University of Sydney in 1927. In 1946 he became the first president of the Australasian Association of Psychiatrists.

¹⁸³⁶Letter by McCallum to Cumpston, 23 March 1932, AA. ACT, A 1928/1. Item 362/20.

¹⁸³⁷See *Federal Inquiry into the Sterilization of Mental Defectives*, 1933. It was prepared by Kerr and appeared as Appendix II of the 6th session of the FHC, 21-23 February 1933, 16-28. See also *ibid*, H Downes, CMO to the D-G, Summary, 28 March 1934, 2-3 and 24, AA/ACT, A1928/1 - Item 362/20.

and that before this procedure could be lawful 'there would have to be an advancement of the frontiers of what is lawful'.¹⁸³⁸

In Britain in 1933-1934 a legal decision was made that doctors performing eugenic sterilization operations risked prosecution on the grounds of mutilation.¹⁸³⁹ These British and Australian legal judgements that no form of sterilization was lawful strongly suggest why Cumpston reversed his position. In 1935 he advised the RHA 'there is no Commonwealth law in the matter [of sterilization] and, except in the Territories, I would consider that the constitutionality of any Commonwealth legislation would be questioned'.¹⁸⁴⁰ In 1944 Harvey Sutton complained that 'no court decision has been given on an actual case, and till the legal aspect is cleared up, no hospital will permit doubtful operations, though in private practice no such prohibition exists'.¹⁸⁴¹

Two organisations which publicly acknowledged performing such operations were Piddington's Institute of Family Relations in Sydney and the clinic operated by Dr Victor Wallace in Melbourne. Paradoxically, although the clamour was for mentally-defective women to be sterilized, eugenists' clinics were only able to perform the simpler male sterilization (vasectomy). The first case in 1931 had been reported in *Smith's Weekly* as 'Made sterile at his own wish. Sydney man's act staggers social opinion'.¹⁸⁴² Doctors did not wish to be involved in a legal test case and the fear of such adverse publicity may have influenced the RHA to avoid such work. This caution suggests why Wallace waited almost 40 years before publishing information about the vasectomies his clinic had performed from 1936.¹⁸⁴³

Ernest Jones noted in his 1929 *Report on Mental Deficiency in the Commonwealth of Australia* that while sterilization laws had been passed in many American states, 'principally in California', most states had discontinued the practice.¹⁸⁴⁴ Jones found 'segregation and guardianship infinitely preferable to sterilization' and stated that 'sterilization will never be

¹⁸³⁸State Crown Solicitor's Office, Sydney in response to a letter on 20 September 1934 from the I-G of Mental Hospitals, Sydney [seeking an opinion, based on British law, about the legal status of sterilization], State Archives (I-G), 5908.

¹⁸³⁹Searle (1976), 100.

¹⁸⁴⁰Goodisson to Cumpston, 3 December 1935 and his reply, 13 December 1935, AA/ACT, A461/1 Item D347/1/1, 'Sterilization of the unfit'.

¹⁸⁴¹Sutton (1944), 48.

¹⁸⁴²*Smith's Weekly*, 10 October 1931, 1 and 13.

¹⁸⁴³V H Wallace, 'Vasectomy', *MJA* (27 January 1973), 212.

¹⁸⁴⁴Jones (1929), 17. Larson (1995), 38-39, indicated that in California, 'the state of strangers', 20,100 patients were involuntarily sterilized in government institutions.

resorted to in any of the countries of the British Empire until the economic pressure, arising from the increasing burden of lunacy and mental deficiency, has become very much more acute than it is at the present time'.¹⁸⁴⁵ Jones must not have known that the Sexual Sterilization Act (for compulsory sterilization of psychiatric and mentally defective people as a condition of their discharge from institutions) had been passed in Alberta, in March 1928.¹⁸⁴⁶ The provisions in this Canadian Act were quoted approvingly in the Western Australian Parliament in 1929.¹⁸⁴⁷ However, six years later, Dr Richard Dick, the Director-General of Public Health in NSW, repeated Jones' mistake by commenting that 'no British community' had permitted sterilization.¹⁸⁴⁸ In 1935 Angela Booth supported her propaganda by stating that 'two countries' in the British Empire had advocated sterilization: 'Alberta passed a law legalizing voluntary sterilization in 1928, and British Columbia in 1933'.¹⁸⁴⁹ It is incorrect to use the word 'voluntary' in connection with these Canadian Acts as the Alberta Act was coercive in 1928 and became more so in 1937 when it was amended to allow compulsory sterilization.¹⁸⁵⁰ Although enthusiasts could have cited many precedents in the United States, they did not. Possibly, this was because Australian sentiment was so strongly pro-British and pro-Commonwealth that an appeal to follow an American example would have been counter-productive.

Attempts to pass legislation controlling marriage had failed and, despite claims by some historians, no eugenics-related organisations succeeded in their clamour for laws to regulate the education, care, control or sterilization of mental defectives. In 1994 Stephen Garton argued that support for eugenics was weak before 1914 and gathered support after the 1914-18 war, a position which Alison Turtle had taken in 1990.¹⁸⁵¹ The fallacy of these statements has already been discussed in Chapter 3. Contrary to Garton's claim that the NSW Eugenics Society had 'foundered on lack of interest' by 1914,¹⁸⁵² the Society, which was established on 11 December 1912, did not 'founder' but continued to provide progress

¹⁸⁴⁵Jones (1929), 17.

¹⁸⁴⁶In 1928 this was reported in the *SMH*, 9 March, 11 (b), and 10 March, 17 (c), and incorrectly reported as being the 'Kentucky (USA) Bill' in the *Telegraph*, 10 March, 4.

¹⁸⁴⁷Hon A J H Saw, Mental Deficiency Bill, 12 November 1929, WAPD, 82 (1929), 1459.

¹⁸⁴⁸*SMH*, 20 January 1934, 15 (b).

¹⁸⁴⁹Booth (1938), 12, referred to these Canadian provinces as 'countries'.

¹⁸⁵⁰See Angus McLaren, *Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990), 100.

¹⁸⁵¹Alison Turtle, in 'Anthropometry in Britain and Australia: technology, ideology and imperial connection', *Storia della Psicologia*, 2 no 2 (1990), 134, wrote that 'the organized eugenics movement gained little ground [in Australia] and almost none at all until after the [1914-18] war'.

¹⁸⁵²Garton (1994), 164.

reports to its parent body in London until 11 January 1922.¹⁸⁵³ Similarly, while the eugenics movement did continue after 1914, it is not possible to measure its strength from this evidence which Garton provided:

After 1914 many Australian States passed 'mental defectives' legislation - Tasmania (1920), Victoria (1922), Queensland (1938), New South Wales (1939).¹⁸⁵⁴

While several Bills were prepared, only one specifically relating to mental deficiency was passed, not four as Garton claims. Lunacy Acts or Prisons Acts more appropriately described some 'mental defectives' laws which were passed, not for eugenic reasons, but to maintain law and order. In 1920 Tasmania became (and remained) 'the first and only State in Australia to legislate especially for the feeble-minded class as well as for the lower grades'.¹⁸⁵⁵ In 1923 the passage of this law was cited as indicating that Tasmania was 'more advanced than other states of the Commonwealth', unlike the 'woefully unenlightened and woefully behind' state of NSW.¹⁸⁵⁶ Ironically, the only law with eugenic intent was passed in a state which did not have a eugenics organisation. In 1925 Professor Morris Miller drafted an amended Tasmanian Mental Deficiency Bill with the help of the humane Emanuel Sydney Morris, Director of Public Health.¹⁸⁵⁷ The Bill, like the British legislation of 1913, differentiated between mental deficiency and insanity.¹⁸⁵⁸ Such a distinction was important to eugenicists, who pointed out that although South Australia had passed a Mental Deficiency Act in 1913 (with amendments in 1914 and 1922) for the care and control of the insane, idiots and imbeciles, it was really a Lunacy Act, because it dealt in part with low-grade defectives and made no distinction between mental disorders and mental deficiency.¹⁸⁵⁹

¹⁸⁵³Eugenics Society Archives, SA/EUG E2.

¹⁸⁵⁴Garton (1994), 164.

¹⁸⁵⁵Tasmanian Mental Deficiency Act, 1920 and two Amendment Acts of 1925 and 1929. The first two were discussed by Miller (1925), 135. See also Roe (1984), 292-93.

¹⁸⁵⁶Henry Tasman Lovell, 'The Tasmanian Mental Deficiency Act', *AJPP*, vol 1 (December 1923), 285.

¹⁸⁵⁷Emanuel Sydney (Syd) Morris (1888-1957) became Tasmania's Director of Public Health in 1920. He outlined his plans for a scheme of 'mutual benefit to themselves [people with mental deficiency] and the community of which they form a part' in 'The Administrative control of mental deficiency in Tasmania', *Health*, 2 no 3 (May 1924), 80.

¹⁸⁵⁸Faith Schenk and Alan S Parkes, quoted in Edward J Larson, 'The rhetoric of eugenics: Expert authority and the Mental Deficiency Bill', *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 24 (March 1991), 48, 57-60. British eugenicists claimed this as their 'principal legislative achievement', even though it was only passed after all references to eugenics had been removed in response to public hostility.

¹⁸⁵⁹Miller, *MJA* (7 February 1925), 134 and the *Commonwealth Yearbook* (1926), 477. Comments on the Bill are by Roe (1984), 292-93.

In 1929 the Second Reading Speech of the Western Australian Mental Deficiency Bill was reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.¹⁸⁶⁰ This non-party Bill was not passed in the Legislative Council, despite 'exhaustive' consideration by a Select Committee and lengthy discussion in both Houses of Parliament.¹⁸⁶¹ The Bill had had a provision for sterilization of mental defectives in it, but after its defeat the State's only legislation for 'this class' was the Lunacy Act for their admission to hospitals for the insane.¹⁸⁶² Attempts in 1929 by the Victorian Parliament to pass a Mental Deficiency Bill also failed.¹⁸⁶³ The National Council of Women of Victoria, whose motto was 'Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you', sent the following resolution to the Minister for Health in October 1933:

We urge our governmental authorities to take further effective measures to prevent mental defectives from reproducing their own kind, and so creating expenditure by the community on welfare work, gaols and mental hospitals.¹⁸⁶⁴

Dr Ernest Jones, Victoria's Director of Mental Hygiene, maintained his interest in the subject, sending a request in 1936 to his Sydney equivalent, Dr John A Wallace, for a copy of the draft Bill which the NSW Cabinet was considering 'for the control of mental defectives who were criminally inclined'.¹⁸⁶⁵ Jones thanked Wallace for the confidential material and mentioned the polarization of Victoria's judiciary, who wanted an institution for sexual offenders, and the psychiatrists who believed that they could 'cure these perverts by talking them to death'.¹⁸⁶⁶ Such arguments were not new, as shown by Edward Paris Nesbitt, a lawyer and an inmate of both gaols and lunatic asylums, who stated in 1892 that for years this had been disputed between doctors and lawyers with most of the acrimony being expressed by the doctors.¹⁸⁶⁷ The NSW Bill, which Jones asked to see in 1936, became the Defectives (Convicted Persons) Act of 1939, which amended the 1899 Prisons Act.¹⁸⁶⁸

¹⁸⁶⁰SMH, 19 September 1929, 14 (h). See also Moira Fitzpatrick in Penelope Hetherington (ed.), *Childhood and Society in Western Australia* (Perth: UWAP, 1988), 144-60.

¹⁸⁶¹WAPD, 82 (1929), Mental Deficiency Bill debates: 14 August, 343; 17 September, 739-47; 19 September, 823-26; 22 October, 1080-82; 30 October, 1231; 12 November, 1450-62; 20 November, 1684-91 and 10 December, 2009-20.

¹⁸⁶²J Bentley, I-G of the Insane, WA Lunacy Dept, to Chief Quarantine Officer General, Commonwealth Dept of Health, 10 August 1931, Federal Health Council of Australia.

¹⁸⁶³See Pierre Molitor Bachelard, *The Education of the Retarded Child* (Melbourne: MUP, 1934), 30-35.

¹⁸⁶⁴C Downing, Hon Sec National Council Women of Vic to Mr W C Marr, Minister for Health, 20 October 1933, AA/ACT, A461/1, Item D347/1/1, 'Sterilization of the Unfit'.

¹⁸⁶⁵Ernest Jones to John A Wallace, I-G of Mental Hospitals Sydney, 2 March 1936, State Archives (I-G), 5/5916.

¹⁸⁶⁶Jones to Wallace, 25 March 1936, *ibid*.

¹⁸⁶⁷Edward Paris Nesbitt, 'Insanity and crime', *AAASR* (1892), 575.

¹⁸⁶⁸This NSW Act made provision for the special care and treatment of mentally defective prisoners. It was replaced by *Miscellaneous Acts (Mental Health) Repeal and Amendment Act* no 181, 1983.

When the Queensland Parliament considered mental deficiency legislation in 1930, Sydney's *Telegraph* reported that a non-party Bill for the sterilization of mental defectives would soon be introduced.¹⁸⁶⁹ This proposed Bill related to the provision of day and residential schools for 'idiots, imbeciles, feeble-minded persons and moral defectives' but it lapsed 'owing to financial stringency'.¹⁸⁷⁰ In 1934 the Queensland Branch of the BMA prepared a report on the sterilization of the unfit as a 'preventive measure'.¹⁸⁷¹ Like the Bill, nothing came of the report.¹⁸⁷²

In the South Australian Parliament, a 'sterilization of unfit persons' motion was moved by Walter Hamilton on 8 July 1936. The state's Premier wrote to Joseph Lyons, the Prime Minister, to inform him of the resolution and to ask what opinion the Commonwealth and other state governments had on the matter.¹⁸⁷³ Dr Cumpston's memorandum to the Prime Minister's secretary was that the Minister for Health advised:

That the [Commonwealth] government has not at any time considered this question, and as the government has no constitutional powers which would enable it to take any action ... it is difficult to foresee an occasion upon which a policy could be formulated.

The Premier was referred to the 1934 United Kingdom Departmental Report for advice on precedent and authority.¹⁸⁷⁴ Cumpston certainly had considered the question and in 1929 advised the Royal Commission on Child Endowment or Family Allowance that the Commonwealth did possess such constitutional powers.¹⁸⁷⁵ In the SA Parliament it was agreed on 23 September 1936 'that the question of (voluntary and compulsory sterilization) of persons suffering from unsound mind or other dangerous malady or maladies known to be transmissible to their offspring should receive the earnest and immediate consideration of

¹⁸⁶⁹Mental defectives. Sterilization Bill for Queensland', *Telegraph*, 7 November 1930, 2. This quoted Queensland's Home Secretary (James C Petersen) as saying that it 'would arrest the propagation of thousands of children who would be of no use to the community or to themselves'.

¹⁸⁷⁰Home Secretary's Office to Raphael Cilento, Division of Tropical Hygiene, 10 August 1931 forwarded to D-G of Health on 12 August 1931. AA/ACT, A1928/1, Item 362/20.

¹⁸⁷¹'Sterilization. Weaver [Queensland's Minister for Health] will study BMA report', *Sun*, 10 January 1934, 10 (f) and 'Sterilization. Inquiry for Queensland Government', *SMH*, 11 January 1934, 6 (f).

¹⁸⁷²Wayne Jarred from the Queensland Parliamentary Library could not locate any Bill dealing with this topic between 1930-1935, Pers. Comm, 22 June 1993. Dr Humphrey Crammond, Chairman of the Historical Committee of the Qld Branch of the AMA, and the Federal AMA, could not provide information about the BMA sub-committee appointed to report to Qld's Home Department, Pers. Comm, 14 July 1993.

¹⁸⁷³Richard Butler, Premier of South Australia to Prime Minister, 16 November 1936, AA/ACT D347/1/1.

¹⁸⁷⁴Ibid, J H L Cumpston to Secretary, Prime Minister's Department, Canberra, 27 November 1936.

¹⁸⁷⁵Report of the Royal Commission (1929), 1359, paragraph 630.

this House' but it was not discussed again.¹⁸⁷⁶ This was long after most supporters had realised that such attempts were misguided or futile. By 1933 support for sterilization on eugenic grounds was diminishing and no law sanctioning eugenic sterilization was ever passed in Australia. There are a number of reasons for this:

At least a third of the Australian population was Catholic and the Pope's 1931 *Casti Connubii* specifically forbade sterilization on the grounds that self-mutilation was unlawful and that the rights of the individual should prevail over the welfare of the community.¹⁸⁷⁷

By 1931 it was recognised that most mentally defective people had normal parents, so that plans to sterilize the unfit would only minimally reduce their numbers.¹⁸⁷⁸

In 1931, a Bill for voluntary sterilization of people with mental deficiency had been rejected by 167 votes to 89 in the British House of Commons.¹⁸⁷⁹

In 1932, a BMA Committee on Sterilization had agreed that sterilization would not lead to a marked reduction in the incidence of mental deficiency and that there were no grounds for the previous alarmist views about racial deterioration.¹⁸⁸⁰

In June 1933, the Secretary of the Eugenics Society in London had expressed repugnance about the Nazi sterilization program,¹⁸⁸¹ and news about these plans was starting to be reported in Australian newspapers.¹⁸⁸²

In 1933, the British psychologist Cyril Burt had 'flung a bombshell amongst the upholders of wholesale sterilization, by pointing out that, in order to wipe out the evil, it would be necessary to sterilize one-fifth of the population'.¹⁸⁸³

¹⁸⁷⁶SAPD (1936), 696-704, 940-45, 1169-76, 1400-05 and 1557.

¹⁸⁷⁷John T Noonan, *Contraception: A History of its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists*, rev edn. (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1986), 430-31.

¹⁸⁷⁸In 'The wider implications of the policy of sterilization' (a paper presented at the RHA One Day Conference, 14 October 1931, 15) the Reverend H N Baker pointed out that even if no childbearing occurred among the unfit, this would 'prevent only 17%, at the most, of defectives being born'.

¹⁸⁷⁹Reported in the *SMH*, 23 July 1931, 10 (d).

¹⁸⁸⁰'Sterilization will not reduce idiocy. BMA Committee's conclusions. Few for whom it is desirable. Defect "carried" by the normal', *Telegraph*, 24 June 1932. In a 1934 lecture to the Catholic Newman Society, Sydney cancer specialist Dr Herbert M Moran said it was wrong to assume that mental deficiency was a single or 'largely a hereditary disease' or that the national stock was degenerating, *SMH*, 25 April 1934, 15 (d).

¹⁸⁸¹C P Blacker, 'Eugenic sterilization in Germany', *Lancet* (10 June 1933), 1265-66. Sheila Block noted that from 1934 until the beginning of the war 'approximately 360,000 people were sterilized - more than 35 times the number reported to have occurred in the US between 1907 and 1930, most against the will of the individual concerned', quoted by Sheila Faith Weiss in *Race Hygiene and National Efficiency: The Eugenics of Wilhelm Schallmayer* (Berkeley, Ca: University of California Press, 1987), 155.

¹⁸⁸²AA files on *Sterilization of Mental Defectives* (1933) contained: 'Sterilise millions!', *Telegraph* (Sydney), 30 October 1933; 'Sterilization law. Eugenic reform in Germany', *West Australian*, 18 November 1933; 'Sterilization. 400 thousand marked in Germany', *Canberra Times*, 22 December 1933; and 'Sterilization. German law may defeat end' and December 30, 1933. See also *SMH*, 2 December 1933, 15 and 22 December 1933, 9 (b).

¹⁸⁸³'Socially unfit. Sterilization idea. Intense controversy in England', *Canberra Times*, 27 October 1933, also reported in *SMH*, 27 October 1933, 12 (b).

In 1934 rejection of the recommendations in the Brock Committee's report for voluntary sterilization in Britain was a result of lack of government interest and the growing disrepute which Nazi 'eugenics' was bringing to the field.¹⁸⁸⁴

Britain's pro-sterilization eugenists failed to mobilize support from the scientific community and faced opposition from the labour movement and the Catholic Church.¹⁸⁸⁵

Sterilization had fewer Australian supporters after 1935, but it is not accurate to say that they were all cranks or people seeking notoriety.¹⁸⁸⁶ There was no doubting the sincerity of supporters such as Marion Piddington, Canon R B S Hammond and Professor William Dakin. In Sydney, the Catholic *Church Standard* stated that Hammond's views on sterilization were 'utterly immoral'¹⁸⁸⁷ and Dakin's coercive approach in 1935 was newsworthy for its shock value.¹⁸⁸⁸ The fact that moderation was the norm was demonstrated in 1934 when Mr J H Disney failed to have his Bill introduced in the Victorian Legislative Council because the Attorney-General refused to allow the Parliamentary Draughtsman 'to prepare any private Bill containing contentious matter' and sterilization of the unfit was 'very contentious'.¹⁸⁸⁹ In 1935 a member of the ESV expressed his opposition to eugenic sterilization in a paper given to the Victorian Council of Mental Hygiene. The author, psychiatrist Paul Dane, described the 'cry for sterilization' as a 'spurious remedy' which would divert people's minds from 'real reforms'.¹⁸⁹⁰ ESV members were divided and in 1938 the Society's President urged the Chief Secretary of Victoria to include voluntary sterilization in a Mental Deficiency Bill.¹⁸⁹¹

¹⁸⁸⁴Michael Freeden, 'Eugenics and progressive thought: A study of ideological affinity', *Historical Journal*, 22 (1979), 667-68.

¹⁸⁸⁵John Macnicol, 'Eugenics and the campaign for voluntary sterilization in Britain between the wars', *Social History of Medicine*, 2 (August 1989), 147-69.

¹⁸⁸⁶'Sterilization of the unfit', *MJA* (21 November 1931), 655-56.

¹⁸⁸⁷'Sterilization called "utterly immoral"', *Telegraph*, 9 December 1933, 3 (e).

¹⁸⁸⁸Dakin (1883-1950) was quoted as saying this in 'Sterilize unfit. Would end evil in generation says Professor', *Sun and Guardian*, 18 August 1935, 7 (a). His continued interest in the topic is suggested by Dame Enid Lyons, in *The Nation's Forum of the Air*, vol 1 (no 2) August 1944, 4-5, in which she stated that Dakin had said on radio that Australia was now 'biologically askew' and that 'all the white races were suffering from a disease'. In 1996 Isobel Bennett, his former research assistant, gave me a (1935?) newspaper article by Dakin, 'Why our civilisation must study the science of human eugenics'.

¹⁸⁸⁹'Sterilization of the unfit', *Argus*, 11 July, 9 (c) and 'Proposed legislation. Action by Mr Disney, MLC', *Argus*, 8 August 1934, 8 (e) and VPD, LC (12 September 1934, 1753.

¹⁸⁹⁰Paul Dane, 'Sterilization of the unfit', *MJA* (23 May 1936), 711.

¹⁸⁹¹W E Agar to Hon H S Bailey, Chief Secretary of Victoria, 12 August 1938 [supplied by W T Agar]. This was the Society's public position in their first publication, Angela Booth's *Voluntary Sterilization* (1938).

Surprisingly, a substantial amount of evidence weakens Garton's claim that Labor governments 'on the whole' were 'more wary' of passing such legislation.¹⁸⁹² In 1933 the Commonwealth's conservative Government, after hearing of a British legal decision on the matter, decided against such an approach on legal and medical grounds. Although initially favouring it, and supported by the pro-sterilization recommendation of its Kerr Report, they abandoned the idea.¹⁸⁹³ This suggests that legal and medical factors, rather than party politics or eugenicists' advocacy, had most influence in the Commonwealth and other governments' decision-making. While Garton's hypothesis initially appears plausible, it does not take account of the reality that other factors were operating and that many attempts to pass eugenic legislation were made by the Labor Party or had bipartisan support.¹⁸⁹⁴ Saul Dubow remarked that 'the capacity of the eugenics movement to transcend political affiliations and incorporate contradictory tendencies was part of its peculiar strength'.¹⁸⁹⁵ He was speaking about South Australia but this pragmatic flexibility was also evident in Australia and in many other countries with eugenics movements.

For example, Mark Adams stated that 'the fact that eugenics could flourish in both Weimar and Nazi Germany, in Coolidge's America and Lenin's Russia, and that it could count among its adherents renowned communists, socialists, liberals, conservatives and fascists, suggests that any simplistic political classification of the movement cannot sustain analysis'.¹⁸⁹⁶ Daniel Kevles emphasized the political diversity among British and American eugenicists who were united only in being largely 'middle to upper middle class, white, Anglo Saxon, predominantly Protestant and educated'.¹⁸⁹⁷ Australian eugenicists, including those in the medical professions, also had homogeneous backgrounds with similarly diverse political views. Their views both mirrored and shaped those of the wider community.

¹⁸⁹²Stephen Garton, in his PhD thesis, 'Insanity in NSW: Some Aspects of its Social History 1878-1958' (Kensington: UNSW, 1984), 337, wrote 'conservative governments had been responsible for eugenic legislation in South Australia and Tasmania' but not in other Labor dominated states. In fact, the South Australian legislation was a Lunacy Act, not 'eugenic legislation'. See *Argus*, 10 September 1935, 8.

¹⁸⁹³Joseph Lyons' conservative United Australia Party Government abandoned plans for the legislation once they knew about the British legal judgement of 1933-1934 which found that doctors performing sterilizations risked prosecution for 'maiming' the patient.

¹⁸⁹⁴Federal Labor politician Billy Hughes introduced a Marriage Certificates Bill in 1913 and still favoured such legislation in 1929. In 1930 the NSW Mental Defectives Bill was introduced as non-party legislation.

¹⁸⁹⁵Dubow (1995), 123.

¹⁸⁹⁶Adams (1990), 220-21 and 224. See also Diane Paul, 'Eugenics and the Left', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 45 (January-March 1984), 567-90 and Christopher Shaw, 'Eliminating the Yahoo: Eugenics, social Darwinism and five Fabians' *History of Political Thought*, 8 (Winter 1987), 521-44.

¹⁸⁹⁷Kevles (1985), 64.

In 1912 Havelock Ellis stressed that Galton wanted eugenic reforms to be the result of public education, not legislation. Ellis added 'the compulsory presentation of certificates of health and good breeding forms no part of Eugenics, nor is compulsory sterilization a demand made by any reasonable eugenicist'.¹⁸⁹⁸ Some Australian eugenicists and organisations wanted both. In 1935 the Mothers' Club of Victoria voted in favour of voluntary sterilization of the mentally and physically unfit to ensure that in Australia there 'should not only be a white race, but a race of the best whites'.¹⁸⁹⁹ In 1936, John Bostock and Leslie John Jarvis Nye praised Hitler and Mussolini's 'triumphs of autocracy' and advocated the sterilization of 'those individuals who possess such serious transmissible diseases as would make their progeny a burden to themselves and to the state'.¹⁹⁰⁰ The same year, the Australian Legion in Perth issued a letter urging support for a referendum question on sterilization of the unfit to be included in the next federal election.¹⁹⁰¹ Even as late as 1954, a deputation organized by the Feminist Club demanded segregation and/or sterilization for 'incurable sex perverts'.¹⁹⁰² However, public opinion and world events ensured that such clamour for eugenic sterilization never resulted in action.

In 1929 the eminent Australian physiologist and biochemist Thorburn Brailsford Robertson (1884-1930) made a prescient plea for moderation. Fearful about breeding for 'fitness', he warned that unless 'sterilization of the unfit' was limited to the 'conspicuously feeble-minded', it could become 'an appallingly dangerous weapon in the hands of a profession which is possessed of notoriously little social or historical perspective, and still less spirit of toleration for whatever they do not understand'.¹⁹⁰³ Perhaps his attitude was influenced by his experience as a professor at the University of California in 1916.¹⁹⁰⁴ In 1936 Norman Haire could verify Robertson's prediction from his experience of world events. He opposed any form of compulsory sterilization: 'for if once the State is given legislative power, there is

¹⁸⁹⁸Havelock Ellis (1912), 30.

¹⁸⁹⁹From an article in *Argus*, 10 September 1935, quoted in Kay Daniels and Mary Murnane (comps.), *Uphill All the Way: A Documentary History of Women in Australia* (St Lucia: UQP, 1980), 134-35.

¹⁹⁰⁰*Whither Away? A Study of Race Psychology and the Factors Leading to Australia's National Decline*, by A Psychologist and A Physician (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1936), 40, 79. Garton (1994), 164, footnote 7, incorrectly cited the title and mistakenly identified co-author Leslie John Jarvis Nye as Ronald Nye.

¹⁹⁰¹Reported in 'Referenda sought' [on sterilization], *SMH*, 18 May 1936, 7 (h). The April 1936 letter from the Australian Legion, signed by John H Gaffney, Honorary Organiser, is in Perth's Battye Library at PR2485. Library staff were unable to find more information about either Gaffney or activities of the Legion.

¹⁹⁰²Quoted by Gail Griffith, 'The Feminist Club of New South Wales, 1914-1970: A history of feminist politics in decline', *Hecate*, 14 no 1 (1988), 64.

¹⁹⁰³Thorburn Brailsford Robertson, *The Spirit of Research* (Adelaide: F W Preece, 1931), also *Hibbert Journal* (July 1929).

¹⁹⁰⁴Robertson's eugenics help to the South Australian Branch of the British Science Guild was acknowledged in *Race Building* (1916), 26.

always the likelihood, as we have seen in Germany, that such powers may be used for political ends. It seems therefore wiser not to put such powers into the hands of the State if the desired result can be obtained voluntarily by educating public opinion'.¹⁹⁰⁵ In 1939, shortly before his death, Ellis showed no interest when Haire repeatedly attempted to warn him of the fate of the Jews in Germany.¹⁹⁰⁶

Similarly, embarrassment, ignorance or approval are three possible reasons why many Australians, including eugenists, were not critical. Mark Hayne has examined Australian responses to Hitler's rise to power, noting that the Australian Government failed to denounce Germany's anti-semitic policies or condemn the fascist regime, the Australian press was more favourable to Germany than the British press, and that the Catholic Church praised Germany's actions as opposing communism.¹⁹⁰⁷ From November 1935 to March 1937 Stephen Roberts had first-hand experience of the 'German experiment' and warned of the danger in *The House that Hitler Built*,¹⁹⁰⁸ a book which was banned in Germany.¹⁹⁰⁹ Although some Australians, such as Sir Raphael Cilento and Professor Harvey Sutton, openly supported fascist regimes, few Australian eugenists published such views. However, on a number of occasions, two prominent members of the Eugenics Society of Victoria very publicly expressed their approval of the German regime. For example, on 7 July 1938, Dr Fritz Duras spoke in the ESV lecture series on 'Eugenics in Germany today' and his contentious views were reported in the *Age*.¹⁹¹⁰ Duras, the Director of Physical Education at Melbourne University, applauded Nazis measures for racial improvement as 'one of the most interesting biological experiments in the world'.¹⁹¹¹ His views were not a solitary aberration and similarly extremist views appeared in 1939 in the second of the Society's publications. They were written by the Society's President, Professor Agar who praised German pronatalist taxation incentives for the fit, which were introduced in 1933 'to improve the eugenic quality of the nation and to stem the fall in its birth-rate'. Agar commented that if the increase in the German birth rate continued, it would be 'largely due to psychological

¹⁹⁰⁵Haire, typescript *Hymen*, 29 January 1936, 22, Sydney: Fisher Library, *ibid*.

¹⁹⁰⁶Phyllis Grosskurth, *Havelock Ellis : A Biography* (New York: NY University Press, 1985), 415.

¹⁹⁰⁷Mark B Hayne, 'Australian reactions to Hitler's accession to power, February-June 1933', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 71 (June 1985), 59-74.

¹⁹⁰⁸The book was published in London by Methuen in 1937. For comments see, 'War or oblivion. Hitler's alternatives. Professor Roberts's views', *SMH*, 26 October 1937, 17.

¹⁹⁰⁹'Book banned by Nazis', *Argus*, 13 December 1937, 1 (f) and 'Book of the Week, Why did the Nazis ban Professor Roberts's book?', *ibid*, 14 December 1937, 10 (d).

¹⁹¹⁰'Marriage bonuses. Germans want more babies. Honours for mothers', *Age*, 8 July 1938, 12 (d).

¹⁹¹¹Grant McBurnie, 'Constructing Sexuality in Victoria 1930-1950: Sex Reformers Associated with the Victorian Eugenics Society' (PhD thesis, Clayton, Victoria: Monash University, 1989), 301, stated that Duras was born in 1896 in Bonn, Germany and trained there as an MD.

factors, such as a more optimistic outlook on the future of their nation'.¹⁹¹² No other Australian eugenics society expressed such views and, while the ESV had indulged in melodramatic rhetoric, they posed no threat as they were a powerless and moribund organization. Therefore, it is surprising that in 1995 Paul Ashton, in a discussion of the influence of eugenics, made the following comment using the innuendo of tabloid journalism, but made no other attempt to analyse the influence:

In Australia, people with intellectual disabilities were not butchered as was the case in Nazi Germany or in the United States where, during the 1920s and 1930s, legislation was introduced in around thirty states which allowed for the sterilization of 'mental defectives'.¹⁹¹³

¹⁹¹²W E Agar, *Eugenics and the Future of the Australian Population* (Melbourne: ESV, 1939), 14-15.

¹⁹¹³Paul Ashton, 'Changing approaches to the developmentally disabled', in Shirley Fitzgerald and Gary Wotherspoon (eds.), *Minorities: Cultural Diversity in Sydney* (Sydney: State Library of NSW Press in assocn with the Sydney History Group), 1995, 147.

By the 1930s both Australia and Britain had rejected the idea of legislation to control the unfit. Events of the 1930s weakened support for sterilization, and after the news of German practices in World War II contemplation of eugenics or sterilization became utterly repugnant.¹⁹¹⁴ In 1932 it was rejected by Dr Grey Ewan (1896-1992), fondly known at Stockton Mental Hospital as 'the Grey Ruin', who was one of the first psychiatrists to be trained in NSW and later became the Deputy Inspector-General of Mental Hospitals in NSW. In his view, using the procedure on the unfit would have a 'practically negligible' impact on preventive medicine and it was 'atrocious' to suggest that the sterilization of patients with a mental disease should be a condition of their discharge from hospital.¹⁹¹⁵

In addition, suggestions about eugenically 'good' births were unpopular once peace came and with it a resurgence of the pronatalist patriotic imperative to have as many births as possible, regardless of the physical or mental status of the parents. Finally, effective medical treatment for venereal disease, a greater understanding of genetics, and the realisation that the unfit were not swamping the fit, undermined the credibility of eugenics. After World War II, many people who had previously supported eugenics preferred to forget or deny it. For example, in 1932 the RHA had openly advocated sterilization of the unfit,¹⁹¹⁶ but their references in the 1950s to the events of the 1930s modified this position to 'there was some effort made to permit sterilization of the eugenically unfit'.¹⁹¹⁷

After the 1930s, neither the RHA nor the ESV made any further proposals for eugenic legislation. The Victorian Society closed in 1960, the same year the Sydney Association changed its name to the Family Planning Association. Dr Laira Perry, a RHA Medical Officer from the mid 1940s until 1968, explained to members that from as far back as 1952 the International Planned Parenthood Federation (the Sydney Association's 'roof organisation') had been urging them to change and 'fall in line with the other organisations the world all over'. Mary Howard (who became their General Secretary after Goodisson's death) had been asked in 1955 by Margaret Sanger to change the name to the Family Planning Association 'since that was one of the main objects of our work now' and because 'many of the objects which were responsible for the choice of our present name have fallen by the wayside'. The newsletter mentioned that VD and TB were then curable, even though

¹⁹¹⁴In 1949 fears that women at refugee hostels had been sterilized in German concentration camps prompted the Commonwealth Department of Health to investigate. The number of their pregnancies provided reassurance, AA/A434/1, Item 49.3/13646.

¹⁹¹⁵Grey Ewan, 'Sterilization of the unfit', *MJA*, (27 February 1932), 311-12 and 'Noted medical career', Obituary Dr Grey Ewan', *SMH*, 23 July 1992, 4.

¹⁹¹⁶RHA Annual Report (1932), 1.

¹⁹¹⁷Fink (1956), 287.

fighting TB was not one of the RHA's objectives, nor one of its primary considerations.¹⁹¹⁸ Eugenics was not mentioned, despite its significance in the Association's name and its inclusion as the RHA's third objective. The part eugenics had played in the Association had become invisible.¹⁹¹⁹ The re-named Family Planning Association concentrated on contraception not for the unfit, but for anyone wishing to use it.

Conclusion

Eugenists were partly right about factors which could be inherited but while the transmission of genetic defects is still a problem in the 1990s, there is a vast change in the measures which are considered to be appropriate for dealing with such problems. There are a number of reasons for the change. For example, people no longer fear that they might transmit diseases such as TB, or 'tendencies' such as criminality, which are not hereditary. Advances in genetics continue to offer possibilities of treatment or even cure.¹⁹²⁰ At-risk couples, by the use of genetic counselling and prenatal testing, can make informed choices if tests show that a foetus is severely disabled or has inherited a fatal disorder.¹⁹²¹ Most Australians would see it as a basic human right for a couple themselves to decide whether to abort or bear a foetus with serious genetic defects. Most people in our society would be shocked by the suggestion that child-bearing decisions should be taken from individuals and made by others, for religious reasons, or on the grounds of the parents' likely eugenic contribution to the race or state. Finally, eugenic assumptions that some people are biologically 'better' than others are repugnant in democratic countries with egalitarian beliefs.¹⁹²²

These factors both cause and reflect major changes in attitudes around the world about 'unfitness' and what can or should be done about it.

Early this century, when eugenics flourished, there was considerable commitment to the collective good ('for king and country'). Such unquestioning and altruistic commitment has largely been replaced by distaste for government or religious intrusion into private affairs and support for self-determination and the protection of each individual's human rights. In recent

¹⁹¹⁸Most of these diseases were curable in the 1960s but in the 1990s some had become resistant to antibiotics.

¹⁹¹⁹*Racial Hygiene Association Monthly Bulletin* (March 1960), 1.

¹⁹²⁰For example, the possibility of genetically engineered sperm for men at risk of passing on a genetic defect, in 'Patent bid for designer super sperm', *SMH*, 9 April 1994, 4.

¹⁹²¹David Danks in 'Whither genetic services?' stressed that prenatal testing gave at-risk couples the opportunity to have further healthy children, *MJA* (16 August 1993), 222.

¹⁹²²Sir Frank Macfarlane Burnet, *Endurance of Life: The Implications of Genetics for Human Life* (Melbourne: MUP, 1978), 115.

decades the aims of eugenisists have been replaced by the medical concerns of geneticists. While this has largely reassured the public, some developments in human genetics are contentious and history is a reminder of the potential for misuse which such advances can offer.

There are additional explanations for the minimal Australian responses to negative eugenic proposals and calls for sterilization. Possibly, the large proportion of Australians with easy-going, anti-authoritarian attitudes might explain why Australian eugenists and pro-sterilization groups failed to mobilize support. Scepticism played a significant part in this rejection, as demonstrated by Billy Hughes, who said 'Survival of the fittest is a very good doctrine when we are the fittest; it is a very bad one when we are not'.¹⁹²³ Australia was also influenced by a strong Catholic opposition to sterilization, and as many of them were poor, they often shared the Communist and Labor Party opposition to elitist definitions of unfitness.¹⁹²⁴ For a number of reasons which are universally applicable or are idiosyncratically Australian, most Australians, who almost without exception vote 'no' to referendum questions, have never felt the urge to support proposals to minimise the numbers of the 'unfit'. In this we follow the British preference for voluntary rather than regulatory measures.

¹⁹²³Billy Hughes, quoted by Douglas Sladen, in *From Boundary-rider to Prime Minister: Hughes of Australia. The Man of the Hour* (London: Hutchinson and Co, 1916), 72.

¹⁹²⁴The "unfit", *Australian Worker*, 10 June 1920, 13 and 'A threatened evil. Dangerous sterilization fad', *Labor Daily*, 14 June 1930, 10 (b), and 21 June 1930, 7 (d).

Conclusion

This thesis has reconsidered the important but insufficiently known contribution which eugenics made to Australian health, cultural, scientific and political history. I have done this by examining three propositions: that eugenics in Australia in the early 20th century was readily accepted because of fears about the declining birth rate; that Australian eugenic ideas, while mainly derivative, had certain distinctly Australian qualities; and that eugenics influenced the developments of Australian health services, particularly family planning and public health.

I have used primary sources to fill gaps in the history of eugenics in Australia. In addition, I have suggested ways of redefining and correcting the interpretations of several scholars who have contributed to this history, particularly in relation to their claims about the alleged weakness of the Australian eugenics movement before 1914, to their dismissiveness of the importance of the nature-nurture debate, and to their neglect of the role of environmental eugenics. It is clear moreover, that it is necessary to qualify the received view that concerns about the feeble-minded had waned by 1928 and that only zealots advocated eugenic sterilization.

Eugenists, individuals in sympathy with eugenic goals, and eugenics-related organisations, particularly the Racial Hygiene Association, played major roles from the 1920s to 1950s, particularly in the fields of public health and family planning. In the 1920s and 1930s many politicians, academics and the public accepted eugenics as being the norm, and it was a frequent topic in books and in literary, current affairs and women's magazines. Such writing about eugenics, and the language which eugenists used, revealed information about its impact and the extent to which eugenics developed distinctively in this country.

Australia's political and social developments reflected eugenic beliefs and progressivism, which aimed to increase national efficiency and vitality through enlightened state intervention in programs such as sanitation, town planning and quarantine. Progressivism is also visible in the 1904 *Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth-Rate and on the Mortality of Infants in New South Wales*, in attempts to eradicate venereal diseases, and in efforts to prove medically that white settlement of the tropics was safe. Other such initiatives were the introduction of baby health centres in 1904, the implementation of child endowment schemes from 1912, the establishment of the Commonwealth Department of Health in 1921, and the decision to establish a Commonwealth Royal Commission on Health in 1925 to

again examine the problems of VD, the falling birth-rate and the high maternal and infant death rate. In some government reports, including the *Report of the Royal Commission on Child Endowment or Family Allowances* and the *Report on Mental Deficiency in the Commonwealth of Australia*, both published in 1929, eugenic ideas were expressed explicitly. The same is true of the Commonwealth report on *Sterilization of Mental Defectives* published in 1933, and eugenic ideas were frequently quoted in support of parliamentary attempts to pass laws relating to mental deficiency. Eugenics was implicit in work of the NSW Director-General of Public Health, Dr Emanuel Sydney Morris, who in the Medical Science and National Health Section of ANZAAS in 1939 reported that the state was continuing to increase its responsibility for managing the whole of an individual's physical life. Eugenic thought was also evident in the work of the National Fitness Councils, and in reports in 1943 and 1944 by Kathleen Gordon, the Commonwealth Department of Health's National Fitness Officer.

Precursors to eugenics

In the years between 1904 and 1930, eugenics organizations operated in many countries. Australia responded enthusiastically to these new theories which emerged after the industrial revolution, occurring first in Britain in the 1780s, had 'tilled the ground' in which the eugenics 'seed' germinated.¹⁹²⁵ The ready acceptance of eugenics was understandable in a new, sparsely populated country which was attempting to establish itself on the fringes of the British Empire. Before 1914, Australia had gained a reputation as the world's social laboratory. In 1909 the first Commonwealth Statistician, Sir George Knibbs, also claimed that Australia was the anthropological laboratory of the world. Dr William Ramsay Smith echoed these positive assessments when he said in 1913, 'the type produced by a thousand years of inter-breeding, that seemed unalterable, appears to have become radically changed in the course of two or three generations'. Such rapid changes however, created uncertainty. Professor Robert Irvine questioned Australia's credentials as the 'working man's paradise', and many wondered if these reported anthropological changes would be beneficial or harmful and would lead to a 'paradise of physical perfection', or cause the population to shrink and degenerate.

As Barry Butcher has demonstrated, Australia was used as the world's anthropological quarry, with studies of Australian Aborigines by Sir Walter Baldwin Spencer and others providing 'evidence' that informed Charles Darwin's theories. These evolutionary theories

¹⁹²⁵J M Thoday and A S Parkes, (eds.), *Genetic and Environmental Influences on Behaviour*. A Symposium held by the Eugenics Society in September 1967 (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd), 1968, v. Such metaphors were popular with social Darwinians and eugenicists.

received world acceptance and gave a scientific legitimacy to the belief that Aboriginals were inferior and destined for extinction, a view which Australian pastoralists and politicians had long held. Social Darwinian beliefs were also a part of the restrictive immigration policy which from 1901 aimed to ensure the continuation of a British-Australian nationality. A eugenicist later commented that 'unconsciously, the White Australia Policy was one of greatest eugenics laws ever passed in Australia'.¹⁹²⁶ This policy was linked with the themes of Australian nationalism, British imperialism and Caucasian racism which contributed to the turn of the century debates about the dangers facing Australia's 'national stock'. The preoccupations of this young nation provided both stimuli and nurture for eugenics.

Eugenics was attractive early this century because it offered a scientifically respectable option when the idea of white superiority was challenged by declining birth rates in the western world while Asian populations were expanding. As well, in 1905 the Japanese had fought and defeated the Russians, and in 1908 a black boxer had beaten a white one in a world title fight which was held in Sydney. As a result Australians were intensely worried about the dangers of 'yellow peril', fearing an Asian invasion and believing that a declining white birth-rate indicated that a process of 'racial suicide' was already taking place. When NSW Government Statistician Timothy Coghlan produced evidence of this decline it caused such alarm that in 1904 a Royal Commission was set up to determine the causes and find solutions to this problem. As Milton Lewis has noted, this Commission on the decline of the birth rate gave wide publicity to the issue of infant mortality, making it 'a respectable, even pressing public issue' and 'cleared the way for state involvement'.¹⁹²⁷ Without this fearfulness about a small and diminishing population and the acceptance of the legitimacy of the government having a role to rectify this problem, it is unlikely that there would have been such a favourable response to eugenicists' proposals for improving the 'national stock'.

¹⁹²⁶Richard Granville Waddy, 'Eugenics', in *Australian Racial Hygiene Congress Report*, 15-18 September 1929 (Sydney: RHA, 1929), 63.

¹⁹²⁷Milton Lewis, "'Populate or Perish': Aspects of Infant and Maternal Health in Sydney, 1870-1939" (PhD thesis, ANU, 1976), 125.

Added to anxieties about population size, however, was the additional fear that national fitness was being eroded by an escalating process of mental, moral and physical decay. In Britain, these fears stemmed from 19th century degeneracy theories which were used to argue that, if counter-measures were not taken, deficiencies would intensify in successive generations. The reduction in family size prompted anxieties about class-linked fertility differences, with the rich having few children and the poor having many. It was also feared that misguided social welfare efforts had allowed the 'unfit' to survive and outnumber the 'fit', and that this differential fertility was the principal cause of national decay. Debate about racial decay was intensified in Britain by the high rejection rates of army recruits and by the reverses which the British suffered in the Boer War. The public and parliamentary demands for national efficiency prompted the establishment in 1903 of an Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Although the subsequent report stressed environmental causes of ill health, it was widely believed that the urban poor were 'degenerating', even 'degenerate'.

It was in this climate, where Britain feared both the loss of its Empire and internal collapse, that Francis Galton successfully launched his plans in 1904 to improve the race. The Eugenics Education Society was established in London three years after the enthusiastic reception to Galton's eugenics proposals.

Defining eugenics

There have been endless disputes about what constituted eugenic fitness and unfitness and, as this thesis has demonstrated, there were many forms of eugenics with the result that people had many different responses to eugenics. At the 1929 Australian Racial Hygiene Congress, Linda Littlejohn mused that even if science knew how to improve the race, it would be difficult to choose whether the model should be 'a Mussolini or a Gandhi, a Darwin or a Ford - a tall man or a short one, a giant in brawn or a giant in intellect - a prohibitionist or an anti-prohibitionist'.¹⁹²⁸

The causes which Australian eugenisists endorsed ranged from censorship, sex education, temperance and prevention or eradication of venereal disease, to pure food regulations and the health and happiness of babies. To avoid what Geoffrey Searle has described as an 'absurd situation', I followed his plan for discriminating between the different kinds and levels of commitment to eugenics by dividing eugenisists into four main categories. The first are 'strong' eugenisists, those for whom eugenics provided the only means of escape from

¹⁹²⁸Linda Littlejohn, 'Marriage and Divorce', in *AHRC* (1929), 7.

national collapse and decay. The second were 'weak' eugenists who grafted aspects of eugenics onto their underlying political creeds. The third group, which figured importantly in Australia, were the 'medical' eugenists, mainly doctors and health workers who considered eugenics not as a political belief but as a branch of public health which needed government support to improve health or reduce disease and suffering. Also important was the fourth group of 'career' eugenists, consisting mostly of academics and practitioners in such fields as genetics, statistics, education or psychology, who sympathised with the objectives only where they stimulated interest in their own field of study. Finally, there was a marginal group of 'opportunistic' eugenists who were prepared to use eugenic phrases and ideas to promote unrelated causes.

Few Australians contributed significantly to the eugenics movement and they were largely isolated from overseas eugenists and from each other. However, these eugenists were influential. Most of these would fit Searle's 'medical' or 'career' eugenist categories, factors which helped to determine the direction and impact of the movement. I considered why some people became eugenists and used Searle's classification in biographical sketches of four people who played major roles: Marion Piddington, John Eldridge, Lillie Goodisson and Henry Twitchin. They were born approximately within the same decade, made their contributions later in life, lacked significant scientific training, and revered overseas eugenic thinking. Two became involved in eugenics because of personal experiences: Twitchin, because he believed he had 'inherited bad health', and Goodisson because she had a syphilitic husband. Australian-born Eldridge and Piddington, and Welsh-born Goodisson, promoted eugenics in this country. English-born Twitchin, a 'career' eugenist who amassed a fortune as a pastoralist in Australia, assisted the cause of the British movement. Piddington, Australia's only 'strong' eugenist, and Goodisson, a 'medical' eugenist, remained unwavering in their commitment to the cause. Piddington believed that human history could be explained in terms of eugenics and crusaded desperately for a eugenic utopia, and Goodisson used both eugenics and politics to further her anti-VD and pro-contraception goals. Eldridge was a 'weak' eugenist who endorsed eugenics while it aided his political career. The complexity of eugenics is underlined by the fact that the projects of these four eugenists appear to be unrelated to political theory. Eldridge and Piddington were affiliated with the Labor Party, and while he favoured an environmental approach, she espoused hereditarian eugenics. Goodisson and Twitchin were politically conservative but, while she focused on women's health, he dreamed of eradicating the unfit.

Something old, something new in Australian eugenics

Australia frequently sought overseas advice and expertise and this was true of eugenics which was largely derived from the British and, to a lesser extent, American movements.

For example, Australia followed the British preference for voluntary rather than regulatory measures to control the 'unfit'. This is not surprising as many Australian doctors, scientists and academics who advocated eugenics were either British-born or had 'appropriated a British culture of science and directed it to colonial and national purposes'.¹⁹²⁹ There were also differences: for example, environmental concerns were of great importance in the early years of the Australian eugenics movement, at a time when hereditary determinism dominated the movements in countries such as Britain and America. Australia's colonial circumstances provide obvious reasons for this, as the country's isolation and harsh climate might be inimical to white survival. Eugenics was welcomed by this new nation which needed to boost its population and fitness in order to fill the continent as protection from Asian invasion. While these factors were not unique to Australia, they featured much more prominently than in either Britain or America. In addition, the most committed Australian eugenisists before 1914 were ardent supporters of environmental reforms.

An idiosyncratic but unsuccessful Australian attempt was a crusade launched by Marion Piddington in 1916 for 'eugenic' motherhood. By this she meant artificial insemination, also called celibate or scientific motherhood, and euteleogenesis. While Marie Stopes had reluctantly mentioned this in one of her books, Piddington's suggestion found little support and she suffered years of censure because of it.

Australia's population was small, so that it is not surprising that although there were some influential eugenisists, there was no cohesive 'movement' comparable in any sense to those of Britain or America. Between 1911 and 1936, five Australian states made seven attempts to launch eugenics organizations. Four attempts were made before 1914 but only two groups - the Racial Hygiene Association of NSW (RHA) and the Eugenics Society of Victoria (ESV) - survived more than a decade and they were bitter rivals. Alison Turtle has described the RHA as 'the main outlet of the [eugenics] movement'.¹⁹³⁰ The reality however, was shown in a 1939 letter from the RHA to the British Eugenics Society's Dr Blacker, informing him that the organization was 'not a Eugenic Society.' Eugenics became a 'flag of convenience' for the RHA after the split with Piddington. When the RHA established a birth control clinic in 1933 (two years after Piddington established hers), the RHA's primary interest was birth control, a controversial cause that faced powerful pronatalist, medical and religious opposition. While many members of the Australian medical profession sympathized with eugenic goals, most doctors (prior to 1960) and the Catholic Church opposed birth

¹⁹²⁹Roy MacLeod, 'Preface', in *The Commonwealth of Science: ANZAAS and the Scientific Enterprise in Australasia, 1888-1988* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988), xi.

¹⁹³⁰Alison Turtle, 'Anthropometry in Britain and Australia: technology, ideology and imperial connection', *Storia della Psicologia*, 2 (no 2) (1990), 134.

control.¹⁹³¹ Sensibly, the RHA allied itself with supportive politicians and sympathetic doctors.

In two important ways the Australian eugenics movement as a whole differed from those of other countries: class was less relevant in Australia than in Britain, and racial tensions played a lesser role in Australia than they did in America or South Africa. In 1887 Timothy Coghlan noted that no Australians were 'born to poverty' and, as it was assumed that the Aborigines were a dying race, from 1901 the restrictive immigration policy ensured the continuation of a predominantly Anglo-Saxon heritage. Consequently, neither class nor race featured prominently in the Australian eugenics experience. In Australia, the 'unfit' who featured in negative eugenics schemes were principally the mentally defective and people affected by 'racial poisons' but not the poor (as in Britain) nor those of non-white races (as in America and South Africa). The class difference is well illustrated by Australian child endowment schemes which provided universal, not class-based benefits. On three occasions, in 1912 and twice in 1922, Britain's Eugenics Education Society complained that the Australian schemes would increase 'pauper stock' and swell 'the less valuable classes'. Economic difficulties in 1928 prompted the Commonwealth Government to consider providing benefits to children of the 'right kind of stock' [determined by health not wealth] and would withhold them from only the 'unmistakeably feeble-minded' and those with genetically transmissible defects.¹⁹³²

¹⁹³¹John Peel and Malcolm Potts wrote 'Within a generation the physician has undergone a remarkable reversal of attitude from being an opponent, or apathetic supporter, of birth control to attempting to create a closed shop of contraceptive techniques', in Don Brothwell (ed.), *Biosocial Man: Studies related to the Interaction of Biological and Cultural Factors in Human Populations* (London: Published for the Eugenics Society by the Institute of Biology, 1977), 78. The 'reversal' was prompted by doctors' role as prescribers of oral contraceptives in the early 1960s.

¹⁹³²*Report of the Royal Commission on Child Endowment or Family Allowances*, CPP, 2 (1920), 'H. Eugenic Control', paragraphs 627-633, 888-91, 1046, 1359-60.

Another significant difference lies in the antagonism displayed by the medical profession towards eugenics in Britain which was largely absent in Australia, probably because many members of the medical profession were also eugenisists. Many Australian doctors became eugenisists as young men and their beliefs have left a legacy in the health system which they later helped to build. This was particularly so in the case of Dr John (Howard) Cumpston. At the outset of his career in the first two decades of this century, eugenics was accepted as a science and these beliefs were manifest in the workings of the Commonwealth Department of Health, after he became its first Director-General of Health in 1921. The same was true of Sir Thomas Anderson Stuart, who played an important role in the development of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Sydney and in the establishment of the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Townsville in 1909 to help develop the tropics. The political significance of the Institute is indicated by the fact that it was one of Australia's first medical research institutes. 'Medical' eugenisists such as Dr Richard Arthur, the NSW Minister for Health, were influential as politicians. In addition, this group of eugenisists also wielded power as administrators, for example, doctors E Sydney Morris, W Ramsay Smith, Professor Harvey Sutton, Sir Raphael Cilento and Sir James Barrett. The influence of individuals with eugenic sympathies was also evident in many other fields and these too have been considered in this thesis.

Australian responses to eugenics

Australia reacted quickly to eugenics, with enthusiastic responses coming from state and federal governments, professions, the churches and individuals. In 1912 eugenics enjoyed such prestige and respectability that an invitation to attend the first International Eugenics Congress in London was dispatched from Downing Street to the Australian Prime Minister, and that Australia was represented by four official delegates, headed by Sir John Cockburn, a former Premier of South Australia. Despite this official imprimatur, in two decades the fortunes of eugenics had plummeted so that in 1932 the Australian government declined the invitation to the third international congress.

In the 'golden' years of eugenics before 1914, the Australian government's response to reports of a degenerating population was to undertake anthropological surveys, first to check children's physical fitness, and later to determine the numbers of the 'feeble-minded'. Dr Mary Booth told the AAAS delegates in 1908 that eugenisists relied on such data to study 'what the race may become'. The NSW Department of Public Instruction instituted medical examinations of school children: these studies were augmented in 1909 by the Sydney branch of the British Science Guild, which aimed to improve the school children's physical fitness. In 1916 John Eldridge, Secretary of the NSW Eugenics Education Society,

described these surveys as 'one of the most important events' in the State's history. Unlike overseas eugenicists' anxieties about differential fertility rates according to class, or about questionable physical prowess, in Australia these were overshadowed by fears that the feeble-minded were increasing and would soon outnumber the 'fit'.

In 1911 the Australasian Medical Congress delegated a committee to find out the extent of feeble-mindedness in each state. The national committee presented its report in 1914 and proposed to respond to the problem with support from the medical profession, educational and charitable bodies, eugenics societies, women's organizations, churches and the press. Assumptions that the feeble-minded were 'markedly more prolific than those normally constituted' were widely publicised by notables such as Sir Charles Mackellar, the dominant figure in the 1904 Royal Commission into the birth rate decline. Studies of school children, undertaken in Victoria by Professor Richard Berry and Stanley Porteus in 1918, and in NSW by Dr Harvey Sutton in 1925, did much to convince Australians that the proportion of mentally deficient people in the community posed a large and growing problem. Before genetics was included in university medical courses in 1938, knowledge about inherited characteristics was rudimentary. This explains why there was such fear of mental deficiency, and why people believed that it could be eliminated in a few generations if affected individuals did not reproduce.

From 1942 Leslie Bailey provided an unusual style of positive eugenics at Hopewood House in Bowral, in which 86 babies born 'under unfortunate circumstances' developed into fine, healthy children with superior teeth. He concentrated on nurtural (environmental) eugenics, paying particular attention to the provision of a wholesome diet, exercise and fresh air. In the 1950s, the *Australian Women's Weekly* sponsored a competition with a hidden but conventional positive eugenics agenda which was to encourage childbearing among the 'fit'. Eugenists soon discarded any plans for positive eugenics and instead concentrated on negative eugenics, which aimed to minimise or prevent 'unfit' births by implementing strategies of prevention and control. The first aimed to combat 'racial poisons' which were thought to threaten healthy parenthood. The second attempted to regulate marriage and advocated legislation for the care, control or sterilization of 'unfit' people.

There is no evidence to support Stephen Garton's claim that a 1927 to 1928 Commonwealth survey had concluded that feeble-mindedness was 'not as rampant in NSW as many eugenicists had argued'.¹⁹³³ No survey was done at this time. The national survey, which

¹⁹³³Stephen Garton, *Medicine and Madness: A Social History of Insanity in NSW, 1880-1940* (Kensington: UNSWP, 1988), 95.

was not announced until August 1928, was headed by Dr Ernest Jones, who was instructed to inquire into the prevalence of mental deficiency and to recommend methods of treatment. Jones' report, published in December 1929, contained nothing at all about levels of feeble-mindedness, but proposed that each state should establish psychological clinics to examine mentally deficient children and young adults. Jones had examined issues of concern to eugenicists: detection, segregation, sterilization and marriage prevention of the unfit, eliminating syphilis, and control or prohibition of alcohol. Contrary to Garton's assertion that by 1927-28 mental deficiency was no longer seen as a problem, many eugenicists, significant numbers of the public, and federal and state governments considered that it was an extremely grave problem.

Numerous delegations from eugenics groups and women's organizations to politicians in the 1920s and 1930s urging that mental defectives should be sterilized or placed in custodial care, and the extensive outpourings on the subject in medical journals and newspapers over this period are evidence of a wide concern. As a result of this pressure, and in response to a request made by the Federal Health Council in 1931, the Commonwealth Government conducted an extensive inquiry into the sterilization of mental defectives.¹⁹³⁴ It recommended laws to allow selective voluntary sterilization of people with, or likely to transmit, a mental defect or disorder. State boards were to give approval for sterilization and there was to be provision for appeal.¹⁹³⁵ However, neither the Commonwealth nor individual states took any action. After receiving legal advice that Britain had decided against eugenic sterilization, Dr Cumpston declared that the Commonwealth had no powers on the subject: in 1929 he had advised the *Royal Commission on Child Endowment* that the Commonwealth should exercise its constitutional powers on the matter.

The evidence of parliamentary debates does not support Garton's claim that Labor governments 'on the whole' were 'more wary' of passing legislation which proposed segregation.¹⁹³⁶ Indeed, many attempts to pass eugenic legislation in Australia were made by the Labor Party or had bipartisan support.¹⁹³⁷ Propositions that eugenicists were mostly

¹⁹³⁴Frank Robinson Kerr, *The Sterilization of Mental Defectives*, in Federal Health Council, Report of the 6th Session (Canberra; Govt. Pr., 1933), 16-32.

¹⁹³⁵See *Federal Inquiry into the Sterilization of Mental Defectives*, 1933. It was prepared by F R Kerr and appeared as Appendix II of the Sixth session of the FHC, 21-23 February 1933, 16-28. See also *Ibid.*, H Downes, CMO to the D-G, Summary, 28 March 1934, 2-3 and 24, AA. ACT, A1928/1 - Item 362/20.

¹⁹³⁶Stephen Garton, 'Insanity in New South Wales: Some Aspects of its Social History, 1878-1958' (PhD thesis, UNSW, 1984), 337.

¹⁹³⁷Federal Labor politician Billy Hughes introduced a Marriage Certificates Bill in 1913 and still favoured such legislation in 1929. In 1930 the NSW Mental Defectives Bill was introduced as non-party legislation.

right-wing politically have been called a 'myth' by Mark Adams who noted that eugenists included communists, socialists, liberals, conservatives and fascists, all of which 'suggests that any simplistic political classification of the movement cannot sustain analysis'.¹⁹³⁸

Daniel Kevles also emphasized the political diversity of British and American eugenists whose only common bond was in being largely 'middle to upper middle class, white, Anglo Saxon, predominantly Protestant and educated'.¹⁹³⁹ Australian eugenists also had homogeneous backgrounds with similarly diverse political views which both mirrored and shaped those of the wider community. Anthea Hyslop noted that, early this century, Australian liberals, radicals and conservatives had surprisingly similar views, all of which agreed on the 'need for a larger, healthier, racially pure population, and for the preventive and scientific treatment of social problems'.¹⁹⁴⁰ My findings strongly support those of Adams, Kevles and Hyslop.

While eugenics sought to improve national fitness through better health, it was also frequently described as a branch of preventive medicine because one of its aims was to prevent the unfit from breeding. Before 1920 this goal resembled a religious crusade for some but the literature does not support Claudia Thame's claim that 'the extreme position of sterilization of the unfit was held by only a small minority of zealots', nor is there evidence that 'the *Medical Journal of Australia* published only two articles advocating the "scientific improvement of the race" during the 1920s and 1930s and made no editorial comment on the subject at all'.¹⁹⁴¹ Similarly, there is little evidence to support David McCallum's claim that 'ideas about sterilization did not gain much acceptance in Australia'.¹⁹⁴² An examination of contemporary literature disproves both claims. During the 1920s and the early 1930s, there was intense debate and extensive writing about this issue, with many articles appearing in the *Medical Journal of Australia*.¹⁹⁴³ In June 1934 a special meeting of the RHA Executive tried to agree whether it was preferable to segregate or sterilize the

¹⁹³⁸Adams (1990), 220-21 and 224. See also Diane Paul, 'Eugenics and the Left', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 45 (January-March 1984), 567-90 and Christopher Shaw, 'Eliminating the Yahoo: Eugenics, social Darwinism and five Fabians', *History of Political Thought*, 8 (Winter 1987), 521-44.

¹⁹³⁹Daniel J Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 64.

¹⁹⁴⁰Anthea Hyslop, 'The Social Reform Movement in Melbourne, 1890 to 1914' (PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 1980), 12.

¹⁹⁴¹Claudia Thame, 'Health and the State: The Development of Collective Responsibility for Health Care in Australia in the First Half of the Twentieth Century' (PhD thesis ANU, 1975), 156.

¹⁹⁴²David McCallum, *The Social Production of Merit: Education, Psychology and Politics in Australia, 1900-1950* (Deakin Studies in Education Series: 7) (London: The Falmer Press, 1990), 17.

¹⁹⁴³*MJA* articles include eugenics editorials on (21 November 1931), 655-56 and (5 October 1935), 438; letters (26 December 1931), 825-6; (23 January 1932), 143; (6 February 1932), 211 and (27 February 1932), 311-12; articles on (9 March 1935), 295-305 and 318-21.

'mentally unfit', and to decide which persons had 'the right to be sterilized'.¹⁹⁴⁴ In 1936 the RHA discussed the issue 'several times' and found the lack of any legal ruling 'very unsatisfactory'.¹⁹⁴⁵ In 1950 Dr Charles Brothers, Chairman of the Tasmanian Mental Deficiency Board, praised Britain for 'her usual wise conservatism' in refraining from passing any laws about sterilization although the subject had been 'discussed for many years'.¹⁹⁴⁶

Despite widespread debates, no Bill for the sterilization of mental defectives was ever presented in the NSW Parliament. Several scholars have mistakenly reported that Dr Arthur had done so.¹⁹⁴⁷ The nearest Arthur came to this was his comment in 1929 that 'sterilization is an inevitable necessity, but the time is not ripe for its introduction'.¹⁹⁴⁸ Although Arthur said he 'was inclined to accept an amendment in connection with sterilization if such was moved',¹⁹⁴⁹ no such amendment was proposed and Arthur's own party opposed the Bill.¹⁹⁵⁰ There has been a similar misconception about the existence of state legislation on feeble-mindedness. Garton has suggested that 'mental defectives' legislation was passed 'in Tasmania (1920), Victoria (1922), Queensland (1938) and New South Wales (1939)'.¹⁹⁵¹ Certainly, Tasmania passed legislation especially for the feeble-minded but it was the only Australian state which did. Although some states passed what might appear to be 'mental defectives' laws, these were Lunacy Acts or Prisons Acts, and related to law and order, rather than eugenics.

Motherhood and migration have always been important for Australia. Pronatalist governments promoted migration in the belief that a large, steadily increasing population was vital for the country's wealth and progress. British migration was encouraged, including the (now notorious) child migrant schemes. The imperial motive was to send the colonies these little 'bricks for Empire building' under the philanthropic guise of 'child rescue'. The eugenic motive was to transplant children, rather than adults, from urban slums in the belief that they would escape slum-induced degeneration. If the British Government could not discourage the poor from having children, they could encourage them to migrate. Some

¹⁹⁴⁴RHA Annual Report (1935), 3.

¹⁹⁴⁵Ibid (1936), 3.

¹⁹⁴⁶Brothers (1950), 215.

¹⁹⁴⁷Bacchi (1980), 205 wrote, 'In 1930, as Minister for Health in the Bavin administration, Arthur presented a Bill calling for the sterilization of defectives'. This mistake was repeated by Mary Cawte in *Historical Studies* (April 1986), 38 and by Milton Lewis in *Managing Madness: Psychiatry and Society in Australia 1788-1980* (Canberra: AGPS, 1988), 130.

¹⁹⁴⁸'Danger of the half-wit. Sterilization must come, says Minister', *Telegraph*, 15 July 1929, 4 (d).

¹⁹⁴⁹NSWPD, 27 March 1930, 4182 and *SMH*, 1 February 1930, 18.

¹⁹⁵⁰'Minister is opposed by own party', *Labor Daily*, 23 May 1930, 5 (f).

¹⁹⁵¹Garton (1994), 164.

Australian eugenists worried about such migrants, arguing that Australia should only receive 'thoroughbreds', not those affected by 'racial poisons'.

Women as mothers played a central role in the plans for boosting the nation's fitness. Hereditary determinists such as William Baylebridge saw them as 'the sacred vessels of maternity'; pronatalists such as Octavius Beale commented that feminism was 'a formidable adversary of fecundity', and eugenist doctors, including Truby King, Mary Booth and Sir James Barrett, felt that higher education would divert women from the primary role of motherhood. Feminists and eugenists agreed that the mothers of the race needed education. In this analysis, I have considered the links between the women's movement and eugenics in the light of recent criticisms by historians who have examined the work of birth control pioneers in Britain, America and Australia. I have argued instead that a more accurate view of the pioneers' aims was obtained by examining the humanitarian work of their clinics than by considering their eugenic rhetoric.

Organized eugenics

Six months after participating in the discussion on eugenics at the 1913 meeting of the BMA in Brighton (England), Dr William Ernest Jones urged Australians to establish affiliated branches of the London-based Eugenics Education Society. New Zealand already had four such branches and an unaffiliated group was operating in South Australia. Jones differentiated between eugenics groups which wished to improve the quality of the race, and pronatalists who aimed to increase its quantity.

The analysis of much of the historical writing on eugenics in Australia has not been informed by an examination of the archival material on Australian eugenics, particularly that relating to activity before 1914, or to the significant Australian presence at the 1912 International Eugenics Congress. For example, Alison Turtle has argued that 'the organized eugenics movement gained little ground in Australia and almost none at all until after the [1914-1918] war'.¹⁹⁵² Similarly, Stephen Garton reiterated the statement that the eugenics movement was weak prior to 1914.¹⁹⁵³ In contrast, my analysis of these eugenics groups' activities has demonstrated that there was eugenics-related activity in four states before 1914. Indeed, this was the time when many individuals, who later became leaders in their professions, acquired their eugenics beliefs. As a consequence, their pre-1914 learning had an impact on careers which spanned the next three decades, crucial years in the establishment of the state's role in the provision of public health and social medicine.¹⁹⁵⁴ There were also influential decision-makers in the fields of education, science, law and politics but, while these professions wielded power in various spheres, doctors' influence was almost ubiquitous in the first half of this century. Paradoxically, the medical profession largely accepted eugenics because they had limited scientific understanding. Despite this, doctors' public standing was much greater 50 years ago than it is now and doctors' orders were generally followed on social, moral and medical matters. As a result 'medical' eugenisists influenced both the developing health services and their patients.

¹⁹⁵²Turtle (1990), 134.

¹⁹⁵³Stephen Garton, 'Sound minds in healthy bodies: Reconsidering eugenics in Australia, 1914-1940', *Australian Historical Studies*, 26 (October 1994), 164.

¹⁹⁵⁴These included Dr J H L Cumpston, Dr W Ramsay Smith, Dr E Sydney Morris, Dr E Morris Miller, Dr W Ernest Jones, Sir T Anderson Stuart, Sir James Barrett, Dr Victor Wallace, Dr Kenneth Cunningham, Dr Mary Booth, Professor R J A Berry, Sir Frank Macfarlane Burnet and Sir George Knibbs.

The style of Australian eugenics: nature or nurture?

The thesis has paid considerable attention to the crucially important nature-nurture debate, elements of which were explored by Carol Bacchi.¹⁹⁵⁵ I have engaged with Stephen Garton and Rob Watts over their criticism of Bacchi's emphasis on environment in Australian eugenics and over their dismissal of the importance of the nature-nurture debate. In Garton's view, this debate 'contaminated' enquiries¹⁹⁵⁶ while, according to Watts, it led 'numerous historians' into the 'bog' of 'this oppressive dichotomy'.¹⁹⁵⁷ My examination of archival material supports Bacchi's position on the importance of the debate and her conclusion that between 1900 and 1914 'hereditary determinism found fewer adherents [in Australia] than in England or America'.¹⁹⁵⁸ While the British eugenics movement was not launched until 1907, the early years of the movement were important ones for eugenics in Australia. Between 1912 and 1914 the Eugenics Education Society of NSW changed its focus: although initially sharing the hereditarian objectives of the parent British body, in 1914 the NSW society changed to the 'nurtural' (environmental) perspective which Caleb Saleeby promoted. These aspects of eugenics suited the social reform orientation of members such as Eldridge, Irvine and Arthur. Eldridge's involvement in economics, eugenics, social sciences and low cost housing was probably stimulated by Irvine who stated that 'the problem of how to produce a superior civilisation is both biological and sociological', a comment which Eldridge found 'entirely in accord with the principles of eugenics', indeed 'the whole basis of the new science'.¹⁹⁵⁹ Bacchi underestimated the extent of eugenics activity prior to 1914 and was also unaware that the NSW Eugenics Education Society was using Saleeby's objectives rather than creating an environmental position which was uniquely theirs. I argued that Watts and Garton were mistaken in their attack on Bacchi, particularly so in their dismissal of the importance of the nature-nurture debate. This was centrally important to eugenists, both in Australia and overseas, and has resurfaced periodically, the most recent being the fierce arguments surrounding the contentious 1994 American book on class, race and intelligence by the late Richard J Herrnstein and Charles Murray.¹⁹⁶⁰

¹⁹⁵⁵Carol Bacchi, 'The nature-nurture debate in Australia, 1900-1914', *Historical Studies*, 19 (October 1980), 199-212.

¹⁹⁵⁶Garton (1994), 163.

¹⁹⁵⁷Rob Watts, 'Beyond nature and nurture: Eugenics in twentieth century Australian history', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 4 no.3 (1994), 320.

¹⁹⁵⁸Bacchi (1980), 199.

¹⁹⁵⁹Eldridge (5 March 1914).

¹⁹⁶⁰Richard J Herrnstein and Charles Murray, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (New York: Free press/Simon and Schuster, 1994).

The impact of eugenics

The impact of eugenics is both complex and paradoxical. There were eugenists in Tasmania and Queensland, but neither state had eugenics organizations.¹⁹⁶¹ Despite this, Tasmania was the only state to legislate on the feeble-minded, not the states which had such organizations. While all states tried to pass eugenics-related laws, no one who advocated such laws belonged to a eugenics organization. Eugenists were often rivals. The groups were small, vied with each other, and had frequent internal and external disagreements. Attempts to establish eugenics research institutes failed. With the exception of Knibbs, no Australian eugenists participated in or reported on the 1921 and 1932 International Eugenics Congresses - evidence which suggests that the Australian movement was fragmented, isolated and ineffectual.

Certainly, the eugenics movement in Australia was not strong: the Racial Hygiene Association focused mostly on birth control and the Eugenics Society of Victoria was not established until 1936, by which time eugenics' credibility had waned. ESV members argued whether to focus on 'pure' eugenics, or expand to include such issues as welfare, VD, housing, alcoholism and contraception. The ESV remained 'pure' but achieved few results, and it closed in 1961. There were major differences between the ESV and the RHA which determined their respective fates: whereas the ESV strove for an unattainable abstract goal and had little popular, political, or medical support, the RHA had all three, as birth control was a tangible health service which many people wanted.

Despite the weakness of the eugenics movement, there were several eugenics-related achievements which were real and long-lasting. Eugenics attracted many prominent people whose eugenics-influenced thinking is reflected in many of the health and education services which these experts helped to establish. Perhaps the greatest influence was in the medical profession which, both collectively and individually, exerted an influence on Australia's national life, and eugenics helped to shape this influence. The health services which were pioneered before World War II also bear the stamp of these beliefs. Eugenists' efforts to improve national fitness encompassed maternal and child health, fighting VD and TB, and the provision of sex education and birth control. As well, questions raised by eugenics stimulated the study of genetics. While much of the rationale for eugenics now appears misguided or offensive, such thinking was incorporated into the development of public health; eugenists' crusades helped the public to accept services which had been opposed

¹⁹⁶¹For example, Sir Raphael Cilento in Queensland and E Morris Miller and E Sydney Morris in Tasmania.

or ignored. I agree with Dr Victor Wallace that 'the [eugenics] pioneers played a definite part in winning this freedom and in bringing about this enlightenment'.

Many of preoccupations which fuelled Australian anxieties in the first half of this century have proved to be ephemeral. Fears of invasion no longer cause concern, pressure to 'populate or perish' has eased, and questions are rarely asked about national fitness. Interest in 'populating' the tropical north had waned in 1930 when the Commonwealth Government closed the Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine in Townsville and relegated this field to a secondary role for the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine in Sydney. However, the 'survival of the fittest' ideology and debates about national fitness were the foundations from which eugenics developed. It also provided Australia with a welcome and scientifically respectable means for dealing with social problems and sustaining national fitness and pride.

Eugenists were partly right about factors which could be inherited but, while the transmission of genetic defects is still a problem in the 1990s, there has been a vast change in the ethical approach and in the choice of available options. There are a number of reasons for this: people no longer fear the genetic transmission of diseases such as TB, or 'tendencies' such as criminality which are not hereditary. Advances in genetics continue to offer possibilities of treatment or even cure. At-risk couples, by the use of genetic counselling and prenatal testing, can make informed choices if tests show that a foetus is severely disabled or has inherited a fatal disorder. Most Australians would see it as a basic human right for a couple to decide whether to abort or bear a foetus with serious genetic defects. Most people in our society would be shocked by the suggestion that child-bearing decisions should be taken from individuals and made by others, for religious reasons, or on the grounds of the parents' likely eugenic contribution to the race or state. Finally, eugenic assumptions that some people are biologically 'better' than others are abhorrent in democratic countries with egalitarian beliefs.

These factors both cause and reflect major changes in world attitudes about 'unfitness' and what can or should be done about it. In English-speaking countries early this century, when eugenics flourished, there was considerable commitment to the collective good ('for king and country'). Such unquestioning and altruistic commitment has largely been replaced by distaste for government or religious intrusion into private affairs and by support for self-determination and the protection of human rights. Distinctively Australian reasons for largely rejecting negative eugenics are: the legendary Australian easy-going, anti-authoritarian attitudes; the failure of eugenists and eugenics-related organisations to mobilize support; Catholic opposition to sterilization; and Communist and Labor Party opposition to class-

based definitions of unfitness. For reasons which apply universally, and for such specifically Australian ones, there has been little support for proposals to minimise the 'unfit'. In this we followed the British preference for voluntary measures, rejecting the regulatory procedures of some American states.

Overall, this thesis has argued that, before and between the two world wars, an all-embracing if ill-defined concept of eugenics was propounded by many leading Australians; that, while largely derived from Britain and America, a variety of specifically Australian circumstances contributed to this acceptance; that many influential Australian politicians enlisted elements of eugenic thinking into their political speeches; and that eugenic ideas played a significant role in the development of Australian policies in the fields of public health and family planning.

Many 'medical' eugenists, striving for national fitness, saw eugenics as a tool for improving public health in the broadest sense, involving all aspects of community and individual well-being, freedom from disease and giving children the best start in life. Their utopian dreams of making Australia 'a paradise of physical perfection' were seen as a possibility in an age of unsophisticated medicine when few questioned doctors' standing in the community. While some members of the medical profession who were eugenists had careers which spanned the rise and fall of eugenics, their amnesia-affected biographers and obituary writers have rarely mentioned this involvement. In Australia and overseas, by the 1950s most eugenists had distanced themselves by adopting new titles such as 'human geneticists', 'sociologists' or 'demographers', just as many eugenics movements and their publications still operate but, from the 1930s, began masking their origins under new names. The discredited 'old' eugenics may have become invisible. However, advances in genetic screening, prenatal testing, gene therapy and allied treatment could involve choices which parallel those of the eugenics movement. These new technologies should be informed by history so that they do not develop into born-again eugenics.

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Appendix

Terminology

I have used terms which were acceptable during the period studied, such as 'unfit', 'feeble-minded' and 'mental deficiency', rather than terms currently in use, such as 'intellectual disability'.

As many words in this thesis can be variously interpreted, I have included in this Appendix words and terms which have significant meanings in the context of eugenics, those which are ambiguous or can be interpreted in different ways, and where the meaning has changed.

Degeneracy (degeneration) theory: this was first articulated in 1857 by a French psychiatrist, Benedict Morel (1809-1873).¹ From 1860 to 1910 it was widely accepted by psychiatrists and neurologists who proposed that patients who were unresponsive to their treatment had inbuilt deficiencies (also called 'traits' or 'tendencies' which became progressively worse in each generation until the affected individual, family or groups became extinct.

The studies of the Jukes and the Kallikak families are examples of this theory. See Figures 18 and 20 for examples of 'degeneracy'.

Eugenics: the science of improving the qualities of offspring and those of the human race. The word comes from the Greek *eugenes* meaning well-born and was coined by Sir Francis Galton in 1883.

Drawing on ancient ideas and stimulated by the writings of Thomas Malthus, Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, Galton expressed eugenic beliefs as early as 1865. He did not feel that the time was right to announce his plan until 1901 and elaborated in 1904, describing it as a new 'science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race; also with those that develop them to the utmost advantage'. The Eugenics Education Society was launched in London in 1907.

¹Sheila Faith Weiss, *Race Hygiene and National Efficiency: The Eugenics of Wilhelm Schallmayer* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1987), 21-23.

Eugenics (continued): However, as Saul Dubow has noted, there is no 'general agreement' about the meanings of "eugenics" and "social Darwinism", with some writers offering restrictive and technical definitions and others using it in a more inclusive sense and stressing its pervasive influence.² Like him, I see 'eugenics' as one of the most important expressions of social Darwinism, but not synonymous with it'. See also racial hygiene, social Darwinism and stirpiculture.

Eugenist: is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989, 433) as 'a student or advocate of eugenics', with a note that it is also used as an attribute or an adjective. I have chosen this British term which Caleb Saleeby coined in 1908, rather than 'eugenicist', because eugenics originated in Britain, the British used the term 'eugenist' prior to World War II and it is shorter and more euphonious than 'eugenicist'.³

Nancy Leys Stepan explained on page one of *'The Hour of Eugenics': Race, Gender and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991) that she had chosen the term 'eugenists' although 'this usage is contrary to current fashion (in which "eugenicists" is preferred)'.

Feeble-minded: Eugenists' greatest concerns about the 'unfit' related to those lacking normal mental powers who were then called 'feeble-minded' or 'mentally deficient' but would now be called 'intellectually disabled' or 'developmentally delayed'. Other terms which were used as synonyms include 'retarded', 'idiot', 'moron' and 'socially inefficient'.

²Saul Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), 121.

³Caleb Saleeby first used 'eugenist' in *Health, Strength and Happiness*, vol 24 (1908), 420.

An argument in favour of 'eugenicist' was made by Professor Charles Davenport, Director of the Eugenics Record Office, to Dr Ellsworth Huntington, President of the American Eugenics Society, 3 September 1935. Davenport reprimanding him for using the term 'eugenist', 'like our English cousins', when in his opinion, 'as long as students of genetics call themselves not genists, but geneticists, students of eugenics should be called eugenicists not eugenists', Davenport Papers, B/D27, American Philosophical Library, Philadelphia.

Interestingly, the *New York Times* (28 August 1932) Section 8, 4, published an article with the title 'The week in science: Eugenists and geneticists are at odds'. This indicates that Davenport's preference for 'eugenicist' was not universally adopted.

Nature versus nurture: This debate, which is a central issue in many areas of biology, is discussed in detail in Chapter 5. Various claims have been made about the 'convenient jingle of words',⁴ 'nature and nurture', made popular by Francis Galton in 1874.

In 1979, a psychologist claimed that a Swiss biologist was the originator of this phrase.⁵ Five years later, another psychologist, complaining about the tendency to ignore the 'long past', corrected this mistake: Galton was quoting Shakespeare.⁶ Sir John Arthur Thomson had made this point in 1906.⁷

Neo-Malthusianism: the name first given to the birth control movement in Britain. After the Knowlton trial of 1876 in which Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh were prosecuted for publishing Dr Charles Knowlton's birth control pamphlet *Fruits of Philosophy*, the neo-Malthusian movement began in 1877. Their trial received enormous publicity. In 1878 the first Australian edition of the pamphlet appeared and in 1888 Justice Windeyer delivered his famous Judgement that the pamphlet was not obscene.

The tenet of Neo-Malthusianism was that 'no parents should have more children than they can adequately feed, clothe, and educate. No one having definite hereditary defects should have children, but if they are sufficiently responsible they may marry so long as they do not reproduce'.⁸ This extended the proposition by Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834) that as population increased faster than the means of sustenance, it should be checked by social and moral restraints. In 1838, while working on his inquiry into evolution, Charles Darwin acknowledged that he 'had happened' to read Malthus' *Essay on the Principle of Population* 'for amusement'. It was possibly the revised 1803 edition and from it Darwin had 'at last got a theory by which to work', although his *Origin of Species* did not appear until 1859.

⁴Francis Galton, *English Men of Science: Their Nature and Nurture* [London: Macmillan, 1874] 2nd edn., with intro by Ruth Schwartz Cowan (London: Frank Cass, 1970), 12.

⁵Raymond Fancher wrongly attributed the term in the *Journal of the History of Behavioral Sciences*, 15 (1979), 321-22. James Conley's correction, *ibid*, 20 (1984), 184-85.

⁶From *The Tempest*, Act IV, Scene I, lines 188-90, in which Prospero described Caliban as 'A devil, a born devil, on whose nature, nurture can never stick'.

⁷John Arthur Thomson, 'The sociological appeal to biology', *Sociological Papers*, 3 (1906), 164.

Eldridge mentioned this to Australian readers in *Navvy*, 17 May 1915, 3.

Alfred Sturtevant, in *A History of Genetics* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 128 commented that Galton probably assumed his readers would recognise that Shakespeare was the source of the expression.

⁸Charles V Drysdale, *Neo-Malthusianism and Eugenics* (London: Willian Bell, 1912), 8.

Papal Encyclicals: In 1930 Pope Pius XI published *On Christian Marriage* which extended the Catholic Church's ban on contraception and abortion to all those who 'put eugenics before aims of a higher order, and by public authority wish to prevent from marrying all those whom, even though naturally fit for marriage, they consider, according to the norms and conjectures of their investigations would, through hereditary transmission, bring forth defective offspring'.⁹

Additional decrees were issued on 18 and 21 March 1931 which condemned positive and negative eugenics and on 21 and 24 February 1940, condemning sterilization.¹⁰

Positive eugenics: attempts to encourage eugenically fit women and men to have large families and, in this way, help to increase the size of the fit population.

Progressivism: is the vague term used to describe the range of political reforms for 'human betterment' which were proposed from late last century until its 'noonday' in 1915.¹¹ Drawing from nineteenth century philosophical ideas, this liberal reform began in America and its influence was felt in Britain, Australia and in eugenics movements throughout the world.

Michael Roe and James Gillespie have examined this reform's impact on the development of Australia's health services.¹² Progressives believed that, just as science and industry had developed economic efficiency, the same principles should be applied to perfecting humans and that the state should provide a centralised national health service to promote this.

Pronatalism: attempts to encourage all women to have large families and to increase the population. Its aims are shown in Billy Hughes' slogan for Australia to populate or perish. Examples of such rhetoric appear in Figures 2, 10 and 14. This response was prompted by fears of racial suicide and yellow peril.

⁹Quoted by Loren R Graham in *American Historical Review*, 83 (1978), 1139-40.

¹⁰Pauline Mazumdar, *Eugenics, Human Genetics and Human Failings: The Eugenics Society, its Sources and its Critics in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1992), 211.
The announcement of these Roman Catholic decrees was reported in Australia, 'Pope's Encyclical. Birth control condemned', *SMH*, 10 January 1931, 13.

¹¹Donald Pickens, *Eugenics and the Progressives* (Nashville, Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968), 90.

¹²Michael Roe, *Nine Australian Progressives: Vitalism in Bourgeois Social Thought, 1890-1960* (St Lucia: UQP, 1984) and James Gillespie, *The Price of Health: Australian Governments and Medical Politics, 1910-1960* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), 31-56.

Purity feminism: has been used to describe the style of feminism which was common early this century. It was espoused by feminists who advocated women's rights while endorsing motherhood as women's primary role. The science of eugenics strengthened demands for sexual reforms which the women's movement had previously made for moral or social purity reasons.

A recurrent theme of eugenics was the need for individuals to promote the future of the race by exercising sexual restraint. 'The linking of venereal disease to promiscuity and the impact of disease on the "racial future" was a powerful argument for the control not only of female but male sexuality'.¹³

Some purity feminists were broad-minded and humourous as is shown on page 13 of the 1929 Australian Racial Hygiene Congress, in which Angela Booth quoted Lord Chesterfield's advice to his son to 'spend his days with books and his nights with women, but to have the good editions of each'. Examples of purity feminist messages are shown Figures 8, 16 and 19.

Race culture: this term (which is synonymous with eugenics) was used by Dr William Ramsay Smith who stated that its aim was 'to show how to discover the fit and the conditions that foster fitness, and how to encourage the multiplication of the fit; to show how to find the unfit and the conditions that cause or perpetuate unfitness, and how we may either remove such conditions or discourage the propagation of such persons'.¹⁴

Galton originally used the term *viriculture* from the Latin for man.¹⁵ Other terms used were man culture, stirpiculture and puericulture, or infant nurture.

Racial decay: applied to the widely held belief early this century that the human race was progressively degenerating as a result of an increase in racial poisons and in the size of the unfit segment of the population. The words race and racial were often used interchangeably. See also degeneracy (degeneration) theory and racial poisons.

¹³Meredith Ann Foley, 'The Women's Movement in New South Wales and Victoria, 1918-1938' (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 1985), 63-64.

¹⁴William Ramsay Smith, *On Race-Culture and the Conditions that Influence it in South Australia* (Adelaide: Govt Pr, 1912), 7,

¹⁵Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development* (London: Macmillan, 1883), 25, decided to use the word *eugenics* because it expressed the idea better, was a neater, 'more generalised one than *viriculture*, which I once ventured to use'.

Racial hygiene: the term 'Rassenhygiene' was proposed by Alfred Ploetz in 1895 but its exact meaning was disputed in the 1920s. In Germany at that time, the use of the term 'Rassenhygiene' (race/racial hygiene) or 'Eugenik' (eugenics) became 'a kind of political flag, often with the more right-wing members of the movement favouring the first term, the more left-wing members the latter'.¹⁶

The German term for racial hygiene was broader in scope than the English word 'eugenics' and 'included not only all attempts at "improving" the hereditary quality of a population', but also pronatalist measures.¹⁷

In Australia, these political and racist connotations were minimal: for example, in 1943, the NSW Racial Hygiene Association was investigated by the Commonwealth Security Service which concluded that 'It cannot in any manner be regarded as anti-semitic, since many of its members and supporters are of the Jewish persuasion. The use of the word "racial" in the Association's title, refers to the whole of the human race'.¹⁸

Racial poisons: a term used by degeneracy theorists and eugenisists to apply to any substance which, regardless of its impact on an individual, was 'liable to injure the race of which he (or she) is trustee'.¹⁹ Venereal disease, tuberculosis, alcoholism and feeble-mindedness were the poisons of most concern. Figures 18 and 20 illustrate 1930s concerns about degeneracy caused by VD and alcoholism.

Racial suicide: this term was prompted by fears of white population decline and was a major concern for Australians at the beginning of this century. Fears about racial decay were linked with fears about white race suicide, Theodore Roosevelt warned that both could jeopardise the future of the white races.²⁰ See also Figures 2 and 14, pronatalism, and yellow peril.

¹⁶Loren R Graham, 'Science and values: The eugenics movement in Germany and Russia in the 1920s', *American Historical Review*, 83 (1978), 1138-39.

¹⁷Weiss (1987), 160.

¹⁸Constables First Class, Alfred F Hughes and Alfred L Walsh, 'Racial Hygiene Association', Security Service, Sydney, 23 July 1943, AA/SA D1915, Item 22063.

¹⁹Saleeby coined the term in 1907, quoted in *ER*, 2 (1910-1911), 30.

²⁰First used in 1901 by sociologist Edward Alsworth Ross and quoted by Allan M Brandt, in *No Magic Bullets: A Social History of Venereal Diseases in the United States Since 1880* (New York: OUP, 1985), 7.

Social Darwinism: theories of evolution which rely on two central assumptions: 'There are underlying, and largely irresistible, forces acting in societies which are like the natural forces which operate in animal and plant communities. One can therefore formulate social laws similar to natural ones; these social forces are of such a kind as to produce evolutionary progress through the natural conflicts between social groups. The best adapted and most successful social groups survive these conflicts, raising the evolutionary level of society generally'.²¹

Social hygiene: a term introduced by Havelock Ellis in 1912 to describe an extension of the social reform movement.²² It was subsequently adopted by various groups who expanded the term to apply to attempts to combat VD, prostitution and various other social evils.²³ In the first decades this century there was a Social Hygiene Association in America, a Social Hygiene Council in Britain and a Social Hygiene Association in NSW. As shown in Figure 7, the second aim of the RHA was 'A State-wide campaign for the prevention and eradication of Venereal Diseases'.

Stirpiculture: the name coined by John Humphrey Noyes (1811-1886) from the Latin for stem, root or stock and used from 1869-1879 in the Oneida Community, New York to describe the process of 'scientific propagation' this community used in attempts to produce morally and physically perfect people. As Noyes coined the word years before Galton proposed the term eugenics in 1883, it has been suggested that Noyes not Galton should be called the founder of the eugenics movement.²⁴ See also eugenics and racial hygiene.

Yellow peril: the alleged danger of a predominance of the yellow (Asian) race over the white race and western civilization generally. The term was coined by the German Emperor William II at the time of the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1900) in China. Fears intensified after the Japanese won the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905.²⁵ In Australia, this scare prompted the strenuous attempts to boost the population. See also pronatalism and racial suicide.

²¹Nicholas Abercrombie et al, *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1984), 195-96. Peter J Bowler, in *Biology and Social Thought: 1850-1914* (Berkeley: Office for History of Science and Technology, University of California, 1993), 62, quoted studies by Donald C Bellomy indicating that the term 'social Darwinism' has purely pejorative connotations and was first used early this century.

²²Havelock Ellis, *The Task of Social Hygiene* (London: Constable, 1912).

²³Greta Jones, *Social Hygiene in Twentieth Century Britain* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 25-26.

²⁴Wilson Yates, 'Birth control literature and the medical profession in nineteenth century America', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 31 (1976), 56, 65.

²⁵Geoffrey Barraclough, quoted by Weiss (1987), 193.

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- C343 Henry Twitchin (1922-1930)

D. General Correspondence

- D 69 Correspondence - Foreign countries
- D 103 Immigration and Emigration (1925-1958)
- D 105 Imperial Conference 1926
- D 122 Migration Council
- D 166 Premiers, India and Colonies (1922-1927)

E. Branches and Other Societies (1909-1962)

- 2-5 Australian Eugenics Societies
- E2 Eugenics Education Society of NSW (1912-1930)
- E3 Eugenics Society of Victoria (1914-1939)
- E4 Eugenics Society of Victoria (1940-1961)
- E5 Western Australia (1933)
- E19 New Zealand (1933-1936)

H. Henry Twitchin Bequest

- H 1 Pedigree and family
- H 2 Correspondence re Estate, I (1930)
- H 3 Correspondence re Estate, II (1921-1938)
- H 6 Claims of Mrs Drake-Brockman and Madelaine Rocca

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- A307 *Married Love*, Australia. Mrs Marion Piddington
- A308 Australia. General. A copy of these files is in ML, Reel 2573

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Australian Medical Journal, 1912 to 1924

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