

23 July 1934.

B.S. Bramwell, Esq.,
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Southwark Street,
S.E.1.

Dear Mr. Bramwell,

Thanks for your letter and enclosure. I will have it circularised to the Committee. Meanwhile, I should be glad to have your reaction to some comments on your observations. I am also enclosing for the same purpose a brief foreword which I have written to appear in the first number under my editorship of the Annals of Eugenics.

Yours sincerely,

x Family Allowances Committee
of the Eugenic Society

1). The Correlation of age and salary.

The existing relationship between average salary and age is obviously due to several causes which need to be distinguished.

i.) Increase of competence with experience.

This is a very marked factor in all professional employment, more especially in the administrative aspect of such work. Familiarity with the procedure and workings with a department or institution is only acquired with time, and posts requiring such familiarity must be filled by those who have the necessary experience. Mere lapse of time is, however, never regarded as in its self carrying the right to promotion, although some State services could, perhaps, be found in which length of service is dangerously over-stressed. In no case, I think, could it be claimed that those in receipt of higher salaries were, apart from age, a random sample of those employed.

ii.) A second factor is the gradual recognition of superior ability and of failure. Gifted individuals must for this reason, during an initial period, prove their worth and must, during this period, receive less than their worth. On the other hand, many junior posts will be occupied by people who are not pulling their weight, and who will later be eliminated. These first two factors are m

merely economic in character and inevitable in any system in which the employing body is supposed to be freely entering into a contract to buy certain services at a certain price.

iii). There is a third factor, of direct relevance to family allowances, and that is the social tradition, arising from the fact that up to a fairly advanced age family responsibilities do, on the average, increase. I think this has had some influence, though it is very difficult to assess how much in the framing of rates of pay and increment scales. Under a family allowance system, this element would be redundant and should be eliminated. How quickly this would happen it is difficult to guess, but for a time, it is a fair criticism to infer that older employees would be overpaid, relative to younger employees, as valued by the actual value of their services.

The important point in respect of proportionality of allowances is, however, that whether salaries ^y ~~inferred~~ ^{increment} are economically justifiable, or whether they are to any extent due to extraneous, non-economic factors, they are in fact associated very closely with differences in standard of living, as measured by expenditure and savings, and in whatever standard of living in these respects is actually attained the children share proportionately. Consequently,

any departure from proportionality in the allowances will mean either a lowering of the standard of living with additional children for a more highly paid group, or an increase in standard of living for a less highly paid group, with additional children, or both of these consequences; and this could only be justified on eugenic grounds if it were proved that the more highly paid group was in fact of lower eugenic value than the less highly paid group. It is essential to remember that the object of the Eugenic Society is not to reward the fortunate owners of desirable qualities, but to propogate them.

On point (i) I should also like to note that the fall in fertility is not very great for married couples at the earlier ages, but becomes rapidly and increasingly greater at later ages, so that, thinking in terms of a direct stimulus to parenthood, the importance of which, I ^{as} think you know, has been greatly exaggerated, ^{such} a stimulus which may be expected to be ^{more} most effectively applied in prolonging the reproductive period, rather than of initiating it.

With point (ii) I thoroughly agree and should be glad if you would draft a paragraph effectively developing it. On point (iii) I am sure you are going too fast. I do not ^{underrate} underrate the importance of professions supported by fees rather than by salaries, but I think you will agree

with me that it is only when the advantages of family allowances have been demonstrated for 10 or 15 years in the salaried occupations that either the convenience or the propriety and equity of such an arrangement will be sufficiently appreciated for its adoption (at the command of the majority) by the associations of professional men earning fees. Insurance on the initiative of the individual will carry us nowhere; insurance, if you prefer the term, made obligatory for all entrants to such a profession would be workable and effective. If, however, carried out at the risk of an insurance company the rates would certainly be disadvantageous, owing to uncertainty as to the extent of the claims. I should not suppose any actuary would be willing to quote rates of benefit in relation to premium which should be safe for the insurance company, and at the same time not grossly disadvantageous to the participants. They would, of course propose a bonus scheme to counter-balance the disadvantageous rates, and probably wish to include life insurance for the compensation of those who do not live to participate in the bonus for which they have contributed.

A second most serious obstacle is the disclosure of earnings, which could only be achieved by a professional association,

(iv) The Committee did consider the suggested

change of order in the leaflet, but felt rather strongly that it was first necessary to state in general terms what family allowances are, before discussing what ends they might serve.

2). Eliminations.

1) The whole design of family allowances is to transfer the economics of reproduction so as to eliminate the economic motive for its avoidance. Such phrases as "having more children than one can decently support" or "having more than one can hope to support" have meant a great deal in the past to people whose reproduction was economically penalised. They illustrate well the stress induced by this system between the normal duty of reproduction and the maintenance of social status, by which the less reproductive have been promoted and the more reproductive forced into the poorer ranks of society.

On general principles, a project involving the advantage of some individuals and the disadvantage of others can gain no general support, except on the claim to fairness or social justice. Propaganda which attempts to eliminate these ideas would seem incredibly flat and futile.

ii) I also cannot see a case for State aided family allowances in any self-supporting industry, and if State aid is to be given to an industry, I should prefer

to see it entirely dissociated from the family allowance system in that industry. The proposal of equalisation pools has as its most serious and widely advocated rival that of so-called social insurance, originated by the State with contributions in unspecified proportions from workers, ^{employers} contributors and the Treasury, and, doubtless, as in the case of unemployment insurance, with its solvency ultimately guaranteed by the State. This competitor seems to be eugenically dangerous, and I was a good deal concerned to find that Blacker, at the instance, no doubt, of Mrs. Hubback, incorporated it unreservedly as an appropriate eugenic method. Apart from the new additions, I think the Committee may be relied upon to resist this pressure, if its confidence is not upset by the attitude of the Council.

111) I think I have discussed this under (1) above. It might be useful, if you were to draft a paragraph, stating that increment scales of salaries and automatic promotions by seniority would need to be reconsidered and revised in relation to family allowance payments. You say the amounts received in the case of the higher salaries would be unnecessarily large. - Unnecessary for what? I believe the present Professor of Anatomy at Edinburgh receives nearly £2000, but I should rather take the case of £5000 which you propose. Why was such a salary ever paid? May I presume that it was because a

suitable ^{proportion} of this subject must be obtained from the ranks of leading surgeons, who could command as large an income, taking no account of any advantage in status or security, by his private practice? The first question I should ask, a question which may be discussed both in relation to its answer and to its relevance, is ^{What} what income would be needed by a couple supporting 1, 2, 3, dependent children, to maintain the same standard of living and social status as a couple without children living on £5000 a year? Experimentally you might take such a couple with 3 children, increase their income and observe at what point they cut an equally resplendent dash. At this income, ^{level} therefore, obviously, savings with a view to the capital endowment of the children would be the most important item. Would the needed increment per child be less than £600 a year or greater? You can form a better opinion than I. I have gone no further than to satisfy myself that up to about £2000 a year the increment would not differ much from 12%. Your answer to this problem, however, will be appreciably effected by whether the increment pays surtax or not. See if you can make it less than £600 a year paying surtax.

I think it would be worthwhile to think out this case seriously, although I am under no illusion as to the probability that a family allowance of £600 a year per child will, in this wicked world, ever be paid. If you

have any ideal as to the economic structure of society in the future, other than that put forward, but not realised, by the Soviets, there will be some class of persons earning salaries higher than any others and exposed to all the envy, hatred and malice to which such incomes are exposed. What are you going to do about them? Are you going to say that this select class alone of the population shall have a large economic inducement to restrict their fertility, or are you going to permit them to enter on the same terms as others to a self-supporting, contributory scheme of family endowment?

Your section(iv) is the only one that I really disagree with, and that because I think you have missed the main point of the pamphlet. Organic inheritance is responsible, apparently, much more than training for the temperamental differences among men and women, which lead to celibacy, postponed marriage, or low fertility in marriage. The differences in temperament seem to be quite irreconcilable by argument. There is really a great deal of evidence that the social promotion of natural infertility has filled the more affluent classes with types of mind strongly averse to reproduction, easily terrified by the thought of population increase, and easily horrified by the distresses occasioned among the poor by quite moderate fertility. I think you will agree that the difference

in attitude between different classes in these matters is very evident indeed, and there is every reason to expect that class antagonism will be increasingly embittered by the abnormal attitude towards reproduction too commonly found among relatively wealthy women. That, however, is rather a bigger question than need be gone into for the immediate purposes of the Family Allowance Committee.