May 2, 1939

Dear Mr Russell,

Many thanks for your interesting letter.

It is just because the need for family allowances is being stressed and they will inevitably be introduced as a measure almost of Public Assistance, that I jumped at the opportunity of speaking of them in a middle class environment, where they really will do some good if we have the sense to institute them.

Beveridge calls them "the greatest step now within our power towards the abolition of poverty", and this is probably true, but a great bussance because it diverts the attention of philanthropists and politicians away from their importance in other respects.

I have given most of four chapters in the Genetical Theory of Natural Selection to elucidating the evolutionary situation in civilized man, and it appears, at first rather to my surprise, that such allowances will be beneficial to an important extent, even through their application to the poorest, least prudent and most prolific classes.
On general fertility I think there is now no occupation, even coal miners or agricultural labourers, having enough children to maintain their numbers. On differential fertility I suppose it will be admitted that the prudential motive is both more powerful and more effective among people with ambition and assured prospects than among people without these advantages. Consequently, the removal of the prudential motive for childlessness, supposing, for simplicity, that the allowances payable for each class are sufficient to maintain the standard of the parents unaltered, would be followed immediately by a relative increase in the contribution of the better qualified citizens.

I see from your letter that I ought to emphasise that the State need have little share in these transactions. I mentioned that the system in France costs the French Treasury nothing. The compensation pools were established by employers' Federations; they were later supplemented by local pools, and, finally, all employers were put under the obligation to belong to an appropriate organisation, so as to ensure that the benefit of allowances shall be available to anyone he chooses to employ. The initiative came from the Federations and the opposition came from the Confédération Général du Travail, though they changed their tune after about four years, when the immense popularity of the allowances had become evident. In England, if State
aid is given at all, as I fear it will be, it will be confined to the poorest workers and constitute a kind of extension of the family allowances now paid to those out of work. It is for others to make sure that these allowances are preceded, or at least supplemented, by contributory schemes covering the higher wage and salary groups. There is nothing to prevent such a body as the Headmasters' Conference from taking some initiative, at least in discussing this matter, either from the point of view of the well-being of their own staffs, or from the point of view of the fraction of the National Income made available for education.

Yours sincerely,

The Rev. C.F. Russell, M.A., B.D.