Professor E.F. Wilson,
Social Science Res. Council,
230 Park Avenue,
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Dear Prof. Wilson,

Many thanks for your long and interesting letter of July 18. Your views for the future of the Union seem to provide a better solution than I had thought possible. I hope the institute may rise to it.

Naturally, I have had to form my own opinion as to Pearl's statistical work some years back, though I could not be sure that the facilities he seemed to have at Johns Hopkins for large scale collecting and handling of data would not have enabled him to do some good even with crude methods. Now that has been tried out, and the results will not stand the lime-light in which they have been staged.

On ethical grounds I believe we ought not to try to excuse a man from facing "the actual consequences of his own actions" - (Is not this pretty nearly an English eighteenth century equivalent to your "by nature free and equal"?) because it puts him on a sub-human level. Responsible men cannot blame their actions on to their temperament, however
useful such a conception may be to a psychological study.

I agree with the bulk of your letter so much that it is quite a relief to pick a bone with you on paragraphs 3 and 4. In 3 you justify birth control propaganda on the grounds of a possible eugenic effect of lowering the birth-rate of the poor, but the second half of 4 goes to show that quite probably this effect if brought about would be no use eugenically. I do not agree with this last argument, but supposing it to be good does that not diminish the justification for the chat going about at the Geneva conference about a league of low birth-rate countries to bring economic pressure on the expanding populations, which seemed to me to be the direct way to a Hall of International Ill-Feeling.

I see no harm in contraception being made as handy, cheap, and reliable as may be, but a great deal of harm in its advocacy on moral, social or economic grounds. The subject is thick with illusions and false statistical assumptions so as I think it important I had better put my own views as directly as possible, without stopping to pick up many commonly accepted assertions which might make you think me wrong. In Britain since about 1870 the birth-rate has fallen in all classes simultaneously, not first in one class and then in another; it has fallen a little more in the richer classes than in the poorer, a good deal more proportionately,
and I think a little more absolutely. There is no evidence that it was ever equal in Victorian times, since in 1851 at least the difference was well developed. The rate of fall is now apparently greater than ever. About 1915 (one cannot say exactly because of the war) the point was reached at which the birth and death-rates by age would give a stationary population; Dublin and Lotka's recent paper in Metron shows that the corresponding date for the white population of the U.S.A. is very near to 1930. Up to that point it is possible to argue that increased contraception, if we believe the increase will be greatest among the poor, is a way to solve the eugenic difficulty. Beyond that point it is obviously an ineffectual argument (apart from the assumption, which is contrary to all our past experience). If I think that on eugenic grounds the well-to-do classes ought not to be extirpated, it is of no comfort to me to see to it that other fellow citizens (though perhaps of less worth) are being cleared out likewise. The simple fact is that if you cannot induce the better classes to have more children, you cannot solve the eugenic problem.

On the economic side I believe that the world as a whole is seriously underpopulated, that this did not matter so long as communications were difficult and each region insulated, but that it does matter now. Just consider the present position of food producers all over the world, but I have sent you an offprint on that, so I need not enlarge upon it.
Or consider the phenomenon of town boosting. The fact is that the English speaking peoples have got themselves biologically into a hole, to their own economic loss incidentally, and if a few Mediterranean and South American peoples are still out of it, so much the better for them.

As to the eugenic effect of class difference in fertility, I do not see that what you say about luck throws any doubt on it at all. If desirable characters, intelligence, enterprise understanding of our fellow men, capacity to arouse their admiration or confidence exert any rate average social advantage, then it follows that they will become correlated with social class. The more thoroughly we carry out the democratic programme of giving equal opportunities to talent wherever it is found, the more thoroughly we insure that genetic class differences of eugenic value shall be built up. Chance can only dilute this process, it does nothing to neutralise it. Of course direct intelligence tests in this country show considerable differences between the children of parents of different occupations attending the same schools; but I do not stress this because a great many other qualities moreimportant than intelligence must be sorted out by the same process.

I do not expect you to agree with all this, though I should be greatly pleased if to some extent you did, as I anticipate that the big decision of the next fifty years will be partly influenced by scientific opinion, and I have
no doubt of the importance of deciding them rightly.

Yours sincerely,