

The Eugenics Society and Social Research

THE OFFICIAL COMMITTEE on Social Studies, under the chairmanship of Lord Heyworth, has been collecting evidence on the financing of social research from a number of bodies working in this field.

As part of the Eugenics Society's recent activities are epitomized in its answers to the Committee's questionnaire, Fellows and Members may be interested to read the following paragraphs derived from the evidence submitted by the *Society*.

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The Aims of the Eugenics Society primarily are concerned with the social implications of human genetics and the attendant responsibilities. They may be summarized thus:

To study the influences that may modify inborn human qualities; to formulate and support policies for developing these qualities to the utmost advantage; to promote research on eugenic problems; to foster a responsible attitude to parenthood; to guide public opinion in these matters.

Research: Financial Support

On occasion in the past the *Society* (through its own officers or appointees) has carried out specific inquiries such as that on Promising Families in 1956. However, this procedure has been little followed in recent years, though one or two small-scale sample surveys have been made, notably of public opinion upon population, heredity and eugenics. On the other hand several Darwin Research Fellows have been appointed, and paid at M.R.C. rates, to work on their own initiative within a wide field defined by the *Society*.

Since the war approximately £25,000 has been spent in the direct subsidization of very varied research carried out by others. Additionally, cognate bodies have been subsidized by the provision of rent-free accommodation in the *Society's* house. In the last five years it has in the main used its resources to support appro-

priate research work which has been initiated by other bodies or individuals.

The normal arrangement for selecting research projects has been that applications for grants are considered in detail once a year by the Executive Committee and then recommendations are made to the *Society's* Council for final decision. Within the resources available, those research projects have been helped which (a) have fallen within the general interests of the *Society*, (b) have been unlikely to receive support from elsewhere, or (c) have shown promise of attracting further funds from elsewhere once a promising start had been made.

Availability of Funds and Workers

There is no doubt that it is difficult to find funds for research in the most important area of interest where biology and sociology meet. Funds for research in pure biology and genetics, in medicine and in psychiatry, are not truly difficult to obtain if the prospective workers are of the proper calibre.

Good workers tend, from an early stage in their careers, to move into those fields where funds are available for research and where other distinguished research work is already in progress. There is at present, in the opinion of the *Society*, a marked lack of funds and of organized research in the fields where the biological and the social sciences meet. Problems, whose solution depends essentially upon a combination of biological and social inquiry, are seriously neglected and fall between the two stools of the biological and the social disciplines. The result is that at present funds and research workers may be found with much greater ease for purely biological research, or for research in the social studies as such, than for the extremely important field where biological knowledge should be applied to problems of society. In the opinion of the *Society* this vicious circle needs to be broken

by consciously directing research into this borderline area.

A few examples may suffice.

- (a) What really is the basis for the sociologically unacceptable characteristics of "Problem Families"? Joint study is needed, to elucidate the relative roles of genetic and of environmental factors (both those operating within and those operating outside the immediate family) if an adequate social assault is to be made on the problem. Further twin studies and studies of foster children are needed, and geneticists, psychiatrists and sociologists must join in an *ad hoc* team which would investigate seeming lack of capacities as well as of opportunities.
- (b) The well-being of new multiracial communities must be built not only upon varied social customs but upon varied actual fertility, and upon the "fitness" of whatever hybrids may appear. Work in Liverpool on European x Negro hybrids, and in Birmingham on the differential fertility of immigrant Irish, Pakistanis and West Indians, has already yielded important results. This kind of research needs much extension. (Recent work has been paid for by an anonymous benefactor working through the *Society's* General Secretary.)

- (c) The new interest in criminological studies so far is confined to the sociologists with their emphasis on environmental influences. Indubitably the pendulum at one stage swung too far in the other direction, but that should be no reason now for neglecting the inherent or genetic factors.
- (d) The interconnection, between (i) the inheritance of intelligence and other forms of ability, (ii) opportunities for social mobility, and (iii) differential rates of fertility, is of the greatest importance in explaining the structure of society; it demands the combined work of biologists and social scientists.

The form of research in which this *Society* is interested is, in the beginning, cheap because insignificant apparatus or facilities are required. But the stage is now being reached where considerably more funds are required because of the growth of interest in and need for wide sampling of populations by social workers and by questionnaires and because of the need to trace individuals and happenings over a long period (cf. the Terman inquiries in California which have extended over forty years, tracing traits from one generation to another).

APPENDIX

The Eugenics Society's Subsidized Research Projects 1958 - 1963

1. £500 for two years to set up an autonomous *Artificial Insemination (Donor) Investigation Council (AIDIC)*. The primary objective was fact finding. The Council later presented evidence to the official Feversham Committee. Professor A. S. Parkes was convener.
2. £150 for *The establishment of family records in a group practice in Edinburgh*. The application was made by Professor Kennedy on behalf of Dr. E. V. Kuenssberg and Mr. D. A. Sklaroff. The objective was the capability of observing familial conditions from one generation to another.
3. £250 for a survey in Liverpool, of *Some aspects of the genetics and biological fitness of Negro by European hybrids*, the work to be carried out by Dr. G. A. Harrison. The objective was the collection of evidence, on a detailed case to case basis, of strictly measurable attributes.
4. £1,000 for *An historico-demographic investigation based on the British peerage*. The application was made by Professor Glass on behalf of Mr. M. Hollingsworth. The objective was to obtain evidence of changes in the British birth rate before the age of contraceptives.
5. £1,600 spread over two years to investigate *The genetics of obesity in man*. The application was made by Professor D. R. Newth on behalf of Mr. R. J. Withers.
6. £500 (through the Oliver Bird Trust) to the Population Investigation Committee for *A field study on marriage and family growth*, under the general direction of Professor D. V. Glass. One of the main objectives was, by questionnaire and interviews, to elucidate the actual extent to which families are now planned in the United Kingdom.
7. About £6,000 spread over about four years, to promote *Domiciliary and special problem birth control facilities* in two provincial cities under the direction of Dr. Mary Peberdy and Dr. Dorothy Morgan. The funds were partly derived from the Marie Stopes Memorial Foundation (a subsidiary of the Eugenics Society) and were drafted through the Oliver Bird Trust and the Family Planning Association. The objective was both to render a personal service, and to demonstrate the factual acceptability of birth control facilities, to feckless women with problem families, so long as those facilities are taken to their homes by a doctor or social worker. The longer-term objective is to persuade local authorities to recognize that to provide social workers is cheaper and more sensible than to maintain on the rates a growing number of problem families and their increment of undesired children.
8. £1,250 spread over two years for *Population Studies in Newcastle* under Dr. E. G. Knox. The studies were concerned with a facet of medical geography.
9. £100 emergency grant for equipment, etc., to enable

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- Dr. I. Shine to embark upon *A medical and demographic investigation*, while on duty in the Colonial Medical Service at St. Helena, under the general sponsorship of Dr. A. C. Stevenson.
10. £500 for work, under the control of Professor A. S. Parkes, upon *The low temperature preservation of human spermatozoa*.
 11. £1,000 to initiate *An investigation on social mobility and differential fertility* by Dr. John Gibson and Dr. Michael Young, under the sponsorship of Professor J. E. Meade and Professor J. M. Thoday. The objective is a detailed understanding of phenomena of wide social importance.
 12. £2,800 over several years to the *International Planned Parenthood Federation*, mainly in aid of its administration. This cash payment was additional to twelve years' rent free accommodation for the Federation's Headquarters.
 13. £2,000 over the five years were expended for the general work of the Population Investigation Committee, to support the training of Dr. E. M. Williamson in practical Medical Genetics; for visiting speakers for the Society for the Study of Human Biology; for emergency aid in anthropological preparatory work for the International Biological Programme.
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