LETTERS FROM READERS

Dear Editor,

I thought members of the ESIG should know about an article in the Wall Street Journal (January 30, 1984, p.30) pertaining to government-imposed eugenics policies. It is the first such reward system I've heard of actually being implemented by a modern government.

Uneducated parents in Singapore--in sync with those of most other countries--are having the most children, which presents a serious dysgenic problem. Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew says that over 30 percent of uneducated mothers continue to have four or more children, while only 1.5 percent of university-educated women have that many. In a speech made last summer, he said that ability is largely determined by heredity, and that if the present trend continues the economy will falter and the level of culture will decline.

The government of Singapore is implementing social rewards for educated parents to encourage them to have more children. There is great competition among parents to get their children into the best schools, since this is a first step toward ultimate university acceptance, considered a prerequiste to success in adulthood. The government is awarding spots in the better nurseries and primary schools to children whose mothers hold university degrees, with top priority given to those with the most siblings.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Thank you so much for calling this important new development to our attention. Thanks also to Daniel Vining, who sent a copy of the text of Prime Minister Lee's speech. (Interested readers may find an English translation of the speech in Population and Development Review, December 1983, Vol. 9, No. 4, or send a note to me asking for a photocopy.)

Quotations on Eugenics

I wish very much that the wrong people could be prevented entirely from breeding; and when the evil nature of these people is sufficiently flagrant, this should be done. Criminals should be sterilized and feeble-minded persons forbidden to leave offspring behind them. THEODORE ROOSEVELT, 1914.

We have seen more than once that the public welfare may call upon the best citizens for their lives. It would be strange if it could not call upon those who already sap the strength of the State for these lesser sacrifices, often not felt to be such by those concerned, in order to prevent our being swamped with incompetence. It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind. The principle that sustains compulsory vaccination is broad enough to cover cutting the Fallopian tubes . . . Three generations of imbeciles are enough. CHIEF JUSTICE OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES in BUCK VERSUS BELL, 1927.

Vastly more effective than ten million dollars to "charity" would be ten million dollars to eugenics. He who, by such a gift, should redeem mankind from vice, imbecility and suffering would be the world's wisest philanthropist. CHARLES B. DAVENPORT, 1909.