

EVIDENCE AND CONTEMPORARY OPINION
ABOUT THE PEOPLING OF AUSTRALIA.
1890 - 1911

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Australian National University.

January 1971.

This thesis is my own work.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Hicks". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial 'H'.

Neville Hicks.

C O N T E N T S

		Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		iv
LIST OF TABLES		v
LIST OF FIGURES		vii
ABBREVIATIONS		viii
INTRODUCTION		1
CHAPTER	I Australian Population Structure and Growth, 1890 - 1911.	5
	II Differentials in Australian Fertility, 1890 - 1911.	43
	III The Evidence Makers: the Work of Government Statisticians.	66
	IV Evidence or Opinion? The Origins, Proceedings and Report of the New South Wales Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth-Rate.	96
	V Medical Opinion.	138
	VI Religious Opinion.	169
	VII The Population Debate.	200
	VIII Newspaper and Popular Opinion.	232
CONCLUSION		268
APPENDICES	I. Geographical Differentials in Fertility	270
	II. Fertility by Fathers' Occupations	274
BIBLIOGRAPHY		276

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

I wish to acknowledge the help I received in preparing this thesis from librarians in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, from the Australian National Library and from Mrs Vivian Wilson and others at the Menzies Library of the Australian National University.

A number of people in medical, commercial and private libraries, and other individuals who are mentioned in the text, helped with prompt and courteous replies to requests for information.

Professor W.D. Borrie, Dr F.B. Smith and several colleagues (including Dr Graeme Davison, Mr Peter MacDonald and Dr C.M. Young) offered valuable suggestions.

My chief thanks go to my wife for supervising the preparation of this volume.

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table No.</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
1	Population of Australia, 1891, 1901, 1911.	5
2	Percentage Distribution of Australian Population by Age and Sex.	6
3	Elements of Australian Population Growth, 1891-1911.	7
4	'Forward Survival' Estimates of Net Migration to Australia.	9
5	Australian Vital Rates, 1891-1910.	11
6	Wives by Age and Average Issue by Age at Census, Australia.	14
7	Number of Males per 100 Females in Various States.	16
8	Net Migration to New South Wales (Census-and-Registration Estimate).	17
9	Net Migration to New South Wales (Forward Survival Estimate).	17
10	Vital Rates, New South Wales, 1891-1910.	18
11	Percentage Distribution of New South Wales Population by Age and Sex.	20
12	Marriage Age Index, New South Wales, 1897-1910.	21
13	Percentage Married of Women at Various Ages in New South Wales.	22
14	Female Marriages 'Lost' in New South Wales, 1891-1911.	23
15	Wives by Age and Average Issue, New South Wales.	25
16	Net Migration to Victoria (Census-and-Registration Estimate).	26
17	Net Migration to Victoria (Forward Survival Estimate).	27
18	Vital Rates, Victoria, 1891-1910.	28
19	Percentage Distribution of Victorian Population by Age and Sex.	29
20	Marriage Age Index, Victoria, 1891-1910.	31
21	Age Specific Marriage Rates per 1,000 Population, Victoria.	32
22	Percentage Married of Males and Females at Various Ages in Victoria.	32
23	Female Marriages 'Lost' in Victoria, 1891-1911.	33
24	Wives by Age and Average Issue, Victoria.	34
25	Net Migration to South Australia (Census-and-Registration Estimate).	35
26	Net Migration to South Australia (Forward Survival Estimate).	35
27	Vital Rates, South Australia, 1891-1910.	36

LIST OF TABLES (Continued).

<u>Table No.</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
28	Percentage Distribution of South Australian Population by Age and Sex.	38
29	Age Specific Marriage Rates per 1,000 Population, South Australia.	39
30	Percentage Married of Males and Females at Various Ages in South Australia.	40
31	Marriages 'Lost' in South Australia, 1891-1911.	40
32	Wives by Age and Average Issue, South Australia.	41
33	Completed Family Size of Women by Age at Marriage and Duration of Marriage, Various States.	53
34	Percentage Change in Completed Family Size by Age at Marriage and Date of Marriage.	54
35	Fertility Ratios Per Married Woman for Regions of Various Population Densities.	57
36	Intercensal Percentage Change in Fertility Ratios for Regions of Various Population Densities.	58
37	Estimates of Births by Fathers' Occupations, South Australia.	59
38	Completed Family Size by Religious Denomination.	62
39	Percentage Change in Completed Family Size according to Religion.	63
40	Participation in Proceedings of Commission.	111
41	Movement in NSW Age-Specific Nuptial Birth Rates, 1891-1901.	120
42	Decline of Age-Specific Nuptial Birth Rates from 'Standard'.	120
43	Retail Price Index Numbers, 1901-1905.	257

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure No.</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Facing Page</u>
1	Population Pyramids, Australia, 1891, 1901, 1911.	5
2	Australian Vital Rates, 1891-1910.	11
3	Australian Infant Mortality and Non-Infant Death Rate, 1891-1910.	12
4	Australian Crude Marriage Rate, 1891-1910.	On p. 13
5	Population Pyramids, Various States.	16
6	New South Wales Vital Rates, 1891-1910.	18
7	New South Wales Crude Marriage Rate, 1891-1910.	On p. 20
8	Proportions of Women Marrying at Specified Ages, New South Wales.	22
9	Victorian Vital Rates, 1891-1910.	28
10	Victorian Infant Mortality and Non-Infant Death Rate, 1891-1910.	29
11	Victorian Crude Marriage Rate, 1891-1910.	On p. 30
12	South Australian Vital Rates, 1891-1910.	36
13	South Australian Infant Mortality and Non-Infant Death Rate, 1891-1910.	37
14	South Australian Crude Marriage Rate, 1891-1910.	On p. 39
15	Annual Percentage Increase of Population, Various States.	42
16	Annual Rates of Natural Increase per 1,000, Various States.	41
17	"The Line of Declension".	122
18	"The Cloud of Extinction".	230

ABBREVIATIONS

AMG	<u>Australasian Medical Gazette</u>
DBR	New South Wales Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth Rate
DT	<u>Daily Telegraph</u>
IMJA	<u>Intercolonial Medical Journal of Australia</u>
MJA	<u>Medical Journal of Australia</u>
SMH	<u>Sydney Morning Herald</u>

INTRODUCTION

During the quarter of a century around 1900 there were some radical changes in Australia's demographic development. The total annual rate of increase of population, which had averaged more than 3 per cent during the 1870s and 1880s, fell to only 1.07 per cent in 1903 before climbing back to 3.78 per cent in 1912. The story was the same in migration: an average net intake of 36,000 per annum in the 1880s gave way to a net outflow of 10,000 in 1903, to be followed by a net intake of 92,000 in 1912. The crude birth rate also collapsed from 35 per 1,000 in 1890 to just over 25 per 1,000 in 1903. Unlike immigration, the birth rate made no spectacular recovery and when it crept up to 28.6 per thousand in 1912 it reached its highest level so far in this century.

Demographic changes of this magnitude, especially in the birth rate, clearly have some historical importance yet they have been largely ignored by Australian historians who concentrate on economic and political developments between 1890 and 1914. The neglect is surprising for at least two reasons. Firstly, the change in both age- and sex-composition of the population was of sufficient magnitude to make one question its economic, political and social effects.¹ Secondly, the close correspondence between demographic events in Australia and those elsewhere in the West European sphere of civilization should at least provoke some questioning of the fin-de-siècle myth that a 'new white race' was being formed in Australia.

Present day historians may ignore the second point but many public men who lived through the two decades of change did not. They were seriously disturbed by the decline of fertility, the slow growth and the rapid urbanisation which appeared to be going on around them and they feared for the future of the Anglo-Saxon race in Australia. The quintessential expression of their fear was the Report of a Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth-Rate which was established in New South Wales in August 1903 and published its findings in March 1904. The Report shows that the participants were no more interested than most of their successors in the economic and political implication of the changes in their demographic environment but they were very interested in the social and moral implications of the decline in the crude birth rate.

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1. What effect did the ageing of the population have on the skill and efficiency of the workforce, for example? What was the political effect, in a country enjoying universal adult franchise, of the substantial rise in the proportion of women in the electorate? Did a more even balance of the sexes produce any changes in the use of leisure time?

The Birth Rate Commission is an important interest of this thesis but it is not the sole one. The topic is precisely described in the title and this is a study of evidence and contemporary opinion about the peopling of Australia between 1890 and 1911. The opening date is partly dictated by the convention of Australian historiography and partly by the conviction of contemporaries that the demographic changes which disturbed them had come in with the opening of the turbulent decade. The closing date simply reflects the convenience of using the Australian census of 1911 for a precise summary of the evidence at a time when the sense of crisis was disappearing from discussions of population. Although most of the people whose opinions are dealt with appeared to be thinking of the whole continent when they spoke about Australia, the detailed evidence considered here is confined to the populations of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. To study all six States would obviously have been out of the question within the limits of this research project and, in any case, many of the pertinent runs of figures were not comparable for all States until 1911. On the other hand it seemed imperative to compare the similar population movements of New South Wales and Victoria and at least instructive to keep in mind the markedly different experience of South Australia.

The first two chapters of the thesis give a picture of the statistical evidence about the size and growth of the populations of Australia, and New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia in particular, between 1891 and 1911. The intention, in the first chapter, at least, is to explain the significance of the contemporary statistics, not to reconstruct them. An attempt is made to isolate the demographic changes in fertility so that it will be possible to see how far the opinions studied were justified by secular changes in marriage and birth experience and how far they were a misunderstanding of demographic changes. Differentials in fertility, where they are recoverable, have been calculated for comparison with the opinions that were expressed about the incidence of decline. A third chapter deals with those who publicised the evidence: the government statisticians and others who inevitably built their own opinions into the collections of official population statistics they were trying to present in a form laymen could understand.

The central chapter of the thesis also deals with the confusion between evidence and opinion for its subject is the origin, procedure and findings of the Birth Rate Commission.

The dominant impression of the Commission is one of conservatism: political conservatism in its origins and conservative unwillingness to consider new ideas in its procedure. In the second half of the thesis contemporary opinion is surveyed in four chapters. Two are devoted to the opinions of doctors and clergymen as the professional groups most obviously interested in what was happening within society's central institution, the family. The last two chapters look at the rather meagre theoretical debate about population questions and at what might loosely be called 'popular' opinion about the peopling of Australia.

Briefly this is an attempt to describe a social change, namely the widespread resort to limitation of family size in Australia during the 1890s, and to study reactions to that change. It is not an attempt to rewrite the works of Banks or Eversley or Himes with Australian data. It is not a history of contraceptive technique or an attempt to discover the motives which led people to limit their families, although the reasons they offered for the prevalence of limitation are discussed. It is certainly not an essay in demographic statistics. The questions in mind are 'did the decline of the crude birth rate between 1890 and 1903 represent a real decline in fertility?'; 'what opinions were expressed about the decline and about the peopling of Australia in general?'; 'were those opinions consistent with the evidence at their holders' disposal?'; and 'how representative of Australian opinion at large was the Report of the Birth Rate Commission?'

A few words should be said at this point about the report and evidence of the Commission which is easily the most quoted document in this thesis. The findings of the Commission and the voluminous statistical evidence it was given were bound in one volume freely available to the public both in the New South Wales Parliamentary Papers and as a separate publication. The even more extensive social evidence of doctors, pharmacists, parsons, policemen and others, together with non-statistical exhibits and an index so comprehensive as to almost require an index to itself, was bound in a separate volume of which few more than one hundred copies were printed. The Commission resolved that Volume II should not be published and only two or three of the members themselves had copies. The printing file shows that a very strict control was kept over distribution with only three copies released before the file was closed in 1908, one to the Chairman, Dr. Charles Mackellar, another to Mackellar on behalf of Sir William MacGregor, and one to Prime Minister Deakin on behalf

of the Commonwealth Statistician.² The remainder of the copies were kept under seal in the basement of the Chief Secretary's department in Sydney until 1942, when they were destroyed to make way for an air raid shelter.

The few Australian scholars who were interested in the whereabouts of the missing volume did not know about the copies mentioned in the previous paragraph and it was generally assumed that Volume II was lost forever. In fact there appear to be only two references by people who have seen it, apart from the group of officials mentioned above. O.C. Beale, one of the original Royal Commissioners, wrote in 1910 "A copy in private hands is always available to myself" but he did not name his source.³ Norman E. Himes, as usual, had read more than anyone else and a footnote in his Medical History of Contraception makes it clear to anyone who has read volume I of the Royal Commission evidence that Himes must have been looking at volume II.⁴ The note evidently lay unchecked from 1936 to 1969 when an enquiry on behalf of the author revealed that the copy Himes had noted was still in the National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, Maryland, U.S.A. A microfilm of the original is now in the Menzies Library of the Australian National University and a photographic reproduction is held by the author. It is hoped to arrange publication of an edited version of the volume in the near future.⁵

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2. New South Wales Archives shelf no. 6993. Chief Secretary's inward letter file no. 08/4795.
 3. O.C. Beale: Racial Decay (Angus & Robertson Sydney 1910), para. 50. The second volume may also have been seen by Mary Alden Hopkins, the author of "Opposition to Family Limitations" in Harper's Weekly LXI:274 (18 September 1915) but her article is also consistent with a careful reading of the Report only.
 4. Norman E. Himes: Medical History of Contraception (Gamut Press New York 1936/1963) p.326 n.145.
 5. Since the American copy was 'rediscovered' Professor J.A. La Nauze has seen a copy in the possession of Mr. A.F. Coghlan, the son of one of the Royal Commissioners, and Mr. R.B. Joyce of Queensland University has found records in the Colonial Office papers at the Public Record Office, London, which show that four copies of Volume II were forwarded by the Governor of New South Wales to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in a despatch dated 31 May 1904. Mr. Joyce asked for a search to be made at the Colonial Office Library in July 1970 but no copy could be located.

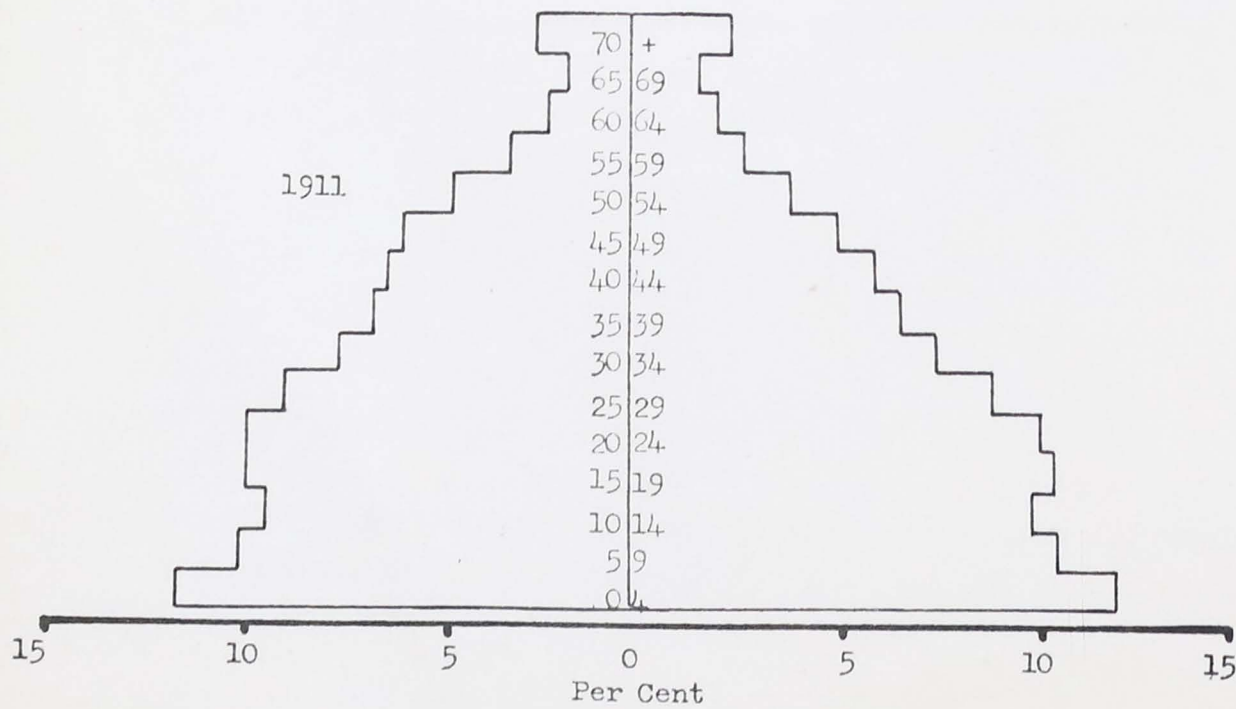
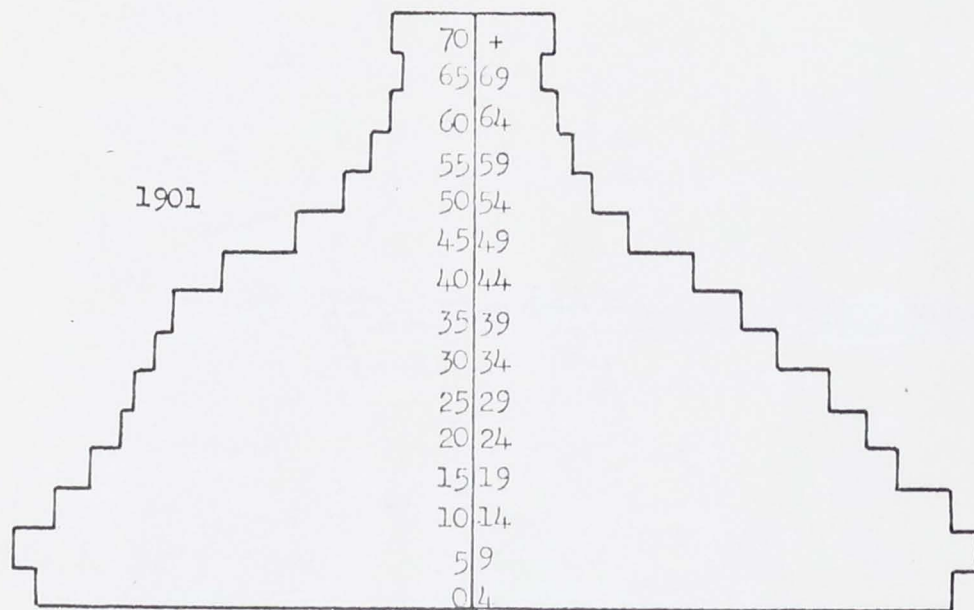
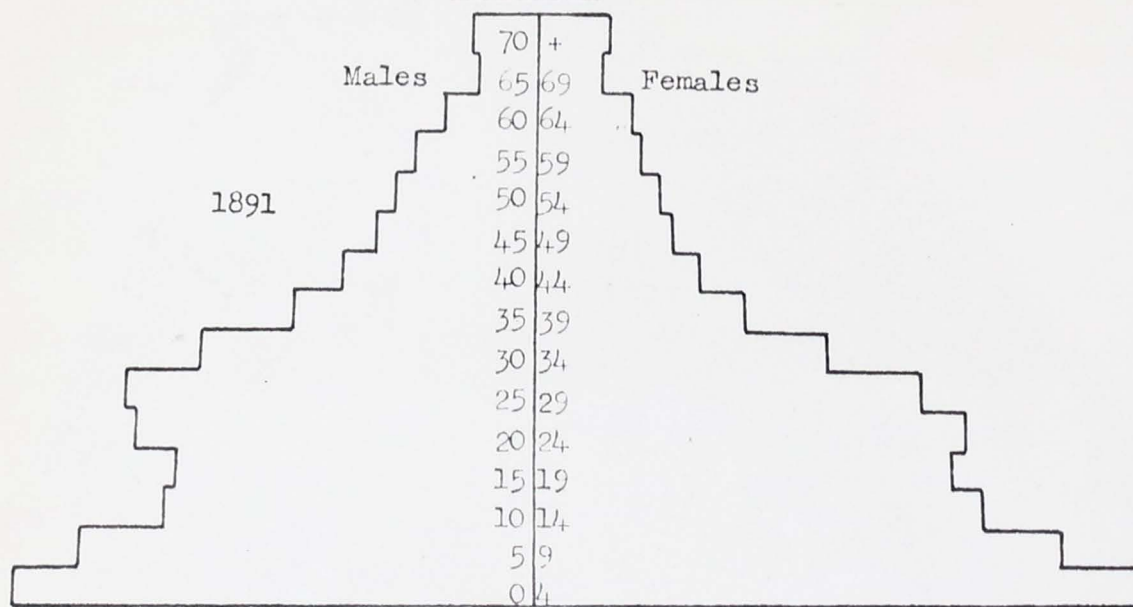
CHAPTER I

Australian Population Structure and Growth, 1890 - 1911.

Fig. 1

Age and Sex Composition
of the Australian Population

1891-1911



The various colonial and State censuses of 1891 and 1901 and the Commonwealth Census of 1911 provide precise cross-sectional views of the Australian population as it was forming around the turn of the century. The first impression gained from those censuses is one of considerable expansion for the 3.17 million people of 1891 had increased to 4.46 million by 1911, a growth of 41 per cent in two decades. Furthermore this growth was divided fairly evenly around 1901, being just under 19 per cent in the first decade and just over 18 per cent in the second. If the sexes are considered separately, however, the impression of regularity and stability is blurred. Between 1891 and 1901 the female population grew in a ratio of 119:100 to male growth but in the

TABLE 1

Population of Australia, 1891, 1901, 1911.

<u>At the Census of</u>	<u>Persons</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
1891	3,174,392	1,704,039	1,470,353
1901	3,773,801	1,977,928	1,795,873
1911	4,455,005	2,313,035	2,141,970

Source: Commonwealth of Australia, Census 1911, Vol II p.17.

following decade the ratio was only 103:100. This change in sexual composition, like the change in age-structure of the population, is clearly reflected in the pyramids of Figure 1 (see facing page) where increasing age and decreasing masculinity stand out.

The varying structure of the population can be illustrated by two examples, proportions of the population in early childhood and proportions at male and female reproductive ages. From the 0-4 line of the 1901 and 1911 pyramids and the 5-9 lines of the 1891 and 1901 pyramids it can be seen that male children aged 0-4 were an almost constant proportion (about 6 per cent) of the total population in 1886, 1896, 1901 and 1911 but both male and female children in the youngest age-group were a noticeably greater element (about 7 per cent) in the population in 1891 than at other times. Looking at a broader range of ages it appears that, in the case of both males and females, there was a fall at each census in the proportion under 20 years of age (see Table 2). In the case of males there was a commensurate increase in the proportion over 50 years of age, while the deficiency of girls was made up in roughly equal measure by women in the 20-49 and 50+ age groups. It will be significant for the study of changing fertility patterns to note

that, although there was a noticeable rise in the proportion of women aged 20-49 years, the increase occurred mostly within the 40-49 year group that is least important from the point of view of nuptiality and fertility.

TABLE 2
Percentage Distribution of Australian Population by Age and Sex

At the census of:	<u>1891</u>		<u>1901</u>		<u>1911</u>	
<u>Age</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
0-19	23.5	23.1	22.8	22.4	21.2	20.6
20-49	23.5	18.6	22.9	19.9	23.3	21.2
50+	<u>6.5</u>	<u>4.6</u>	<u>6.7</u>	<u>5.2</u>	<u>7.5</u>	<u>6.2</u>
	<u>99.8</u>		<u>99.9</u>		<u>100.0</u>	
20-29	11.0	9.4	9.0	8.9	9.8	9.3
30-39	7.8	5.7	8.2	6.7	7.4	6.8
40-49	4.8	3.5	5.7	4.3	6.2	5.3

Changes in the structure of Australia's population between 1891 and 1911 were due to the two factors of migration and natural increase, neither of which was, or can be, measured with undoubted precision. Of the two the natural increase figures, being calculated from birth and death totals gathered by a fairly efficient registration system, can probably be accepted with greater confidence than migration estimates which even the Commonwealth Statistician acknowledged to be based on data open to error.¹ Hence the extent of migration must be inferred from census estimates of total population and registrations of births and deaths. Even then it will not be possible to say what was the age distribution of immigrants, although sex can be isolated. Because the 1891, 1901 and 1911 censuses were held about the end of the March quarter, precise inference of migration totals from census-and-registration data would require the use of quarterly birth and death returns for each State.² Such returns are not easily recoverable for all States, however, and variation between quarters is unlikely to have much significance

1. Commonwealth of Australia: Census, 1911, Vol. I, p.86f. The problem of imperfectly recorded migration by sea, which was the source of error in the national estimates, was compounded in State estimates by the difficulty of ascertaining the number of persons passing between States by rail or by other less evident routes.
2. Censuses were held in all States on 5 April 1891, 31 March 1901, and 3 April 1911. Thus registration figures for the March quarter of 1891 should be left out and registrations for the March quarter of 1901 included if registration totals were to be strictly comparable with the intercensal period 1891-1901.

over a ten year span anyway.³ The following table is therefore based on annual birth and death totals, themselves the sum of the several State totals.⁴

TABLE 3
Elements of Australian Population Growth, 1891-1911

	<u>Births</u>		<u>Deaths</u>		<u>Natural Increase</u>	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
1891-1900	533,964	508,158	266,678	187,759	267,286	320,399
1901-1910	550,588	523,284	262,094	192,519	288,494	330,765

	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
Census population, 1901	1,977,928	1,795,873
<u>Minus</u> Census population, 1891	<u>1,704,039</u>	<u>1,470,353</u>
Inter-censal increase, 1891-1901	273,889	325,520
<u>Minus</u> natural increase	<u>267,286</u>	<u>320,399</u>
Presumed migration, 1891-1901	<u>6,603</u>	<u>5,121</u>

	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
Census population, 1911	2,313,035	2,141,970
<u>Minus</u> Census population, 1901	<u>1,977,928</u>	<u>1,795,873</u>
Inter-censal increase, 1901-1911	335,107	346,097
<u>Minus</u> natural increase	<u>288,494</u>	<u>330,765</u>
Presumed migration, 1901-1911	<u>46,613</u>	<u>15,332</u>

This census-and-registration method of analyzing population increase confirms the evidence of official estimates at the time and economic investigations since, that immigration was a relatively minor factor in the growth of Australia's population in the 'nineties but of increasing importance during the first decade of the present century. $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of male, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of female, population

3. In the case of New South Wales, for example, male births during the census interval April 1891 to March 1901 have to be estimated by applying the annual masculinity ratios to quarterly birth returns (in which sex was not specified) and summing the products. This rather lengthy procedure is hardly justified by the degree of refinement it produces:

Total male births, calendar years 1891-1900	195,590
Total male births, 1/4/1891 to 31/3/1901	<u>195,500</u>
Difference (less than 0.05 per cent)	90

4. State registration figures have been recovered from the appropriate Statistical Registers or Year Books, except those for Tasmania between 1893 and 1899 which have been taken from Demography XXIX (1911) pp. 222f and 226f.

increase was due to immigration between 1891-1900 while the relative figures for 1901-10 were 14 per cent and $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. It has to be recognized, of course, that this assessment applies only to total numbers since the figures in the preceding Table refer only to net migration and not to the volume of immigration into and out of Australia or to the age distribution of the migrants.

The latter defect can be partially remedied, however, by using census results and life tables of the period.⁵ Applying this 'forward survival' method of estimating immigration to Australia we might consider, say, males aged 30-39 years in 1891. There were approximately 248,000 of them and the probability that they would survive the ten years to 1900 was about 91 per cent. Hence 226,000 males could be expected to have survived into the 40-49 years cohort of the 1901 census. In fact there were only 216,000 men of that age counted in 1901, so it must be inferred that about 10,000 were lost from the cohort by emigration during the decade. By applying this procedure to the Australian population, distinguished by sex and single years of age, for the decades 1891-1900 and 1901-1910 we obtain an estimate of net migration of which the following table gives a summary. The figures in the row "Migration" refer to the persons who had arrived between the censuses and survived to be of the age specified at the second census.

5. Male and female life tables by sex for each decade, 1881-1911 are printed in Commonwealth of Australia: Census 1911, Vol.III, pp. 1209-1279.

TABLE 4
 'Forward Survival' Estimates of Net Migration to Australia
 (Thousands)

	0-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	Total
<u>Males</u>									
Census 1891	421	324	345	248	150	115	67		
Estimated 1901	453	406	313	320	226	129	85	36	
Census 1901	451	410	341	308	216	120	85	38	
"Migration"	-2	4	28	-12	-10	-9	-	2	1
Census 1901	451	410	341	308	216	120	85	38	
Estimated 1911	486	439	396	321	285	188	92	46	
Census 1911	498	445	432	325	279	181	91	48	
"Migration"	12	6	36	4	-6	-7	-1	2	46
<u>Females</u>									
Census 1891	413	319	297	182	111	82	45	16	
Estimated 1901	441	398	310	276	169	99	66	28	
Census 1901	441	405	335	255	164	94	68	28	
"Migration"	-	7	25	-21	-5	-5	2	-	3
Census 1901	441	405	335	255	164	94	68	28	
Estimated 1911	471	429	391	317	140	147	79	42	
Census 1911	483	436	409	301	135	143	81	43	
"Migration"	12	7	18	-16	-5	-4	2	1	15

It will be noticed that while the forward survival totals for 1901-10 are in close accord with the results from the census-and-registration estimate the two methods produce widely disparate results for 1891-1900. Comparing the 'census-and-registration' table with the 'forward-survival' table we have the following estimates of net immigration:

	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	<u>Census and Registration</u>	<u>Forward Survival</u>	<u>Census and Registration</u>	<u>Forward Survival</u>
1891/ 1900	6000	1000	5000	3000
1901/ 1910	47000	46000	15000	15000

The difference between the two sets of results obviously makes pertinent a comment as to the relative reliability of the methods. The 1891 and 1901 census results are common to both methods so an explanation of the different results must concentrate on the vital registration data and the life table values used in the 'census-and-registration' and 'forward survival' methods respectively.

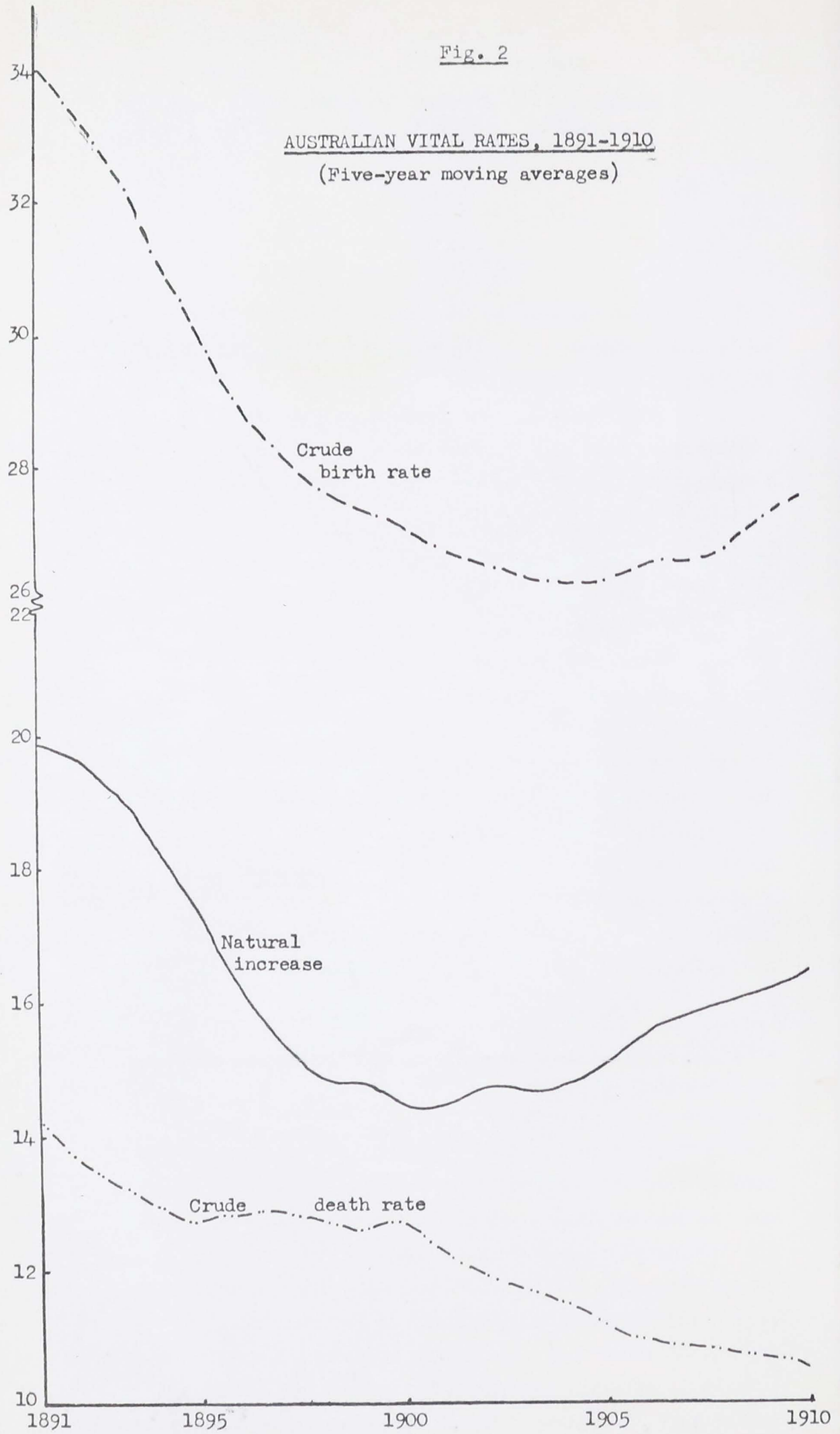
If the census-and-registration estimate of migration were higher than the actual figure one would have to assume some combination of over-registration of deaths (which is unlikely) and under-registration of births (which is possible). Conversely an estimate lower than the actual presupposes under-registration of deaths and over-registration of births, a combination which could occur if stillbirths and neonatal deaths were not properly accounted. In other words a decennial estimate of migration is likely to be too low, rather than too high. If there is an error in the estimate it will probably be due to inadequacies in data for the 0-9 age group. On the other hand, it is generally conceded that colonial registrations of births and deaths were reasonably reliable by 1891 and only marginally better by 1911, so it is probable that the census-and-registration estimate of migration is not far from the actual figure.

By taking account of age distribution, the forward survival method offers additional information but only at the cost of diminished accuracy. In the first place it is necessary to estimate, say, the numbers who might survive to 1901 out of males born in 1891, 1893 and each succeeding year and compare those numbers with the numbers of boys aged 9, 8, ... 1, 0 years in 1901, but the same problems have to be recognized here as were noted in the discussion of registration data. In addition the method relies on ten-year life tables, which may have only limited validity when mortality changes as rapidly as it did between 1891 and 1911, and calculation of an appropriate survival ratio for the younger cohorts (especially those aged 0 at the 1901 census) is exceedingly difficult.⁶ Yet another problem is presented by the

6. On the steady improvement in Australian mortality experience from about 1880, particularly in childhood and adolescence, see Christabel M. Young: "An Analysis of the Population Growth and Mortality of Selected Birth Cohorts in Australia..." (PhD thesis Australian National University 1969) pp.34-42.

Fig. 2

AUSTRALIAN VITAL RATES, 1891-1910
(Five-year moving averages)



"heaping" of numbers around ages that are multiples of five. The extent of heaping diminished noticeably at successive censuses so it is likely that the ten year cohort estimates of migration are significantly different from the real figures.⁷ Since the totals involved are small one should perhaps, not place too much weight on the discrepancy between the two estimates of migration for the period 1891-1900. Suffice it to say that migration made a very small contribution to Australia's growth in the last decade of the nineteenth century but quite a substantial contribution in the first decade of the twentieth, and that forward-survival techniques provide an acceptable estimate of the age distribution of the migrants.

Natural increase contributed far more to the growth of Australia's population between 1891 and 1901 than immigration did. In the first decade of our period natural increase accounted for 97.5 per cent of the increase in male population and 98.5 per cent of the increase in females. Even in the second decade the proportions were 86 per cent and 95.5 per cent respectively. As the columns of Table 5 and their graphical representation in Figure 2 indicate, however, the rate of natural increase itself had a less than constant course. From 1891 to 1900 there was an uninterrupted downward trend

TABLE 5
Australian Vital Rates, 1891-1910

	Rate of Natural Increase		Crude Birth Rate		Crude Death Rate	
	per 1,000	5-year average	per 1,000	5-year average	per 1,000	5-year average
1891	19.64	19.87	34.47	34.11	14.84	14.24
2	20.74	19.65	33.65	33.34	12.91	13.69
3	19.05	19.11	32.79	32.42	13.74	13.32
4	18.18	18.30	30.83	31.21	12.66	12.92
5	17.92	17.37	30.38	30.13	12.45	12.76
6	15.60	16.16	28.43	29.00	12.83	12.84
7	16.09	15.40	28.21	28.29	12.12	12.89
8	13.03	14.93	27.15	27.68	14.12	12.75
9	14.36	14.79	27.27	27.42	12.91	12.63
1900	15.55	14.42	27.33	27.12	11.78	12.70
1	14.94	14.44	27.16	26.75	12.22	12.31
2	14.21	14.64	26.71	26.58	12.49	11.94
3	13.14	14.60	25.29	26.36	12.15	11.76
4	15.36	14.74	26.41	26.24	11.05	11.50
5	15.35	15.05	26.23	26.25	10.88	11.20
6	15.65	15.53	26.57	26.51	10.92	10.98
7	15.77	15.73	26.76	26.57	10.99	10.84
8	15.53	15.92	26.59	26.67	11.07	10.75
9	16.35	16.10	26.69	26.79	10.33	10.69
1910	16.29	16.42	26.73	27.47	10.43	10.74

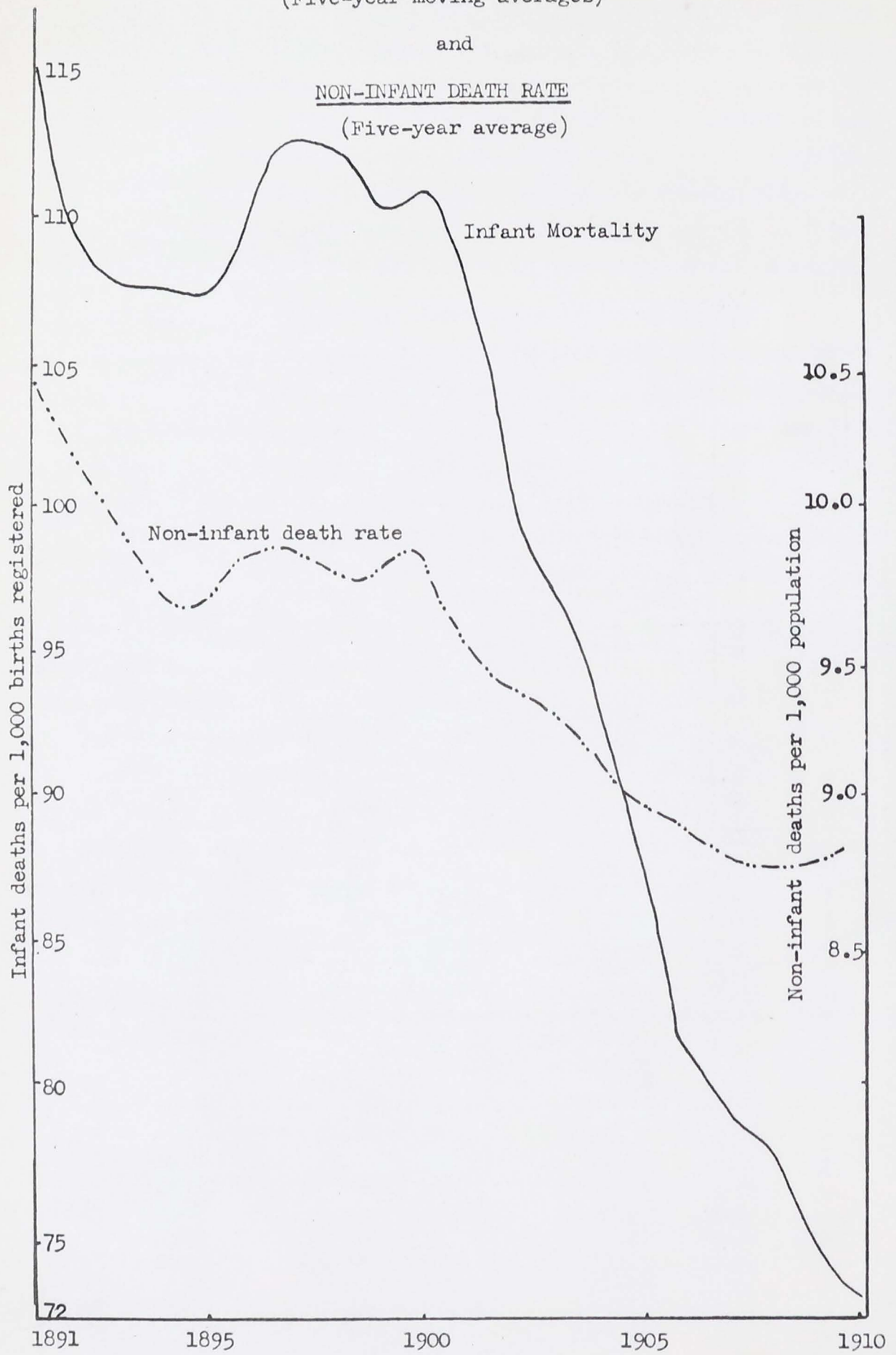
Source: Demography, LVI, (1938), pp. 157, 163, 165.

Note: Cases where the difference between birth and death does not equal natural increase are due to errors in source material. (Eg 1894, 1902)

7. The problem of accumulation at certain ages is discussed in Commonwealth of Australia: Census 1911, Vol. I, p.91f

Fig. 3

AUSTRALIAN INFANT MORTALITY, 1891-1910
(Five-year moving averages)



in the average rate of increase while the course of recovery after 1900 was almost as steady but much less pronounced. As with migration, so with natural increase, the decline in the first decade was by no means matched by the recovery in the second and the years around the turn of the century saw a major shift from the level of population growth which had prevailed in the booming 'eighties.

Movements in natural increase were not solely a function of the country's birth experience but were influenced by the trend of mortality as well. While the crude birth rate fell steadily from 1891 to 1904 and the rate of natural increase fell until 1900, the effect of the former and extent of the latter were modified by the movement of the crude death rate. For example, the rate of natural increase dipped more sharply between 1894 and 1896 than it did in 1890-94 even though the fall in crude birth rate was sharper in the earlier period: the reason was that between 1890-94 the crude death rate was also dropping but between 1894 and 1896 it was not. Again, the natural increase curve moved upwards from 1900 to 1904, contrary to the continuing downward movement of births, under the impulse of a significant decline in the crude death rate.

A more precise estimate of the effect of changes in mortality is difficult because annual age specific rates are recoverable only for deaths under 1 year of age.⁸ Failure to treat the higher ages is partly justified, however, by the dominant role which infant mortality played in the total mortality experience. An approximate idea of the movement in non-infant mortality is given in Figure 3, where non-infant and infant mortality are drawn to a common scale.⁹ That Figure shows non-infant mortality falling quite sharply from 1891 to 1895 in continuation of a trend established in the mid-'eighties, then fluctuating between 1895-1900 before settling into a steady decline lasting for most of our period. By contrast the infant death rate, having moved more or less in harmony with the non-infant rate until 1901, suddenly went into a spectacular decline lasting to 1910 and beyond. It was this last factor which enabled Australia's rate of natural increase to rise for

8. Only in the census years is there a reliable base for the calculation of age specific death rates. Even if one took that base, the labour involved in recovering deaths-by-age would not be justified, in this thesis, by the information produced.

9. The curve of non-infant deaths is calculated thus:

the non-infant death rate in a given year,

$$D_x = \frac{\text{Total deaths in year} - \text{total infants deaths in same year}}{\text{Population at 31 December} - \text{total births in year}};$$

then the five year average value, $\bar{d}_x = \frac{\sum_{x-2}^{x+2} D_x}{5}$

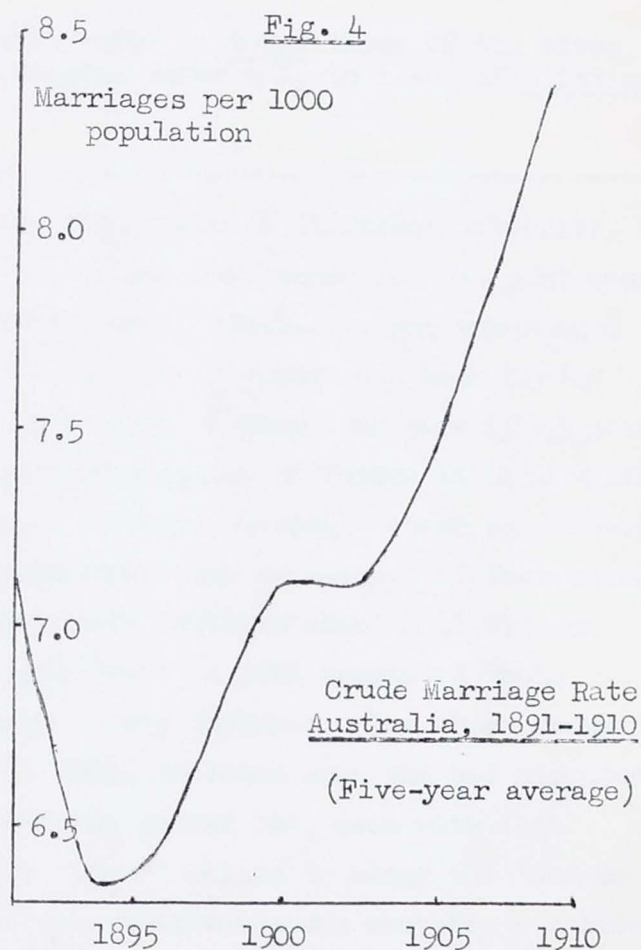
a decade after 1900 with only a slight stimulus from the birth rate.

The crude birth rate turned up a little after declining for a decade and a half. From over 35 per 1,000 in 1888 it slipped nearly thirty per cent to the 1903 level of little more than 25 per 1,000. Even when recovery did come it can hardly have been sufficient to satisfy those 'pro-natal nationalists' to whom the declining birth rates of the 'nineties had brought so much despair, for the rate in 1910 was still no higher than it had been in 1900.

Whether one looks at the movement of annual rates or, more usefully for the observation of trends, at the five-year average it is clear that the crude birth rate in Australia went through three phases between 1890 and 1910: before 1896 there was a period of sharp decline, in excess of 0.5 per 1,000 per year; then nearly a decade, from about 1896 to 1905, of steadier decline (less than 0.5); finally a phase of very moderate recovery with the gain no more than 0.5 per 1,000 per year between 1905 and 1910.

Detailed explanation of the causes and course of this shift in the level of births must be left to the sections on the three States with which this study is principally concerned.

Suffice it to say at this stage that the most natural explanation of decline, a reduction in the numbers of potential parents, is not an adequate explanation. It is true that there was no significant increase in the proportion of women at the lower ages of the 20-49 cohort but no more was there a decline in gross nuptiality, for 32.2 per cent of all women counted at the 1891 Census, 31.6 per cent in 1901 and 34.3 per cent at the 1911 census were married.¹⁰ The



crude marriage rate did follow the familiar U-curve but not in harmony with the movement of the crude birth rate. Although both rates fell after 1890 the marriage rate turned up about 1895 and

10. There could have been significant variations in age specific proportions married without much variation in the gross proportion. For example 35% of all women in New South Wales were married in 1891 and 32% in 1911 but among women aged 25-29, 60% were married in 1891 and 68% in 1911.

was markedly higher by 1911 than it had been before the slump whereas the revival in the birth rate was later, less certain and less complete. The conviction that there was a real fall in fertility in this period is reinforced by the movement in the ratio of children aged 0-4 to women aged 15-49 and by the evidence of completed family size. This child/woman ratio for Australia dropped from 0.6020 in 1891 to 0.4626 in 1901 and slid further to 0.4523 in 1911. Average completed family size during the same period can be inferred from the 1921 and 1911 Census returns of age and average issue of wives as follows (the figures for 1901 and 1891 are inferences from the information obtained in 1911):

TABLE 6

Wives by Age and Average Issue by Age at Census, Australia.

	<u>Wives aged:</u> 45 - 49	50 - 54	55 - 59	60 - 64	65 - 69
Census of 1921	4.19	4.57	5.12	5.74	6.25
Census of 1911	5.25	5.92	6.44	6.75	7.03
Presumed figure, 1901	6.44	6.75	7.03	-	-
Presumed figure, 1891	7.03	-	-	-	-

Source: Census, 1911 Vol III p.1143 and Census, 1921 Vol III p.1928.

Note: The 1911 Census figures refer to total issue of the wives specified, the 1921 figures refer only to issue of existing marriages.

Although migration would have made them somewhat different universes, many of the women aged 65-69 in 1911 would have been those who had just completed their child bearing at ages 45-49 in 1891. Similarly, the women aged 55-59 in 1911 give a good idea (because their cohort had been hardly disturbed by migration) of the family size of women who were 45-49 years old in 1901. The 1921 Census recorded slightly different figures which, nevertheless, show the same decline of child bearing. Women aged 45-49 in 1921 had just completed their families with an average of four children; women aged 55-59 in 1921 completed their families about 1911 with an average of five children; women aged 65-69 in 1921 completed their families about 1901 with an average of six children. The women counted in 1921 and, to a lesser extent in 1911, included some who had migrated to Australia during their child-bearing period but, even with that qualification, by looking down the '45-49' column or along the 'Census of 1921' row of Table 6 it can be seen that there was probably a substantial real fall in the size of families borne in Australia throughout our period.

To sum up, it appears that both the structure and the growth pattern of Australian population changed substantially during the decade before and the decade after 1900. Net migration

went through a long depression during which many people in the prime years of their life emigrated. Family size declined and natural increase was shifted to a lower level than had previously prevailed, despite more favourable conditions of mortality. The young, highly masculine population of 1891 had lost some of each characteristic by 1911 and in the process had shed some of the evidence of its virility.

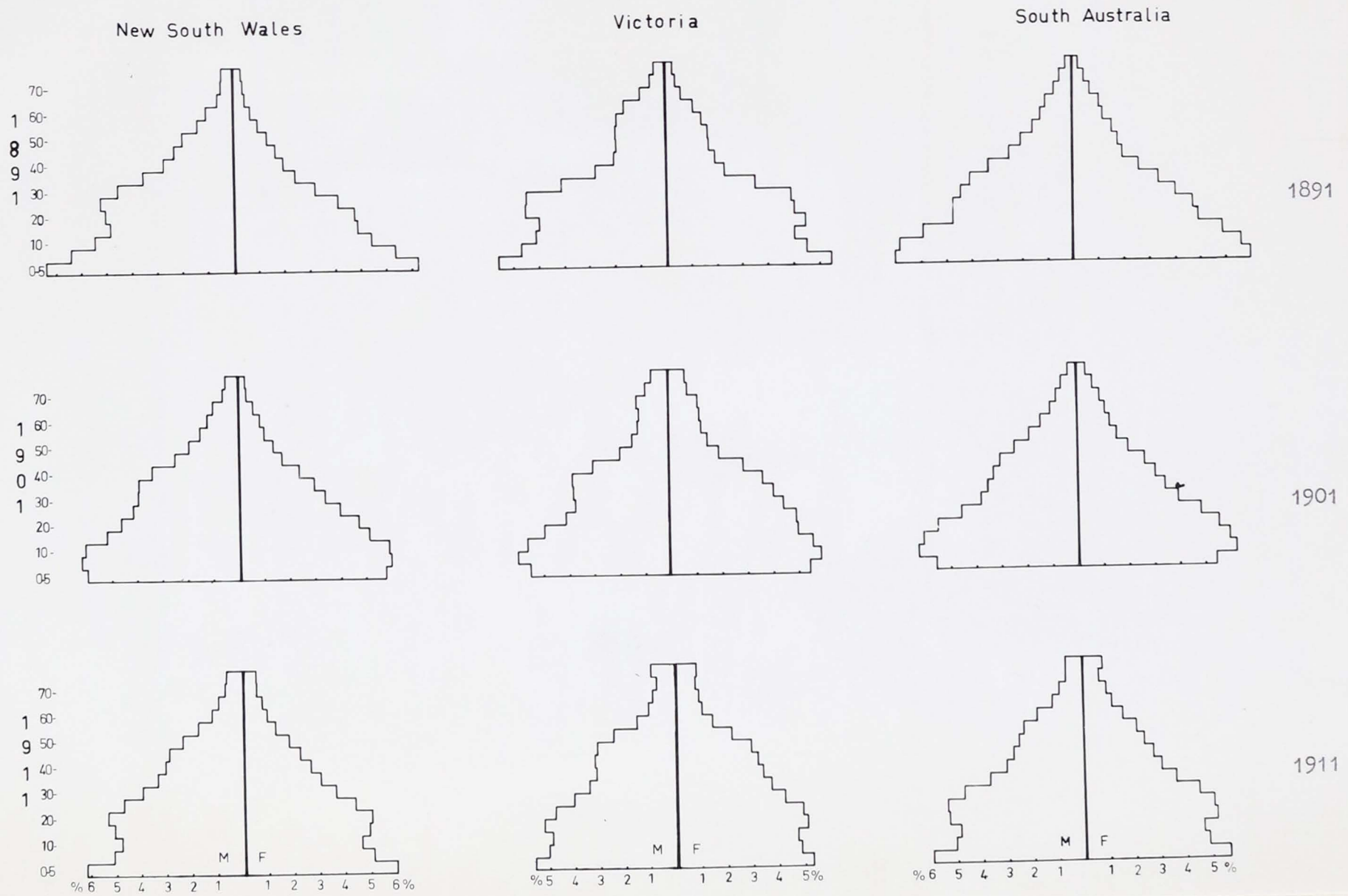
New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia provided about three-quarters of the total Australian population in 1911 and much that has been said about the Australian scene can be said with equal justification about the several States. Nevertheless there were considerable interstate variations and it is necessary to notice the differences in size and composition and elements of growth of the populations. Even in respect of total numbers, for example, the comparison between States is instructive. New South Wales' population was slightly less than Victoria's in 1891 but had outstripped it by 25 per cent in 1911. In the same period South Australia, which stagnated for a decade after 1895, fell further behind its bigger neighbours in total numbers. At the three censuses on which we are concentrating the State populations were:

	<u>New South Wales</u>	<u>Victoria</u>	<u>South Australia</u>
1891	1.12 million	1.14 million	0.32 million
1901	1.35 (+21%)	1.20 (+ 5%)	0.36 (+13%)
1911	1.64 (+21%)	1.32 (+10%)	0.40 (+11%)

To achieve this increase of nearly one half in twenty years, New South Wales had a rate of population increase that averaged 2.5 per cent per annum before 1895 and after 1903 and was below 1.5 per cent per annum only twice. Victoria's annual increase, by contrast, exceeded 1 per cent only twice in twenty years. Even South Australia had a proportionately bigger increase in population than Victoria, chiefly due to a few years of rapid growth at the beginning and the end of the period. Both Victoria's and South Australia's recovery came later than that in New South Wales, due to a period of diminished growth between about 1899 and 1904. New South Wales' superior progress was built on an ascendancy in natural increase and in net migration. All three States had a U-curve of natural increase rates - declining in the 1890's, rising after 1900 - but with the whole curve at a lower level in Victoria than South Australia and lower in both than in New South Wales. Victoria also differed from the other two States in its slower, less certain recovery of natural increase after 1900.

Varying growth experience gave rise to important differences of sex- and age-composition between the three States. New South Wales had a higher level of masculinity than Victoria at each of the

Figure 5
POPULATION PYRAMIDS, VARIOUS STATES



1891, 1901 and 1911 censuses but the intercensal movements were comparable. The pattern differed somewhat in South Australia where the level of masculinity was lower initially but increased slightly after 1901. The various rates, expressed as numbers of males per 100 females, were:

TABLE 7
Number of Males per 100 Females in Various States

<u>Census of</u>	<u>New South Wales</u>	<u>Victoria</u>	<u>South Australia</u>
1891	117.8	110.4	105.0
1901	110.1	101.1	101.5
1911	108.7	99.3	103.1

This variation in masculinity is evident in the three sets of population pyramids of Figure 5, which also show the ageing of the population of each State. Although all three populations aged over each decade, Victoria had a substantially 'older' population in 1891, and one that seems to have gone on ageing more quickly, than those of the other two States. There were other important interstate variations, too. Thus South Australia had the closest parity between the sexes, to the extent that one is tempted to think the founders did succeed when they promoted "colonization by couples" as the basis of a respectable society in their paradise of dissent.¹¹ Victoria, to take another example, lost more of her large 20-30 year cohort of 1891 during the twenty years to 1911 than the other States lost from the same cohort in the same period. Again, New South Wales had a much more regular modification of her population than Victoria (and even a slightly smoother pattern of change than South Australia).

As with Australia as a whole, so with New South Wales, the separate factors of migration and natural increase must be examined if any useful explanation is to be given of the process by which the structure of the population was changed. As with Australia, so again with the State, one has to remark on the paucity of migration's contribution to growth, particularly during the 1890's. The census- and-registration estimates of net migration to New South Wales are:

11. Douglas Pike: Paradise of Dissent (edn. 2 Melbourne University Press 1967), p.497.

TABLE 8

Net Migration to New South Wales (Census-and-Registration Estimate)

	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
Census population, 1901	710,005	644,841
<u>Minus</u> Census population 1891	<u>608,003</u>	<u>515,951</u>
Intercensal increase 1891-1901	102,002	128,890
<u>Minus</u> natural increase	<u>105,526</u>	<u>121,037</u>
Presumed migration, 1891-1901	<u>- 3,524</u>	<u>7,853</u>
Census population, 1911	858,690	789,758
<u>Minus</u> Census population, 1901	<u>710,005</u>	<u>644,841</u>
Intercensal increase, 1901-1911	148,685	144,917
<u>Minus</u> natural increase	<u>115,428</u>	<u>130,378</u>
Presumed migration, 1901-1911	<u>33,257</u>	<u>14,539</u>

Three features of this table require comment, in comparison with the Australia-wide migration estimates: the net loss of males in the 'nineties, compared with a marginal gain by the whole country; the diminished impact on females of whatever forces were acting in the 'nineties to deter males from immigrating - a phenomenon that was repeated on the national scene; and the considerable extent of both male and female immigration in the second decade, when New South Wales gained almost as many females and three-quarters of the number of males as were added to the whole Commonwealth.

Once again there is some disparity between these census-and-registration estimates of migration and the forward survival estimates:

TABLE 9

Net Migration to New South Wales (Forward Survival Estimate)

(Thousands)

Migrants aged:	0-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	<u>Totals</u>
<u>Males</u>									
1891-1901	-2	2	8	-5	-6	-4	1	-	-6
1901-1911	4	4	18	6	-	-2	-	1	31
<u>Females</u>									
1891-1901	-	4	10	-6	-1	-1	1	-	7
1901-1911	6	3	10	-5	-1	-1	-	1	13

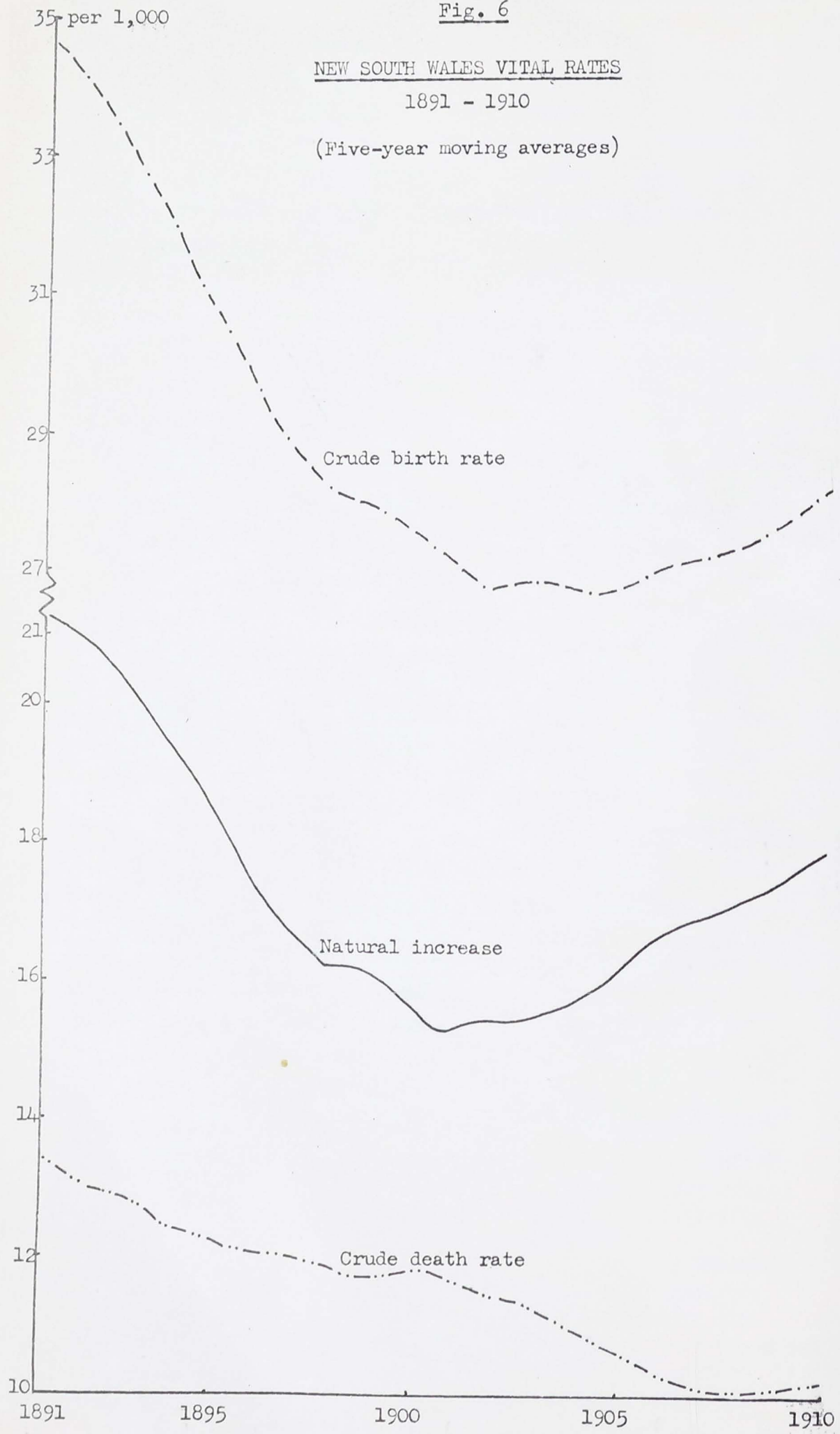
Although the totals do not quite conform with those of the census-and-registration estimate, this estimate of the age distribution of migrants does supplement the comments in the previous paragraph. The loss of males in the 'nineties, for instance,

Fig. 6

NEW SOUTH WALES VITAL RATES

1891 - 1910

(Five-year moving averages)



was not from the 20-29 cohort from whom one would expect the bulk of new ventures in family building, while the accession of female migrants was in that same age range at which they might be expected to have made their most substantial contribution to the State's fertility. It is also evident that the recovery in both male and female immigration early this century was due to an influx of men and women well under forty years of age.

Given this factor of youthfulness, with all that it should imply for fertility, it is somewhat surprising to discover the extent to which performance in natural increase failed to match the promise in New South Wales. The decennial birth, death and natural increase totals for the State were:

	<u>Births</u>		<u>Deaths</u>		<u>Natural Increase</u>	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
1891-1900	195,590	185,558	90,064	64,521	105,526	121,037
1901-1910	207,178	197,636	91,750	67,258	115,428	130,378

Source: N.S.W. Statistical Register, 1911, p. 97.

These totals were the product of the following annual rates:

TABLE 10

Vital Rates, New South Wales, 1891-1910

	<u>Rate of Natural Increase</u>		<u>Crude Birth Rate</u>		<u>Crude Death Rate</u>	
	per 1,000	5 yr. av.	per 1,000	5 yr. av.	per 1,000	5 yr. av.
1891	20.45	21.32	34.82	34.73	14.37	13.42
2	21.94	21.00	34.28	34.09	12.34	13.09
3	20.35	20.29	33.76	33.20	13.41	12.91
4	19.51	19.47	31.95	32.01	12.44	12.54
5	19.19	18.66	31.18	30.96	11.99	12.29
6	16.35	17.58	28.88	29.75	12.53	12.16
7	17.90	16.78	29.01	28.85	11.11	12.07
8	14.97	16.20	27.72	28.12	12.75	11.91
9	15.48	16.14	27.45	27.90	11.97	11.75
1900	16.32	15.61	27.52	27.54	11.20	11.93
1	16.03	15.37	27.78	27.08	11.75	11.71
2	15.25	15.34	27.23	26.79	11.98	11.45
3	13.77	15.58	25.44	26.83	11.67	11.25
4	16.19	15.83	26.85	26.72	10.67	10.89
5	16.67	16.12	26.85	26.74	10.18	10.62
6	17.26	16.72	27.21	27.05	9.95	10.32
7	16.71	16.98	27.34	27.16	10.63	10.17
8	16.78	17.24	26.99	27.35	10.20	10.11
9	17.50	17.44	27.40	27.63	9.89	10.18
1910	17.93	17.88	27.83	28.11	9.89	10.22

Source: Demography LVI (1938) pp. 157, 163, 165.

A number of points stand out when the graphs of these rates are considered on their own and in comparison with the relevant graphs for Australia as a whole (see Figure 6). The most noticeable feature in the movement of the birth rate is that the years of sustained, sharp decline in New South Wales were past before the Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth-rate began its investigations. There was a sharp fall from 1901-1903 but in seven

years between 1901-10 the annual crude birth rate rose and throughout the decade the trend of the rate was less adverse to population growth than it had been in the previous decade, 1891-1900. Divergences between State and national movements were small but, given the volume of public comment such variations could provoke among contemporaries, worth noting. Between 1894/5 and 1898/9 and again from 1899/1900 to 1902/3 the State's birth-rate fell more rapidly than Australia's but during most of the subsequent period New South Wales' was the more rapid recovery.

Writers on demographic transition have occasionally suggested that there may be a link between a decline in mortality and subsequent falls in the birth rate.¹² Such an explanation is of only limited help in respect of the differences between New South Wales' and Australia's birth rate, however. Infant mortality was somewhat higher in New South Wales before 1900 but the level was practically identical with Australia's thereafter. The non-infant death rate was also consistently lower in New South Wales and the trends of mortality for the two populations differed only between 1895 and 1899, when New South Wales had the better record. In sum, then, a comparison of the New South Wales and Australian experiences of fertility does little to confirm or refute the theory that mortality effects the birth rate.

An area in which causes of change in the birth rate might be sought with greater profit - and an area on which mortality, with migration, is effective - is that of modifications in age structure. From the figures in Table 11 it will be seen that there was an increase during our period of about 3 per cent in the proportion of females aged 20-49. All other things being equal this growth in the proportion of potential mothers might have been expected to lead to an increase in the birth rate but two modifying factors were operating. The most likely source of potential husbands, men aged 20-49 years, was a decreasing proportion of the population at successive censuses, although there was a surplus of such men throughout the period. Also the rise in the proportion of women aged 20-49 was most significant at the older ages of the range: between 1891 and 1911 the proportion of the population who were women aged 40-49 rose by 1.3 per cent or twice the rise in the 20-29 cohort. Thus any initial surprise at the failure of the

12. See, for example, D.M. Heer and D.O. Smith: "Mortality level and desired family size" in I.U.S.S.P. Sydney Conference, 1967, Contributed Papers, pp. 26-36. Cf. T.H.C. Stevenson: "The fertility of various social classes in England and Wales from the middle of the nineteenth century to 1911" in Jour. Royal Statistical Soc. LXXXIII: 3 (May 1920) pp. 401-403.

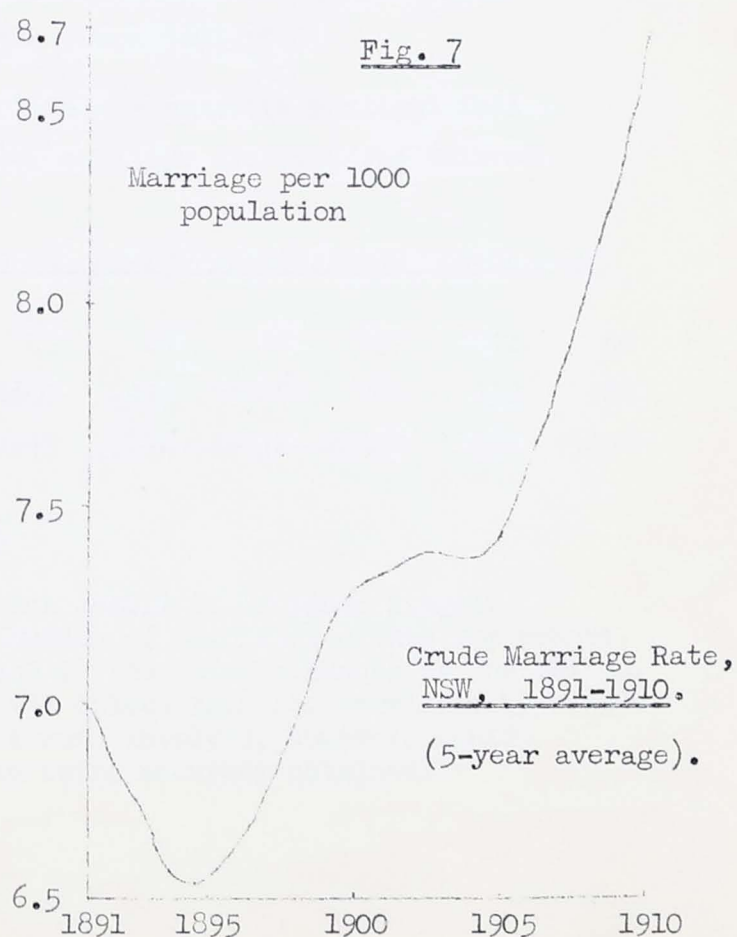
birth rate to rise is dispelled by the recognition that the increase in the proportion of females was least in the most nubile cohort and that the surplus of men over women aged 20-49 was more than halved before 1911.

TABLE 11
Percentage Distribution of New South Wales
Population by Age and Sex.

At the Census of:	1891		1901		1911	
<u>Age</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
0-19	24.2	23.8	23.4	23.1	21.3	20.8
20-49	23.8	18.1	22.3	19.8	23.2	21.1
50+	6.0	4.0	6.6	4.9	7.5	5.9
	<u>99.9</u>		<u>100.1</u>		<u>99.8</u>	
20-29	10.4	8.8	8.8	9.0	10.0	9.4
30-39	8.2	5.6	7.7	6.6	7.2	6.7
40-49	5.2	3.6	5.8	4.2	6.0	4.9

Since the proportion of women in the most fertile age groups did not increase with sufficient rapidity to promote a substantial change in the birth-rate it is necessary to investigate whether the movement in marriage patterns during the period 1891-1911 was of an extent that might have been expected to affect fertility. The investigation is complicated by the fact that, until 1897, no information was given in New South Wales marriage registers about the age at marriage of the contracting parties. A crude marriage rate is therefore the only measure regularly available for the period before 1897: as Figure 7 shows there was a sharp fall in the rate from 1891 until 1894, then a recovery of equal rapidity until 1888. Following an hiatus between 1899 and 1905 another rapid rise began which was continuing in 1911.

More precise analysis is not easy to achieve. Age-specific fertility rates cannot be calculated before 1897 and even after that date estimates of male and female population according to age are available only in the census years. Two alternative methods which



give some idea of the changing age of marriage are the construction of a 'marriage-age index' and the proportions marrying at specified ages of all males or females marrying in a given year. The basis of the marriage-age index is the number of marriages occurring in each of seven age groups. A 'representative age' is assigned to each group and multiplied by the number of marriages in the group. The sum of the resulting products, divided by the sum of marriages, is the marriage-age index number for the year in question. An example of the calculation (for males married in 1897) is given below.¹³ Repetition of this procedure yields the following index:

TABLE 12
Marriage Age Index, New South Wales, 1897-1910

Year	Index Number		Year	Index Number	
	Males	Females		Males	Females
1897	29.01	24.99	1904	28.77	25.09
8	29.17	25.09	5	28.82	25.08
9	29.02	25.07	6	28.94	25.18
1900	28.97	25.18	7	28.92	25.24
1	28.98	25.09	8	28.72	25.26
2	29.11	25.22	9	28.80	25.36
3	29.04	25.20	1910	28.73	25.38

It must be emphasised that these figures have no absolute meaning although they happen to be within reasonable range of the average marriage age we would expect. The utility of the index is that it shows with tolerable clarity the relative movement in the age incidence of marriage during the years 1897-1910.

The trend of the index values suggests a slight fall in male, and slight rise in female, marriage age over the thirteen

13. Age at marriage.	20	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45+
1. Representative age	18	23	27	32	37	42	50
2. Number marrying	110	2605	2994	1426	766	338	388
3. 1 x 2	1980	59915	80838	45632	28342	14196	19400

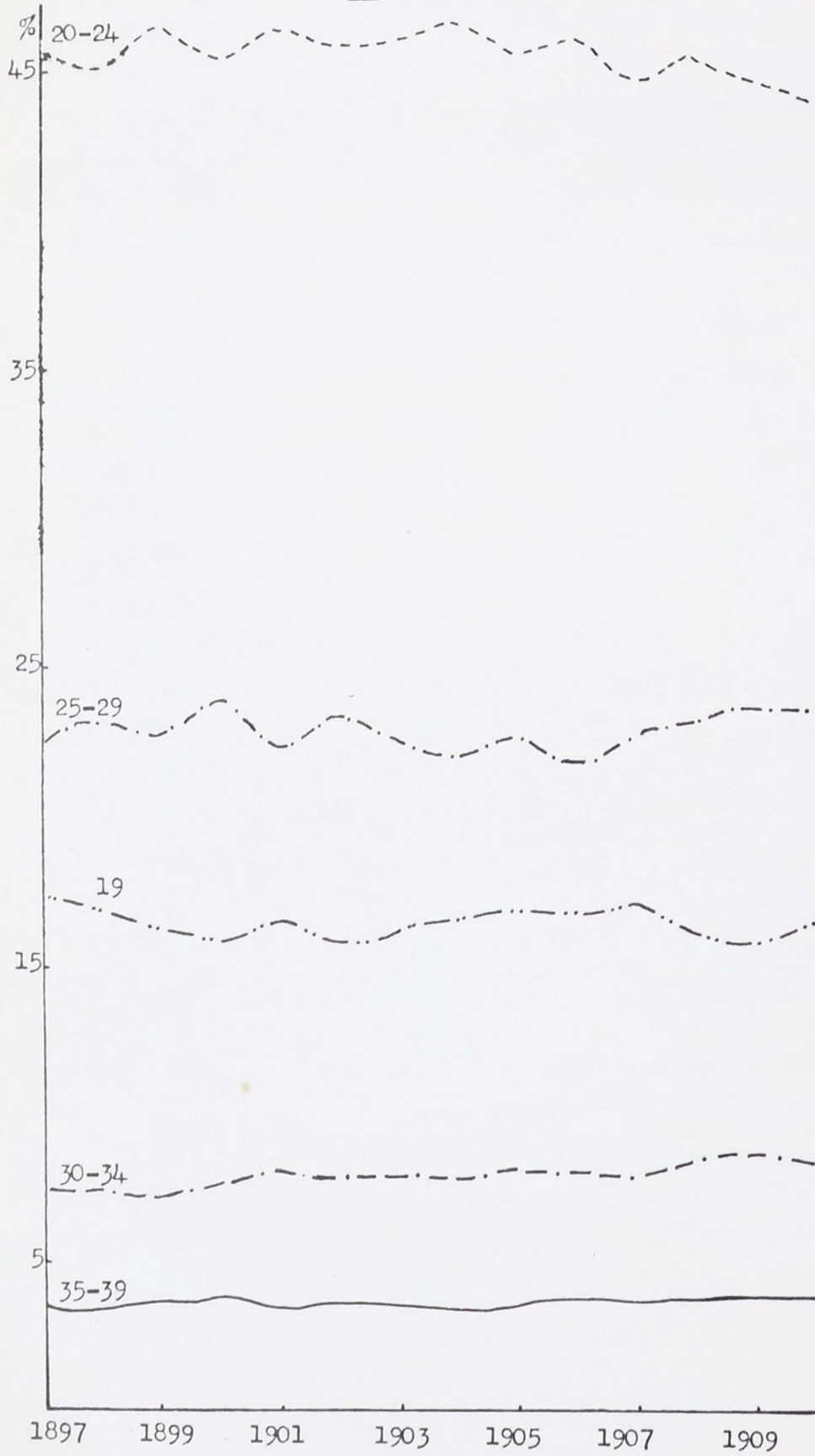
$$\frac{\Sigma 3}{\Sigma 2} = \frac{250303}{8627} = \underline{\underline{29.01}}$$

The representative age of each cohort is assigned roughly according to the age-distribution of marriages within the cohort. This rough assignation, which is the chief weakness of the method, could be avoided by making the calculation for marriages by single years of age. The volume of work involved, however, would hardly be compensated by the extra accuracy obtained.

Fig. 8

Proportions marrying at
specified ages of all females
marrying in given years

NEW SOUTH WALES



years but in neither case is the movement very pronounced. The relative stability of the New South Wales marriage pattern is also evident in the annual figures of proportions of women marrying at specified ages (Figure 8). This measure suffers from two defects. The percentage married of women at, say, age 30-34 in 1907 is partly a function of the percentage married at age 20-24 in 1897 and at age 25-29 in 1902. Also the measure does not reflect the extent of marriage in the population as a whole but only the proportions marrying at various ages. As the graph indicates, those proportions did not vary very greatly among New South Wales females in our period. The percentage of girls marrying at or before 20 was fairly steady, there was a small fall at ages 20-24 and an even smaller rise at 25-29, while hardly any movement occurred at higher ages.

Looking at the act of marrying, one gets the impression of stability in New South Wales. Looking at the married condition, however, the contrary impression is obtained. While 32.1 per cent, 32.0 per cent and 35.0 per cent of all women in the State were married at the censuses of 1891, 1901 and 1911 respectively, among women in the crucial 20-34 year age groups the percentages married fell markedly between 1891 and 1901 and recovered only marginally between 1901 and 1911. The movements are set out in Table 13.

TABLE 13

Percentage Married of Women at Various Ages in New South Wales.

	<u>Ages:</u>	<u>All ages</u>	<u>20-24</u>	<u>25-29</u>	<u>30-34</u>	<u>35-39</u>	<u>40-44</u>	<u>45-49</u>
Census of 1891		32.1%	37.7	68.6	81.0	83.3	81.9	78.7
1901		32.0	30.3	58.1	74.0	79.5	80.3	78.1
1911		35.0	32.6	59.6	71.1	75.7	77.0	76.4

Another way of demonstrating the decreased incidence of marriage is to calculate the numbers of women at various ages in the New South Wales populations of 1901 and 1911 who would have been married, had the marriage proportions of 1891 continued to apply. The 'expected' numbers are then compared with the actual numbers of married women revealed by the censuses, to give an estimate of the marriages 'lost', as in Table 14:

TABLE 14
Female Marriages 'Lost' in New South Wales, 1891-1911

Age	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49
No. expected to be married in 1901 at 1891 rate	24,449	38,473	37,824	34,651	27,380	18,883
Actual number married, 1901 census	19,591	32,548	34,574	33,083	26,887	18,735
Marriages 'lost'	4,858	5,925	3,250	1,568	493	148
Number expected to be married in 1911 at 1891 rate	31,273	49,723	48,551	42,277	35,621	29,593
Actual number married, 1911 census	27,031	43,113	42,598	38,382	33,446	28,728
Marriages 'lost'	4,242	6,610	6,953	3,895	2,175	865

Between 1891 and 1901 the marriage rate declined to the extent that some 10,000 women aged between 20 and 29 who might have been married at the former date were not married at the latter. Few of them retrieved their position in the next ten years. For the 4,800 women in the age group 20-24 and unmarried in 1901 the situation actually deteriorated in the following decade. In 1911 a remnant of them had survived into the 30-34 age group whose 'loss' had increased to 6,900.¹⁴ To sum up this part of the argument:

14. It is clear that the failure of women to achieve marriage did not mean that men also were being denied the chance to marry. The proportion of males at the relevant ages who were married declined very little between 1891 and 1901, and between 1901 and 1911 rose faster than the proportions of females who were married:

Percentage married of men at various ages in New South Wales

Ages:	All ages	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49
Year						
1891	27.4%	39.0	57.4	65.6	66.2	68.9
1901	28.7	37.4	56.6	65.8	69.2	70.5
1911	32.1	42.1	60.9	68.8	71.7	73.1

In addition the number of males of age X remaining unmarried per 100 females of age X-5 remaining unmarried fell significantly:

Unmarried males aged X per 100 females aged X-5 years in New South Wales

Males aged / females aged:	25-29		30-34		35-39		40-44	
	20-24	25-29	25-29	30-34	30-34	35-39	35-39	40-44
At the census of								
1891	109	154	227	311				
1901	78	98	157	198				
1911	78	84	99	124				

The change from a situation of relative female dominance to one of relative male dominance in the marriage market raises a field for interesting speculation (not to be pursued here!) about the 'psychology of marriage'. To take just one example, when men became able to choose from among a surplus of women did they begin to impose conditions, such as agreement to limit family size, on their willingness to marry?

there was a marked decline in the New South Wales crude birth rate between 1891 and 1903 and a partial recovery after 1903 (Table 10); the proportion of the population who were women of conceptive ages increased between 1891 and 1901 and, slightly more slowly, after 1901 (Table 11); but the proportion of those women at significant conceptive ages who were married fell during the first decade and only partially recovered in the second (Table 13). Part of the decline in the crude birth rate must therefore have been caused by the failure of women who helped swell the denominator of the crude birth rate to enter matrimony in sufficient proportions to ensure that the numerator of the crude birth rate also rose. The extent of the loss in fertility due to a change in the proportions of women at various ages married can be shown by comparing the movement of the crude birth rate with a birth rate standardized for fertility. Standardisation is achieved simply by applying the known age-specific fertility rate of a population with fairly normal fertility distribution to the age distribution of wives in the population at interest.¹⁵ Applying the age specific fertility rates of Sweden in 1891 to the New South Wales wives of the appropriate ages at each census, we obtain standardised birth rates of 35.55 (1891), 33.45 (1901), and 35.17 (1911). Movements in these rates show the trends in New South Wales fertility directly attributable to changes in the proportions of women married at various ages.

15. As an example of the standardisation method, the following is the calculation of the New South Wales standardised rate for 1891

Wives aged	(1) Swedish fertility 1891	(2) NSW wives 1891	(1) x (2) (3)
15-19	51.8 per 1,000	2,874	148,873 per 1,000
20-24	45.1 per 1,000	20,043	903,939 per 1,000
25-29	37.5 per 1,000	32,041	1,201,538 per 1,000
30-34	31.2 per 1,000	29,505	920,556 per 1,000
35-39	25.0 per 1,000	22,584	564,600 per 1,000
40-44	14.2 per 1,000	18,018	255,856 per 1,000
(4).....		3,995,362 per 1,000
(5) NSW population, 1891...		1,123,954
(6) (4) ÷ (5), =			35.55 per 1,000

Standardisation techniques are discussed by A. Newsholme & T.H.C. Stevenson: "An improved method of calculating birth-rates" in Journal of Hygiene V:2 (April 1905) p.175 and V:3 (July 1905) p.304, and Newsholme & Stevenson: "The decline of human fertility in the United Kingdom and other countries as shown by corrected birth-rates" in Journal of the Royal Statistical Society LXIX (March 1906) p.34. The second of the articles has the more convincing exposition of the technique. In both articles the authors used Australian examples, which leads one to wonder if they had worked out the technique independently or 'borrowed' it from the Victorian Government Statistician, W. McLean who had used it in 1904. [See W. McLean: "The Declining Birth Rate in Australia" in Intercolonial Medical Journal of Australia (20 March 1904) p.112f] McLean had also used the Swedish age-specific rates of 1891 for his standard.

Between 1891 and 1901 (but not between 1901 and 1911) part of the decline in fertility was due to a decline in the marriage experience of women. Part was also due to a reduction of fertility within marriage. For example the ratio of children aged 0-4 to married women aged 15-49 fell from 1.1791 in 1891 to 0.9460 in 1901 and only 0.9259 in 1911. There was a similar picture of decline in completed family size, clearly evident in Table 15 which shows a decline of more than one-third, or nearly three children, from the average size of families completed at the beginning of our period to the average size of the families formed between 1896 and 1921 (that is the families where the mother, being 45-49 in 1921, was 20-24 in 1896). When this fall in family size is

TABLE 15

Wives by Age and Average Issue, New South Wales

Wives aged:	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69
Census of 1921	4.24	4.63	5.26	5.91	6.30
Census of 1911	5.38	6.06	6.51	6.90	7.28
Presumed figure, 1901 ^a	6.51	6.90	7.28	-	-
Presumed figure, 1891 ^a	7.28	-	-	-	-

Sources: Census, 1911, Vol.III p.1143; Census, 1921, Vol.II p.1934

a. From the 1911 Census figures.

considered with the restriction of marriage, the failure of immigration at young adult ages and the ageing of the population it is possible to understand, at least, the anguish of the Royal Commissioners who wrote

Who can tell what progress New South Wales might not have made if, since 1864, 280,000 citizens had not been lost, and had performed their share in the development of the country; or what strides Australia might have taken, in the same period, with the assistance of nearly a million more inhabitants.¹⁶

We have already noticed that Victoria, after starting with a larger population than New South Wales in 1891, was lagging behind the older colony by 1911 and that Victoria's population increase exceeded one per cent per annum on only two occasions in the twenty years. In addition the Victorian population was older than New South Wales' at each census and significantly less male-dominated: in 1911, in fact, Victoria had a slight surplus of females.

The differences in population between the two States that were already evident by 1891 reflected their disparate development. New South Wales had developed steadily from the late 1840's on an economic base of

¹⁶. DBR, Report para. 107.

primary industries other than mining. Victoria had grown with tremendous speed in the 1850s under the stimulus of gold discoveries but after the mid-60s rarely matched New South Wales in natural increase or growth of population by migration. For three years in the late-80s Victoria had a migration boom but over the rest of the period from 1860 to 1890 she did not share in the rejuvenation of population enjoyed by New South Wales.

The two decades after 1890 were particularly unfavourable for Victoria, especially with regard to migration. According to the census and registration returns of the period there was a net loss by emigration of about 95,000 males and almost 58,000 females between 1891 and 1911.

The estimates from which these totals come are:

TABLE 16

Net Migration to Victoria
(Census-and-Registration Estimate).

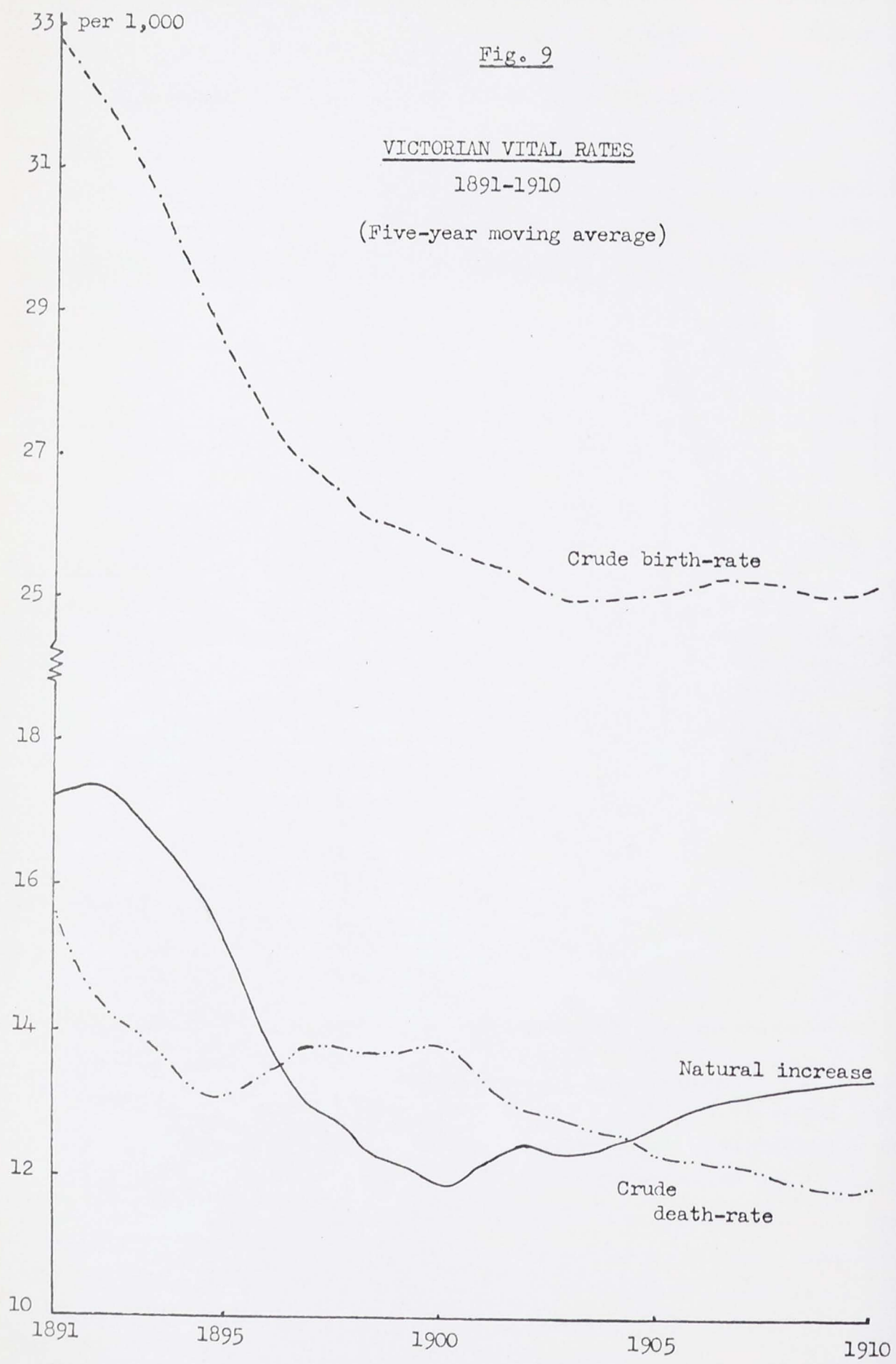
	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
Census population, 1901	603,720	597,350
<u>Minus</u> Census population, 1891	<u>598,099</u>	<u>541,751</u>
Intercensal increase, 1891-1901	5,621	55,599
<u>Minus</u> natural increase	<u>79,251</u>	<u>93,664</u>
Presumed migration, 1891-1901	<u>-73,630</u>	<u>-38,065</u>
Census population, 1911	655,591	659,960
<u>Minus</u> Census population, 1901	<u>603,720</u>	<u>597,350</u>
Intercensal increase, 1901-1911	51,871	62,610
<u>Minus</u> natural increase	<u>73,384</u>	<u>82,471</u>
Presumed migration, 1901-1911	<u>-22,513</u>	<u>-19,861</u>

When it is recalled that New South Wales had a net gain by migration of 33,000 males and 22,000 females in the same period, the extent of this Victorian loss is seen to have been considerable. The comparative effects on age structure of migration experience also favoured New South Wales rather than Victoria. The age approximate distribution of net Victorian migration between the censuses was:

TABLE 17
Net Migration to Victoria (Forward Survival Estimate).
 (Thousands)

	Migrants aged at the second date:									
	0-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	Total	
<u>Males</u>										
1891-1901	-7	-9	-15	-25	-11	-6	-1	1	-73	
1901-1911	-	-3	-7	-4	-2	-2	-1	-	-19	
<u>Females</u>										
1891-1901	-6	-6	1	-18	-5	-4	-1	-	-39	
1901-1911	-	-1	-1	-11	-3	-1	-1	-	-18	

Among the 20-29 year olds who would have begun the bulk new families, New South Wales had gains of 8,000 males in 1891-1901, 18,000 males in 1901-1911 and 10,000 females in each decade. In Victoria however, there were considerable losses of males in both periods, unmatched by any substantial emigration of females. It was also the case in both decades that female migration was more concentrated in age in Victoria than in New South Wales. Whereas New South Wales gained 20-29 year-old females who might have begun new families, Victoria lost the 30-39 year olds who could have been adding fourth, fifth or sixth children to their families.



If the Victorian migration experience between 1891 and 1910 was different from the New South Wales experience, the dissimilarity was even more marked in the case of natural increase. The decennial totals of vital events in Victoria were:

	<u>Births</u>		<u>Deaths</u>		<u>Natural Increase</u>	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
1891-1900	172226	164073	92975	70409	79251	93664
1901-1910	157691	149517	84417	67046	73274	82471

Source: Victoria: Statistical Register, 1900, pp.364, 375 and 1910 pp.225, 229.

The annual and moving average rates of births, deaths and natural increase were:

TABLE 18
Vital Rates, Victoria, 1891-1910

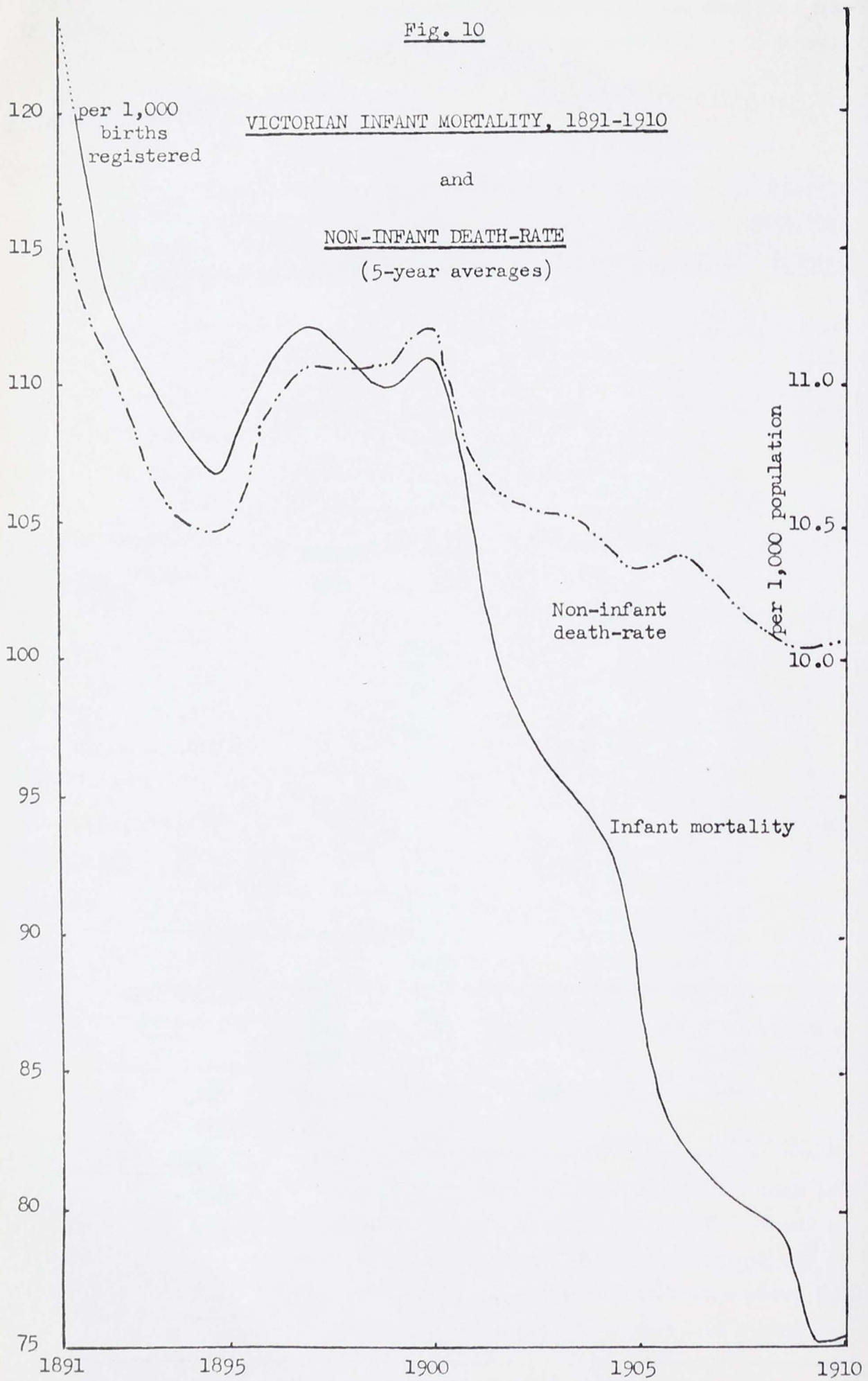
	<u>Rate of Natural Increase</u>		<u>Crude Birth Rate</u>		<u>Crude Death Rate</u>	
	<u>per 1,000</u>	<u>5 yr. av.</u>	<u>per 1,000</u>	<u>5 yr. av.</u>	<u>per 1,000</u>	<u>5 yr. av.</u>
1891	17.34	17.27	33.60	32.83	16.26	15.56
2	18.89	17.35	32.51	31.98	13.62	14.42
3	17.10	16.91	31.18	30.96	14.08	13.85
4	15.97	16.22	29.05	29.68	12.09	13.25
5	15.26	15.19	28.47	28.48	13.21	13.09
6	13.92	13.71	27.21	27.35	13.29	13.44
7	13.70	12.95	26.51	26.77	12.81	13.82
8	9.71	12.51	25.52	26.24	15.81	13.73
9	12.17	12.23	26.16	25.95	13.99	13.71
1900	13.05	11.86	25.81	25.69	12.76	13.83
1	12.55	12.23	25.77	25.50	13.22	13.26
2	11.83	12.36	25.23	25.21	13.40	12.85
3	11.59	12.30	24.53	25.04	12.94	12.74
4	12.78	12.37	24.74	24.97	11.97	12.60
5	12.79	12.75	24.96	25.04	12.17	12.29
6	12.86	12.90	25.41	25.15	12.55	12.25
7	13.73	13.06	25.59	25.20	11.86	12.14
8	12.36	13.11	25.07	25.11	12.71	12.01
9	13.57	13.23	25.01	25.03	11.45	11.80
1910	13.03	13.31	24.51	25.19	11.49	11.87

Source: Demography LVI (1938) pp.157, 163, 165.

The most remarkable feature of these rates, clearly revealed in Figure 9, is the failure of the crude birth rate to recover from its long decline to the low point of 1903-04. In 1910 the Victorian moving average rate had risen only 0.22 per 1,000 above the 1904 level whereas New South Wales had seen a recovery of 1.49 per 1,000 by 1910.¹⁷

17. If the crude annual rate is considered, rather than the moving average Victoria's case appears even worse. The rate crept up from 24.53 in 1903 to 25.29 in 1907 but had fallen back to 24.51 by 1910. In New South Wales the crude birth rate went up from 25.44 in 1903 to 27.83 in 1910.

Fig. 10



Not only with regard to the recovery of its birth rate did Victoria compare unfavourably with New South Wales: Victoria's birth rate was at a lower level, its natural increase was much less and its death rate was higher, especially in the late 1890s when it actually rose. In comparison with New South Wales (and Australia as a whole, in fact) Victoria's non-infant death rate was very high for most of our period and the State's mortality experience was hardly conducive to rapid population growth. Although the non-infant death rate was down to 10.5 per 1,000 in 1895 it began to rise the following year and did not go below 10.5 per 1,000 again until 1905. At its lowest point - 10.0 per 1,000 in 1909 - the Victorian death rate was still nearly 1.5 per 1,000 above the national level. With regard to infant mortality, on the other hand, the Victorian record was marginally better than the Australian.¹⁸

Comparatively high mortality and low fertility, combined with substantial emigration, meant that Victoria had large changes in population structure but only a little change in population size between 1891-1911. Only 130,000 were added to the population between the two dates, compared with nearly three times that number in New South Wales where the base population was almost the same. On at least three occasions, in fact, there was a decrease in the annual total of Victoria's inhabitants and, as was noted earlier, the State's annual increase exceeded one per cent only twice in twenty years.¹⁹ At the same time the masculinity ratio fell from 110 males per 100 females in 1891 to 101 in 1901 and only 99 in 1911. The result of these changes was a marked intercensal movement in distribution of the population by age and sex, of which the estimates appear in Table 19.

TABLE 19

At the census of:	1891		1901		1911	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Age						
0-19	22.5	22.1	22.1	21.8	20.6	20.2
20-49	21.4	19.7	20.5	21.4	21.7	22.6
50+	8.6	5.6	7.7	6.4	7.5	7.4
	<u>92.9</u>		<u>99.9</u>		<u>100.0</u>	
20-29	11.1	10.3	7.9	9.2	8.7	9.2
30-39	6.2	5.8	7.5	7.6	6.6	7.1
40-49	4.0	3.6	5.1	4.6	6.4	6.2

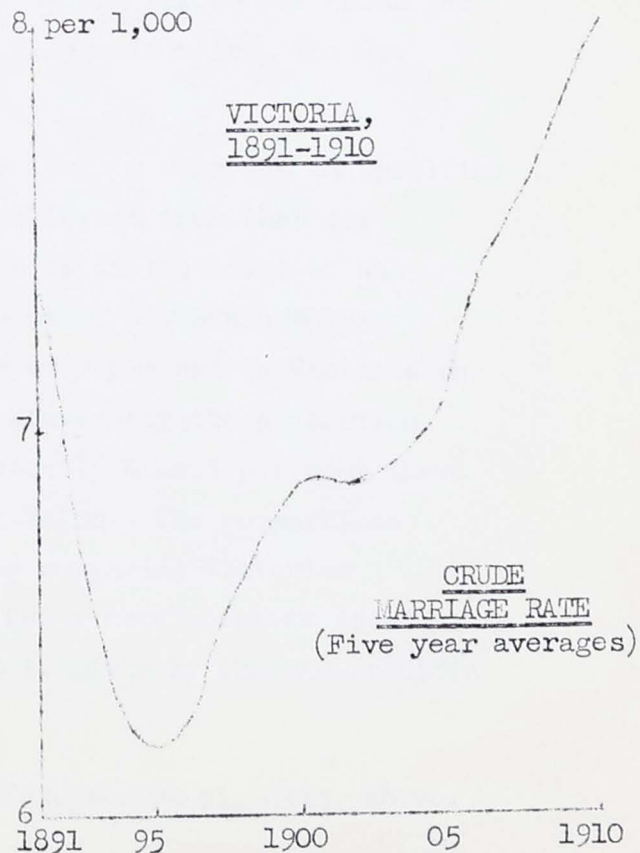
18. The movement of Victorian rates is shown in Figure 10. The comparable Australian graph appears as Figure 3.

19. According to the estimates in *Demography LVI* (1938) p. 154, the losses were in 1895/6 (-5,326), 1901/2 (-1,669) and 1902/3 (-3,489). In 1897/8 the gain was only 175.

The first thing to notice about this table is that, although overall masculinity fell by some 10 per cent, there was no fall in the proportion of men at the ages of family responsibility, 20-49. Within that broad category, however, there were some interesting variations. There was a slight increase in the proportion of men aged 30-39 and a considerable increase of 2.4 per cent in those aged 40-49, the growth in the latter category being equal to the fall in the proportion of males aged 20-29. Between 1891 and 1901, in fact, the fall in the 20-29 age group was even greater, being three times the fall among women of the same age and, thus, restricting the potential for the formation of new marriages and families during the 'nineties. At first glance one might be inclined to think that the increase in femininity to a point of virtual equality between the sexes would provide considerable opportunities for matrimony and childbearing to expand, especially since the increase of females was entirely at ages above 20. Here again, though, refinement of the categories enforces a different conclusion. Four-fifths of the improvement in the proportion 20-49 was confined to the 40-49 year group and the proportion aged 20-29 actually fell between 1891 and 1901 (although the fall was not so sharp as that among males of the same age). In New South Wales, by comparison, the gain in the proportion of women of child-bearing age at this time was spread much more evenly over the whole 20-49 age range.

Knowing that the structure of the Victorian population changed to the extent just described, we might expect to find considerable fluctuation in the State's conjugal experience. The returns of marital statistics and conjugal condition prove that this was, indeed, the case. We have noted that the New South Wales crude marriage rate fell sharply from 1891 to 1894 and then rose with equal rapidity, apart from an hiatus between 1899 and 1905.²⁰ Much the same could be said of Victoria, except that the initial fall there was sharper, the hiatus more evident and the succeeding rise less rapid. In addition the crude marriage rate in Victoria was well below that of New South Wales for all

Fig. 11



20. See p.20, above.

but the first two years of the period surveyed. Analysis of the distribution through the population of the marriages to which this crude rate refers is made much easier in Victoria by the availability of statistics of marriage by age. It is, nevertheless, useful for the purpose of comparison with New South Wales to calculate the Victorian marriage-age index series, as follows:²¹

TABLE 20
Marriage Age Index, Victoria, 1891-1910

<u>Year</u>	<u>Index Number</u>		<u>Year</u>	<u>Index Number</u>	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>		<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
1891	28.62	25.35	1901	30.04	26.31
1892	28.72	25.38	1902	30.15	26.40
1893	29.08	25.56	1903	29.89	26.21
1894	29.12	25.76	1904	29.78	26.30
1895	30.12	25.86	1905	29.78	26.21
1896	29.57	26.05	1906	29.89	26.34
1897	29.74	26.08	1907	29.99	26.50
1898	30.49	26.10	1908	29.95	26.51
1899	29.78	26.10	1909	29.95	26.56
1900	29.89	26.22	1910	29.81	26.53

This series suggests that the age-incidence of marriage for females rose steadily from 1892 to 1896, was stable from 1896 to 1899 and then edged unevenly upward until 1909. Among males the rise in the index was at once more extensive and less regular than that for females, particular features were the very sharp rises of 1894-5 and 1897-8, each of which was followed a year later by a fall of lesser magnitude. Both the irregularity of the series for males and the extent of its increase are in sharp distinction from the New South Wales case.

The pattern of proportions of females marrying at specified ages in Victoria each year is not very different from that for New South Wales: the striking difference is in the level of the various proportions. More than 15 per cent of New South Wales marriages after 1897 were of women under 20 years but in Victoria the proportion was only about 10 per cent. Conversely the proportion marrying at 25-29 in Victoria was consistently 4 or 5 per cent above that for the same age group in New South Wales. The proportions marrying at specified ages are useful for comparing Victorian nuptiality with that of New South Wales but a more accurate idea of the incidence of marriage in Victoria is given by the age-specific marriage rates at each census:

²¹. For the method of calculating the index, see p. 21, n.13, above.

TABLE 21

Age Specific Marriage Rates per 1,000 Population, Victoria

	<u>Aged:</u>	<u>-19</u>	<u>20-24</u>	<u>25-29</u>	<u>30-34</u>	<u>35-39</u>	<u>40-44</u>	<u>45+</u>
<u>Males</u>	1891	0.2	41.0	54.2	31.0	17.0	10.5	4.3
	1901	0.3	41.4	60.7	37.0	20.5	11.0	4.4
	1911	0.5	49.6	73.1	41.4	23.5	12.0	8.3
<u>Females</u>	1891	3.9	66.6	64.9	57.2	26.8	12.6	4.1
	1901	3.3	60.1	44.0	18.9	10.0	5.1	2.0
	1911	4.2	70.6	55.0	23.8	13.6	6.0	2.2

While there was a good deal of movement in the rates for both sexes the range was much greater in the case of females with the 25-29 and 30-34 year olds most affected. While the rates for males in those age groups rose between 1891 and 1901 the female rates fell very sharply and even after 1901 the rise in female rates was only on a par with the continuing male rise. As might be expected the lack of congruity between male and female marriage rates is reflected in the returns of conjugal condition at the various censuses. At all ages in the child bearing range, 20-49, the proportion of women married fell much more than the proportion of men in the same age groups fell. The pertinent figures are:

TABLE 22

Percentage Married of Males and Females at Various Ages in Victoria

	<u>Aged:</u>	<u>20-24</u>	<u>25-29</u>	<u>30-34</u>	<u>35-39</u>	<u>40-44</u>	<u>45-49</u>
<u>Males</u>	1891	10.4%	38.7	61.0	69.9	73.2	74.0
	1901	8.3	33.5	56.6	69.8	74.5	75.5
	1911	10.7	38.6	59.1	67.8	73.1	75.9
<u>Females</u>	1891	30.3	60.1	73.9	78.3	77.8	75.4
	1901	22.0	48.0	66.3	73.5	74.7	72.1
	1911	24.1	51.4	64.3	68.6	71.3	71.0

Even the rise between 1901 and 1911 in the proportion of women aged 20-29 who were married did not retrieve the fall of the preceding decade. By applying the marriage proportions of 1891 to the age distribution of the female population in 1901 and 1911 respectively the following calculation can be made of marriages which might have been expected but did not eventuate for the females concerned.

TABLE 23

Female Marriages 'Lost' in Victoria, 1891-1911.

	Age: <u>20-24</u>	<u>25-29</u>	<u>30-34</u>	<u>35-39</u>	<u>40-44</u>	<u>45-49</u>
No. expected to be married in 1901 had 1891 proportions applied.	17,464	31,751	35,587	33,968	26,095	16,435
No. actually married, 1901 Census.	<u>12,609</u>	<u>25,308</u>	<u>31,884</u>	<u>31,852</u>	<u>25,010</u>	<u>15,705</u>
Marriages 'lost' 1891/1901.	<u>4,855</u>	<u>6,443</u>	<u>3,703</u>	<u>2,116</u>	<u>1,085</u>	<u>730</u>
No. expected to be married in 1911 had 1891 proportions applied.	19,767	33,451	35,989	34,877	33,045	29,003
No. actually married, 1911 Census.	<u>15,700</u>	<u>28,595</u>	<u>31,290</u>	<u>30,541</u>	<u>30,266</u>	<u>27,318</u>
Marriages 'lost' 1891/1911.	<u>4,067</u>	<u>4,856</u>	<u>4,699</u>	<u>4,336</u>	<u>2,779</u>	<u>1,685</u>

As had been the case in New South Wales, so in Victoria, well over 10,000 women in the 'nineties did not realize the hopes of marriage which the conjugal rates of 1891 might have raised. Even as the crude marriage rate rose in the next decade the efficient factor was not an increase in the probability of marriage but an increase in the female population. The 'loss' from 1891 to 1911 was nearly 9,000 women between the ages of 20-29 and over 20,000 between 20-49. The conjugal condition of men, by contrast, varied in a way quite different from that of women. Although the 1891/1901 comparison indicates a 'loss' of over 11,000 marriages in the 20-29 age bracket, the position was reversed at higher ages with more than 20,000 men being married in 1901 whom the 1891 proportions would have left unmarried. By 1911, however, conjugal condition of men at all ages was almost the same as it had been in 1891.²²

The 'loss' of male marriages in the 'nineties and female marriages in both that decade and the next helps to explain the

22. The figures for male marriages compared with 1891 proportions were:

	Age: <u>20-24</u>	<u>25-29</u>	<u>30-34</u>	<u>35-39</u>	<u>40-44</u>	<u>45-49</u>
'Gain' or 'loss' 1891/1901	-2400	-9100	-2700	+10500	+10200	+2200
'Gain' or 'loss' 1891/1911	+149	-21	-849	-852	-64	+749

reduction of total fertility in Victoria but it is not a sufficient explanation. For that one must also take account of the reduction of fertility within marriage revealed by the standardised fertility rates, the child/married women ratios and the estimates of the average size of completed families. The birth rates standardised to account for the distribution of married women were 33.76 (1891), 31.04 (1901) and 30.70 (1911). In other words part of the fall in fertility in Victoria between 1891 and 1901, and a small part of the fall between 1901 and 1911, was due to a reduction in marriage. However the major reduction was of fertility within marriage and its extent is shown by the progress of the ratio of children aged 0-4 to married women aged 15-49, which stood at 1.0962 in 1891, 0.9140 in 1901 and 0.8673 in 1911. Table 24 shows quite distinctly how the fall in marital fertility affected the average size of completed families.

TABLE 24

Wives by Age and Average Issue, Victoria

Wives aged:	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69
Census 1921	3.92	4.27	4.77	5.33	6.03
Census 1911	4.93	5.56	6.24	6.61	6.79
Presumed figure, 1901	6.24	6.61	6.79	-	-
Presumed figure, 1891	6.79	-	-	-	-

Sources: Census, 1911, Vol III p.1143 and Census, 1921, Vol II p.1936

The table may be interpreted as showing that a Victorian woman who had completed her child bearing by 1891 would probably have had at least two, and perhaps three, more children than a woman who bore her children during the two decades we are studying.

To turn from New South Wales and Victoria to South Australia is to turn from the major league to the little league in regard to Australian State populations at the turn of this century. In 1891 South Australia had a population less than one-third that of either New South Wales or Victoria. By 1911 South Australia had less than one-quarter as many people as New South Wales but its size had increased slightly relative to that of Victoria. The differences in total population also reflected the differences between the States in annual growth with the South Australian rate always slightly higher than Victoria's but, during the greater part of the two decades to 1911, about one per cent per annum lower than the rate in New South Wales. Over the whole period the annual growth rate averaged 1.25 per cent to raise the population from 320,000 in 1891 to 400,000 in 1911.

Only a small proportion of the increase in South Australia was due to immigration for there was a net loss of population by migration in fourteen out of the twenty years concerned. As with total growth, this was much worse than New South Wales (which had five years of loss) and marginally better than Victoria (which had only four years of gain by net migration).²³ A census-and-registration estimate of the decennial migration totals yields the following results:

TABLE 25

Net Migration to South Australia
(Census-and-Registration Estimate)

	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
Census population, 1901	184,701	178,456
<u>Minus</u> Census population, 1891	<u>166,801</u>	<u>153,630</u>
Intercensal increase, 1891-1901	17,900	24,826
<u>Minus</u> natural increase	<u>28,619</u>	<u>30,160</u>
Presumed net migration, 1891-1901	<u>-10,719</u>	<u>- 5,334</u>
Census population, 1911	210,092	201,776
<u>Minus</u> Census population, 1901	<u>184,701</u>	<u>178,456</u>
Intercensal increase, 1901-1911	25,391	23,320
<u>Minus</u> natural increase	<u>26,649</u>	<u>27,453</u>
Presumed net migration, 1901-1911	<u>- 1,258</u>	<u>- 4,133</u>

An estimate of the immediate impact of this emigration on the age structure can be made by the forward-survival method, thus:

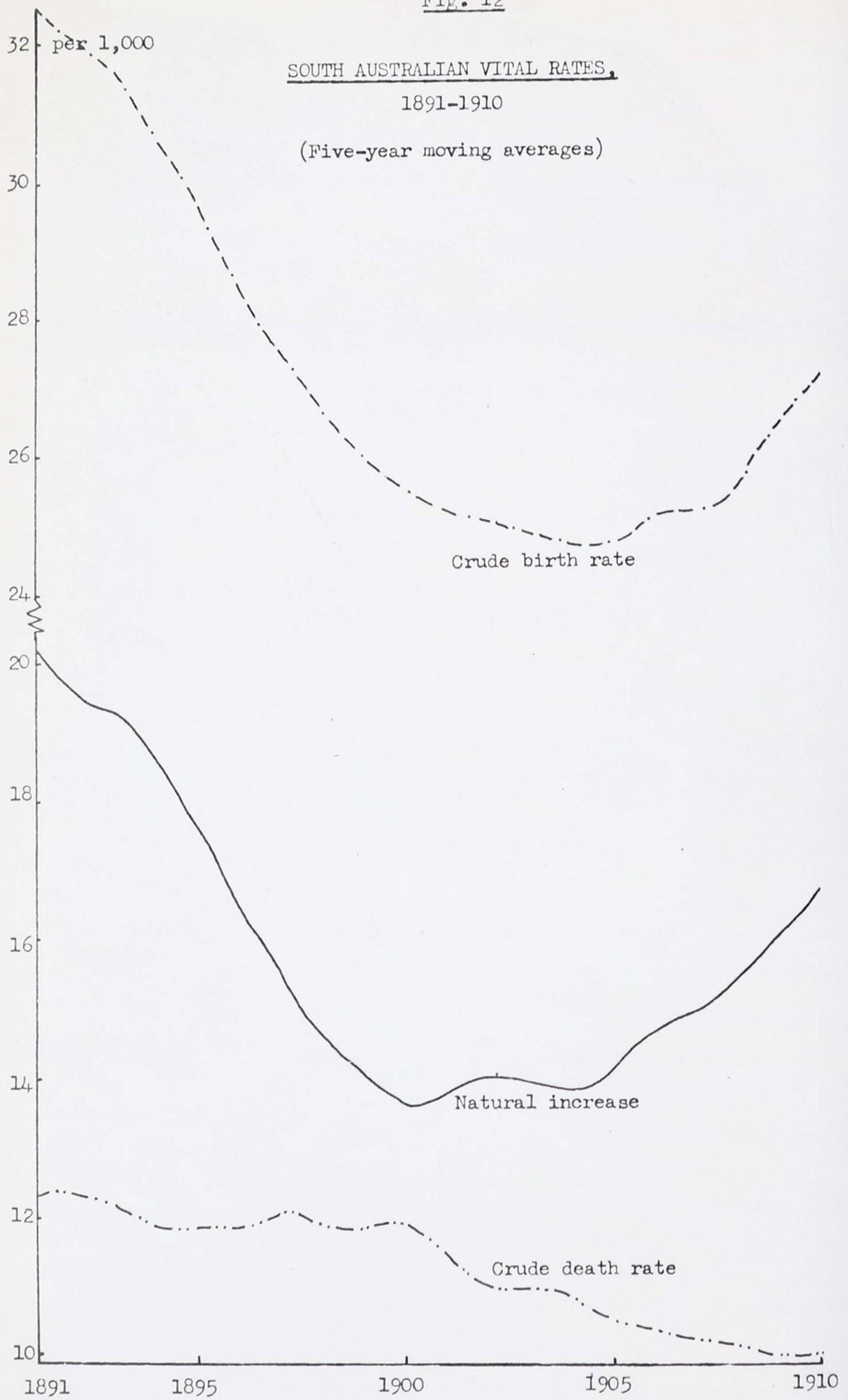
TABLE 26

Net Migration to South Australia (Forward Survival Estimate)
(Thousands)

Migrants aged:	0-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	<u>Totals</u>
<u>Males</u>									
1891-1901	-	-1	-3	-3	-2	-1	-	-	-10
1901-1911	2	-1	-	-1	-1	-1	-1	-	- 3
<u>Females</u>									
1891-1901	-1	-	-1	-2	-1	-1	-	-	- 6
1901-1911	2	-1	-1	-3	-1	-	-	-	- 4

23. This statement is based on the migration estimate of Demography LVI (1938) p.158 and is only as correct as that estimate. Nevertheless the relative position of the States is fairly represented.

Fig. 12



The net loss indicated for each sex in each decade meant that South Australia, like Victoria, had to rely on natural increase as the main source of population growth. The forward-survival method suggests there was a gain of two thousand immigrant children of each sex in 1901-1911 but the method is least reliable at the most extreme ages and little weight can be placed on those figures. What is more reliable and more significant is the estimated emigration of males and females from the 20-49 age range. Since the maximum level of South Australia's masculinity ratio was only 105:100 the loss of some eight thousand males from the 20-49 year-old population must have had an adverse effect on the State's nuptiality and fertility. Similarly the loss of mature women in 1901-11 would have tended to depress the natural increase of the population in that period.

The natural increase of South Australia's population and the constituent elements of the increase were:

	<u>Births</u>		<u>Deaths</u>		<u>Natural Increase</u>	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
1891-1900	50,979	49,030	22,360	18,870	28,619	30,160
1901-1910	47,687	45,216	21,038	17,763	26,649	27,453

Source: South Australia, Statistical Register, 1900 p.7 and 1910 p.9

To produce these totals the South Australian population experienced the following vital rates:²⁴

TABLE 27

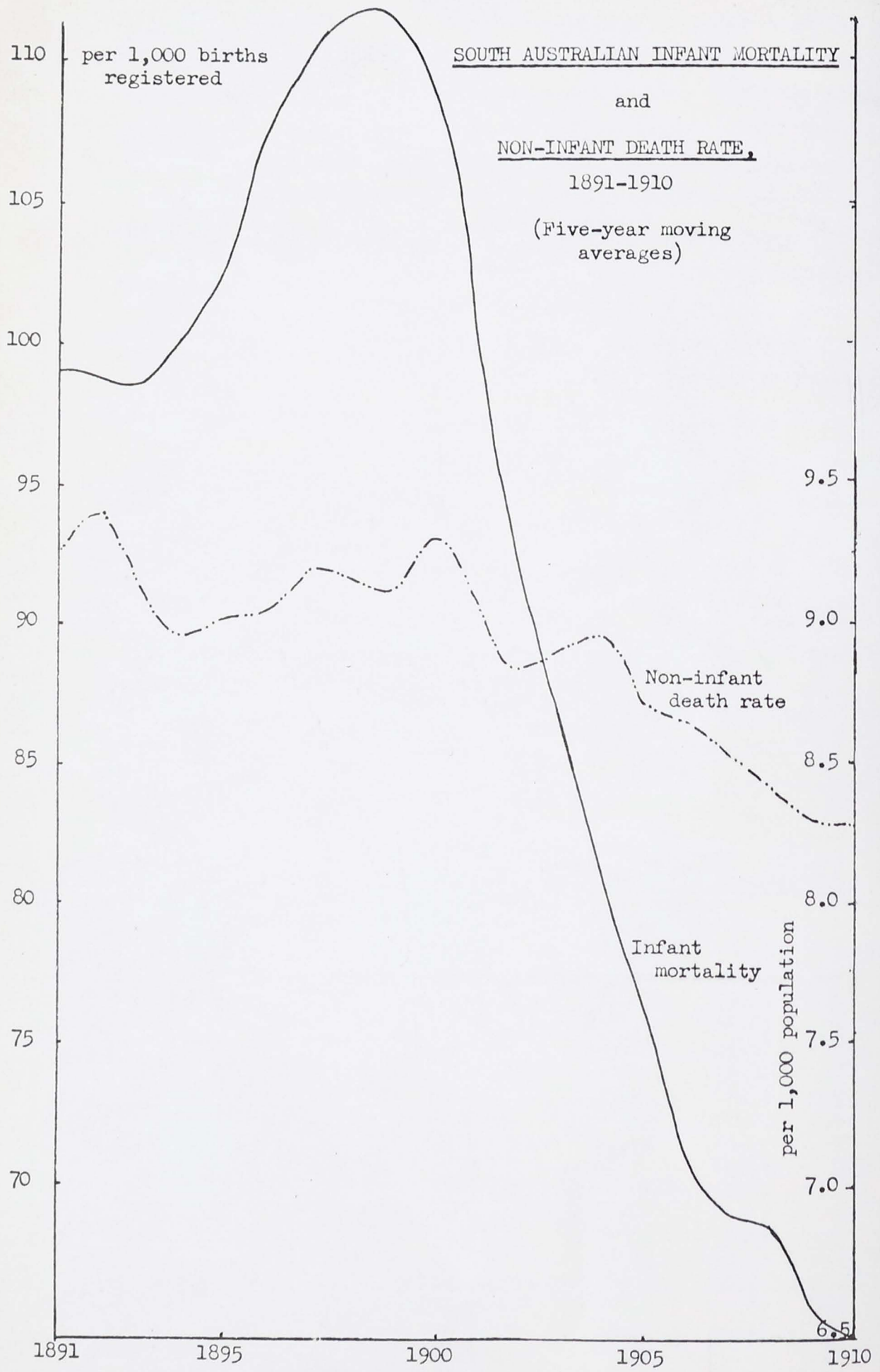
Vital Rates, South Australia, 1891-1910

	<u>Rate of Natural Increase</u>		<u>Crude Birth Rate</u>		<u>Crude Death Rate</u>	
	<u>per 1,000</u>	<u>5 yr. av.</u>	<u>per 1,000</u>	<u>5 yr. av.</u>	<u>per 1,000</u>	<u>5 yr. av.</u>
1891	20.23	20.23	33.41	32.53	13.17	12.30
2	20.69	19.58	32.02	31.97	11.33	12.38
3	18.07	19.29	31.47	31.46	13.40	12.17
4	18.62	18.63	30.27	30.49	11.65	11.86
5	18.85	17.63	30.16	29.51	11.31	11.88
6	16.95	16.41	28.54	28.29	11.60	11.88
7	15.67	15.46	27.15	27.52	11.48	12.06
8	11.99	14.65	25.37	26.57	13.38	11.92
9	13.85	14.12	26.39	25.95	12.54	11.83
1900	14.80	13.62	25.44	25.53	10.64	11.91
1	14.29	13.81	25.41	25.23	11.12	11.42
2	13.18	14.05	25.08	25.05	11.90	10.99
3	12.95	13.91	23.84	24.87	10.90	10.95
4	15.07	13.83	25.49	24.70	10.42	10.86
5	14.09	14.18	24.54	24.69	10.45	10.51
6	13.90	14.72	24.57	25.09	10.66	10.36
7	14.89	14.94	25.05	25.17	10.16	10.23
8	15.67	15.40	25.81	25.56	10.14	10.15
9	16.17	16.03	25.91	26.42	9.74	9.98
1910	16.41	16.71	26.50	27.11	10.09	10.00

Source: Demography LVI (1938) pp.157, 163, 165

24. See next page.

Fig. 13



When the graph of these rates (Figure 12) is compared with the corresponding graphs for New South Wales and Victoria (Figures 6 and 9 respectively) some interesting points emerge. The revival of South Australia's birth rate was much stronger than that of the other States, for example. Also the trough in the South Australian birth rate was much deeper than that in New South Wales. Thus the revival in South Australia merely restored the relative position of the two States to the level that had prevailed between 1890 and 1895. At the end of our period, in fact, the crude birth rate was almost as high in South Australia as in New South Wales and substantially higher than in Victoria, a situation much changed from 1890. It should also be noticed that South Australia had a distinctly higher rate of natural increase than Victoria had throughout the period, not because South Australia had a higher birth rate but because it had a noticeably lower death rate.

The non-infant death rate in South Australia (Figure 13) declined in much the same way as those of Victoria and New South Wales but, whereas the South Australian rate was roughly 0.5 per 1,000 higher than the New South Wales rate for most of the period, it was nearly always about 2.0 per 1,000 lower than the Victorian rate. At no time in our period did the non-infant death rate rise above 10.0 per 1,000 and by 1910 it was below 8.5 per 1,000.²⁵ Except for a couple of years at the end of the 1890s infant mortality was markedly and consistently lower in South Australia than in the other States, the margin often being as much as 10 deaths per 1,000 live births per annum. The reasons for South Australia's better record do not seem to have been investigated but plausible suggestions would include the earlier development of effective public health measures in Adelaide, less intense urban crowding and, possibly, a less oppressive climate, and the more vigorous development of infant

24. In Table 24 there is a discrepancy in the 5-year averages for 1909 and 1910, arising from the fact that the Demography figures for crude birth rate minus crude death rate in 1911 do not equal the rate of natural increase. In a letter to the author dated 17 October 1968 the Commonwealth Statistician advised that the crude birth rate figure for 1911 should be 26.86 per 1,000, not 23.86. The 5-year average figures for crude birth rate in Table 24 should therefore be 26.01 (1909) and 26.71 (1910). The correction was to have appeared in Demography 1966 but had not been made by late-1970.

25. To set South Australian mortality in context, it may be pointed out that when the State's crude death-rate was 10.1 per 1,000 (in 1910) England & Wales were still experiencing a crude death-rate of 13.8 per 1,000. [See D.V. Glass: Population Policies and Movements in Europe (Frank Cass & Co. London 1940/1967) p.5]

welfare services.²⁶

Given the limited extent of migration throughout the period, the low fertility and low mortality of South Australia had the natural result of giving the State an older population. In the decade after 1901 the proportion of minors fell by about 2.5 per cent while the proportions of the population at ages 20-49 and 50+ each increased by lesser amounts. Within the 'mature-age' group that is of most interest in a study of fertility, the 20-29 year old males decreased in proportion to other age-groups during the 'nineties but recovered their relative position between 1901 and 1910: the proportion aged 30-39 also diminished in the former decade but experienced no later recovery. On the other hand the proportion of females in each of the two age groups increased slightly at each census. The proportional distribution of the population by age at each census was as follows:

TABLE 28

Percentage Distribution of South Australian
Population by Age and Sex

At the Census of:	1891		1901		1911	
Age	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
0-19	24.8	24.2	23.5	23.2	21.0	20.6
20-49	21.5	18.3	20.8	20.0	22.2	21.4
50+	5.8	5.3	6.5	6.0	7.8	7.0
	<u>99.9</u>		<u>100.0</u>		<u>100.0</u>	
20-29	9.3	8.7	8.3	8.8	10.0	9.6
30-39	7.5	5.9	6.9	6.5	6.8	6.6
40-49	4.7	3.7	5.6	4.7	5.4	5.2

For the period between 1891 and 1900 the contrary movement of male and female proportions in the age groups 20-29 and 30-39 is reflected in the age-specific marriage rates. As can be seen in Table 26, the rate for women aged 20-24 fell sharply, for 25-29 year olds

26. On the last point see Mary J. Dampney: "Health and Medical Services in Australia" (Unpublished MS/1951/Copy in Australian National University Library) pp. 2:17 and 6:7f, who notes the early voluntary work of the Mothers' and Babies' Health Association in South Australia. Another early development in Adelaide was the establishment by the Reverend Joseph Berry of a district nursing service covering the eastern part of the City about 1894, a decade before Sydney had a similar organisation. See my "Establishment of a Central Methodist Mission in Adelaide" (BA thesis University of Adelaide 1966) p.28.

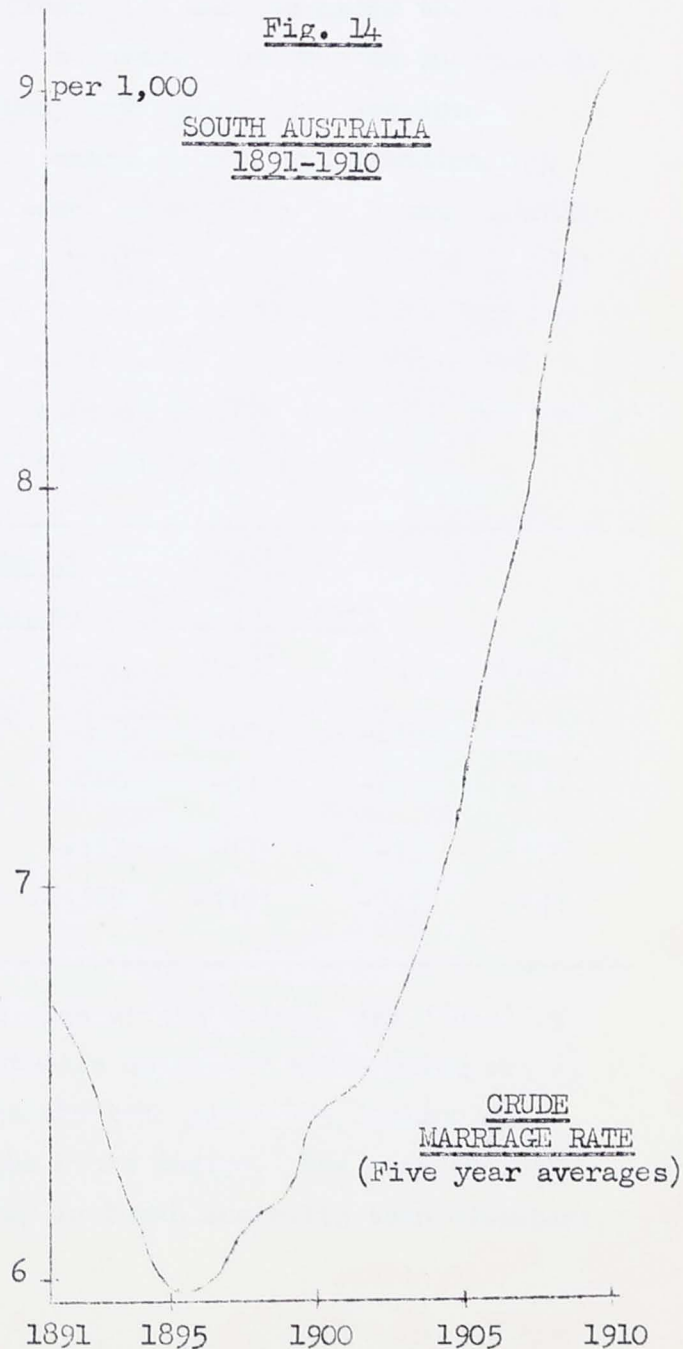
there was little change and for the group aged 30-34 there was a marked rise in the incidence of marriage by 1900. Among men, however the experience of 25-29 and 30-34 year olds was very little changed between the censuses and the rate for 20-24 year olds fell only about half as much as that of women of the same age.

TABLE 29

Age Specific Marriage Rates per 1,000 Population,
South Australia.

	<u>Aged:</u>	<u>-19</u>	<u>20-24</u>	<u>25-29</u>	<u>30-34</u>	<u>35-39</u>	<u>40-44</u>	<u>45+</u>
<u>Males</u>	1891	0.2	49.1	57.2	28.1	13.1	10.1	4.2
	1901	0.3	39.2	58.8	29.4	17.4	9.2	3.8
	1911	0.4	57.4	78.6	41.3	23.1	11.0	5.2
<u>Females</u>	1891	4.3	78.0	39.1	13.9	7.8	5.9	2.3
	1901	3.0	59.4	40.9	19.2	8.0	4.2	1.8
	1911	5.1	85.7	61.6	25.0	13.2	6.0	2.6

Considered in conjunction with the preceding table of percentage age distribution these age specific rates make it easier to understand the course of the crude marriage rate in South Australia (Figure 14). The South Australian rate was lower than that of Victoria, until 1904, and of New South Wales, until 1906, and lacked the strong recovery which was evident in those two States in the late 1890's. The decline in South Australia in the early 'nineties was greater than that in New South Wales - though less than in Victoria - but its recovery was stronger than either of theirs in the first decade of the twentieth century. This recovery in the crude marriage rate may be ascribed mainly to conjunction of a moderate increase between 1901 and 1910 in the proportion of both men and women aged 20-29 and a considerable rise in the age specific marriage rates



of the two groups within that range.

These movements in the age groups most likely to found new families did not lead automatically to such foundations, as can be seen in the census estimates of conjugal condition (Table 30).

TABLE 30

Percentage Married of Males and Females
at Various Ages in South Australia

Aged:		20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49
<u>Males</u>	1891	10.0	38.4	62.4	74.0	76.3	78.9
	1901	9.0	36.8	59.1	68.9	74.4	76.3
	1911	12.2	42.3	63.1	72.5	76.2	77.9
<u>Females</u>	1891	29.2	63.3	79.2	82.9	82.4	79.9
	1901	23.3	52.4	71.1	77.8	79.7	78.2
	1911	27.9	56.0	70.0	73.5	76.3	75.7

The proportion of men aged 20-24 and 25-29 who were married rose between 1901 and 1910, as did the proportion married among the 20-24 year old women. At all higher ages, however, there was an increase in the proportion of women whom matrimony had passed by. Absolute marriage registrations and the crude marriage rate notwithstanding, there was relative fall in the incidence of marriage in South Australia between 1891 and 1910. More 20-34 year old males were married in 1911 than could have been expected on the basis of 1891 experience but for males in 1901 and females at both censuses the proportions married compared unfavourably with the proportions recorded in 1891. The 'gains' or 'losses' of marriages, compared with 1891, were:

TABLE 31

Marriages 'Lost' in South Australia, 1891-1911

Aged:	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49
1891/1901 male	+89	-218	-425	-613	-219	-232
female	-1086	-1542	-1000	-578	-259	-117
1891/1911 male	+781	+749	+117	-179	-13	-105
female	-265	-1375	-1389	-1181	-721	-441

Allowing for the relative size of the States, the 'loss' of marriages was as great in South Australia as in New South Wales or Victoria. Within the marriages that did take place the decline of fertility was much the same as in the other States. The standardised birth rate fell and rose more sharply in South Australia than elsewhere,

Fig. 16

Rates of Natural Increase per 1,000.

VARIOUS STATES

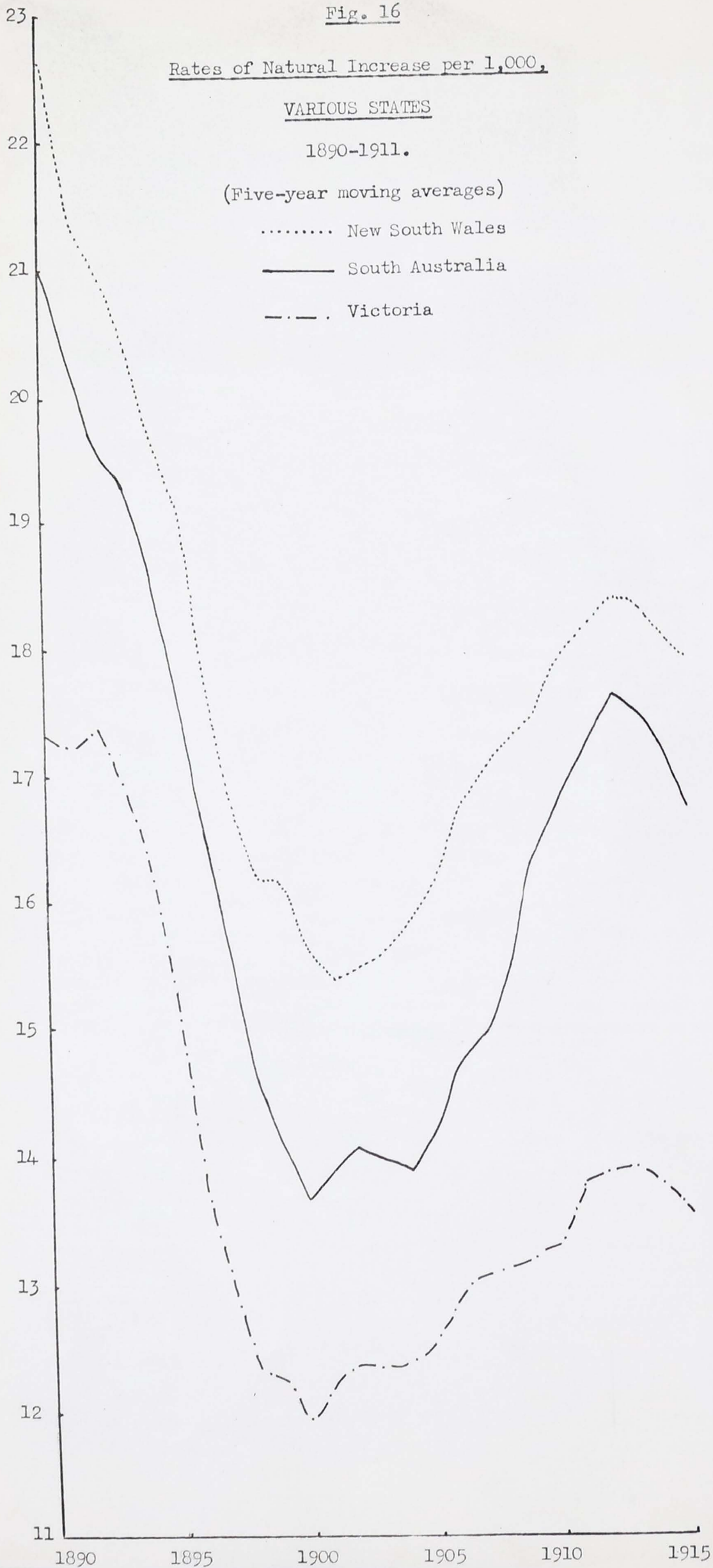
1890-1911.

(Five-year moving averages)

..... New South Wales

— South Australia

- - - Victoria



beginning at 32.38, (1891), falling to 29.90 (1901) and recovering to 32.71, making this the only State where the distribution of married women was as favourable to fertility in 1911 as it had been in 1891. The record of fertility within marriage was not so good, though. The ratio of children aged 0-4 to women aged 15-49 in South Australia fell from 1.1949 in 1891 to 0.9365 in 1901 and 0.9145 in 1911. As with measures of population structure and growth considered earlier, this ratio was higher in South Australia than in Victoria, although lower than in New South Wales. The same comment applies to the average size of completed families. In South Australia the figures were:

TABLE 32

Wives by Age and Average Issue, South Australia

	Wives aged: <u>45-49</u>	<u>50-54</u>	<u>55-59</u>	<u>60-64</u>	<u>65-69</u>
Census 1921	4.11	4.50	5.17	5.90	6.38
Census 1911	5.32	6.10	6.52	6.76	7.14
Presumed figure, 1901	6.52	6.76	7.14	-	-
Presumed figure, 1891	7.14	-	-	-	-

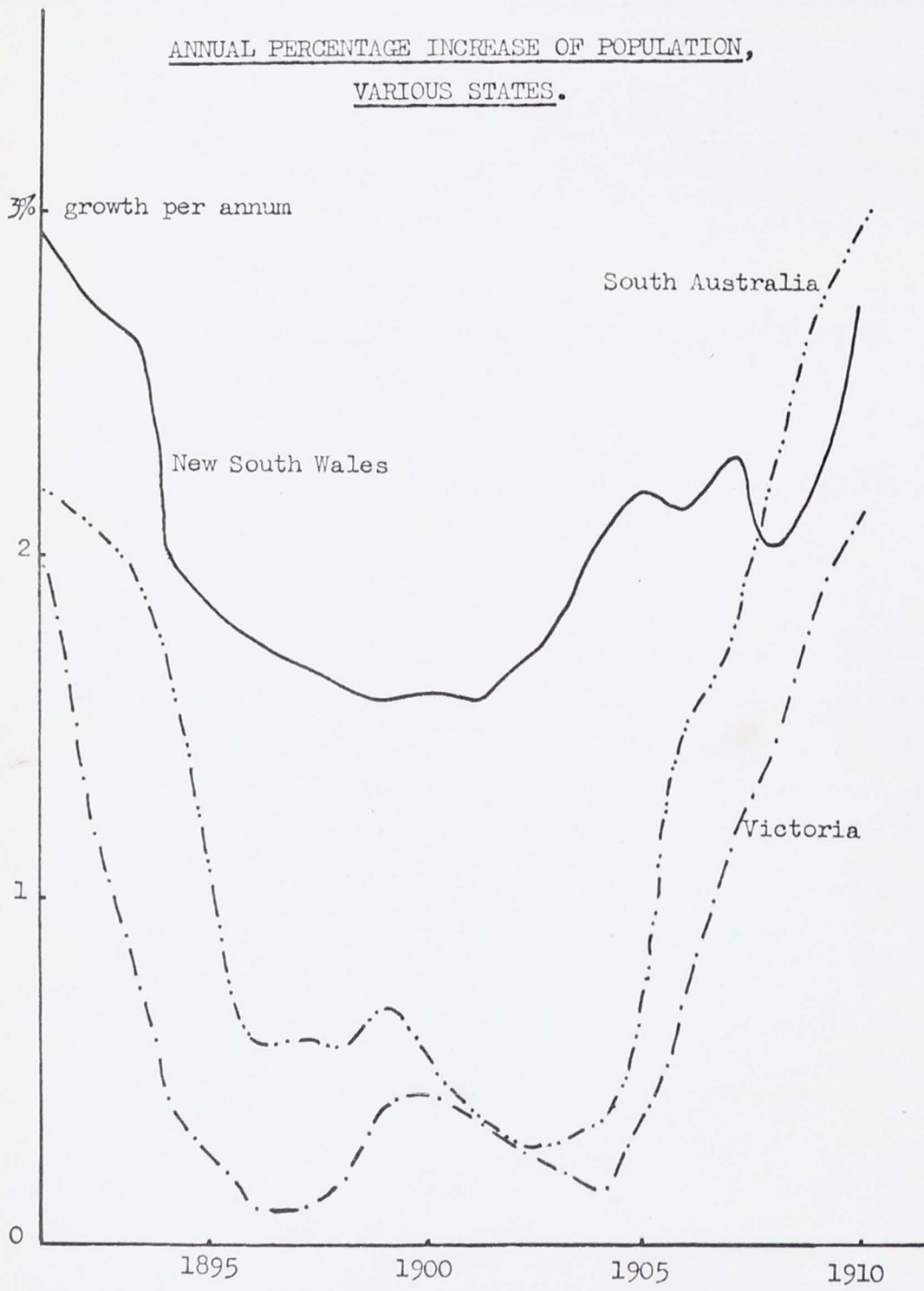
Source: Census 1911, Vol III p.1143 and Census 1921, Vol II p.1940.

Between 1891 and 1911 the size of the average family in South Australia was cut by about 50 per cent. Since the number of marriages also failed to rise proportionately with the increase of population it is evident that fertility was considerably restricted.

This chapter has been based entirely on the statistics of Australian population structure and growth which were gathered between 1891 and 1911. The statistics show that during those two decades the population of the whole country increased by more than one-third, aged considerably and became less masculine. Marriage declined for a decade, then recovered, while fertility within marriage fell very steeply and failed to recover. The demographic experience of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia was on the same general lines but with differences of intensity. Victoria suffered badly from the emigration of people in the most fertile years of their lives, South Australia had a small loss of this kind and New South Wales was hardly affected at all. In each State fertility was adversely affected during the 1890s by a reduction in the incidence of marriage but limitation of fertility within marriage accounted for an even greater part of the fall in the crude birth rate. In respect of marriage and fertility within marriage Victoria again experienced the most severe, and New South Wales the mildest, decline. As can be seen from Figure 15 (facing p.42) and Figure 16 (opposite), New South Wales had the highest

Fig. 15

ANNUAL PERCENTAGE INCREASE OF POPULATION,
VARIOUS STATES.



rates of total population growth and natural increase, followed by South Australia and Victoria. New South Wales was the State where fluctuations in growth were least violent but, as we shall see in succeeding chapters, it was also the State in which pessimistic opinions about the peopling of Australia were most often expressed.

CHAPTER II

Differentials in Australian Fertility, 1890 - 1911

Material presented in the previous chapter showed that fertility was not constant either between or within the Australian States during the period 1891-1911. Given this inconstancy, a uniform decline of fertility within all sections of a given population should not be expected and studies made of other populations at other times support this conclusion. Investigations in the United Kingdom and Europe, as well as the United State of America, have emphasised the extent of differentials in fertility according to social status, religious affiliation, geographical location and so on. While a survey of these studies indicates lines of investigation that help to provide an understanding of the course of the decline in Australian fertility at the turn of the century, it must be noted that some recent writing has called in question the kind of inference commonly drawn from fertility differentials.

Although variation in physiological capacity to reproduce may seem the most obvious cause of changes in fertility it is not a plausible explanation when the differentials are as fluid as they were in Australia between 1891 and 1911. Physiologically-based differentials are unlikely and differences stemming from changes in sexual practice are unprovable, so investigation must be concentrated on those differentials about which there is more public, quantifiable evidence. The four main groups of differential usually distinguished are those relating to marital and familial structure, to geographical location, to social or socio-economic conditions and to what might be called the intellectual or cultural environment. The first group covers variations in fertility related to age at marriage and marriage duration, and variations according to existing family size. Concerning differentials by age at marriage J.W. Innes, who surveyed fertility trends in England and Wales for the last quarter of the previous century and the first third of the present, concluded that even when allowance was made for incomplete participation by some age groups in the period of decline there was "a positive association between rate of decrease in fertility and age of wife at marriage."¹ Innes recognised, in his qualification about incomplete participation, that age at marriage and duration of marriage exercise a mutual bias. More recent commentators have stressed even more strongly the difficulty of separating the effect of early marriage from the influence of lengthy marriage, at least with regard

1. J.W. Innes: Class Fertility Trends in England and Wales, 1876-1934. (Princeton University Press 1938) p.35.

to current fertility.² Another element in the same matrix is that of current differential fertility according to existing family size which was treated in T.A. Coghlan's discussion of childbirth in New South Wales. He claimed that whereas the birth rates for fifth and sixth issue were substantially higher than those for second and third issue in 1887 the positions had been reversed by 1898. In other words the American experience of medium sized families replacing large families had a parallel in New South Wales.³

While discussion of differentials specific to family size is hindered by the small volume of evidence, geographic differentials have been much more fully treated, chiefly those distinguishing rural from urban behaviour. Much, but not all, of the investigation which has been done in this area stems from the interest long generated by the effect on population characteristics of the abnormal, 'wicked' city as opposed to the so-called normalcy of the countryside. Examples of regional variations not wholly resulting from the influence of cities have been gathered by Professor Glass, who presents tables indicating the changes in fertility over time and between the provinces of France and Belgium and the Counties of England and Wales.⁴ Among factors he mentions as being related to the regional differences are the extent of industrialization, which has to be fairly intense before it has a marked effect; age-sex composition and the level of female employment; and the class composition of a region. The last characteristic is difficult to isolate in a large region and is probably a less useful index for Australian conditions than, say, climate, distance from service centres and density of population - all of which will be

2. Donald J. Bogue: Principles of Demography (Wiley New York 1969) p.729B, argues that, while age-specific and duration-specific fertility do not correspond perfectly, especially at extreme ages of child bearing, "Whichever variable is used as the explicit criterion of classification, the alternate criterion is also used implicitly."

K. Horstman and F. Hage: "Age Specific or Duration Specific Fertility Rates" in Proceedings of the World Population Conference (1954) (United Nations New York 1955) Vol IV p.333, suggest that the duration specific rates have the advantage of showing the effect on fertility of special circumstances (e.g. postponement of child bearing during the war).
3. T.A. Coghlan: Childbirth in New South Wales. A Study in Statistics. (N.S.W. Govt. Printer Sydney 1900) p.18. Coghlan was New South Wales' Government Statistician throughout the 1890s and he features largely in Chapters 3 and 4 infra.

Cf. the American evidence of changing family size (not current fertility) in F.W. Notestein: "The Decrease in Size of Families from 1890 to 1910" in Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly IX:4 (October 1931) p.187.
4. Glass: op cit pp.62f (on England and Wales); 194f (France); 200 (Belgium).

considered later. One might even say of the indices Glass lists that it is difficult to see how one could distinguish a regional differential from the related indices which are not peculiar to any one region.

As for the specific rural/urban differential, which has been so widely observed as to be taken virtually for granted, the United States Bureau of Census' figures for "Number of Children Ever-born per 1,000 women 50-74 years" in 1910 make the point very clearly. For the United States as a whole the numbers were 4,300 (in urban areas), 4,600 (rural non-farm) and as high as 5,600 (rural farm).⁵ If this sort of experience was repeated in Australia and, more particularly, if the rural/urban differentials changed between 1890 and 1910 it would be significant for the picture of population development we are trying to draw.

An area in which it is difficult to make precise separation of possible causes is that of social and socio-economic variations in fertility. There is, nevertheless, a considerable volume of statistical material on those very differentials.⁶ More speculative essays in the same field include those of Malthus and Nitti. In his Essay on Population, for instance, Malthus suggested that there is a direct link between demand for labour and the growth of population. In fact he believed that availability of employment will have more effect than availability of food on the progress of population. "When the demand for labour is either stationary or increasing very slowly," Malthus said, "people... will of course be deterred from marrying. But if a demand for labour continue increasing with some rapidity, although the supply of food be uncertain...the population will evidently go on, till it is positively checked by famine or the diseases arising from severe want."⁷ Speaking at a later date of the Australian situation, without supplying any additional evidence, T.A. Coghlan put the Malthusian view even more bluntly: "it has always happened in Australia that where there is a demand for labour there is a demand for children, and when there is such a demand, children are born."⁸ This facile connection

5. U.S. Bureau of Census: Population, Differential Fertility 1940 and 1910. Standardized Fertility Rates and Reproduction Rates (G.P.O. Washington DC 1944) p.8, quoted in Warren S. Thompson: Population Problems (edn.4 McGraw-Hill New York 1953) p.177.

6. See, for example, Innes: op cit; Glass: op cit; and D. Heron: On the Relation of Fertility in Man to Social Status (Drapers' Company Research Memoirs London 1906).

7. T.R. Malthus: An Essay on the Principle of Population (Edn.6 John Murray London 1826) Vol II Book III Chapter XIV, "General Observations", especially p.234f.

8. Coghlan: op cit p.21

of movements in fertility with the demand for labour was soon contradicted by an English statistician, G.U. Yule, who supported his conclusions with more hard evidence than Coghlan ever troubled to publish. Yule was discussing the Political Arithmetic of Arthur Young but his observation could have applied equally well to Coghlan: "in so far as the response to a demand for labour - to brisk trade - is not immigration, but a rise in the birth-rate, the present demand is only met by a delivery of the commodity some twenty years later; by that time the 'commodity' may not be required."⁹ While Yule's comment probably overestimates the degree of farsightedness most people bring to family planning, it does suggest that caution is needed in approaching purely economic explanations of changes in fertility. This caution should be reinforced by the results of R.H. Hooker's study of marriage rates (which are usually the causal link in fertility/economic cycle arguments) in nineteenth century England. His statistical analyses led him to the conclusion that correlations of trade and the marriage rate are often overstated.¹⁰

An influential Italian theorist of the 1890s who challenged the Malthusian version of the link between socio-economic conditions and the birth rate and whose views about population were known in Australia was F.S. Nitti. His opinion was succinctly expressed in two propositions:

- a. The lower the economic situation and the moral feelings of the popular classes, the more restricted are their pleasures to those of sense, and so much the more is their birth rate abundant and disordered.
- b. Every improvement of the general condition, every diffusion of wealth, every increase of wages and of the standard of living exercise a useful influence on the birth rate.¹¹

While not necessarily agreeing with him in points of detail or sharing his ideological presuppositions, many writers have shared Nitti's general belief in a relationship between fertility and social conditions. Sydenstricker and Notestein, for example, found evidence in the United States Census returns for 1910 that differentials of fertility according

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9. G.U. Yule: "On the Changes in the Marriage- and Birth-Rates in England and Wales during the Past Half-Century; with an Inquiry as to their Probable Causes" in Journal of the Royal Statistical Society (LXIX:1 March 1906) p.131.
 10. R.H. Hooker: "Correlation of the Marriage-Rate with Trade" in Journal of the Royal Statistical Society LXIV:3 (September 1901) p.485ff.
A plausible argument for a link between changes in wage rates and changes in fertility was put by G.H. Wood: "Changes in Average Wages in New South Wales, 1823-98" in ibid LXIV:2 (June 1901) p.327.
 11. F.S. Nitti: Population and the Social System (S. Sonnenschein London 1894) p.162.

to social status were appearing in both urban and rural areas, although with different force in each case.¹² A number of studies have made the same point in regard to British experience. Innes observed that after standardizing for age at marriage it was clear that, for all social classes in England, "the lower the status of the class, the more slowly did it participate in the downward trend" in the fertility of marriages contracted between the periods 1851/61 and 1881/86. T.H.C. Stevenson also found that there had been a widening of the differential in the generation 1851/61 to 1881/91, while Heron, noticing the same change, added his own value judgement to the facts:

The relationship between inferior status and high birth-rate has practically doubled during the last fifty years and it is clear that in London at least the reduction in size of families has begun at the wrong [i.e. 'upper'] end of the social scale and is increasing in the wrong way.¹³

It is clear, then, that the idea of variations in fertility being related to social factors has had a wide currency despite some of the difficulties involved in expressing the relationship precisely. The notion of social status, for example, is not easily defined and, as we noticed in the preceding quotation from Heron, is liable to carry non-objective overtones. The kind of data most readily available often relate to occupational, rather than social, status and the two are therefore confused. Even if this confusion is overcome it may still be difficult to devise a measure of social status. Thus Heron calculated a correlation coefficient of + .697 (\pm .067) between the birth rate and the proportion of the population living more than two to a room but Innes found that the status-dwelling-fertility index was clouded by "a direct positive relation between fertility and size of tenement more or less irrespective of social class."¹⁴ The employment of domestic servants was also used as a status measure by Heron and by Newsholme and Stevenson but it is of little use in the Australian context or even in the English context, if any substantial time span is considered, since the period we are considering was one during which the institution of domestic service was becoming as rare in England as it had already become in Australia.¹⁵ Yet another difficulty with status measures is that what appear as status differentials may, in fact, mask age

12. E. Sydenstricker and F.W. Notestein: "Differential Fertility According to Social Class" in Journal of the American Statistical Association. XXV:169 (March 1930) p.32.

13. Innes: op cit p.43.
T.H.C. Stevenson: op cit p.416f.
Heron: op cit p.21

14. ibid, p.14; and Innes: op cit, p.38.

15. Heron: loc cit; and Newsholme & Stevenson: "The Decline of Human Fertility..." p.67.

differentials: high social (or, more precisely, occupational) status is commonly linked with late marriage and brings the wife's fertility within the ambit of age differentials.¹⁶ Some of the difficulties of definition and description could possibly be overcome by the use of Glass's four factor "index of economic status" but this is rather too precise a measure to apply to the Australian conditions of 1890-1910 on less than a metropolitan scale.¹⁷ It is enough to have noted that socio-economic differentials have been found measurable (with limited precision) and significant. It will be worthwhile noting their extent and significance on the Australian scene.

The fourth category of fertility differentials which have been widely noticed is that which might be labelled 'intellectual' since it takes account of both religious and educational influences. The relationship between family size and religious affiliation is a matter of popular - though not necessarily accurate - observation. However careful observers, too, have produced acceptable evidence of the widespread incidence of the relationship. J. Sanders has written of religiously differentiated fertility in late-nineteenth century Holland; A. Grotjahn quotes figures from H. Krose, "Geburtenruckgang und Konfession", which "show clearly that the fall in the birth-rate is not stopping at the Catholics. It only falls somewhat later, and not as rapidly, as in the Protestant and Jewish population"; M. Booth illustrates the point from the history of Leeds and Bradford which are "so close to one another that they almost form one city" with "almost identical pursuits and accustomed to live upon the same economic level." Yet the birth-rate was 23.2 in Leeds when it was 19.3 in Bradford, probably because "in Leeds the proportion of Jews and Irish Catholics is well-known to be very high; while the Bradford working-class is almost purely English [and thus, presumably, Protestant]." Even in recent studies

16. Sydenstricker & Notestein: op cit

17. Glass: op cit p.77. The four factors considered are: "(a) the number of males aged 14 years and over engaged in professional and subordinate professional occupations per 100 of all occupied males aged 14 years and over; (b) the number of males in all occupations per 100 males employed in occupations indicative of areas of low economic status; (c) the number of female domestic servants per 100 of the population excluding domestic servants; and (d) the percentage of the total population in private families living less than two in a room." The factors are arranged "so that they all suggest height of economic status rather than the reverse, and since they are economic indices they avoid, to some extent, begging the question of what constitutes 'social class'."

"religion and religiousness" has been regarded as an important factor in fertility.¹⁸ Evidence like this suggests that religious differentials are worth considering: there is little problem of definition, apart from the difficulty of nominal adherence, and the necessary data are readily available from the various Australian censuses.¹⁹

Education may be expected to affect family building in two ways. To the extent that formal education issues in improved occupational status it may simply mask age differentials in the same way as the status differentials mentioned earlier. This is not to deny, however, that educational achievement may be an effective factor in the movement of fertility. Alternatively education may be said to have a direct effect on family building through family planning. Insofar as most of the mechanical and chemical contraceptives that have become common during the past century require a certain degree of sophistication for their effective use, the extent of a population's education might be expected to influence its fertility. This has certainly been shown to be the case in American surveys and was suggested by earlier studies in the

18. J. Sanders: The Declining Birth-rate in Rotterdam (The Hague 1931) Chapter III /quoted in United Nations: The Determinants and Consequences of Population Trends (U.N. catalogue no: 53. XIII.3) p.90 n.171/ found that the size of families within all occupational groups was largest among adherents of the Reformed (Calvinist) Church, followed in order by Roman Catholics and members of the Dutch Reformed Church.

A. Grotjahn: "Differential birth-rate in Germany" in M. Sanger (ed.): Proceedings of the World Population Conference, 1927 (Arnold London 1927) p.150f., quoting H. Krose: "Geburten-rückgang und Konfession" Aus Des Deutschen Volkes Wille zum Leben (herausg. von Fassbender, 1916 Freiberg 1917) whose figures of legitimate births after marriage were:

	1891-95	1913
Wholly Catholic marriages	5.2	4.7
Wholly Protestant marriages	4.2	2.9
Wholly Jewish marriages	3.3	2.2

M. Booth: "Religious belief as affecting the growth of population" in Hibbert Journal (XLIX 1914) p.138ff. There is some 'discussion' of the article by Eva H. M'Laren in ibid p.658.

Charles F. Westoff, R.G. Potter Jr., and P.C. Sagi: The Third Child. A Study in the Prediction of Fertility. (Princeton University Press 1963) Chapter VIII, "Religion and Religiousness", make a carefully qualified statement that religious affiliation continues to affect fertility.

19. But see D.V. Glass: "Differential Fertility, Ability and Educational Objectives" (Godfrey Thomson Lecture 1961) p.10f on "the existence of conflict within a given Church" over family limitation and "the influence of involvement in that Church upon the reproductive behaviour of its members." Thus "even within a given Church which is opposed to birth control there may be a sharp conflict conditioned by one's position in the social structure."

United Kingdom. Thus T.H.C. Stevenson declared that those who have seen his table of fertility according to social class between 1851 and 1911 yet maintain that the change in fertility patterns was due to natural causes "will have to explain why these should have operated first on the most prosperous and educated classes."²⁰ Against this opinion, which at least suggests that educational differentials are worth considering, it is necessary to set Methorst's view that the role of knowledge (and, by inference, education) in the form of propaganda has been overstated, at least in the Dutch case.²¹ Although Methorst's caution must be kept in mind, the American and English examples indicate that there would be some value in analyzing the links between fertility and education in Australia - if sufficient data were available.

Methodologically the material reviewed above distinguishes differentials in fertility at a given point in time from changes in those differentials over time. Although the disjunction in method is clear enough, it tends to be overlooked in discussion of family building practice and some confusion of thought results. The confusion frequently appears in theories of urban/rural 'lag' in the resort to contraception and, indeed, in most cases where the decline in fertility is portrayed as an innovation, rather than an adjustment process. Since both lag and innovation were discussed in Australia it is worth considering the matter further.

Kingsley Davis uses the term "multi-phasic response" to remind us that there are - and were - other methods of family limitation than the resort to contraception.²² He suggests that when we remember the availability of other methods we will recognize that many urban/rural 'lag' theories only appear compelling because we "ignore all changes

20. T.H.C. Stevenson: op cit p.417. In fact Stevenson did not really distinguish 'prosperous' from 'educated' and the weight of his opinion is accordingly diminished in the present context. Cf. Charles F. Westoff (et.al.): Family Growth in Metropolitan America (Princeton University Press 1961) pp.213-220.

21. H.W. Methorst: "Results of Differential Birth Rate in the Netherlands" in Sanger: op cit p.176. He says that the principal reason for the decline of the birth rate in Holland "is certainly not to be found in propaganda" for the application of birth control techniques since the pro-Malthusian campaign was only started 10 to 20 years after the birth rate had started to go down.

22. Kingsley Davis: "The Theory of Change and Response in Modern Demographic History" in Population Index XXIX:4 (Oct '63) p.345. Cf. Gösta Carlsson: "The decline of fertility: innovation or adjustment process?" in Population Studies XX:2 (Nov '66) p.149. Carlsson argues that differences in fertility levels before, say, the 1880's may be as important as the differential changes after 1890.

except the reduction of marital fertility by contraception." In fact contraception may not have been adopted rapidly by the countryman because other responses, such as migration to the cities and beyond, were readily available. Davis also points out that postponed marriage, sterilization and abortion were alternatives to contraception in Japan and the frequency of newspapers stories about abortion and infanticide suggests that in Australia, too, these practices were continued by some classes of town dwellers after other classes had begun employing strictly contraceptive techniques.²³

The analysis of Australian fertility differentials from 1890 to 1911 is almost entirely confined to the scope of the colonial and State censuses and the Commonwealth census of 1911. Little help can be got from the annual birth statistics since they were usually published only as total numbers, sometimes not even differentiated by sex. Even where access can be had to original registrations, as in South Australia, the 1891 and 1901 registers give no details of parents' age at marriage, duration of marriage or previous issue. Only the district in which a birth occurred (often not the same as district of parents' usual residence) and the father's occupation, of all the potentially useful data, are recorded. Similarly in the case of the census materials analysis is limited to the extent of the cross-classifications published. These may be quite extensive, as in the case of New South Wales of the 1911 Commonwealth census, or almost non-existent, as in the case of South Australia. In view of these limitations it is necessary to examine the pattern of changes in fertility through different 'windows' for each State - occupational differentials in South Australia, say, or age at marriage in New South Wales - and then make some assumptions about the validity for the three States of the conclusions in a particular case.

One measure of fertility which can be prepared for each State at several dates in our period is completed family size by age at marriage and date of marriage. This figure is not directly available but may be inferred from tables of "average issue of wives by age and duration of existing marriage" in the 1921 and 1947 Censuses. An additional, more serious, disadvantage that cannot be avoided is that of possible built-in bias in the figures. Only those marriages can be considered which have run their reproductive course and in the case of

23. Davis: op cit. Although no check was kept on the number of abortion and infanticide stories they seemed to crop up quite regularly during the reading of Australian daily newspapers. Even allowing for the press's preference for the dramatic, the practices must have been at least as common as the 'several hundred' per year in Sydney mentioned by witnesses to the Birth Rate Commission.

women who married at age 20 in 1891 the end did not come until 1916. On the other hand women marrying at age 40 in 1891 would have been 65 years old in 1916 - or 70 by the 1921 Census. Since limited reproductive stamina and an early demise could be correlated, however, it is possible that women who lived to age 70 in 1921 had more children than those who died too young to be caught in that year's census net.²⁴ It is therefore possible that there may be some overstatement of average family size at the higher ages of the following tables.

Table 33 begins with a 'skeleton' table indicating the way in which the substantive tables have been prepared. Ages shown within the box are the ages reached in 1921 (or 1947 in the case of the italicised figures) by women who had married at, say, age 20-24 and whose marriage had lasted for 30-34 years. (The 50-59 year olds in the top, left hand corner of the box had this history.) Similarly for other marriage ages and durations. The 'date of marriage' figure in the left hand column is inferred from the 'duration of marriage' column on the right.

24. On this point see M. Beeton, G.U. Yule and Karl Pearson: "On the Correlation Between Duration of Life and the Number of Offspring" in Proceedings of the Royal Society LXVII (1900) p.159. But their evidence has been questioned by X. Sallume and F.W. Notestein: "Trends in the Size of Families Completed Prior to 1910 in Various Social Classes" in American Journal of Sociology XXXVIII:3 (November 1932) p.402f.

TABLE 33

COMPLETED FAMILY SIZE OF WOMEN BY AGE
AT MARRIAGE AND DURATION OF MARRIAGE, VARIOUS STATES.

<u>Date of Marriage</u>	<u>Age at Marriage</u>					<u>Duration of Marriage (years)</u>
	<u>20-24</u>	<u>25-29</u>	<u>30-34</u>	<u>35-39</u>	<u>40-44</u>	
1886-1891	50-59	55-64	60-69	65-74	70-79	30-34
1891-1896	45-54	50-59	55-64	60-69	65-74	25-29
1896-1901 [1897-1902]	65-74	45-54	50-59	55-64	60-69	[45-49] 20-24
1901-1906 [1902-1907]	60-69	65-74	45-54	50-59	55-64	[40-44] 15-19
1906-1911 [1907-1912]	55-64	60-69	65-74	45-54	50-59	[35-39] 10-14
<u>NEW SOUTH WALES</u>						
1886-1891	5.54	4.53	3.31	1.96	0.85	
1891-1896	5.16	4.10	3.01	1.87	0.95	
1896-1901	4.83	3.78	2.68	1.60	0.74	
1901-1906	4.53	3.72	2.53	1.46	0.62	
1906-1911	4.10	3.38	2.65	1.30	0.54	
<u>VICTORIA</u>						
1886-1891	5.34	4.41	3.31	2.08	0.90	
1891-1896	4.99	4.07	3.03	1.88	0.97	
1896-1901	4.73	3.77	2.73	1.56	0.65	
1901-1906	4.47	3.76	2.56	1.43	0.60	
1906-1911	4.06	3.46	2.79	1.29	0.51	
<u>SOUTH AUSTRALIA</u>						
1886-1891	5.50	4.66	3.56	2.15	0.86	
1891-1896	5.13	4.16	2.97	1.85	1.29	
1896-1901	4.76	3.75	2.56	1.38	0.54	
1901-1906	4.41	3.74	2.56	1.49	0.55	
1906-1911	4.02	3.42	2.68	1.40	0.65	

Sources: Census, 1921, Vol II p.1970f and 1947, Vol II p.2166.

It is clear that at almost every age of marriage, the later in our period that the marriage took place the smaller was the total family it produced. The significance of this decline is even more readily appreciated from Table 34 which shows the percentage change in completed family size over each quinquennium:

TABLE 34.
PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN COMPLETED FAMILY SIZE
BY AGE AT MARRIAGE AND DATE OF MARRIAGE.

(Calculated from Table 33)

<u>Period of Change</u>	<u>Age at marriage</u>				
	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44
<u>New South Wales</u>					
1886/1891 to 1891/1896	-6.8%	-9.5	-9.0	-4.6	+11.8
1891/1896 to 1896/1901	-6.4	-7.8	-11.0	-14.4	-22.1
1896/1901 to 1901/1906	-6.2	-1.6	-5.6	-8.8	-16.2
1901/1906 to 1906/1911	-9.5	-9.1	+4.7	-11.0	-12.9
<u>Victoria</u>					
1886/1891 to 1891/1896	-6.6	-7.7	-8.4	-9.6	+7.8
1891/1896 to 1896/1901	-5.2	-7.4	-9.9	-17.0	-33.0
1896/1901 to 1901/1906	-5.5	-0.2	-6.2	-8.3	-7.7
1901/1906 to 1906/1911	-9.2	-8.0	+9.0	-9.8	-15.0
<u>South Australia</u>					
1886/1891 to 1891/1896	-6.7	-11.2	-16.6	-14.0	+50.0
1891/1896 to 1896/1901	-7.2	-9.9	-13.8	-25.4	-58.1
1896/1901 to 1901/1906	-7.4	-0.2	Nil	+8.0	+1.8
1901/1906 to 1906/1911	-8.8	-8.6	+4.6	-6.0	+18.2

Since the figures of Table 34 refer to completed, not current, fertility and are specific for marital status, age and marriage duration, the marital fertility experience of the three States can be compared directly. The common pattern of their experience is immediately apparent, especially in respect of marriages contracted at age 34 or younger. The reduction of family size between the first and second marriage cohorts (1886/1891 to 1891/1896) and between the second and third cohorts (1891/1896 to 1896/1901) was greatest at the older end of each cohort. In other words it was not the youthful participants in the marriages of the 1890s who were chiefly responsible for the reduction of fertility of their cohort. The changes between 1896/1901 and 1901/1906 were much less regular, either within any State or between the three States, and by the interval between the 1901/1906 and 1906/1911 cohorts the incidence of decline was reversed with the eventual family size of those women who married at age 20-24 falling more than the eventual family size of women who married at age 30-34.

It also appears that among women in New South Wales and Victoria who married under 30 years of age the reduction of family size was greatest between the cohorts of 1886/1891 and 1891/1896, and between 1901/1906 and 1906/1911. That is, the majority of people marrying at the

beginning and the end of our period, not those who began their marriages between 1895 and 1905, appear to have been the ones who opted most decisively to control their fertility. Although this comment applies only to evidence of completed fertility and contemporaries were discussing evidence of current fertility, it is worth noting that their concern was expressed most vigorously between 1895 and 1905 when the families were being formed who were to be least affected by limitation. A possible explanation of the relatively better fertility of 1895-1905 marriages which might be brought forward here is that those who could afford to marry young between 1895 and 1905, rather than postpone their union because of financial restraint, could also afford to have larger families than those who were forced to postpone their marriage.

Most of what has just been said applies with similar force to each of the States but one additional point must be made about South Australia alone. The fall in completed family size was greater there, for all marriages in the 25-39 age range, than it was in either of the other States during the first half of our period, suggesting that an effective decision to limit family size may have been made earlier in South Australia than elsewhere. To sum up, the reference of completed family size as revealed in later censuses back to the period and age conditions under which marriages were made suggests that deliberate limitation of fertility began at a fairly early date among older wives and spread to younger wives with the passage of time, and that this process was more marked in South Australia than in New South Wales or Victoria. Unfortunately the necessary data do not exist to confirm this view from current fertility. The information already discussed does suggest, however, that we should view with scepticism any contemporary commentator who suggested that Australia's fertility decline began among the younger wives and was most intense between 1895 and 1905.

In the introductory discussion in this chapter fertility according to marriage structure was linked with fertility according to existing family structure, that is to say with previous issue. Only for New South Wales among the Australian States is there enough evidence for a discussion of this question and even that evidence must be treated cautiously. T.A. Coghlan published a table in his Childbirth in New South Wales "Showing Birth-rate amongst women, according to previous issue" which, despite its title, actually recorded "the number of births occurring during a year to every 100 married women under 50 years" according to previous issue. The source on which the table was based was not given, so it is impossible to check the accuracy of the figures, and further hesitancy is induced by the fact that a similar table in a later Coghlan publication reveals a rather different pattern

of change in the rates.²⁵ With these doubts as to accuracy kept in mind, it can be noted that Coghlan's 1903 figures suggest a substantial re-arrangement of fertility differentials according to family size. Whereas the highest birth rate in 1887 was among women having their seventh baby, with sixth, fourth, third and second following in that order, by 1898 the highest rate was at the third issue, followed by fourth, first and second issue. It appears from these figures that the decline of fertility and, presumably, the increased effective use of contraceptives, was most marked in the early 1890s in those cases where there had been five or six previous issue. Only after the mid-nineties did the birth rates for earlier issues begin to fall so rapidly. The evidence of the last two paragraphs has been that the fall in Australian fertility in the 1890s appeared first at higher parities and higher ages of mothers. As a supplementary comment it may be noted that later American experience was that people seeking help from birth control clinics were generally "well along in their reproductive and married life."²⁶

Material on geographical differentials of fertility does not suffer from the same limitations of extent and reliability as apply to family structure differentials. The various censuses in Australia recorded sundry characteristics of the population for counties, shires and, sometimes, even smaller districts and child/woman ratios can therefore be calculated for those areas. In the case of New South Wales and Victoria the counties or shires have been prepared for the following exercise by separation into five groups according to the density of their population, the groups being those with more than 50, 20-50, 10-20, 2-10 or fewer than 2 persons per square mile. In South Australia there were no members appropriate to group II and a further group has been added, of areas of extremely sparse settlement outside county boundaries. A sample has been taken from the potential members of each group and ratios calculated of children 0-4 years/all married women at each census.²⁷ For the 1891 and 1901 censuses it has also been possible

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25. Coghlan: Childbirth in NSW p.18.
Cf. Coghlan: The Decline in the Birth-rate of New South Wales and other phenomena of child-birth. (N.S.W. Govt. Printer Sydney 1903) p.30, which has a table of "the number of children born within a year to 1,000 women under 45 years of age" according to previous issue. Since there can only be estimates of the number of women (or married women) by age in non-census years, there is no factor by which the two tables can be rationalised. However the percentage change per year shown for each parity is considerably different between the two tables.
26. So Himes: op cit p.358, who supports his comment with tables from clinics in Baltimore and Cleveland in the early 1930s.
27. See Appendix I (p.270) for a list of the areas included and the principles of sampling.)

to construct ratios of children 0-4 years to married women aged 20-45 but similar data were not available for 1911. The child/married woman ratio has the defect of dealing only with the survivors of earlier births and may be disturbed by fluctuations of infant, child or maternal mortality but it is a useful measure in the present context because it accounts for the uneven distribution of married females over the various regions. Less densely settled and generally remoter areas in Australia might be expected to have relatively low proportions of unmarried women (as a rule, for example, only the ties of matrimony are likely to draw a woman into the country 'back of Bourke') and the parameters of the ratio take account of this. For similar reasons it would have been helpful if the data had been available to use the more refined measure, "married women 20-45", for 1911 as well as for 1891 and 1901. In the following table the cruder measure for each census year is presented first, then the more refined figure for 1891 and 1901 and an estimate of the refined ratio for 1911.²⁸

TABLE 35

FERTILITY RATIOS PER MARRIED WOMAN
FOR REGIONS OF VARIOUS POPULATION DENSITIES.

	Children 0-4/all married women			Children 0-4/married women aged 20-45		
	<u>1891</u>	<u>1901</u>	<u>1911</u>	<u>1891</u>	<u>1901</u>	<u>1911</u> (Estimate)
<u>New South Wales</u>						
Group 1	0.8889	0.6377	0.5998	1.1751	0.8910	0.8366
2	1.0153	0.7734	0.7973	1.4033	1.0945	1.1283
3	1.0754	0.8261	0.7797	1.5050	1.1675	1.1019
4	1.1015	0.8740	0.8185	1.4217	1.2597	1.1797
5.	1.2087	0.9458	0.9418	1.4279	1.2705	1.2651
<u>Victoria</u>						
Group 1	0.9121	0.6147	0.5602	1.3394	0.8874	0.8087
2	0.8089	0.7467	0.7011	1.5290	1.1098	1.0420
3	0.9147	0.8313	0.7669	1.4510	1.2178	1.1234
4	0.9697	0.8156	0.8165	1.4060	1.1887	1.1900
5	1.1228	0.9441	0.9290	1.4932	1.2804	1.2599
<u>South Australia</u>						
Group 1	0.8661	0.6552	0.6014	1.2743	1.0035	0.9210
3	0.9550	0.7670	0.7473	1.4756	1.1774	1.1471
4	1.1149	0.8299	0.7723	1.5755	1.2537	1.1666
5	1.1628	0.9401	0.8661	1.5960	1.4046	1.2940
<u>Remote</u>	1.0980	0.8776	0.9484	1.3104	1.0963	1.1847

28. The 'refined' figure for 1911 was obtained by multiplying the 'crude' ratio for each region in 1911 by the same factor as the 1901 refined rate bore to the 1901 crude rate for the same region.

It is immediately apparent from Table 35 that there was a marked decline in the ratios between the 1891 and 1901 censuses and a lesser decline in the decade to 1911, a pattern we have already observed in the measures considered in Chapter I. As was the case with differentials according to marital history, so here there is value in examining the percentage change in the ratios for each region from one census to the next. The figures are as follows:

TABLE 36

INTERCENSAL PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN FERTILITY RATIOS
FOR REGIONS OF VARIOUS POPULATION DENSITIES.

	<u>New South Wales</u>		<u>Victoria</u>		<u>South Australia</u>	
	1891/ 1901.	1901/ 1911.	1891/ 1901.	1901/ 1911.	1891/ 1901.	1901/ 1911.
<u>Children</u>						
<u>0-4/ all married</u>						
<u>women.</u>						
Group 1	-28.3%	-5.9	-32.6	-8.9	-24.4	-8.2
2	-23.8	+3.1	-7.7	-6.1		
3	-23.2	-5.6	-9.1	-7.7	-19.7	-2.6
4	-20.6	-6.4	-15.9	+0.1	-25.6	-6.9
5	-21.8	-0.4	-15.9	-1.6	-19.2	-7.9
Remote					-20.0	+8.1
<u>Children</u>						
<u>0-4/married women</u>						
<u>20-45.</u>						
Group 1	-24.2		-33.7		-21.3	
2	-22.0		-33.7			
3	-22.4		-16.1		-20.2	
4	-11.4		-15.5		-20.4	
5	-11.0		-14.3		-12.0	
Remote					-16.3	

This manner of presentation shows the value of refining the denominator to "married women 20-45", especially in the case of Victoria where the finer ratio differs considerably from the cruder one for groups II and III.²⁹ The changes in the refined ratios suggest that the restriction of fertility in the 1890s was most marked in the most densely populated areas and least in the sparsely settled districts of each State.³⁰ In addition a

29. A possible explanation of the Victorian situation is that groups II and III cover the counties and shires containing the large country towns whose population grew rapidly in the gold era but stagnated and aged towards the end of the century when Melbourne (group 1) and the new farming and irrigation areas (groups 4 and 5) were still receiving young settlers.
30. The one exception to this 'rule' was in the remote areas of South Australia where the population was so small as to make statistical inference meaningless.

comparison of the changes in the crude ratios between the censuses supports the theory that the geographical incidence of restriction was more uniform between 1901 and 1911 than it had been in the previous decade.

It was pointed out in the earlier discussion of overseas studies that accurate analysis of socio-economic differentials in fertility is difficult. Socio-economic differentials are particularly hard to quantify in the Australian case because of a lack of pertinent census and registration data. Even the New South Wales censuses of 1891 and 1901, which provided extensive detail about the occupations of the people, did not cross-tabulate the information with other characteristics which would allow the construction of an index of differential fertility by occupation. However it has been possible to extract some rather tenuous evidence of fertility trends by fathers' occupations from the South Australian birth registers. The occupations indicated on the birth certificates were classified into four groups: professional, clerical and commercial ('white collar' occupations); shopkeeper-trades and skilled artisans ('apron' occupations); non-skilled and transport workers ('blue collar' occupations); and primary producers. Ratios were calculated of the proportion of each occupational group in the birth register sample to the proportion of each group in the entries in the South Australian Directory for the years 1891, 1901 and 1911. Table 37 shows the result of the calculations:³¹

TABLE 37

ESTIMATES OF BIRTHS BY FATHERS' OCCUPATIONS,
SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

Columns A, proportions percent of births by occupation to total birth registrations.

Columns B, proportions percent of given occupations within the directory population.

Occupations	1891		1901		1911	
	A	B	A	B	A	B
'White collar'	22.7%	30.0	22.7	30.2	21.7	30.9
'Apron'	21.9	21.1	26.6	16.3	20.6	15.6
'Blue collar'	23.4	13.5	24.4	21.2	26.9	17.2
Primary	31.9	35.3	26.3	32.2	30.8	26.4

	Ratio of $\frac{\text{Column A}}{\text{Column B}}$		
	1891	1901	1911
'White collar'	0.75	0.75	0.70
'Apron'	1.03	1.63	1.32
'Blue collar'	1.73	1.15	0.99
Primary	0.90	0.81	1.16

31. Details of the samples taken to constitute the birth registration and directory lists, of the occupations grouped into the four categories, and of some of the inadequacies of method in the exercise are set out in Appendix II (p. 274)

Although any inference from Table 37 must be hedged with considerable qualifications because of the way in which it is calculated, the ratios seem to suggest the possibility that the contribution to total South Australian births by the middle and upper-middle class fathers in 'White collar' occupations remained fairly stable during our period, relative to other occupations; fertility of fathers in 'Apron' occupations, which one might classify as lower-middle class, rose relative to other groups during the 1890s but slipped back after 1901; fertility of fathers in 'Blue collar' or working class occupations fell relative to other groups in both decades; fertility of fathers engaged in primary industry fell slightly in the 1890s but rose strongly in the decade to 1911. These movements differ from those usually expected of occupational differentials in fertility. For example the ratio of proportion of births to proportion of the (directory) population attributable to white collar workers remained fairly stable whereas the usual expectation would be that this ratio would fall in an era of falling fertility. The stability of the ratio seems a little more plausible, though, when it is remembered that South Australia suffered less than New South Wales and Victoria did from commercial and public service retrenchment in the 1890s. The movement of the ratios for the 'Apron' and 'Blue collar' categories is impossible to explain in the absence of a social or economic history of South Australia during the period and may simply reflect changes in the selection of entries for the directory. The trend of the primary producer's ratio might be explained in economic terms by the fact that wheat growing was South Australia's main primary industry and that both the area sown to wheat and the yield per acre fell noticeably in the 1890s and rose strongly after 1900.³²

All these points are little better than speculations but their very tenuousness gives strong support to the main contention of this chapter, that accurate statistical evidence about differential fertility cannot have been readily available to the people who commented on changes in fertility between 1890 and 1911. The contention is re-inforced by the failure of a lengthy survey of suburban Adelaide rate books to reveal any systematic correlation between levels of, or changes in, the value of property in various suburbs and of the child/married woman index for the suburbs in 1891, 1901 and 1911, or between the occupational status of

32. On the wheat industry in South Australia between 1890 and 1910 see graphs and discussion in Edgars Dunsdorfs: The Australian Wheat-Growing Industry (Melbourne University Press 1956) pp.174, 178-183. Dunsdorfs's graphs are useful but some of his discussion of marriage and trade cycles can only be described as simplistic.

residents of the suburbs and the child/married women ratios.³³ If analysis now of data that were available about 1900 provides no sure basis for the discussion of differential movements in fertility according to socio-economic criteria, it must be assumed that commentators at the time were also speaking without knowledge.

The analysis of cultural differentials is almost as much restricted by lack of data as is the study of socio-economic differentials. There is some indication of improvements in literacy in broad areas of each State but this is not linked with data about fertility or family size and there is no information about levels of education. Even if the latter were available the problem would remain of trying to establish whether educational status was the effective factor in a particular movement of fertility or whether it masked another real cause in, say, delayed marriage. The one cultural factor for which there is a useful body of evidence is religious denomination. The 1911 Census included a series of tables on the average issue of wives according to their age and professed religion, from which it is possible to infer the completed size of families by religious denomination at several dates in the preceding two decades. The figures for Australia and each of the three States are set out in Table 38.

33. The City of Unley, on the southern boundary of the City of Adelaide, comprised the suburbs of Unley, Parkside, Goodwood and Fullarton and a separate annual rate book was kept for each. The average annual rate for each of the suburbs suggests what an architectural tour of the area still confirms, that their social ranking was in the order Parkside, Unley, Fullarton, Goodwood but there is no systematic correlation between the child/married woman ratio for each and either the average annual value, the extent of owner occupancy or the occupational status of the suburb.

TABLE 38

COMPLETED FAMILY SIZE BY RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION

	<u>1891</u> ^a	<u>1896</u> ^b	<u>1901</u> ^c	<u>1906</u> ^d	<u>1911</u> ^e
<u>AUSTRALIA</u>					
Church of England	7.00	6.72	6.37	5.84	5.15
Presbyterian	7.04	6.59	6.17	5.54	4.95
Methodist	7.38	7.11	6.75	6.17	5.42
Baptist	7.10	6.61	6.05	5.71	5.10
Congregationalist	6.68	6.13	5.79	5.20	4.50
Lutheran	7.17	7.00	7.40	6.97	6.31
Roman Catholic	6.96	6.86	6.76	6.29	5.57
"Catholic"	6.56	6.64	6.70	6.30	5.67
All religions	7.03	6.75	6.44	5.92	5.25
<u>NEW SOUTH WALES</u>					
Church of England	7.33	6.95	6.51	6.09	5.33
Presbyterian	7.37	6.68	6.13	5.63	5.15
Methodist	7.49	7.11	6.90	6.35	5.65
Baptist	7.23	6.49	6.05	5.96	5.22
Congregationalist	6.96	6.13	5.80	5.09	4.48
Lutheran	5.79	6.69	6.20	5.71	4.94
Roman Catholic	7.26	7.13	6.84	6.38	5.67
"Catholic"	7.08	6.80	6.70	6.44	5.60
All religions	7.28	6.90	6.51	6.06	5.38
<u>VICTORIA</u>					
Church of England	6.67	6.54	6.10	5.45	4.80
Presbyterian	6.99	6.65	6.24	5.40	4.71
Methodist	7.40	7.12	6.46	5.86	5.11
Baptist	6.56	6.51	5.97	5.04	4.76
Congregationalist	6.55	5.97	5.08	4.91	4.19
Lutheran	7.72	6.90	6.64	5.82	5.32
Roman Catholic	6.59	6.59	6.59	5.93	5.31
"Catholic"	5.67	5.95	6.68	5.85	5.90
All religions	6.79	6.61	6.24	5.56	4.93
<u>SOUTH AUSTRALIA</u>					
Church of England	6.89	6.34	6.07	5.68	4.99
Presbyterian	6.45	6.82	6.01	5.67	4.91
Methodist	7.50	7.14	6.93	6.29	5.52
Baptist	7.74	6.55	6.05	6.01	4.89
Congregationalist	5.97	5.87	5.82	5.30	4.52
Lutheran	7.72	7.00	7.40	7.19	6.19
Roman Catholic	6.67	6.71	6.79	6.47	5.54
"Catholic"	7.19	6.77	6.71	6.63	5.79
All religions	7.14	6.76	6.52	6.10	5.32

- a. Women aged 65-69 in 1911
b. Women aged 60-64 in 1911
c. Women aged 55-59 in 1911
d. Women aged 50-54 in 1911
e. Women aged 45-49 in 1911

Source: Census 1911, Vol III pp.1144-1153.

Table 38 showed the size of families at various dates, Table 39 shows the percentage change in size between those dates:

<u>TABLE 39</u>				
<u>PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN COMPLETED FAMILY SIZE</u>				
<u>ACCORDING TO RELIGION</u>				
	<u>1891-1896</u>	<u>1896-1901</u>	<u>1901-1906</u>	<u>1906-1911</u>
<u>AUSTRALIA</u>				
Church of England	-4.0%	-5.2	-8.3	-11.8
Presbyterian	-6.4	-6.4	-10.2	-10.6
Methodist	-3.7	-5.1	-8.6	-12.2
Baptist	-6.9	-8.5	-5.6	-10.7
Congregationalist	-8.2	-5.5	-10.2	-13.5
Lutheran	-2.4	+5.7	-5.8	-9.5
Roman Catholic	-1.4	-1.5	-7.0	-11.4
"Catholic"	+1.2	+0.9	-6.0	-10.0
All religions	-4.0	-4.6	-8.1	-11.3
<u>NEW SOUTH WALES</u>				
Church of England	-5.2	-6.3	-6.5	-12.5
Presbyterian	-9.4	-8.2	-8.2	-8.3
Methodist	-5.1	-3.0	-8.0	-11.0
Baptist	-10.2	-6.8	-1.5	-12.4
Congregationalist	-11.9	-5.4	-12.2	-12.0
Lutheran	+15.5	-7.3	-7.9	-13.5
Roman Catholic	-1.8	-4.1	-6.7	-11.1
"Catholic"	-4.0	-1.5	-3.9	-13.0
All religions	-5.2	-5.7	-6.9	-11.2
<u>VICTORIA</u>				
Church of England	-1.9	-6.7	-10.7	-11.9
Presbyterian	-4.9	-6.2	-13.5	-12.8
Methodist	-3.8	-9.3	-9.3	-12.8
Baptist	-0.8	-8.3	-15.6	-5.6
Congregationalist	-8.9	-14.9	-3.3	-14.7
Lutheran	-10.6	-3.8	-12.3	-8.6
Roman Catholic	-	-	-10.0	-10.5
"Catholic"	+4.9	+12.3	-12.4	+0.9
All religions	-2.7	-5.6	-10.9	-11.3
<u>SOUTH AUSTRALIA</u>				
Church of England	-8.0	-4.3	-6.4	-12.1
Presbyterian	+5.4	-11.9	-5.7	-13.4
Methodist	-4.8	-2.9	-9.2	-12.2
Baptist	-15.4	-7.6	-0.7	-18.6
Congregationalist	-1.7	-0.9	-8.9	-14.7
Lutheran	-9.3	+5.7	-2.8	-13.9
Roman Catholic	+0.6	+1.2	-4.7	-14.4
"Catholic"	-5.8	-0.9	-1.2	-12.7
All religions	-5.3	-3.6	-6.4	-12.8

It would obviously be valuable to have figures for completed family size in 1916 and 1921, since they would give a better picture than the figures we have of the families which were being borne during our period. (For example a woman who was 45-49 in 1921 would have been bearing the bulk of her family between about 1895 and 1910, if she

married at age 20-24.) The necessary data were not published in the 1921 Census results, however, so we must be content with the picture Tables 38 and 39 provide of the limitation of families in the earlier years of our period.

The most notable feature of the tables is the diversity of experience which they reveal. In New South Wales, for example, the Roman Catholic 'lag' in the restriction of family size was less marked than Australia as a whole and the reduction at each interval, at least with families completed after 1896, much closer to that for the whole State. Methodists also reduced their families at a slower than average rate until late in the period but Baptist family size was cut faster than that of other denominations. Presbyterians began their restriction earlier (or in greater degree) and it was only in 1906-1911 that they had a smaller reduction than the average for New South Wales. In Victoria, too, Presbyterians were leaders in reduction of family size, having a higher than average reduction in every period. The Methodists reversed the record of their New South Wales co-religionists with reductions above the average except between 1901-1906. Lutherans in Victoria did more than Lutherans elsewhere to limit their family size but the behaviour of Victorian Anglicans was very close to that of Anglicans elsewhere and close to that of Victorians of all religions. South Australian experience was less regular than that of either of the other two States. Among the numerically strongest denominations, the Methodists' completed family size fell faster than the average only in 1901-06 and the Anglicans' fell more slowly than the average only in the last period we are considering. The Baptists and Congregationalists, although similar groups in size and in social status, had quite diverse patterns of change. Roman Catholics in South Australia did as their brethren did in the nation at large, reducing their family size little in the first decade-and-a-half (and, in fact, increasing it in the 'nineties) but catching up with the other denominations in families completed after 1906.

Some cautionary comments are needed before attempting any generalisation about these religious differentials. The fact that the Anglican and Roman Catholic figures for New South Wales and the Methodist figures for South Australia were generally close to the movements for 'All Religions' is probably explained by the high proportion of the denomination within the total population in each case. Conversely one should not place too much stress on the changes in, say, New South Wales Lutherans since Lutheran females were well under one per cent of that State's female population in 1891. To take just one more example, given the higher social status usually ascribed to Presbyterians as compared with Catholics in this country, it would be difficult to say that a decline in Presbyterian family size or continuity in that of Catholics

was a function of religious belief rather than social status.

Keeping these qualifications in mind the most remarkable feature of the religious differentials was their difference from what one might have predicted. The most consistent feature was the failure of Roman Catholics to limit the size of their families completed before 1905 but just as important, given the popular idea of Catholic behaviour in this matter, was the extent of change after 1906 when their decline was of the same order as the average for all religions. Baptists and Congregationalists in South Australia, and Methodist and Presbyterians in New South Wales, being of similar status and numbers, might have been expected to reduce their families at comparable rates but this was far from being the case. As a final example of the unpredictability of the differentials, the behaviour of Anglicans was not even consistent from State to State. If one generalisation is justified it must be that no clear pattern of completed fertility differentials according to religion can be shown for Australian families completed between 1890 and 1911.

The material reviewed in the first part of this chapter indicated that some differentiation of fertility according to a number of social characteristics must be expected in any community where fertility is below the biological maximum. The evidence discussed in the second half of the chapter showed that, in Australia, such differentials are very hard to qualify with accurate socio-economic differentials, in particular, being almost impossible to recover. The evidence also fails to give conclusive support to either the Davis or the Carlsson theory of fertility transition. The narrowing of differentials in completed fertility according to religious denomination supports Carlsson's suggestion that differences in fertility levels at the beginning of a transition period (the late 1880s in Australia) may be as important as differential changes during the transition. On the other hand the differentials according to density of settlement grew wider between 1891 and 1911, while the difference between the sizes of completed families in metropolitan and extra-metropolitan areas also widened.³⁴ Taken in conjunction with the increase of urbanisation during the same period, this trend suggests that Davis may be justified in regarding rural-urban migration as an alternative response to family limitation in rural areas.

The most significant point emerging from a survey of Australian fertility differentials is that the evidence for categorical statements about the limitation of family size by certain classes of the population is difficult to recover today and must have been virtually nonexistent at the time when the matter was being publicly and emotionally debated. The irresistible conclusion is that if the publicists of 1890-1911 had any evidence on which to base their pronouncements about Australian procreative behaviour, it was certainly not abundant statistical evidence.

34. See Census, 1911 Vol I p.292.

CHAPTER III

The Evidence Makers:
The Work of Government Statisticians

Government publications were the chief source of demographic information in late-nineteenth century Australia and government officials were the chief interpreters. Thus public awareness of population phenomena was largely informed by Henry Heylyn Hayter, Victoria's Government Statist from 1874 to 1894, and Timothy Augustine Coghlan, who held the corresponding post in New South Wales from 1886 to 1905. Both were active publicists with international reputations, although there were important differences in their treatment of statistical material and in their presentation of the results of their work. Indeed interstate differences in the dissemination of official statistics probably help to explain the different degrees of interest which New South Welshmen, Victorians and South Australians showed in the population question throughout our period.

Hayter was Victoria's first Government Statist although the virtual functions of such an officer had been performed since 1854 by W.H. Archer, "a self-confessed disciple of leading English and European statisticians" who published voluminous statistics and tried unsuccessfully "to establish greater uniformity in statistical practice in the Australian colonies".¹ Hayter began work in the Registrar-General's office, administered by Archer, in 1857 and was appointed Government Statist with charge over a separate department in 1874. With more success than Archer had enjoyed, he continued to seek the unification of colonial statistics and forms of vital statistics which he had devised were used in other colonies. He took the initiative in a conference with officials of other colonies in 1875 and in 1888 he addressed the first meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science on the problems of official statistics.²

1. Cecily Close: "William Henry Archer (1825-1909)" in Australian Dictionary of Biography (Melbourne University Press 1969) Vol III pp.41-43.
2. For biographical material on Hayter see P. Serle: Dictionary of Australian Biography (Angus & Robertson Sydney 1949) Vol I p. 414f and Australian Dictionary of Biography Vol IV (forthcoming). His less than creditable involvement in some less than honest financial dealings at the end of his career is detailed in Michael Cannon: The Land Boomers (Melbourne University Press 1966) pp.100-103. On the extent of his reputation see Town and Country Journal (Melbourne) 24 March 1894 p.30 and 25 March 1895 p.22; Bulletin (Sydney) 26 January 1884 p.12B; C.W. Dilke: Problems of Greater Britain (Macmillan London 1890) Vol I p.187, commenting on Victoria in Hayter's time, said "the Year-Books of the Government statist and the other productions of his office are as nearly perfect as such works can be". On the 1875 conference of statisticians see Victoria: Parliamentary Papers (1874) Vol III Paper 88 and Tasmania: Parliamentary Papers (1875) Vol I Paper 27. (Continued next page)

He also took on Archer's mantle as a voluminous publisher responsible, among other things, for twenty editions of the Victorian Year Book with which he became so closely identified between 1874 and 1893 that many people referred to the work simply as "Hayter". Hayter's report on the 1891 census, his addresses to the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, his Year Books and those edited by his successors Fenton, McLean and Drake together provide the main sources for discussing Victorian sophistication in respect of demographic statistics.

During the 1880s, when Victoria was experiencing fluctuations in marriage rates and birth rates similar to those which were to trouble New South Wales in the following decade, Hayter gave equal attention to each topic. At an early stage he recognised that a crude marriage rate which related the year's marriages to the total population gave a distorted view of the population's marriage habits. He knew that the crude marriage rate was universally employed but thought it was a reliable guide "only when applied to countries which are in a normal state as regards age". Applied to "new countries in which... the age conditions are subject to be disturbed by accessions of population from without", the crude rate was apt to mislead.³ Hayter believed that Victoria came under the rubric of 'new countries disturbed from without' as a result of its experience in the 1850s and 1860s, when heavily male-dominated immigration had greatly increased the general population without providing the opportunity - in the form of nubile females - for many more marriages. The implications of the situation in the 'sixties were emphasised again in Hayter's review of the marriage rate at the end of the 'eighties. He asserted that the addition of children born to gold rush immigrants meant that the population had "assumed a normal condition" of age and sex structure which was the basis of rises in the marriage rate during 1887-9.⁴ The clarity of Hayter's thinking

His publications included "On Official Statistics", Presidential Address to Section F in Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science Proceedings I (1888) p.417, in which he stressed the need for age-specific vital rates; "The Coming Census" in ibid II (1890) p.579, in which he dealt with the mechanics, not the aims of the Census; "The Concentration of Population in Australian Capital Cities" in ibid IV (1892) p.541, in which he discussed the extent, causes, commercial benefits and social costs of urbanization; "Disturbance of the Population Estimates by Defective Records" in op cit p.537, also published as "Disturbance of Population Estimates in Australia by Defective Data" in Journal of the Royal Statistical Society LVI:2 (June 1893) p.327.

3. Victoria Year Book (1880-81) p.199f.

4. ibid (1889-90) Vol I p.269

on the relationship between marriage and migration is open to question, for his 1884 argument that the lack of large-scale, recent migration of single adult males was one reason for the low Victorian marriage rate, relative to other colonies, was contrary to his 1881 and 1890 view that numerous male immigration depressed the marriage rate.⁵ Dealing with secular factors affecting the rate of marriage, Hayter supported the popular belief that "a rural life tends more to the promotion of marriage than a town one" and gave the examples of New Zealand and South Australia in support.⁶ He also said there was no doubt that "the tendency of marriageable males to marry... is affected by their prosperity" but this contention soon got him into an unfortunate crux. Since one of the Government Statist's practical functions was that of public relations officer for Victoria, Hayter found himself arguing that the 1883 marriage rate was lower than one would expect, considering that Victoria had "certainly been second to none of the other colonies in point of wealth and prosperity."⁷

In 1881 Hayter reported that "the birth rate has been decreasing steadily for years past, and in 1880 was lower than it was in any year of the previous vicenniad." The fact that birth and marriage rates were declining did not worry him because he thought in both cases that the crude rate was misleading and expected the results of the 1881 census "to throw light upon this as well as on many other social questions of the deepest interest."⁸ Although postponing any analysis of general fertility, he did notice the marked geographical differentials in the crude birth rate and drew attention to the fact that the relative levels of metropolitan, other urban and rural rates had changed quite markedly between 1873 and 1880. Taking the rural crude birth rate as 100, the metropolitan rate was 94 and the other urban rate 110 in 1873; but in 1880, taking the rural rate as 100 again, the metropolitan rate had risen to 109 and the other urban to 119. Hayter did not elaborate upon these relationships or upon the fact that the crude

5. ibid (1883-84) p.187f.

6. ibid (1880-1) p.202.

7. op cit p.199f, cf ibid (1883-4) p.187

8. ibid (1880-1) p.216.

birth rate had fallen substantially in each region.⁹ He was not disturbed by the fact that the birth rate was still declining in 1883, when he reported it "lower than in any previous year", but relied upon the fact that the ratio of births to married women under 45 years of age had not varied from 1871 to 1881. In his opinion "the reduction in the birth rate, calculated in the ordinary way, [was] therefore conclusively shown to be due to a deficiency in the community of married women at the fruitful period of life". Even the fact that the average number of children born to a marriage appeared to have declined was met with a comment that "there are...many matters affecting the birth rates of infants respecting which it is not possible to obtain precise information."¹⁰

By the second half of the 1880s Hayter was evidently much more concerned about the course of the birth rate. In 1887 he wrote that, although there had been a revival of the marriage rate during the decade, there had not been a corresponding improvement in the birth rate which had "advanced but slightly" from the low point of 1883. By 1889-90 he was sufficiently worried about the fall in family size to be casting around for causes of the decline. In the process he made what was probably the first official reference in Victoria to the practice of contraception. "The falling off", he decided, "is a result which, although perhaps it cannot be proved, may be conjectured to be owing to the increasing desire on the part of married women to avoid the cares of maternity, and the steps taken by them - often, no doubt, with the concurrence of their husbands - to prevent its occurrence."¹¹ Hayter did not elaborate on this comment after 1890 and his last three Year Books simply repeated the observation on the possibility of contraception.

9. op cit p.221. The crude birth rates were:

	<u>Metropolitan</u>	<u>Other Urban</u>	<u>Rural</u>
1873	34.36	40.18	36.32
1880	31.19	34.21	28.72

Taking the rural rate for 1873 as a base for that year and the rural rate for 1880 as a base for 1880, the relative levels were:

	<u>Metropolitan</u>	<u>Other Urban</u>	<u>Rural</u>
1873	94	110	100
1880	109	119	100

But taking the rural rate for 1873 as a base for both years, the levels were:

	<u>Metropolitan</u>	<u>Other Urban</u>	<u>Rural</u>
1873	94	110	100
1880	85	94	79

Clearly the rural birth rate suffered the greatest decline.

10. ibid (1883-4) pp.209f and 223f (on the number of children per marriage, which was given as 5.19 in 1874 and 4.16 in 1883).

11. ibid (1886-7) p.244 and (1889-90) Vol I p.316.

During the 1880s, when Hayter was at the height of his influence and undistracted by private financial worries, the Year Book provided Victorians with a balanced account of the demographic aspects of their ~~Country's~~ ^{Colony's} rapidly declining fertility together with a few snippets of social comment. During the mid-'nineties, however, Victorians were given no official commentary on their Colony's vital statistics because the Year Book became one casualty of the depression and governmental retrenchment. The next issue to appear after Hayter's 1893 edition was a composite volume covering the years 1895-98 and edited by J.J. Fenton. Fenton depended heavily on the Hayter heritage for both form and content but lacked Hayter's statistical understanding. Figures were published indicating substantial annual falls in the birth rate throughout the 'nineties but Hayter's early warnings about the defects of crude rates now acted as a buffer against concern at the extent of the fall. The more refined ratio of births to married women under 45 years of age can only be calculated accurately in a censal year and Fenton allowed himself to be re-assured in 1898 by the fact that the seven-years-out-of-date ratio for 1891 was little below that of 1881 and 1871.¹² Even Hayter's notice of declining average family size and possible contraception was dropped to be replaced by an assertion, supported by no more than a statistical coincidence, that the figures "appear to indicate that the degree of fecundity falls off as the marriage rate increases, and vice versa."¹³

Fenton's first Year Book was his only one and two years elapsed before a further volume appeared under the editorship of William McLean. His publications of 1902, 1903 and 1904 were not so reliant on the Hayter volumes as Fenton's had been. His work was not flawless and there was a rather tentative tone about the 1902 edition but he did make one important technical innovation and, particularly in 1904, show a willingness to look for new explanations of vital phenomena. An example of the early tentativeness is seen in McLean's treatment of marriage. The results of the 1901 census gave him what Hayter had always sought, an up-to-date refined marriage rate, and he duly printed a table of the "Proportion of Marriages per 1,000 Marriageable Men and Women at each Age" for each of the censal years 1881, 1891 and 1901. The figures as a whole - and those

12. ibid (1895-8) p.641f. The ratio of births to married women under 45 years of age was 0.302 in 1871, 0.302 in 1881, 0.297 in 1891. The trend of fertility in the 'nineties is indicated by the fact that the ratio fell to 0.229 in 1901.

13. op cit p.661

relating to women, in particular - were so striking that they should have provoked a substantial analysis of trends in nuptiality but, apart from the comment that "there is every evidence of a tendency amongst men to defer marriage to a later period of life", McLean did not analyse or consider the implication of his figures.¹⁴

McLean did attempt a more substantial analysis when he turned to indices of fertility. He recalled that the number of births had been almost constant from 1863 to 1883, had risen sharply till 1891 and had then begun to fall again. The 1901 census had provided another opportunity to calculate a refined ratio of births to married women under 45 but this figure no longer offered its former solace for it was down from the 1891 level of 0.297 to a 1901 figure of 0.229.¹⁵ Some comfort was taken from the fact that the crude birth rate, a measure discounted by McLean's predecessors, was declining less rapidly in 1900-1902 than it had been before 1900 and this was held to indicate that "an improvement may be expected in the near future." Nevertheless the evidence of the refined rate had to be faced and McLean admitted that, given the drop in the refined rate between 1891 and 1901, fluctuations in the crude rate could not be ascribed as formerly entirely to "varying proportions of married women in the community at the fruitful period of life."¹⁶ Using a standardisation technique which he appears to have developed himself, McLean calculated that nearly 9 per cent of the drop of over 24 per cent in Victoria's rate of births per 1,000 married women aged 15-45 between 1891 and 1901 was due to the changed, older distribution of those women.¹⁷ Another element of

14. *ibid* (1902) p.158f. 'Marriageable' females were defined as "unmarried women aged 15 and upwards". The most striking figures, which ought to have attracted some comment, were:

		Proportion of Marriages per 1,000 Marriageable Women		
		1881	1891	1901
at ages	...			
	21-25	118.8	106.0	87.2
	25-30	105.7	100.5	84.7
	30-35	73.1	66.4	57.9
	...			

It should be pointed out that the proportions for men at each of these ages increased between 1891 and 1901. The figures for both sexes support the accuracy of the calculations in chapter I (pp.32f, above).

15. *op cit* p.166. It will be recalled that the ratio had stood at 0.302 in 1871 and 1881 (see note 12, *supra*).

16. *op cit* p.165f

17. *op cit* p.167ff. Details of the technique and the question of McLean's originality are discussed above at p.24 and note.

2 per cent in the 24 per cent decline was attributed to "the larger proportion in 1901 of wives whose husbands were... living out of the State" at the time of the Census. The remaining 14 per cent of the decline could not be rationalised and McLean met it with the rather casual remark that "no doubt there are causes of a varied nature which operate to bring about this result."¹⁸

The 1904 Year Book gave McLean a chance to offer his explanations "of a varied character". In this instance his views must be seen in the context of the New South Wales Birth Rate Commission's opinion that there had been no deterioration in female reproductive capacity and of his attempt to portray J.B. Trivett, the Commission's statistical adviser, as an alarmist. McLean began with an argument, that at least had the virtue of plausibility, designed to show that part of the decline in fertility might be a result of deterioration in female physique. He reasoned that prior to 1891 assisted immigration had brought to Victoria women who "were physically a selected class...and amongst whom a high birth rate was to be expected". Cessation of assisted migration in the 'nineties had led to a more normal proportion of "frail and infirm" in the population so that "the average physique of women" in 1904 was "not equal to that of the earlier years." A further argument, which probably re-inforced, rather than changed, his readers' opinions was that "the conditions obtaining in 1891 were entirely different from those of 1901, the former being a year in a prosperous period, the latter representing the sixth year of an unprecedented drought." That there was a connection between material conditions and the birth rate McLean did not doubt - or demonstrate.¹⁹ He also argued that there was a direct relationship between the level of the birth rate and the level of infant mortality because "the death of a child before it has reached one year not only shortens the interval between child-bearing, but leaves a vacancy to be filled by another birth." Victorian infant mortality was declining, McLean said, and the birth rate must be expected to follow suit.²⁰

18. op cit p.168f

19. ibid (1904) p.343. The Commission and its Report are the subject of the next chapter while McLean's debate with Trivett in the columns of the Intercolonial Medical Journal of Australasia is discussed at p.93f below.

20. op cit p.365. McLean's theories on the association between birth rate and infant mortality were quoted from "Mr F.S. Crum, the assistant statistician of the Prudential Assurance Company of New York, who has conducted investigations into and written upon [the association] for some years past."

Hayter's most stimulating work on population statistics was done before 1890 and Fenton's sole edition of the Year Book did not compensate Victorians for their lack of statistical information over several years of the 'nineties because he was unable to break out of the mould Hayter had set many years earlier. In the context of pre-Federation rivalries it is also likely that Fenton saw his role, even more than Hayter had done, as that of defending Victoria and all her works. McLean's ideas were distinctive and therefore stimulated some public interest in the demographic changes that were taking place in Victoria. His debate with Trivett was conducted in the columns of the medical press and he was given a chance to air his views at a well-attended public meeting of the National Christian Citizens' League but the material he used on these occasions and in the 1904 Year Book was prepared after the Report of the New South Wales Royal Commission had made the course of the birth rate a public issue.²¹ In addition his habit of indulging in lengthy comparisons of Victorian statistics with those from overseas must have done more to blind than to enlighten the Victorian public as to the trend of fertility: since examples were drawn chiefly from the countries of Western Europe which were themselves experiencing a decline in fertility, Victoria did not suffer by comparison. One is bound to conclude that official descriptive statistics did little to stimulate public concern about the movement of fertility in Victoria during our period.

Provocative statistical information certainly was not lacking in New South Wales. Of the realm of official statistics in that State it could almost have been said 'there is one God, Whose name is Coghlan, And his word is written in Wealth and Progress and sundry other volumes'. Although T.A. Coghlan was probably the most capable - and undoubtedly the most famous - public servant Australia has had, very little biographical information about him has been published.²²

21. On the public meeting, which took place in the Melbourne Town Hall, see The Christian Citizen (Melbourne) 18 November 1904 p.4f

22. E.C. Fry: "Labour and Industry in Australia", a Review Article in Historical Studies XIV:55 (October 1970) p.430 and Fry: "T.A. Coghlan as an Historian" (Paper presented to Section E of ANZAAS Congress, 1965) sets Coghlan in his context, making liberal use of information from Joan M. Cordell: "T.A. Coghlan, Government Statist of New South Wales 1886-1905" (Unpublished typescript Sydney 1960). Cordell's is a useful compilation of the biographical material, provided it is used with care. The estimate of Coghlan's capacity as a public servant does not ignore G.H. Knibbs, the first Commonwealth Statistician. Knibbs was certainly the more able statistician in the technical sense but Coghlan successfully participated in a wider range of public administration.

On the basis of such information as we have, however, it may be said that he was an able journalist, historian and administrator as well as a statistician who attracted world recognition.²³ He believed it was his job to present official statistics in a form useful to public men and interesting to lay people. He was not above writing favourable newspaper reviews of his own books under an assumed name in order to get his point across and he gained valuable publicity through his long association with leading men on the Bulletin. His name also came before the public during the intercolonial jockeying before Federation, when his calculations and opinions were often used to bolster the case of New South Wales.

Coghlan's Wealth and Progress of New South Wales, published in thirteen editions between 1886-87 and 1900-01, represented a deliberate attempt to publicise official statistics in a descriptive, assimilable form and may be regarded as the New South Wales equivalent of the Victorian Year Book. In the early issues Coghlan paid a good deal of attention to the phenomena of marriage and the cause, extent and effects of urbanisation also held his interest. The birth rate, which was to become an important topic at the turn of the century, was first given a substantial place in the 1894 edition of Wealth and Progress and Coghlan did not let it overshadow marriage questions until 1898. The first issue of Wealth and Progress, covering 1886-87 figures, had notes on the closeness of average family size in the various colonies and on the differentials between rural, suburban and city birth rates, together with an expression of concern at the high rate of infant mortality in Sydney.²⁴ Topics treated at

23. H.W. Arndt: "A Pioneer of National Income Estimates" in Economic Journal LIX:236 (December 1949) p.616 claims that Coghlan "made New South Wales for a time the country with the best official statistics in the world".

R.R. Kuczynski: The Measurement of Population Growth (Sidgwick & Jackson London 1935) p.145 note, discussing Coghlan's participation in a Royal Statistical Society debate in 1906, said he was "at that time...rightly considered the greatest British authority on fertility statistics."

Cordell: op cit p.82 n.64 reports that J. Bertillon "examined Coghlan's work very carefully" in Le Journal de la Societe de Statistique de Paris VII (July 1904) pp.244-245. She comments that Bertillon's observations "were a tribute to the authority of Coghlan's investigations".

In 1897, during his first visit overseas, Coghlan was guest in the home of the internationally-known statistician M.G. Mulhall and in 1893 he was elected an honorary Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society.

24. T.A. Coghlan: The Wealth and Progress of New South Wales (NSW Govt. Printer Sydney) (1886-87) pp.157, on family size; 160f, on differentials; 171f, on infant mortality, of which Coghlan wrote: "as far as Sydney and its suburbs are concerned... the rate at which children of tender years drop into the grave forms a pathetic comment on our civilization".

greater length were migration and religious differentials in nuptiality. Migration was adding substantial numbers to the New South Wales population every year and Coghlan believed his Colony was no exception to the "common tendency operating in all new countries for immigrants to locate themselves in and near the large cities". In support of the belief he presented tables showing that the percentage of British- and Foreign-born in Sydney was higher than for the whole colony and the percentage of native born correspondingly lower.²⁵ Regarding the low marriage rate among Roman Catholics, relative to their numerical distribution in the Colony, Coghlan considered both delayed marriage and 'mixed' marriage as explanatory factors but opted for the former on the grounds that "the adherents of the Roman Catholic Church are amongst the poorest in the Colony; and want of means is, perhaps, the chief cause of the comparatively small number of their marriages."²⁶

The implicit acceptance of economic circumstances as a major determinant of marriage and birth patterns was to reappear frequently in Coghlan's writings during the 'nineties, just as the interest in urbanization was to come out in his studies of differential fertility. Indeed the inclination to draw together these strands of his work was already apparent in his claim that "the factors influencing the marriage-rate are - first, and chiefly, the general prosperity of the community; secondly, the number of marriageable males [largely determined by migration], and the occupations of the people".²⁷ Further evidence of the trend of Coghlan's thought was given in 1888, when his survey of the marriage rate revealed that it had been declining for four years and drew the comment that "1887 presents a lower rate than for many years past", and in 1890 when he said of urbanization in Australasia "it is impossible to believe that healthy progress is consistent with the

25. op cit p.136f.

26. op cit p.153f. Both Cordell and Fry suggest that Coghlan continued in the Catholic faith in which he was raised and both appear to think that his religious affiliations may have been significant for his views on marriage and fertility. In fact there is little evidence either for or against his later adherence to Catholicism and, in the writer's opinion, no peculiarly 'Catholic' passage in his demographic writing. As will be seen in Chapter VI, however, Catholic teaching on marriage and the family did not differ sufficiently from that of other denominations in the 1890s to make the question of Coghlan's religious position very significant.

27. op cit p.150

wonderful growth of the metropolis at the expense of the country".²⁸ Discussion of the marriage rate was carried on again in 1891 with two more examples of the connection between economic conditions and nuptial behaviour. Having said that "the social condition of the working-classes" was less advanced in Britain than in "even the least forward of the Australasian Colonies", Coghlan claimed that the probabilities were therefore "greatly in favour of a higher marriage-rate in these colonies". In support of this view he pointed out that, although New South Wales had a high marriage rate, relative to the other colonies, during a period of prosperity from 1881 to 1886, "During some of the succeeding years the material condition of the working population of the colony has not been so satisfactory, and the marriage-rate during these years shows a marked decline."²⁹

Coghlan's statement of the link between socio-economic conditions and the rate of marriage was slightly qualified in his Report on the 1891 Census of New South Wales. The age of marriage being "greatly an affair of custom", he warned against universal acceptance of the dictum that a community's marriage habits are "a gauge of its material condition." It was, nevertheless, axiomatic for him that depreciation of the normal marriage rate of a given community could "confidently be attributed to industrial causes". The axiom was qualified on one hand "by a ready anticipation of good times, and on the other a reluctance to break off projected marriages, even if bad times supervene."³⁰ Coghlan believed this interaction of marriage and economic conditions meant that

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28. ibid (1887-88) p.332f., and ibid (1889-90) p.409. Much later Coghlan recognized that, besides the settlement of overseas migrants, the drift of unemployed men to the city had also been a factor in urban growth relative to the country. See his Labour and Industry in Australia (Macmillan Melbourne 1918/1969) e.g., pp.1446-1449.
29. Wealth and Progress (1890-91) pp.790, 792. In 1894 Coghlan repeated his comparison of English and Australian conditions but was forced to add "the migratory habits of a large part of the male population often occasion a certain amount of extravagance and selfishness, and tend, therefore, to a diminution of the rate". [ibid (1894) p.893].. So much for the mateship of Australian legend!
30. General Report on the Eleventh Census of New South Wales (NSW Government Printer Sydney 1894) p.154. Coghlan went on to say that "there is a considerable proportion of the population on whose marrying...the general condition of affairs in the community has no effect. In this class naturally are to be found all those having fixed incomes." This statement might be accurate if one were looking only at the level of wages and employment but it is difficult to believe it would be true if "the general condition of affairs" were characterised by price inflation. It would also be interesting to know what Coghlan regarded as a 'normal' rate of marriage.

the birth rate also varied with "the prosperity, or the reverse, enjoyed or suffered by the general community." Since nearly half the births in his population were to parents under 30 years of age, deferment of marriage because of economic depression could obviously make a substantial difference to the birth rate. There was much less justification for Coghlan's espousal of the corollary of this argument, that "a high birthrate is due...to prosperity", or for his unsupported assertion that "where there is a demand for population, there will population increase."³¹

By about 1893 any constant reader of Coghlan publications should have been thoroughly conditioned to watch the movement of crude vital rates and to expect their fluctuation more or less in sympathy with economic circumstances. After 1894 the constant reader would have been aware of a new factor upsetting the relationship for in that year two of Coghlan's essays noticed the introduction of "artificial and voluntary checks to population". The artificial checks were mentioned, very briefly, in the 1891 Census Report (published in 1894) and, at greater length, in Wealth and Progress for 1894. In the second instance it was implied that the resort to contraception was partly a consequence of the prevailing depression of the economy. Coghlan felt there could "hardly be a doubt" that, as well as its indirect effect on the birth rate through the postponement of marriages, the depression had led "in many cases" to artificial checks on procreation but he did not explain any psycho-social mechanism linking economic circumstance to personal decision.³² The blame for contraception was laid on the depression again in 1895-96 and in 1897-98, when it was further stated that "the birth-rate of 1887 afforded strong ground for believing that these checks were resorted to, and there is little doubt that their use has largely increased." In these circumstances the subject of prevention of births had become "one of great

31. loc cit. Coghlan continued to believe that there was a close relationship between demographic and economic phenomena. In evidence to a Royal Commission inquiring into Proposed Sites for a Federal Capital (in April 1903) he said:

Victoria is at the present time suffering from economic causes which prevent an increase of population. During the last twelve years Victoria has lost something like 120,000 persons by immigration [sic] alone. That cannot go on very much longer. Perhaps those economic causes might be removed at any time and the population flow back again.

-[Commonwealth of Australia: Parliamentary Papers (Representatives) 1903, Miscellaneous Papers, p.238 Q.31967.

32. Wealth and Progress (1894) p.912

importance" and Coghlan reported that a special investigation into the causes of the decline of the birth rate was already being started.³³

The birth rate investigations took some time to complete and while they were in train an annual essay still had to be published: from 1895-96 to the last issue of Wealth and Progress in 1900-01 there was obvious concern about the movement of marriage and birth rates and a steady loss of confidence in the progress of New South Wales' population. In 1896 Coghlan had noted a small increase in the number of marriages and hoped that, in accordance with his belief that marriage lagged behind depression and led economic recovery, the improvement would continue.³⁴ By 1899, however, concern about the birth rate and its restriction was again dominant, evidently because some results of the promised 'special investigation' had become available. Having once more mentioned the post-1887 increase in the use of 'artificial checks', Coghlan said:

The subject of the decline in the birth-rate is one of great importance, and in the course of the ['special'] investigation, it was found that three conditions of affairs were prevailing; first, that for all women the proportion of fertile marriages is declining; second, that among fertile women the birth-rate is much reduced as compared with what it was twenty years ago, and third, that Australian women are less fertile than the European women who have emigrated to these shores.

Figures for New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria showed that the decline had been "persistent and regular" since 1881 and this was viewed very seriously "in a young country like Australia", where the prospect of reduced growth by natural increase was made more worrying by the realisation that migration, too, was adding far fewer people to the population than it had previously done.³⁵

The first result of Coghlan's special investigation of fertility was a paper in the Journal of the Royal Statistical Society for 1898 but this was a piece of statistical analysis, not a descriptive attempt to publicise the problems he was soon to treat

33. ibid (1897-98) p.679. In the 1895-96 edition the topic was treated on p.530f.

34. ibid (1895-96) pp.512ff.

35. ibid (1898-99) p.589. Where the topic of migration had been covered for 10 years with the words "Tested by the voluntary influx of population...the attraction which New South Wales has offered to the settler for many years is most marked", the text was now changed to this, less confident, passage; "Tested by the voluntary increase of population, the States of the Commonwealth do not present so attractive an appearance to the outside world as hitherto...it is apparent that the tide of immigration to Australia has diminished considerably of late years, and this is especially remarkable with regard to New South Wales and Victoria." [ibid (1900-01) p.937f.]

in booklets on Childbirth in New South Wales and The Decline in the Birth-Rate.³⁶ Introducing the earlier booklet Coghlan claimed that much of what it contained was unique and all of it applicable at least to communities similar to Australia. He recognized that the proportion of fertile marriages was probably declining in most civilized communities but was disturbed at its extent in Australasia, where fertile marriages had declined from ninety per cent to eighty per cent of all marriages during the generation to 1900, while the number of births during the 'nineties was 47,000 less than it would have been had the 1890 birth rates prevailed throughout the decade. Even these figures and the marriage-rates to which they were related would, it was said, have been "much lower if it were not for the mischances of antenatal intercourse."³⁷ As to the basic cause of the decline, whether it was prevention of conception or natural sterility, Coghlan's statistics did not enable him to say - on page 6. By page 18, however, he was writing of a growing indisposition to bear children, existing from the date of marriage and "affecting the birth-rate at every age and stage of married life." A few pages later he again said that the decline in natural increase throughout Australasia was "due to the precaution taken against the birth of children" and repeated his concern that the practice should be spreading in "new countries where population is so much desired."³⁸

The statistical analysis in Childbirth in New South Wales proceeded through calculations of the expectation of married life, period and duration of fertility in males and females, the proportion of fertile marriages among all marriages and birth rates according to previous issue, to an estimate of the number of children to a marriage. In calculating the latter figure Coghlan discarded the usual method of dividing legitimate births in year x by marriages in year x-6, which he claimed was unsuited to the fluctuating marriage

36. T.A. Coghlan: "Deaths in Child-Birth in New South Wales" in Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, LXI:3 (September 1898) pp.518-528; Coghlan: Childbirth in New South Wales. A Study in Statistics (NSW Government Printer Sydney 1900); Coghlan: The Decline in the Birth-Rate of New South Wales and other phenomena of childbirth. An Essay in Statistics. (NSW Government Printer Sydney 1903).

37. Childbirth in NSW pp.5-9. Although Coghlan paid a good deal of attention to illegitimacy the problem is not treated in this thesis because it involves difficulties of inadequate data and raises a set of moral issues distinct from those included here and too extensive to be discussed adequately. Also the interest here is in attitudes to changes in family building - or the 'subsequent' children - not in the accidents of extra-familial behaviour.

38. ibid pp. 18, 25

and migration situation in New South Wales (but which he had employed in Wealth and Progress as recently as 1896), and used both the record of their offspring on women's death registrations and a form of probability analysis similar to the life-table but based on information about recent child-bearing.³⁹ By these methods he came to the conclusion that between the mid-1860s and the mid-1890s the average number of children born to fertile wives had declined for wives of whatever age at marriage. His figures were:

Age at Marriage	Earlier Marriages	Recent Marriages
23	5.8	5.3
27	4.6	3.7
32	3.3	2.5
37	2.3	1.5
42	1.4	1.0

The decline in average family size was said to be even greater than the table indicated if non-fertile wives were included, since their number had "largely increased" between the 'earlier' and 'recent' dates.⁴⁰ The booklet also contained calculations relating to the effect on fertility of the postponement of marriage, birth rate to couples of various ages, risks associated with natality and several other topics.

These detailed studies were not particularly well set out and it is doubtful whether the average - or even the intelligent - layman would have understood much beyond the introductory statements that various phenomena of child birth appeared to be changing in an alarming manner. The lay reader probably would have been affected more by Coghlan's 1903 pamphlet on The Decline in the Birth-Rate of New South Wales. Much of its content was identical with Childbirth in New South Wales but the implications were made more obvious, particularly in a section entitled "A New Country and a Declining Birth-rate" and in the "Conclusion".⁴¹

39. ibid pp.13-21, 22 and Appendix G, p.64. For Coghlan's use of the older children/marriage technique see Wealth and Progress (1895-96) p.522

40. Childbirth in NSW p.23. "Earlier" marriages related to married women who died during 1893-8 and were married "about thirty-one years ago"; "Recent" marriages were not specified.

41. Some of the repeated passages were 1900 p.18/1903 p.29; 1900 p.22/1903 p.35; 1900 p.47/1903 p.59.

Of the 'new country' it was said:

Australia, with its large and sparsely populated territory, and with its industries in process of rapid development, might reasonably be pictured as an ideal land, wherein the people would prove fruitful and multiply... Present indications, however, give no hope of a teeming population springing from Australasian parents, for the birth-rate in all the states has declined very greatly, especially during the last fifteen years...⁴²

Like Hayter, Coghlan recognized that "Ratios based on the whole population are as a rule unsatisfactory"; unlike Hayter, he could draw no comfort from the ratio of births to married women under 45, which had fallen by almost one-third between 1886 and 1901. In the accents of an Australian nationalist, he declared that although there appeared to be

nothing incongruous in a declining birth-rate in an old civilization, especially in one afflicted with the incubus of militarism...the extension of the phenomenon to new countries, where population is so much desired, is novel and astonishing, and claims the deepest attention. 43

Turning to causes of decline Coghlan dealt first with the trend of marriage age among females, important for its effect on fertility, and found that the average age had risen by about sixteen months between 1885 and 1900. He was not prepared to discuss the reasons, "both ethical and economic", for this postponement but said it was greater in towns and less in small-farming and coal-mining districts than in the State as a whole, and that it was hardly affected by religious profession.⁴⁴ Fecundity, like marriage showed some sensitivity to geo-cultural influences, he suggested, due to the aids to the prevention of conception being 'more accessible' in urban than in rural areas. He also showed that there were slight differentials of fecundity between religious groups and that marriages between persons of the same religious denomination were more fecund than religiously 'mixed' unions. To explain the latter phenomenon he put forward the rather novel hypothesis that "the contractors of [mixed] unions speedily exhaust the passion that brought them together... and that the bond of religious sympathy,

42. Decline of the Birth-Rate p.3

43. ibid p.3f

44. ibid p.5f

which might otherwise have taken its place, is entirely lacking." 45

In the "Conclusion" of his second booklet Coghlan returned to the implications of the various statistical indications of a decline in the birth rate. He believed that the decline resulted from "a direct reversal of the ordinary canons of morality" and said that it had occurred far too quickly for any explanation by cerebral development to be credible. On the contrary, he found the facts "compatible with only one explanation, viz., that in the years following 1880 the art of applying artificial checks to conception was successfully learnt". There was, moreover, no sign of the art being forgotten.⁴⁶ Coghlan's peroration set the tone for the public debate which followed publication of the booklet and is therefore worth quoting at length:

Large as is the area of the Australian continent, it is impossible that its people will ever become truly great under the conditions affecting the increase of population which now obtain. Immigration has practically ceased to be an important factor, the maintenance and increase of population depending upon the birth-rate alone, a rate seriously diminished and still diminishing. No people has ever become great under such conditions, or, having attained greatness, has remained great for any lengthened period. The problem of the fall in the birthrate is, therefore, a national one of overwhelming importance to the Australian people, perhaps more than to any other people, and on its satisfactory solution will depend whether this

45. *ibid* pp.16f ("Geographical Distribution of Fecundity") and 20f., 43 (religious belief and fecundity). Clearly Coghlan meant 'fertility', not 'fecundity' when he was comparing the religious groups.

Coghlan had offered his 'mixed' marriage theory several years earlier in his Report on the 1891 Census, *op cit* p.175. It could be argued just as plausibly that 'mixed' marriages might have been delayed by the need to gain family approval for the union, leaving less years for child-bearing!

46. *ibid*, p.68

Coghlan attributed the popularity of the cerebral development/reproductive decline theory to the publication "some thirty years ago" of "Greig's [sic] 'Enigmas of Life'." Obviously he was referring to the work of William R. Greg (1809-1881), on whom see E.P. Hutchinson: The Population Debate (Houghton Mifflin Co. Boston 1967) p.356f. For a more detailed discussion of the theory that intellectual activity leads to sterility see D.E.C. Eversley: Social Theories of Fertility and the Malthusian Debate (OUP 1959) pp.173-179. Hutchinson notes that Greg was anti-Malthusian and concerned about the non-survival of the fittest: this suggests a possible source of Coghlan's remarks, that the cerebral theory "was especially agreeable to the very large number of persons wishful to escape from the dire logic of Malthus" (Decline of the Birth-Rate, *loc cit*), and that, among those not practicing contraception, "it is to be feared that by no means the smallest class comprises those who, unfit for the responsibilities of a large family, are as fertile as they are unfit." (*ibid* p.31).

country is ever to take a place among the great nations of the world. 47

In the late 'eighties and the 'nineties official statistics provoked more interest in New South Wales than in either South Australia or Victoria. South Australia had no general report on her 1891 or 1901 Census, the annual 'Blue Book' statistics were embroidered with no description or analysis, and the State did not publish a Year Book until 1966. Victoria had a general report on the Census and descriptive Year Books but the methods of Hayter and his successors tended to diminish, rather than raise, public concern about the course of vital events. New South Wales had Coghlan, whose concentration on crude vital rates no doubt made it easier for the public to understand his work than if he had employed Hayter's refinements. It also gave that public a magnified impression of the real decline in its nuptiality and fertility and reinforced its concern by special studies of the decline and pronouncements about its implications. One result of Coghlan's work was the establishment in 1903 of a Royal Commission to investigate childbirth, infant mortality and the birth rate in New South Wales.⁴⁸ More than a quarter of the evidence the Commission heard - and the only part released to the public - was statistical material similar to that published in Coghlan's two booklets. The similarity is not surprising since the chief witness on statistical questions was J.B. Trivett, Government Actuary from 1891 to 1905, and Assistant Statistician from 1900 to 1903. Trivett assured the Commissioners that he was well acquainted with the collection of data for the Vital Statistics and his first day's evidence was devoted to criticizing the registration system and suggesting improvements. He did not suggest that there was any large-scale non-registration of births, however, beyond a leakage of about $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent from births in Maternity Homes.⁴⁹ At his second appearance Trivett presented tables of crude birth rates for New South Wales, other Australian States and a number of

47. ibid p.69. Cf Coghlan's evidence to the Federal Capital enquiry in 1903 (Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers 1903, Miscellaneous Papers, p.238 Q. 3194): "... our rate of increase I think is below what we have a right to expect. We are practically dependent upon the increase of excess of births over deaths; the birth rate is extremely low, and the death rate also. It is ridiculous to think that a great continent like this depended for its ultimate settlement on so small a factor as that."

48. The genesis of the Royal Commission is treated in Chapter IV, below.

49. DBR Qq. 286-313.

overseas areas which showed a fall of 21 per cent from the New South Wales rate of 34.6 in 1891 to 27.4 in 1900. He explained that the rate "was nearly level from 1880 to 1888...then suddenly dropped, about 1888, by $2\frac{1}{4}$ per 1000. It was then nearly level for three years... until 1891, and then there was a continuous drop to $27\frac{1}{2}$ in 1898"; it remained at that level for the next five years.⁵⁰ He argued that the decline was not produced by a change in female age composition, which was now more favourable to reproduction than it had been, or by a reduction in the proportion of women who were married. In other words "the available stock for reproduction purposes" was at least on a par with that in each census year back to 1871. The issue of this stock, though, as shown by the ratio of births to women under 45, had fallen about .30 per cent between 1886 and 1901.⁵¹

Dealing with the relative level of rural and urban crude birth rates, Trivett said that the metropolitan rate for 1900, the lowest year under review, was only 57 per cent of that for 1884, the highest of the preceding years, while the non-metropolitan rate did not fall below 72 per cent (in 1902) of the peak rate recorded in 1880. This contrast was misleading because it ignored the sharp rise in the metropolitan rate between 1880-84. If the metropolitan and non-metropolitan rates had both been considered over the span 1880-1902 the difference between their percentage declines would have been very much less. Trivett's statement of the case suggests either that he was one of those who blamed urban life for fertility decline or that he shared the Commissioners' tendency to regard a high birth rate (such as the metropolitan rate in 1884) as the normal condition of affairs.⁵² Trivett also held strong opinions on the level of natural increase. In response to the Commissioners' questions he said that the high rate of natural increase in New South Wales, as compared with Continental experience, was merely a short-term effect of the State's low death rate. "You will have your whirlwind come here in a very short time", he warned, "because the birth-rate is

50. ibid Qq.315-322 and Exhibits 1-3.

51. ibid Qq.324-329, 333f., and Exhibit 4. As we saw in Chapter I and as McLean was to point out in his debate with Trivett (see p.90 below), Trivett was simply not correct in discounting change in female age composition. There had been a change in New South Wales during the nineties and it did account for some of the decline in fertility.

52. ibid Qq.330f and Exhibit 5.

decreasing, and the number of old-aged persons in the population is increasing proportionately, which will give you a higher death-rate eventually."⁵³

Trivett again gave evidence based on crude rates when the discussion turned from births to marriages. He told the Commissioners that the crude marriage rate had fluctuated, rising from 8.21 marriages per 1,000 of population in 1881 to 8.83 in 1883, then falling continuously to 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ per 1,000 in 1894 before making a gradual recovery to 7.53 in 1902. Nothing was said about the trend of average age at marriage but some questions were asked about possible variations from the average in respect of occupation, birth place and religion. On differential marriage age by occupation, Trivett said "generally, you find that the lower down in the social scale a man is, the earlier, on the whole, is his marriage-age", the age increasing with the length of training required for his occupation. Average marriage age for women was shown to vary from 23.35 years for Australian-born to 26.51 for Scottish-born, and from 23.31 years for Methodist women to 24.18 for Congregationalists, but apparent differences between urban and rural marriage ages were discounted in view of the "sentimental motive" to be married in the metropolis.⁵⁴

From marriage Trivett turned to illegitimacy, which he discussed at length, and then to the question of fecundity. He defined fecundity as the proven capacity of women to bear children but he did not say what period of time he allowed for women to prove their capacity. It is therefore difficult to estimate the significance of his figures showing that the proportions of barren, or in-fecund, marriages for the period 1891 to 1897 were:

At marriage age	20	25	30	35	40	45
Infecund per 1,000	88	111	175	347	693	908

The difficulty is increased by the fact that these figures, which were given verbally to the Commission, differ from the figures for the same period provided in Trivett's written submission and that the difference is not explained.⁵⁵ Trivett claimed that his figures showed an increase of barren-ness by comparison with 1861-70 but the fact that barren-ness in women marrying at about the average age (25 years) had increased by only 6.6 per cent over a period when the crude birth rate had gone down 33.5 per cent was consigned to a footnote and neither investigated nor drawn to the Commissioners' attention. Differential analysis of infecundity showed it to be higher in Sydney than in the rest of the State and higher amongst foreign-born wives than amongst native-born. There

53. *ibid* Qq. 335-346

54. *ibid* Qq. 350-362 and Exhibits 7 and 9

55. *ibid* Q.450 (the figures given above) and Exhibit 19 (the submission).

was no obvious differentiation by religious denomination.⁵⁶

When he passed from the proof of women's capacity to reproduce to the extent of their reproduction as measured by average issue, Trivett also became more willing to offer a theory to explain what his statistics seemed to indicate. He showed that average issue had declined from 5.4 children per wife in 1871-80 to 3.6 in 1891-1900: considering marriages at the most usual ages the decline was from 6.4 to 4.4 in the issue of wives marrying at ages 20-25 and from 4.8 to 3.1 in the issue of wives marrying between 25 and 30 years of age.⁵⁷ He said there were "four main causes to quote" for the decline:

One is postponement of marriage; the second is decline in fecundity...; third, cessation of fertility at an earlier period than was formerly in vogue; and fourth, a general decrease of fertility at every age. Numbers two and three...have an intimate connection with the use of preventives which, I understand, will occupy the attention of the Commission. 58

The figures presented on average issue according to husband's occupation dealt only with current differentials (ranging from 4.26 for "Clerks, Book-keepers, Travellers, Storemen, etc." to 6.79 for agricultural workers) and the interesting question, from the viewpoint of the historian of contraception, whether the differentials were changing was not discussed. However, Trivett did claim that the comparatively low family size of the professional and commercial classes was due to prevention of conception rather than delayed marriage - an answer slightly at variance with his earlier stress on the influence of occupational status on marriage age.⁵⁹

Trivett gave his evidence about average issue, together with some material on infant and maternal mortality, at the fourth meeting of the Commission on 3 September 1903. The Commissioners did not consider statistical questions again until their twenty-fourth meeting, when they dealt with written evidence from other States, and Trivett was only recalled for the twenty-ninth meeting

56. *ibid* Qq.440-456 and Exhibit 19 (which has the note on infecundity and the crude birth rate).

57. *ibid* Q.511 and Exhibit 34.

58. *ibid* Q.513

59. *ibid* Qq.515-519 and Exhibit 35. Cf. Q.356. Here again, Trivett follows the lead of his master, Coghlan, and fails to specify the source of his figures or the universe to which they applied. Were they the figures for completed issue according to husband's occupation?

on 31 December 1903.⁶⁰ He was told that, although interstate authorities agreed that all of Australasia had experienced a fall in the crude birth rate, the suggestion had been made that a more refined index was desirable. Trivett agreed that "To decide whether there really is a falling-off in the birth-rate no doubt the rigidly correct mode of procedure is...to compare the births to the number of women of conceptive age, from whom alone births can be expected". He then presented a table of age-specific birth rates which, he claimed, showed the following percentage falls in age-specific birth rates between 1891 and 1901:

<u>Age group</u>	<u>20-25</u>	<u>25-30</u>	<u>30-35</u>	<u>35-40</u>	<u>40-45</u>
% decline	4.6	15.5	22.4	27.0	25.6

His interpretation was that

The great characteristics of the table as a whole are that a very distinct decline in the birth-rate is most palpable...The decline in the birth-rate as regards New South Wales must, in the light of all the figures which have been presented, be considered to have been unmistakably proven.

If other countries showed lower rates

The only inference deducible...would be that such countries have proceeded further down the incline of national disaster than has New South Wales.⁶¹

The quotations in the preceding paragraph give some idea of the defensive tone of the evidence Trivett gave after the Commission had received evidence from other States. Further evidence that he was on the defensive can be seen in his exchanges with Commissioner Sir Normand MacLaurin on the mortality of legitimate and illegitimate infants and on the age distribution of New South Wales women.⁶² The point to be made in extenuation of his attitude and, indeed, in explanation of the line of evidence which he presented, is that as Government Actuary he was immediately subordinate to Coghlan and he had until recently been designated Assistant Statist. In both capacities he must have helped with the preparation of Coghlan's booklets on the birth rate and now, as witness, he was being asked to give evidence before a Commission for which the booklets had provided the impetus and of which Coghlan himself was a member. It is not surprising that he tried to defend the statistical position which Coghlan had set out both in the booklets and, many times, in Wealth and Progress.

60. ibid Minutes of Meetings pp.122-135.

61. ibid Qq.6618, 6698.

62. ibid Qq.6659-6675 and 6691-6703.

The statisticians of the other States were under no such constraints when they provided the evidence against which Trivett was reacting. In fact G.H. Ayliffe, the Registrar-General of vital events for South Australia, hardly had any statistical position to defend. Commenting on the range of information sought by the Commission, he said "as far as between forty and fifty of the questions in the list are concerned, our records do not contain the detailed information necessary to enable us to answer them."⁶³ He was able to report that 1886 was the year when South Australian births began to fall off "both in number and rate", the trend thereafter having been "steadily downward". Four causes of the decline were suggested, including a reduction in the number of marriages celebrated, a rise in the average age at marriage and the considerable number of husbands absent at Broken Hill or in Western Australia for much of each year since 1886. It may be significant of the lack of statistical sophistication in South Australia that there was no reference to a crude, let alone refined, rate of marriage. On the other hand Ayliffe was more circumspect than many of his contemporaries when he wrote "I believe, though I cannot offer any undoubted proof on the point, that in recent years some of our married people have preferred not to have many children, and have, in consequence, had recourse to various means to restrict the number of their offspring".⁶⁴

Easily the most detailed response to the Commission's interstate enquiries came from Victoria's Government Statist, William McLean, who has already been noticed as editor of the Victorian Year Book in 1902-04. The probable direction of his evidence was clear from the covering memorandum he addressed to the President of the Royal Commission. He reported himself as "quite satisfied that restrictive measures are at present adopted" but parted company with the received wisdom by adding "the practice has not been confined to the last twenty or thirty years only." On the contrary, in his opinion, "natural causes are, for the most part, responsible for the declining birth-rate...and...the effects of any artificial measures which are adopted are not, as yet, very

63. ibid Q.6258. Small wonder that South Australia had no Year Book! The scope of the Commission's enquiry is indicated in the reply furnished by J. Hughes, Registrar-General for Queensland, who listed the seventy-four questions involved. His tart comment was "It is estimated that to fully answer all the questions would occupy, in addition to the supervision, the time of six men for five months, and...an expenditure of at least £700." (ibid, Q.6181).

64. ibid Q.6259

pronounced." He added that the chief impressions he had gained from his enquiries were that a high crude birth rate did not necessarily bring economic benefit to a society and that it was dangerous to theorize from results in demographically unstable communities. As a closing gesture he placed a charge at the Commission's very foundation with the remark that he saw "no solid reason for alarm in respect to the birth-rate in Australia."⁶⁵

The statistical basis of McLean's opinions (or the statistical product of his preconceptions?) was immediately demonstrated in his discussion of natural increase. On the basis of figures going back to 1840-44, he claimed, it was difficult to tell when natural increase had first begun to decline in Victoria because the decline had been almost uninterrupted.⁶⁶ There was a substantial flaw in McLean's figures - the fact that Victoria had no separate administration and, hence, no official vital statistics until 1850: it is probable, therefore, that he was relying on an earlier, uncertainly based, set of figures prepared by Archer. Nevertheless his willingness to accept demographic fluctuations as natural was a more justifiable attitude than that of the New South Wales officials who tended to equate a year of high increase, say, 1884, with normalcy and to see anything less than the high figure as an index of decline.

Not all the praise should go to McLean for he was inclined to offer opinions even on topics, like the effect on marriage age of birthplace or religion, about which he had first to report "No Victorian statistics available."⁶⁷

65. ibid Q.5845.

66. ibid Qq.5850f. McLean could have made his point more strongly by pointing out that, while the general trend was downward, the rate of natural increase had been fluctuating throughout.

67. See, for example, ibid Qq.5857-59. In response to Q.5858, "Is the marriage age affected by birth-place", he wrote "No Victorian statistics available. It is probable, however, that warmer climates are conducive to earlier development, and, consequently, to earlier marriage. It is also probable that the reproductive period closes at an earlier age, and thus any economic advantages arising from the earlier marriage (due to climate) are neutralized." This is an interesting speculation but McLean gave no evidence about the relationship between climate and sexual development or about the relationship between sexual development and age at marriage. Raymond Pearl: The Natural History of Population (OUP 1939) p.48 said of the alleged relation between menarche and climate "that while in a general and rather inexact way the rule appears to be true, still there are many exceptions to it." On the other hand M.F. Ashley Montague: An Introduction to Physical Anthropology (edn. 3 Charles C. Thomas Springfield Ill. 1960) p.538 is much less cautious in his support for the 'rule'.

He was also less equipped than Coghlan and Trivett to investigate the subtleties of vital events: on the topics of fecundity and average issue, which were significant in Coghlan and Trivett's argument, McLean was simply devoid of statistics, though not of suggestions! He did point out, however, that there was no guarantee of accuracy in estimates of average issue from death registration, which was one of the bases of Coghlan's estimation.⁶⁸

At the end of his submission McLean plumped again for a natural, or demographic, as distinct from an artificial, or technological, explanation of the decline in the birth rate. Among the natural causes he included changes in the age constitution of married women at reproductive ages, an increase in the age of marriage, decreased infant mortality and a decay in the physique of married women, the latter two points being argued as in the 1904 Year Book.⁶⁹ By way of clincher McLean used two sets of figures from Coghlan's own Vital Statistics of New South Wales for 1901. One set showed that "women who, for by far the most part, had completed their families before the knowledge of scientific preventive measures" had average issue "about equal to that of women of 45 living at the time of the census" in 1901. The unavoidable conclusion, was that

if restrictive measures have been adopted during the last twenty years, then either the practice could not have been as extensive or effective as is popularly believed, or that women of previous generations were equally well acquainted with measures to attain the same end, though doubtless of a less scientific character.

The second set of figures showed that Budapest, with a crude birth rate 13 per 1,000 above New South Wales' and so high that "no suspicion of adoption of preventive measures" could be entertained, had lower age-specific birth-rates - at all ages - than New South Wales.⁷⁰

The Royal Commissioners read McLean's evidence on 14 December 1903. They recalled Trivett to hear it on 31 December and, as a result, sent four further questions to McLean. He was given a table of age-specific legitimate birth rates for New South Wales in 1891 and 1901, which showed a decline in the rate for every age-

68. ibid Qq.5878-5889 (fecundity) and 5897-5905 (average issue)

69. ibid Q.5919

70. loc cit

group, and asked if he had any reason to doubt the reality of the decline. McLean replied that although he did not doubt the accuracy of the figures, they did not modify his opinion "that the various causes contributing to a general decline - i.e., change of age constitution, increased age at marriage, decrease of infantile mortality and change of physique - operate within the groups as over the whole." He was formally correct in saying that changed age constitution could have brought about lower age-specific rates: the point the Commissioner's- and Trivett - were pressing would have been conclusive only if they had standardized the rates for age distribution. On the other hand it would require such a radical rise in age distribution to bring about the reported change in the age-specific rates that McLean's answer looks a little thin.⁷¹

McLean slid further away from the point of the Commission's enquiry by adding that he regarded the decline as temporary, resulting from "motives of commendable prudence" in the "extreme circumstances" of the mid-nineties drought. Taken with his comments on age-specific fertility this answer, which the Commission received on 14 January 1904, can be seen as the product of different assumptions about the morality of family size - or as part of an interstate polemic, rather than an earnest search after statistical truth. Trivett was duly recalled, yet again, on 21 January and duly reiterated his belief that there was "a most unmistakable moral" in the decline of 1891 age-specific rates compared with what he called the "standard" rate of 1871-81. On the question of age distribution he produced figures for a comparison of 1871 and 1891 but not for the crucial comparison of 1891-1901.⁷²

The McLean-Trivett match went one more round in the Commission arena. Trivett's calculation of the 1871-81 "standard" was referred for comment to McLean who responded with a denial that the mean of the age-specific rates in those two years had any validity as a "local normal standard". On the contrary those abnormally high rates resulted from the numerous access of

71. *ibid.*, Qq.6745-7. McLean was supplied with age-specific birth-rates as follows:-

	Age 20-25	25-30	30-35	35-40	40-45
1891	41.63	35.37	29.22	23.63	11.84
1901	39.70	29.87	22.68	17.25	8.81

72. *ibid.* Qq.6779-6793. The 1871-91 figures in fact showed the rise in age distribution that McLean had suggested.

migrants "of a vigorous type" - a point for which McLean found support in his opponent's corner!⁷³ Asked whether, and why, he disagreed with Trivett's interpretation of the decline as "indubitable proof of the practices of artificial restriction", McLean repeated his belief that there were a number of factors in the decline. He agreed that prevention was being practised but said that more or less effective pursuit of the same goal had a long history and could not be the sole cause of the contemporary reduction of fertility. Far from agreeing with Trivett, he wrote,

I have failed to find any evidence in support of his views. I have, on the contrary,...arrived at the conclusion that the decline in the birth-rate of the Australian States and New Zealand is not a cause for alarm...

He then noted the overseas association of high birth rate and high infant mortality, the high rate of natural increase in Australia and the probability that natural increase would double Australia's population every forty-seven years, and concluded:

In view of all these facts it might reasonably be asked what are the advantages of a high birth-rate when it is accompanied, as seems to be invariably the case in a normal population, by a high infantile mortality rate. Clearly it is no satisfaction for any community to have a high birth-rate to achieve in a few years results which are accomplished by communities with a low birth-rate at no such sacrifice of human life. 74

Trivett's reaction was to say that the high fertility rate of 1871-81 was not abnormal, that the influence of immigrant females had been overstated and that McLean was guilty of mis-quotation from Coghlan's booklet. He adduced no new statistical evidence of substance but virtually accused McLean of professional incompetence on the ground that the latter's lack of alarm at the demographic outlook betokened

either a distinctly different reading of the signs of the times to that exhibited by the numerous witnesses examined by the Commission, or else his existence in a much serener and purer plane of humanity than that occupied by such witnesses, or possibly an absence of observation of many facts which are patent to the thoughtful student of statistics. 75

73. ibid, Qq.6846f. McLean very pertinently quoted from Coghlan's Decline of the Birth-rate, p.36: "There can be no question but that the women who came to Australia between 1850 and 1870, and who form a large proportion of the older married women now living, were of a type likely to be prolific in children."

74. DBR Qq.6849-52

75. ibid Q.6854

The Royal Commission concluded its activities soon after Trivett had made his attack on McLean's competence but the debate between the two was quickly transferred to a new forum in the Intercolonial Medical Journal of Australasia. Much of the exchange was repetition of what had been brought to the Commission but McLean's new material gave him the more impressive case.⁷⁶ On the statistical side he used standardized age-specific birth rates to show that, although New South Wales and Victoria had both suffered a decline in fertility since 1871, the decline was less severe than appeared if 1891 were taken as the standard. He also suggested that the number of children surviving to their fifth year was a better index than the crude birth rate of natural increase of population and showed that, on that basis, Australia's progress compared favourably with that of countries overseas.⁷⁷

Trivett's article in the Journal contained no statistical novelty but certainly stepped up the attack on McLean. Statistical matters were touched long enough to show that the association of high birth rate with high infant mortality was not universal, as McLean had contended, and to make the valid criticism that even if a relationship were demonstrated McLean would still have to distinguish cause from effect.⁷⁸ Trivett then begged one of the questions at issue - by using his appearance before the Royal Commission as a guarantee of his authority - and damned McLean for commending what was criticized by 'more enlightened' men. He also attacked him for

applying too severe a strain to public credulity by offering a laboured theoretical explanation of a condition of affairs in our social economy which highly skilled medical authorities have pronounced to be due to...artificial prevention of conception. 79

For a writer in the medical journal the last two lines may have been a skilful appeal to Caesar but it was surely a little unfair for a statistician debating a statistical question to decry his opponent's "theoretical explanation". Even more unfairly, Trivett caricatured McLean's position as an advocacy of "absolute murder of infant life

76. W. McLean: "The Declining Birth-rate in Australia" in IMJA IX:3 (20 March 1904) p.109. McLean had the advantage in the Journal, as compared with the Commission, that he was free to form his own case, rather than react to the case being argued by Trivett.

77. ibid pp.112f, 117

78. J.B. Trivett: "The Decline of the Birth-rate in New South Wales" in IMJA IX:5 (20 May 1904) p.245f.

79. ibid p.239

at the viable stage of pregnancy, and of the crime against the State of avoidance of conception."⁸⁰

McLean had the last say, possibly because he had more to say. In a "rejoinder" he drew attention to Trivett's misrepresentation of the McLean case and misinterpretation of his own New South Wales statistics. He used a technique similar to that described in Chapter I (p.22f, above) to show that deferment of marriage must have been considerable in recent years and he claimed that on Coghlan's figures New South Wales fertility in 1901-02 was little below that for Edinburgh and Glasgow "long before the period of alleged restriction."⁸¹ A couple of months later McLean reported that a circular questionnaire to doctors in Victoria had revealed that attempted contraception was common and even that families were being "unduly limited", but that the question whether this was a recent innovation remained unresolved. On one issue he was firm: "if the declining birthrate is of so grave a character as we are asked to believe...then it is incumbent upon the State or the community to take steps...to preserve infantile life". The pronatalists held that the child was an asset to the State. McLean contended it was only a potential asset unless it reached maturity. His prescription, therefore, was simple: further efforts were needed to preserve infant life, not greater efforts to produce it, for

An increased preservation of infantile life is practicable; the increase of births, either by law or moral teaching cannot but be regarded as extremely doubtful. 82

The debate between the statisticians showed the stage that had been reached in the statistical study of Australia's population by the beginning of this century. Hayter had demonstrated the importance of refining vital rates and shown a willingness to expect fluctuations in population growth. Coghlan had stressed the need to relate vital phenomena to economic and social categories but had been much less willing than Hayter to accept the demographic changes going on around him. The difference between their outlooks was neatly summarised in a comment Hayter

80. ibid p.248

81. W. McLean: "The Declining Birth-rate in Australia: A Rejoinder" in IMJA IX:6 (20 June 1904) p.311-316. See especially pp.312f., and 314.

82. W. McLean: "Alleged Artificial Restriction of Families" in IMJA IX:7 (20 August 1904), pp.394-396.

made on Coghlan's projections of Australia's population and food supply:

Mr Coghlan starts with the assumption that the population of Australia is increasing at the rate of 4 per cent. per annum. This, it may be observed, is a faster rate than that at which the population of any country, starting with a population as large as that Australia contains at the present time, has ever been known to increase for long together...It is true that since 1881 the population, has apparently increased at the annual rate of rather over 4 per cent., but this estimate, if correct, which is doubtful, must be looked upon as quite exceptional and impossible to be sustained. 83

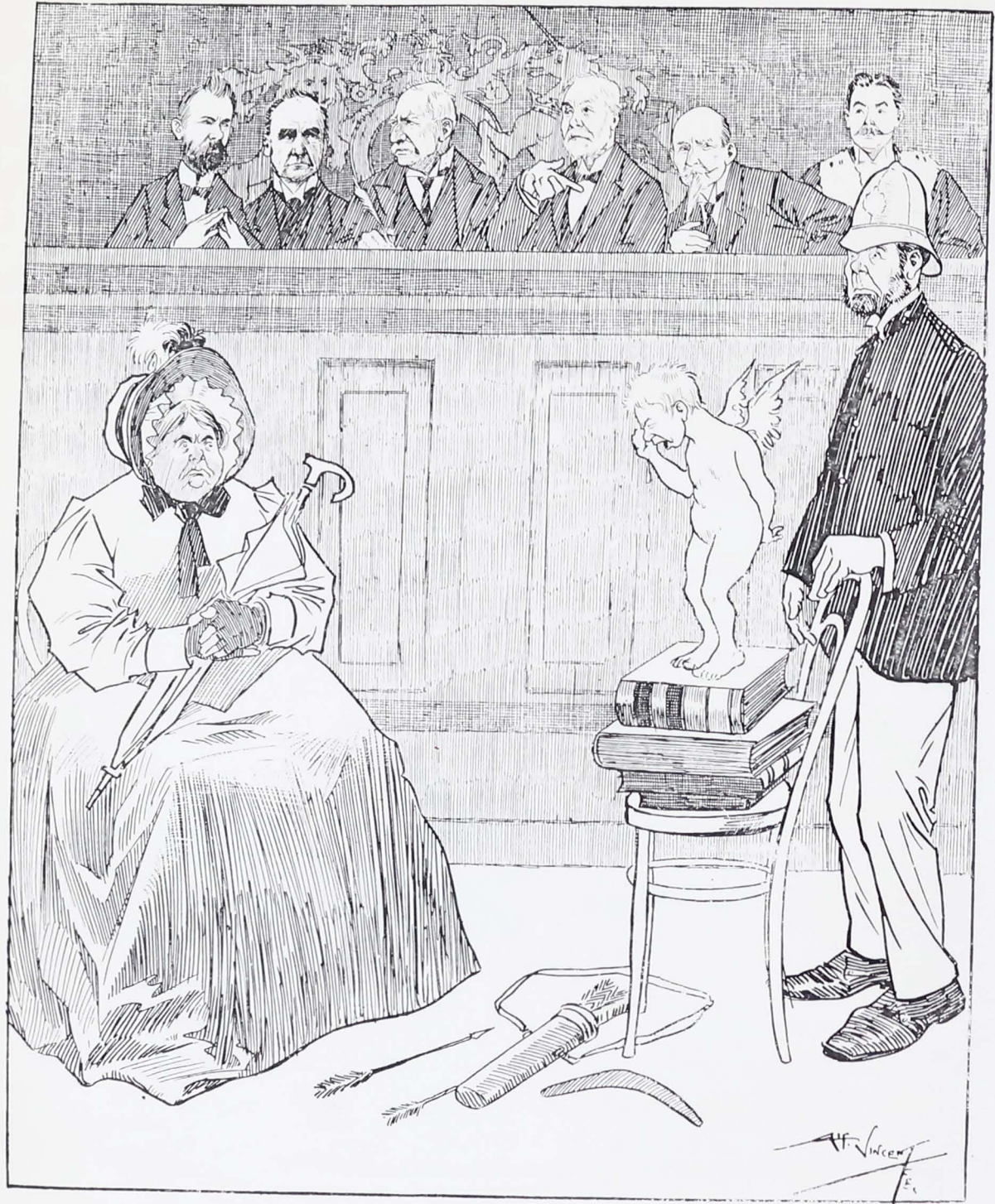
It might be said in defence of Coghlan's less flexible reaction to change that he had to deal with the slackening of natural increase in New South Wales at a time when the comfort of supplementary growth by immigration was fast disappearing, whereas Hayter was dealing with the decline of natural increase in the 1880s while Victoria was still benefiting from an influx of migrants. From the point of view of technical analysis there can be little doubt that Hayter and McLean, with their refinements and standardisations of fertility measures, contributed more to Australian demography than Coghlan and Trivett. From the viewpoint of influence on public discussion about population, however, there is even less doubt that Coghlan made the major contribution. Much as one might hope for technical detachment in statistical discussion, it was absent in Australia and by 1903-04 Trivett and McLean represented the conservative and progressive strands of contemporary opinion about population. Trivett epitomised the view that a national tragedy was in train unless a high birth rate was restored while McLean was a harbinger of the coming stress on the quality, rather than the quantity, of infant life. Both showed that population discussion could be a fruitful source of social disagreement.

83. Hayter: "Our Meat Supply" in Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science Proceedings II (1890) p.175. Cf. Australasian (Melbourne) XLVIII; 1241 (11 January 1890) p.81B.

CHAPTER IV

Evidence or Opinion?

The Origins, Proceedings and Report of the
New South Wales Royal Commission
on the Decline of the Birth-Rate



THE N.S.W. BIRTH-RATE COMMISSION.

THE COMMISSION (having examined Sairey Gamp, to the next witness): "NOW, CUPID, IS IT YOUR FAULT?"

(From Bulletin, 20 August 1903 p.7)

The New South Wales Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth-Rate was the most important element in the debate about the peopling of Australia between 1890 and 1911. The Commission was widely noticed overseas and provided a focus for, and provoked much of, the local discussion. This chapter examines the circumstances under which the Commission was established, its personnel and procedures, and the contents of the Report issued at the end of its investigations. Concerning the establishment of the Royal Commission it will be suggested that, although the way was prepared by Coghlan, the proposition came from Dr C.K. Mackellar, who presided over the Commission and probably chose most of its members. It will also be argued that the Government of Sir John See had good political reasons for agreeing to Mackellar's proposal.

Royal Commissions are usually set up to educate public opinion, to shelve a politically dangerous issue or to make a genuine inquiry into a matter on which there is no settled policy. Whatever the motive the Commission can only be issued with the agreement of a Government and it therefore follows that there is nearly always a political element in the decision to proceed with an inquiry.¹ Hence the natural places to seek an explanation of the establishment of a Royal Commission are the newspapers, for evidence of public disquiet or clamour for an inquiry; the parliamentary record, for hints of political pressure moving the government to action; the personal papers of politicians and the files of government departments involved in behind-the-scenes politicking or establishment of the machinery for inquiry. In fact there are no significant papers, the New South Wales government files tell little and the parliamentary record gives negligible evidence of pressure on the government. The newspapers are more fruitful but even they provide information about the context of the Birth Rate Commission, rather than detailed explanation of its origins.

In March 1903 President Theodore Roosevelt drew attention to changes taking place in the population structure and growth of the United States of America. The matter being treated in Roosevelt's customary colourful style, his views were widely publicized, not least in Australia. In quick succession the Sydney public were able to read an article in the Bulletin pointing out that the poor - who had most cause - had least opportunity to restrict their families; an editorial in the Evening News which reassuringly observed that declining birth rates were not peculiar to Australia; a thoughtful editorial in the Sydney Morning Herald; and

1. The literature on the institution of Royal Commission is exceedingly meagre but some help can be obtained from H.McD. Clokie and J.W. Robinson: Royal Commissions of Enquiry (Stanford University Press 1937). At p.123f they "roughly" classify the reasons for setting up Royal Commissions. Their categories elaborate the three reasons suggested above.

an editorial and several letters in the Daily Telegraph. Significantly, in view of attitudes they were to adopt later in the year, neither the Herald nor the Telegraph yet blamed the Government for the prevailing slackness of population growth.² After its March flow the tide of interest in population ebbed from the columns of the Daily Telegraph in April, May and early June, 1903. Sydney people who wished to pursue the topic, however, could turn to the Evening News and the Sydney Morning Herald for occasional snippets of information and opinion, although even those papers published little during most of May and the first half of June.

The position changed radically on 13 June when the Telegraph published a review of Coghlan's pamphlet on The Decline in the Birth-Rate. Reviews in the Herald and the Evening News followed on 15 June and from then until the issue of the Royal Commission on 13 August a flood of articles, reports, editorials and letters, especially to the Telegraph, kept the population question in the vanguard of public discussion. The Herald greeted the pamphlet with a sub-leader on migration which dwelt on the natural advantages of New South Wales and asserted that there was "no country in the world...so fitted for a home for industrious and energetic people" vastly more numerous than it then housed. To some extent the failure of New South Wales to fulfil its potential was blamed upon drought and compulsory unionism but the Herald did not doubt that "a very large share of the responsibility" lay at the feet of "the present Administration with its disastrous nostrums." A further sub-leader on natural increase was less critical of the Government but more gloomy about the chances of improvement.³

The points the Herald raised, and many besides, were rehearsed in a host of letters to the Telegraph - nearly forty in the two months from mid-June. 'Moral' themes appeared more often than politico-economic or sociological ones and few of the letters directly impugned the New

2. "The Empty Cradle" in Bulletin (7 March 1903) p.8C; "The Australian Birth Rate" in Evening News (18 March 1903) p.4A; "The Problem of the Birth-Rate" in SMH (21 March 1903) p.10C; "The Decline of Population" in DT (28 March 1903) p.8E.

Only the general trend of the newspapers' attention to population topics is considered here, the detailed examination of editorials and letters being left to chapter VIII, "Press and Public Opinions". The question of ownership and editorship has not been pursued because the interest here is in the general climate of press opinion, not the differences of emphasis between the several newspapers.

3. SMH 15 June 1903 pp.6B, "Emigration and Immigration" and 6D, "A Declining Birth-Rate". Cf. DT 13 June 1903 p.8F, "The Birth-Rate Problem".

South Wales Government. As the correspondence proceeded, however, letters dealing with economic conditions and job security and, thus, effectively criticising government policies, became more common.⁴ These letters apart, there was an hiatus in the newspaper debate from mid-June until the latter half of July when all three dailies began carrying increased volumes of news and editorial comment critical of the Government's handling of population problems. Both the Herald and the Evening News expatiated on the exodus of population from the State, the evening paper claiming that the exodus was growing ominous because of the Government's proclivity for running affairs "solely in the interests of the worker".⁵

In the last days of July the developing debate began to wear the aspect of a political campaign, the tone of which was set by a heavily slanted feature on the main news page of the Daily Telegraph. The heading ran

EXODUS FROM NEW SOUTH WALES

Over Sixteen Thousand Gone in Six Months.

. . .
. . .

'Something is rotten in the state of Denmark'.

Letter-writers to the Herald and leader-writers in the Evening News agreed.⁶ It quickly became apparent that the newspaper winds were raising political waves. On 29 July the Premier, Sir John See, produced figures furnished by Coghlan and said they refuted "this nonsense about the decrease of population" or, as another newspaper reported him, "the country is not in the decadent condition that some people would lead us to suppose". The Leader of the Opposition promptly replied with Customs Department figures showing a net outflow of 275 persons from New South Wales in the eighteen months to 30 June 1903.⁷

4. It has already been noted that the detailed content of the letters is discussed in Chapter VIII. The reader who wishes to gauge the trend of correspondence at this stage should consult DI 17 June 1903 p.10D (three letters); 18 June p.3G (two); 19 June p.8D (four); 25 June p.3G (three); 27 June p.11F (four); 30 June p.8D (three); 2 July p.6C (one); 7 July p.3E (six); 8 July p.9D (one); 11 July p.13D (four); 14 July p.8C (one); 15 July p.5B (one); 31 July p.3A (one); 5 August p.4C (one letter).

5. Evening News 16 July 1903 p.4A "An Ominous Exodus" and 23 July p.4A "Provincial Depopulation"; SMH 24 July p.4B "Australia's Need."

6. DI 27 July 1903 p.5F "Exodus from New South Wales" and 29 July p.6C "The Population Question". Cf. SMH 29 July p.7E, letters from "One Who's Going - When He Can" and Frank F. Hoddinott, and Evening News 31 July p.4A "Settlement on Land" and 3 August p.4A "The Truth About The Exodus".

7. DI 29 July 1903 p.9G and SMH 30 July p.8C for statements by See. Cf. DI 30 July p.7C for Carruther's reply.

By the middle of 1903 See's Progressive Party Government was the subject of newspaper attacks on its population policies and on its dependence upon, and deference towards, the minority Labor Party. It was also under increasing political pressure from forces marshalling behind the Leader of the Opposition, J.H. Carruthers. A Liberal and Reform Association had been formed by Carruthers towards the end of 1902 to exploit the "public movement against the Government." During 1903 the Association gained support from the People's Reform League and Protestant-led temperance groups. The accession of these interests meant that the movement began to display many features of what may be called 'urban populism', a combination of the Populists' distrust of politicians and belief in the moral superiority of rural life, the Progressives' interest in social reform, and a vaguely understood Darwinist fear of national decadence. Capitalising on these sentiments, Carruthers spent the parliamentary winter recess of 1903 touring the State to organize party branches while a bandwagon effect was created by the Sydney Morning Herald, which carried an average three columns per issue of news and correspondence about Carruther's reform movement during May and June.⁸

8. See Bruce Mansfield: Australian Democrat (Sydney University Press 1965) pp.187ff., 193; Joan Rydon and R.N. Spann: New South Wales Politics, 1901-1910 ([Sydney Studies in Politics: 2] F.W. Cheshire Melbourne 1962) pp.29, 32; and J.D. Bollen: "The Temperance Movement and the Liberal Party in New South Wales Politics, 1900-1904" in Journal of Religious History I:3 (June 1961) p.160. Cf. SMH May and June 1903 passim. According to SMH 30 May 1903 p.100, Carruthers claimed a membership of seventy thousand for his Association at that time. This thesis is not about the political system or political psychology of New South Wales in 1903 and would, indeed, have been easier to write if some prior work had been published on those topics. With the questions of Federation and the tariff settled, there was no decisive issue to polarise politics in the early years of this century and polarisation only came by the end of the first decade when a labour/non-labour watershed was clearly established. In such an environment movements, not parties, were the vehicles of political change and the effective movement of 1903 was the amalgam of forces we have called urban populism. A study of political psychology would probably have concluded that urban populism was, in Peter Wiles' phrase, "a syndrome, not a doctrine". [P. Wiles: "A Syndrome, Not a Doctrine: Some Elementary Theses on Populism" in G. Ionescu & E. Gellner (eds.): Populism. Its Meanings and National Characteristics (Weidenfeld & Nicolson London 1969) p.166.]
- Wiles' syndrome has 24 'symptoms', of which a number were evident in the New South Wales movement. For example: "1. Populism is moralistic rather than programmatic... Logic and effectiveness are less valued than correct attitude and spiritual make-up... 15. Populism can be urban [but] Bound as it is to tradition and small enterprise, it will be unlikely to support [continuing] urbanisation... 21. Populism is... fundamentally nostalgic. Disliking the present and the immediate future, it seeks to mould the further future in accordance with its vision of the past." Variants of two other symptoms also appeared in New South Wales: opposition to the political Establishment (rather than the social-political Establishment of Wiles' symptom 7) and dislike of over-government by professional politickers, and xenophobic chauvinism in respect of Australia's

Against this background of political flux it must be recalled that many of the letters to the Telegraph had commented on moral aspects of the falling birth rate, whereas the newspapers had concentrated editorially on the migration and distribution of population. See's Government had been criticized for its role in the latter whereas much of the argument about the birth rate was, relatively, a-political. In such a context See could well have been afraid that Carruthers might make considerable capital out of the population issue. The Government could do nothing to improve immigration since loan funds were short and attempts to increase revenue from taxation would have been impolitic. On the other hand an inquiry into the natural increase problem could be expected to entail few political risks, to appear as a politically disinterested attempt at moral reform, and to effectively shelve population problems for several months.

The sequence of events in the week when the Royal Commission was announced suggests that this is at least a plausible explanation of See's readiness to allow an inquiry. Both morning papers on Saturday 8 August 1903 carried announcements that Sir John See had decided the decreasing birth rate was "a matter...of the greatest importance" requiring investigation by a Royal Commission. The following Monday's Herald carried See's detailed denial that the State was losing population, together with his assertion that there was no justification for "decrying the position of the country." The Herald rejected both of See's claims, while the Opposition insisted that the inquiry was an unnecessary duplication of Coghlan's work which would simply blazon New South Wales' troubles abroad and was merely a political stunt anyway.⁹

On Saturday 15 August the Telegraph reported See's assertion that "the question of politics...[had] never entered his head" when appointing the Royal Commission. He repeated this assertion the same afternoon in a defensive speech to an Oddfellows Lodge function in the

8. Continued.

relations with its region (a variant of Wiles' symptom 18). Contrary to the view apparently held by Gollan, [R.A. Gollan: "American Populism and Australian Utopianism" in Labour History IX (November 1965) p.15.] the movement was not radical but conservative in its political sympathies and strongly anti-Labor.

9. DT 8 August 1903 p.8G and 10 August p.4E; SMH 8 August p.1A, "Summary" and 10 August p.9E, "Are We Losing Population?" for See's statements. SMH 11 August p.4B, "The Premier's Defence" for the rejection of See's claims. NSW Parliamentary Debates (Assembly) 13 August, cols. 1499-1503; SMH 14 August p.6C, "In Parliament" and DT 14 August p.8D, "The Declining Birth-Rate...Mr Carruthers Indignant" for the attitude of the Opposition.

suburb of Newtown, claiming he had "no wish to place any political friend on the Commission" but, on the contrary, "was guided by the desire to do the best for the community". Hence he was certain that, because the birth rate question "went to the root and bottom of our social fabric..," the inquiry "would be productive of great good, and would prevent the deterioration of our race and the demoralization of our young people." These professions of innocent intention were set in the context of a claim that, with the fiscal issue relegated to the Federal sphere, "the State could devote its attention to the improvement of the general condition of the people, especially in regard to its moral obligations". See would surely have been justified in hoping that sentiments like these might appeal to the moralism of those from whom his opponents were gaining so much support. The Herald, at least, saw it that way, for it reported his speech under the simple heading "State Politics."¹⁰

The establishment of a Royal Commission would have been politically impossible without the Premier's approval and there were, in fact, sufficient reasons for See to find a Commission on the Birth Rate politically acceptable, even if not essential. In other words, the way was open for a prime mover interested in proposing an inquiry. Two candidates for the role were at hand, in the persons of Coghlan and Dr C.K. Mackellar, who became President of the Commission. The case for Coghlan rests on a note in a departmental file, that for Mackellar on a letter in the same file and on the circumstantial evidence of the Commission's membership.

In September 1908 the Commonwealth Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin, requested from the New South Wales Premier a copy of volume II of the Birth Rate Commission's minutes of evidence. An earlier request had been refused, on the grounds that the volume had been suppressed, but the Prime Minister argued in his second letter that the ban had already been broken by the issue of a copy to Coghlan. With reference to this claim the Under-Secretary of the Chief Secretary's Department made a note for the Premier that he had "ascertained that...the Commission was virtually appointed at the instance of Mr Coghlan, when Government Statistician." There were other, hearsay claims that Coghlan's work had led to the establishment of a Commission but the Under-Secretary's note is the most confident statement of the case for

10. DT 15 August 1903 p.8F and 17 August p.7F; SMH 17 August p.6E and p.7D, "State Politics".

a direct initiative by Coghlan.¹¹ It is not a very strong case. In the first place the official was writing more than five years after the alleged initiative would have been made and he stated no source for his information. Secondly the external evidence is weak. Carruthers claimed that all the information required about the birth rate could have been obtained simply by allowing Coghlan to continue his studies and the Sydney Morning Herald, taking a slightly jaundiced view of the inquiry, complained that "with Mr Coghlan's pamphlet on the subject of the birth-rate before us...we surely do not stand in need of more data."¹² Both views had merit. Coghlan was the best informed man in New South Wales on population matters, as his statistical contributions on the topic demonstrated. Also, given the choice, he preferred not to let other people gain credit for tasks he could accomplish himself. Had he thought there was any information to be gathered which was not already in his pamphlets, it is more likely he would have suggested a study by officers of his own department with the results to be published under his name. From this point of view Coghlan had little to gain from a public inquiry. His rather subdued role in the proceedings of the Commission suggests that was his own estimate of the situation.

The case of Charles Kinnaird Mackellar was different. Earlier interests in public health and child welfare could easily have turned his attention to the birth rate, there are two pieces of documentary evidence supporting the argument for a Mackellar initiative to the Royal Commission and it can be argued that ten of the twelve Commissioners

11. NSW Archives accession no. 6993 (Premier's Office 08/4504) has the note suggesting a Coghlan initiative. Claims of a Coghlan influence appeared in Canterbury Press (New Zealand) 9 August 1903 [quoted by Cordell: op cit p.89 n.88], which had the sentence "The decision of the New South Wales Government to appoint a Royal Commission to enquire into the alarming decrease of the birthrate may be taken as a direct consequence of the publication of Mr Coghlan's 'essay in statistics.'"; in Australasian Insurance and Banking Record XXVIII:212 (19 March 1904) - "The gravity of the case, as presented by Mr Coghlan, led to the appointment by the New South Wales Government of a Royal Commission to inquire into the subject."; in E.C. Buley: Australian Life in Town and Country (London n.d./New York 1905) p.129 - "Mr Coghlan's carefully reasoned paper upon the subject [of declining fertility] has resulted in the appointment of a commission, empowered to enquire fully into all the circumstances affecting this phase of Australian life." Coghlan himself wrote in an autobiographical manuscript [quoted by Cordell: loc cit n.89] that his essay on the decline of the birth rate "led to the appointment of a Royal Commission to enquire into the cause of the decline."

12. DF 14 August 1903 p.8D, "Mr Carruthers Indignant" and SMH 5 August p.8C, "The Royal Commission on the Birth-Rate".

were chosen by him from fields in which he was personally active. It will be seen later in this chapter that Mackellar was a rather dogmatic character who dominated the proceedings of the Birth Rate Commission. Following a notable student career in Glasgow (M.B., Ch.M., 1871) he had returned to develop a successful practice as a physician in Sydney between 1875 and 1882. In the latter year he moved into the relatively undeveloped field of hygiene and preventive medicine as a member and, shortly, President of the New South Wales Board of Health. He was involved in a vigorous campaign to control an outbreak of smallpox and, according to later reports, gave the Board a sound start before resigning in 1885 to take up a nomination to the Legislative Council. He was given a ministerial post in 1886, apparently to guide a public health bill through the Council, but his tenure of office lasted less than a year and he held no later appointment. During his early years on the Council Mackellar maintained his medical practice but also began to develop extensive business interests. By 1903 he held directorships in several companies, including the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, the Mutual Life and Citizens' Assurance Company and the Bank of New South Wales, of which he became President in 1901.¹³ In 1902 he took up a new post in a field which had interested him in the past and was to become his first concern in the future. Following legislative discussion of the treatment of children in deprived or abnormal conditions in New South Wales the State Children's Relief Board assumed major responsibility for the field. Mackellar, who had been a member of the Board at a much earlier period, rejoined it as

13. For biographical details see Serle: Dictionary of Australian Biography II p.84f; G.M. Barron: "After Sixty Years" in MJA 1939 (I) p.565 and M.L.C. Staff Record (Mutual Life & Citizens' Assurance Co. Ltd. Sydney) XVIII:444 (22 January 1916). His appointment to the Legislative Council was favourably received by the Sydney Morning Herald, Evening News and Echo (Sydney), all 1 September 1885.

In addition to the curriculum vitae given here there is a brief estimate of Mackellar's character at p.109f below. Since the author holds copies of all the Mackellar papers known to have survived, it must be said that the lack of 'biographical colour' is a fault of the sources, not the writer.

President at the specific request of Sir John See.¹⁴

Mackellar made use of his new post, together with that of Legislative Councillor, to build a reputation for himself as an authority on problems of child and infant welfare. Although he had rarely spoken in Council during the preceding five years he contributed extensively to debates on infant life protection and girls' protection during 1902 and 1903. In April 1903 he spoke about infant protection to the Women's Progressive Association and about the mortality of illegitimates to a meeting at the Ashfield Infants Home. His work on the former topic was also the subject of a Sydney Morning Herald editorial and he was publicly praised by a leading benevolent home organizer. June found him gaining the support of the Daily Telegraph for a "deeply moving utterance" to the Christian Social Union, which he addressed on "Child Life in Sydney". Also in June he joined the letter-writers' debate in the Telegraph, with a warning that the threat from Asia's fertility was being ignored in the blind Australian pursuit of a more comfortable life, while July brought a speech to a Sydney conference on Public Morals. In his address on child life, as in a later "Address on Parental Right and parental responsibility...", Mackellar stressed that the parent is bound to strive for "the protection, maintenance, and, in the broadest sense, the education of his child in such a way as will enable him to fight the battle of life with a reasonable chance of success." He went on to say that the parent who was unable to provide this benign environment should allow the State to exercise wardship: significantly he did not allow the other alternative, that

14. Brian Dickey: "Charity in New South Wales 1850-1914..." (Ph.D. thesis ANU 1966) pp.385-391, has a flattering assessment of Mackellar's role in infant and child welfare (in which he greatly overstates the value and reliability of the Birth Rate Commission's Report). At p.356f. he describes the reorganization of child welfare services c.1900-1914.

On the circumstances of Mackellar's appointment to the State Children's Relief Board, the following passage from the Report of a Select Committee on the administration of the State Children's Relief Act in New South Wales Parliamentary Papers 1916 (II) p.1049; is self-explanatory:

"Q.602. You have had long experience of the State Children's Relief Board?

[Mackellar] Yes. My experience began more than thirty years ago. I was a member of the Board for a period. I resigned, as it appeared to me that the President was very capable and enthusiastic.

603. You refer to the late Sir Arthur Renwick?

Yes I again joined the Board again [sic] at the instance of Sir John See, on Sir Arthur Renwick's resignation."

the parent might limit his family to a supportable size.¹⁵

According to Mackellar it was on See's initiative that he had become President of the Children's Relief Board. According to a letter written soon after the Birth Rate Commission had reported, it was on Mackellar's initiative that See agreed to hold the Commission. The letter, hand-written by Mackellar and addressed to See, read in part:

I doubt not that you have seen the [Report] and I trust that you will consider that the manner in which the subjects have been treated, and the results placed before His Excellency are such as fully justify you in having authorised the inquiry - At first I feared that the investigation would prove valueless, but as the inquiry proceeded, facts of the gravest importance...were disclosed.¹⁶

If See had initiated the proceedings there would have been no doubt of his having read the Report and while it is not conclusive evidence it is, perhaps, significant that Mackellar was thanking See and that he used the word 'authorised', rather than 'requested' or 'initiated'.

Further weight is added to the 'Mackellar origins' theory by the composition of the Commission. It can be shown from their backgrounds and the network of relationships between them that nine of Mackellar's original eleven associates were already his colleagues in various fields and that their common conservatism would have been congenial to him. See had promised that he would appoint to the Birth Rate Commission men "eminent in their professions." In the event each member justified the appellation "eminent" but the range of professions represented was very small. Business or medicine were the common backgrounds with Coghlan, Fosbery and Holman the only men from other fields.

15. Mackellar's parliamentary activity can be followed in NSW Parliamentary Debates (Council) 22 October 1902 pp.3643-76; 29 October pp.3902-14; 30 June 1903 pp.1149-1163; 5 August p.1266 and 13 August pp.1483-90. See also DT 21 April 1903 p.5F, (address to Womens' Progressive Association) and SMH 22 April p.6D "Dr Mackellar and Infant Protection". SMH 27 April p.3H (letter from G.E. Ardill) and Evening News 28 April p.3E (introducing women's deputation on neglected children). For June doings see DT 20 June p.13F (address to the Christian Social Union), 22 June p.4E (editorial on his C.S.U. address) and 27 June p.11F (Mackellar's letter). DT 8 July p.5H has a summary of Mackellar's report on the State Children's Relief Board and p.6G reports the conference on Public Morals.

The quotation about the upbringing of children is from Mackellar's "Address on Parental Right and parental responsibility viewed in relation to the right of the community" (Sydney 1905) p.2.

16. NSW Archives accession no. 6792 (Chief Secretary's Inward Letters 04/8352), Mackellar to See dated 8 April 1904.

Mackellar was undoubtedly a respected figure in the public life of Sydney. So was his close colleague and friend Sir Henry Normand MacLaurin, an Edinburgh medical graduate who settled in Sydney about 1871. He was a member of the Board of Health from 1882 and Chairman of the Immigration Board in 1890, was prominent in the government of Sydney University from 1883 and accepted an appointment to the Legislative Council in 1889. In 1903 he was serving with Mackellar on the boards of the Mutual Life and Citizens' Assurance Company, the prestigious Bank of New South Wales and the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. These activities and the consensus of biographers suggest the Bulletin was justified in describing MacLaurin as a "high-toned, clean-handed, alert-minded Tory."¹⁷

Thomas Hughes and Edward William Knox shared Mackellar's and MacLaurin's eminence in business, Hughes serving with them on the board of M.L.C. Insurance and Knox serving under them as General Manager of Colonial Sugar. As Lord Mayor of Sydney, Hughes also worked with Mackellar and MacLaurin on the Board of Health. His directorships included a second insurance company, a brewery, the holding company of the Evening News and, more significantly from the point of view of the Commission's proceedings, the Sydney pharmaceutical firm W.H. Soul & Co., whose representatives were evasive witnesses when the company's dealings in contraceptives were being questioned by the Commission. Hughes was also in tune with the political trend of the time, having taken part in the agitation for municipal reform in Sydney during 1899 and 1900 and having been "a candidate in the liberal interest" at the New South Wales election of 1901.¹⁸ Octavius Charles Beale and George Stanley Littlejohn also had successful business careers to recommend them (and Littlejohn worked with Mackellar on the Board of Health) but each also held an official position which was more probably the reason for his appointment. Beale was twice President of both the Chamber of Manufactures and the Chamber of Commerce, holding the former post in 1903 when Littlejohn was Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce. Neither man had previously shown any public sign of particular interest in the population question although it was to be an absorbing cause for Beale

17. Bulletin (31 October 1896) p.13D. Cf. biography in Australian Encyclopaedia (1965) V p.439, obituary in MJA (September 1914) p.241 and articles in Royal Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings by R.A. Dallen [XIX (1933) p.233], H.A.H. MacLaurin [XXI (1935) p.209], and C.B. Mackerras [LIV:3 (1968) p.265f].

See also "Sir Normand MacLaurin, an appreciation" by Sir Charles Mackellar in SMH 29 August 1914 p.9E.

18. Hughes practised as a solicitor in Sydney during the 1890s, was appointed Secretary to the leader of the Government in the Legislative Council in 1899 and assisted Premier Reid in the final stages of the Federation negotiations. He was a leading agitator for reform of the Sydney City Council in 1899-1900 and was elected Mayor in 1901. He was the first Lord Mayor of Sydney in 1902 and was re-elected in 1903.

later in the decade.¹⁹

Foreman, Nash and Paton had no business interests but they all had contact with Mackellar and MacLaurin in the medical profession. Joseph Foreman's medical qualification for a place on the Commission was quite clear. He had gone abroad in 1881 to study the treatment of "women's complaints" at Berlin, Vienna, London and Edinburgh; returning to become "the first man to specialize in obstetrics and gynaecology in Australia" and lecturer in his specialty at Sydney University from 1896. He had long been aware of the problem the Royal Commission was to investigate: in 1887 he described "the custom now so prevalent of preventing conception" as "one of the excrescences of our social life we have least reason to be proud of". The practice was "one full of danger to the health of women," he said, for which "many pay the penalty".²⁰ No other medical member had Foreman's expertise in obstetrics and gynaecology but John Brady Nash had written on aspects of urology. Pertinent elements in Nash's background included an education at St Patrick's College, Melbourne and medical training in Edinburgh. He was active in the New South Wales Branch of the British Medical Association, took a keen, and socially acceptable, interest in the volunteer militia and had the seal put on his public career in 1900 with an appointment to the Legislative Council, where he joined Mackellar and MacLaurin. Robert Thomson Paton clearly owed his appointment to his office. He had joined the staff of the New South Wales Public Health Service in 1890 and by 1903 was government Medical Officer, heir apparent to the post of senior medical adviser to the Government, and

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19. On Beale see MS by E. Lea-Scarlett (to be published, eventually in Australian Dictionary of Biography Vol VII) and family papers in the possession of Mrs A. Jones, 4 Ainslie Close, St Ives, N.S.W. (Photocopies in the possession of the author). Beale's later interest in the question is discussed at pp. 227ff below, where he is treated as a representative of the pro-natalist 'rump' in the population debate after 1904. On Littlejohn see Commerce (1 December 1919) p.358f. Like Mackellar, MacLaurin and Nash, Littlejohn had been a student at Edinburgh University.
20. Joseph Foreman: "Presidential Address" to Gynaecology Section in Intercolonial Medical Congress, Transactions I (1887) p.171f. Biographical details from obituary by Alfred E. Stephen in Royal Australian Historical Society, Journal & Proceedings XXXVI:1 (1950) p.61f.

a member of the Board of Health.²¹

Of the three remaining members T.A. Coghlan was an obvious choice, whose reputation as a statistician and recent, well-publicized work on the birth rate would have commended him to whomever might be preparing a population enquiry. As it happened he had gained Mackellar's approval less than twelve months earlier by making the actuarial bullets for Mackellar to fire during his second reading speech on an Infant Life Protection Bill.²² Edmund Walcott Fosbery shared Coghlan's record of notable public service, having been associated with the Old Age Pensions Board, Charity Organization Society and Aborigines' Protection Board. In 1903 he was both head of the police force and a member of the Board of Health. He was regarded as a "refined and educated gentleman" and got on well with Mackellar, whom he was to join as a Legislative Councillor in 1904.²³

Like Mackellar, most of the Commissioners introduced above either made it clear that they were, or can be inferred to have been, political conservatives and social meliorists who regarded it as their public duty to improve the condition of the poorer orders. All of them were professionally associated with Mackellar, as the following table makes clear.

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21. On Nash see obituary in MJA (July 1925) p.27f. For Paton see ibid (April 1929) p.569 and Cyclopaedia of New South Wales (1907) p.496. Thomas Fiaschi, who was added as a thirteenth member after the Commission's seventh meeting, may have been appointed in recognition of his military deeds. His service with the Italian army in Abyssinia had brought him to the Bulletin's attention and he had come under favourable notice as commander of the NSW No.1 Field Hospital during the Boer War. He was not an expert in obstetrics, having given up the speciality in 1885 to concentrate on medicine and surgery. Like Mackellar and Foreman, he had known the approbation of his profession as President of the NSW Branch of the British Medical Association. [See A.J. Aspinall: "Early Surgeons of Sydney Hospital" in MJA (December 1933) p.879 and obituary in Royal Society of New South Wales, Journal and Proceedings LXI (1927) p.14. The military activities are noted in Bulletin (4 April 1896) p.13 and AMG XIX:4 (April 1900) p.171].
22. Mackellar refers to Coghlan's special computations in NSW Parliamentary Debates (Council) 4 December 1902 pp.508lff.
23. Australian Dictionary of Biography Vol IV (forthcoming). In a speech to well-wishers at his retirement from the police force, Fosbery said he was glad to see Mackellar had begun working on problems of juvenile behaviour and that he hoped before long to be able "to render him a helping hand in that direction." [DT 2 February 1904 p.5G].

<u>Business Leaders</u>	<u>Medical Practitioners</u>	<u>Board of Health</u>
Mackellar	Mackellar	Mackellar
Beale		
	Foreman	
		Fosbery
Hughes		Hughes
Knox		
Littlejohn		Littlejohn
MacLaurin	MacLaurin	MacLaurin
	Nash	
	Paton	Paton
		Coghlan
		Holman

Only Coghlan, who was a special case, and Holman stood outside the Mackellar-centred network. As a Labor member of the Legislative Assembly Holman was a political radical who regarded it as his social duty to change, not merely improve, the order of the poor. This attitude would not have endeared him to Mackellar and there is evidence that he was not included in the original list of Commissioners whom Mackellar apparently nominated. The newspapers certainly thought that Holman was a late addition to the Commission and surviving files from the Chief Secretary's Office show that his name was typed onto the list of Commissioners after the list had been signed by See and countersigned by the Governor. It may also be significant that, after the rush to get him on the Commission, Holman attended only five of its meetings and that he, alone of the thirteen Commissioners, did not sign the Report.²⁴

Mackellar was probably the initiator of the Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth-Rate. He was certainly the dominant figure in its proceedings. He asked more than three-quarters of the oral questions put to witnesses (although some of these, of course, were the formal ones needed to identify and swear witnesses) and there was only one meeting at which his questions were less than half the total asked. When he was unavailable a meeting was postponed, rather than conducted by a vice-President, and he would intervene to stop questioning which seemed to be developing a line independent of his own. One

24. The newspaper account and the 'detective story' of the files are too long to set down here but are presented as an excursus at pp. 136f. Holman was at meetings two, three, fourteen, fifteen and twenty-one. He apologized for only three of his thirty-five absences.

biographer suggested that Mackellar's failure to achieve ministerial office again after 1886 may have been because, though a good administrator, he "was not a party man." This estimate, with its hint of inflexibility, supports the emphasis on his dominating personality. So do the evidence of the Royal Commission as a whole, of parliamentary debates about topics that interested him and of an enquiry into the working of the Children's Relief Board. All suggest that the reporter read his character accurately, if none too kindly, who wrote

Do not suppose him an intolerant man. He is largely tolerant of views and arguments not his own, so long as they are not expressed or published. He is not a narrow-minded bigot who believes that there can only be one opinion on any subject. The position he maintains is that there is only one opinion worth stating.²⁵

In a letter to the Principal Under-Secretary five-and-a-half months after submitting the Commission's Report, Mackellar grumbled that he had been "much hampered" by the failure to receive a copy of the Report and complete evidence, adding

Surely this is an oversight? I cannot understand on what grounds the evidence which I myself elicited should be kept a secret from me...²⁶

The proprietorial attitude to the Commission's activities which this letter displays appeared early and continued throughout the hearings. Mackellar asked more than half the questions at meeting two, nearly two-thirds at meeting four and nine-tenths at meeting six: thereafter his average was about three-quarters of all questions asked. The use each Commissioner made of the limited area of participation left to him can be seen in Table 40, which shows the percentage of meetings attended, the total number of questions asked and the average per meeting, and the overall performance of each member. The 'performance' figure takes account of the number of meetings attended and the proportion of questions asked at those meetings by the member concerned (Mackellar's questions

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25. Smith's Weekly (Sydney) 11 December 1920 p.2C. The rather 'prickly' debating style is revealed in, for example, NSW Parliamentary Debates (Council) 22 October 1902 pp.3643-76, 29 October 1902 pp.3902-14, 4 December 1902 pp.5081-87, 13 August 1902 pp.1483-90, (all on Infant Life Protection Bills) and 30 July 1903 pp.1149-1163 (Girls' Protection Bill). On Mackellar's role in the State Children's Relief Dept. see Dickey: loc cit and Report of a Select Committee on...the State Children's Relief Act, NSW Parliamentary Papers 1916 (II) pp.1011-1066.
26. NSW Archives, shelf no. 7095 (CSIL 04/17814) Mackellar to Gibson, Principal Under-Secretary, dated 30 August 1904. The emphasis is in the original.

having been excluded in each case). Beale, for example, asked 11 per cent of the questions at the seventh, 45 per cent at the sixteenth and 13 per cent at the twenty-seventh meeting. For the twenty-nine meetings he attended the sum of his 'percentage performances' was 258 or an average of 14 per meeting. From the index it can be seen that Holman, who was at fewer meetings than Beale, took a more active part in those he did attend while Coghlan, who asked fewer questions per meeting than, say, Hughes concentrated them to better effect.

TABLE 40

Participation in proceedings of Commission

	<u>Meetings attended</u> %	<u>Questions per</u> <u>meeting</u>	<u>Performance</u> <u>index</u>
Mackellar	100	144.4	- ^b
Fosbery	80	12.3	25
Holman	12	12.4	23
MacLaurin	82	10.1	20
Nash	82	11.8	19
Beale	72	8.6	14
Coghlan	80	5.8	13
Hughes	52	8.8	11
Foreman	82	6.8	9
Paton	92	2.4	3
Fiaschi	66 ^a	2.0	3
Knox	80	1.3	2
Littlejohn	65	0.6	2

-
- a. Fiaschi attended twenty-two of the thirty-three meetings held subsequent to his appointment.
- b. Not applicable (index calculated on proportion of questions asked, "Mackellar's questions having been excluded.")
-

Paton, Fiaschi, Knox and Littlejohn clearly contributed little to the proceedings whilst Holman, too, was so infrequent a participant that he can be left out of consideration. Of the remaining participants Fosbery, MacLaurin and Nash formed a recognizably dominant group, while Beale, Coghlan, Hughes and Foreman played secondary roles. The only qualification needed is to say that Coghlan's and, to a lesser extent, MacLaurin's questions were more often acute and independent of the general line taken by the Commission than were those of anyone else in the two active groups. Perhaps Mackellar allowed some license to the expertise of the one and the friendship of the other.

The orderly progress of any inquiry naturally requires that someone sit down before the first meeting to organize essentials of accommodation and clerical assistance and to draft a rough program of proceedings.²⁷ In the case of the Birth Rate Commission these preparatory duties were done by Mackellar. At the first meeting of the Commission, on 20 August 1903, he announced the appointment of Mr J. Garlick as Secretary to the Commission and Dr R.H. Todd as an Associate to the President, dealt with accommodation for future meetings, directed that each Commissioner receive a copy of Coghlan's Decrease in the Birth-rate (sic) and "stated that he had been considering the advisability of publicly announcing by advertisement in the Press the Commission's willingness to receive evidence, but thought that the matter might be left over for future consideration. The meeting concurred." At the same session "a draft Syllabus which had been prepared to show the proposed course of the Commission's inquiry was... submitted, discussed and adopted by the meeting, with two additions."²⁸ It is unlikely that Garlick, who was only a public service clerk, would have prepared the Syllabus of which Mackellar, acting alone or with Todd, therefore seems almost certain to have been the author.

Neither the original nor the amended form of the Syllabus has survived. Consequently one can only describe the course the inquiry did follow and assume that this was probably the course the amended Syllabus had suggested. The first three working sessions were given over to a lengthy exposition by J.B. Trivett of statistics on population structure and growth, much of which simply re-stated Coghlan's earlier findings. "The question of the future procedure of the Commission was then discussed. The President suggested that officers of the Customs Department should be examined as to whether preventives are largely imported; if so, by whom. The importers should then be examined as to whom they supply these articles to; and the retailers should then be called and examined as to what classes of people the articles are sold to. This was agreed to." And carried out, at meetings five to eight.²⁹ Witnesses at sessions nine and ten were questioned about the inter-related problems of abortion, infanticide and illegitimacy. Having thus

27. If evidence is needed that this truism has been observed by others, see Clokie & Robinson: op cit p.177.

28. DBR Minutes of Meetings p.120 (First Meeting). Coghlan's Decline in the Birth-Rate was obviously the pamphlet involved but it appeared in the Minutes as "Decrease..." Garlick had previously acted as Secretary to a Commission enquiring into a disaster at the Mt Kembla coal mine, south of Sydney.

29. ibid p.122. (Fourth Meeting). Some pharmaceutical evidence was also taken at meetings nine, ten and eleven.

strayed into the area of infantile mortality (which was of particular interest to Mackellar in connection with his Children's Relief work) "the President proposed" and the Commission, as usual, disposed to ask the Government to extend the terms of reference to include "A general investigation of the mortality of infants in New South Wales; whether it is, to any extent, preventable; whether it is increasing; and its relation to the prosperity of the State."³⁰ From meeting eleven to meeting seventeen the Commission was occupied with numerous doctors who gave evidence and opinions about infant mortality, midwifery, abortion and contraception. Meetings eighteen to twenty-four do not seem to have developed according to any clear plan. There was some evidence on female employment and the difficulties in the way of a pure metropolitan milk supply were discussed at length but, for the rest, witnesses were apparently called with a view to tying up loose ends from earlier stages of the inquiry. The twenty-fifth, -sixth and -seventh meetings heard the views of clerical representatives from the various denominations, meeting twenty-eight received Dr Todd's summaries of various 'authoritative' works from the fields of political economy and demography, and meeting twenty-nine was devoted to Trivett's resume of the statistical debate. Although a few witnesses were recalled to clear up minor points the chief business of meetings thirty to forty was the Commission's deliberation upon the contents of its Report.

Evidence was not restricted to oral sources. During the six and one-half months the Commission was sitting it received about five hundred letters, reports and exhibits. These ranged from letters by interstate officials on legislation dealing with indecent literature, through a letter by the Secretary of the Rechabites "giving certain information as to the production of sterility by the use of salicylic acid and by the inhalation of tobacco smoke" and "A report, dated 18th January, 1904, by Senior-sergeant Sawtell, regarding (a) the immoral tendencies of dancing saloons, (b) the question whether the gathering of children at public schools tends to the spread of immorality, and (c) additional evidence regarding criminal abortion", to a circular from the "No More Worry Co." advertising "a Perfect Preventive". Perhaps the oddest item of correspondence was "No. 11: Letter, dated 12/9/03, from S.W. Long, charging his wife and another with plotting and planning to destroy his intellect, and asking the Commission to inquire into the matter." The letter was "Referred to

30. ibid p.126 (Tenth Meeting).

the Inspector-General of Police."³¹

Obviously the Commission could not control the kind of evidence it received in written form. It could, and did, try to determine the content of oral evidence. If their appearance before an inquiry is to be of any value witnesses naturally need to be given a rough idea of what might be required from them. If all were treated like Dr Skirving and Cardinal Moran the Birth Rate Commission's witnesses had more than a 'rough' idea of what to expect. Skirving prefaced his first answer thus: "Yes: your Associate sent a little memo. of probable questions, and I jotted down, before I came, the answers I intended to make to several of them".³² The contents of Skirving's "little memo" have not survived but, if the preview sent to him and, presumably, to other witnesses was at all like the one sent to Cardinal Moran, there cannot have been much room for spontaneity in their evidence. Moran received a "Brief for Clergymen...Strictly Private and Confidential... showing the lines upon which the reverend gentlemen representing the various churches are to be examined before the Commission." This, so-called, brief was a list of thirty-six items setting out the questions the clergyman might expect to be asked, the answers he might care to give, and the necessary data for him to come to those conclusions!³³

The Brief for Clergymen is an excellent example of the tendentious approach which the Commission, or its leaders, adopted towards their inquiry. The document began with eight points each phrased "He knows that..." or "He might be told that..." (- the French birth rate has declined, - the people offer various reasons for limiting family size, and so on.) Point 8 read "He might be told that some witnesses of experience and observation have stated that the positive desire to regulate the number of children born in wedlock is more prevalent in recent years." This point, like the preceding seven, was simply offered as a piece of information for the cleric to agree with, when the purpose of the inquiry was to discover whether such points were valid. Even more presumptuous was point 18 of the Brief:

31. *ibid* pp.126, nos. 208, 191, 192 and 257 (officials); 130, no. 370 (Rechabites); 137, no.476 (Sawtell); 138, Exhibit 145 (No More Worry Co.); and 123, no.11 (Long).

32. *DBR* Q.3154.

33. I am grateful to Mr A.E. Cahill of Sydney University who kindly supplied a copy of the brief and covering letter from Garlick to the Cardinal's Secretary, both items having been discovered by Mr Cahill in the archives of St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney.

He will say that he knows:-

- (a) That during the last eight years the law of N.S.W. has created greater facilities for divorce.
- (b) That the great number of petitions for divorce and judicial separation, which have been made to the Supreme Court during this period, indicates that serious conjugal disagreement is very prevalent -

NOTE. The ratio of divorces to marriages during the eight years 1894-1901, is one divorce or judicial separation to 35.3 marriages. The ratio of petitions for divorce to marriages during the same time is much greater...

After that prolegomena it was rather superfluous to tell the prospective witness:

- 19. He might be asked to express his opinion as to **whether** the frequency of petitions for divorce and separation indicates a disordered social state.³⁴

The Commission did not merely ask witnesses to confirm its own opinions. In a number of cases witnesses were asked specialist questions, or allowed to give 'information', about areas in which they had no specialist knowledge. Thus Dr Ross, who specialized in the treatment of the insane, was questioned about the birth rate and contraception while Senior-sergeant Sawtell was not discouraged from giving his 'specialist' opinion, in response to Mackellar's suggestion, that men avoid marriage because of the low wages caused by closed shop unionism and "that the great drawback to marriage is the unsuitability of the young women of the present day."³⁵ At least the clergyman was warned to brush up his demography and political economy! The Brief said he might be asked

- 24. Whether the problem of overpopulation is a real one so far as the centres of N.S.W. are concerned.
- 25. How he could account for the extent of existing poverty in a State so productive as N.S.W.
- 26. Whether the poverty observed in N.S.W. is due to local over-population.
- 27. To what extent the poverty in over-populated or thickly populated localities is due to under-population outside these localities.
- 28. What are the causes of and remedy for the overcrowding of towns in N.S.W.
- 29. Whether the unequal distribution of population in N.S.W. indicated a disordered social state.

34. The technique of the Brief was repeated when the witnesses actually appeared. Mackellar's second substantial question to the Rev Mr Hennessy, for example, ran to 180 words - and attracted the answer "Yes". (DBR Q.5973).

35. DBR Qq.3960-68 (Dr Ross) and 2603-2617 (Sawtell).

Norman Himes, apparently the only other scholar who has read the Royal Commission's evidence, complained that "Many questions asked witnesses were leading questions designed to elicit the response desired."³⁶ He could easily have given a host of supporting examples, of which the following are but a sample. Dr C.W. Morgan, a country physician who was one of the early witnesses, was happy to agree with the trend of questions:

1094. Q. Well, from the views that you have expressed, I would gather that you consider that the use of preventives to conception is an obscene practice, and it is calculated to lower the morality and degrade the women of Australia?

A. I distinctly say so. I have noticed from year to year that the idea of moral responsibility and maternal duty, and so forth, is very poor indeed.

...

1097. Q. Do you think it would be an advantage to the well-being of the community generally to compel persons selling proprietary articles of that description [i.e. abortifacients] to have the prescription...printed upon the box?

A. Oh, yes; I think it would be a very good thing.

Dr Thring and Mr Fuss were less willing to follow where Mackellar wished to lead. Thring was questioned about women's motives for limiting their offspring:

3069. Q. And the supposed difficulty of providing for the children is merely, in your opinion, a salve to their consciences?

A. No; I would not say that...

3070. Q. But it is alleged that the class in which prevention is most constantly practiced is a class which is comparatively well off?

A. I think you will find that preventive practices go right through...they are certainly extensively used in the working classes...

Mr Fuss was interrogated about the customers for contraceptives from his pharmacy:

1147. Q. Do single women often purchase these goods?

A. That is very difficult to say.

1148. Q. But have you any knowledge that they do?

A. I think not. As far as I can judge from appearances married people purchase them.

1149. Q. But would you say that, of the women who purchase these articles, one-third, for instance, were married women?

A. Well, that would only be a matter of guess, to express any opinion.

1150. Q. Of course, that would be a matter in which you could not state positively, but you would have your own ideas as to that?...

36. Himes: Medical History... p.327 n.145.

during the course of the enquiry Mr A.O. Powys, an officer in the Victorian Government Statist's department, wrote expressing a desire to give evidence. The Commissioners discussed his request on four occasions, with Mackellar showing himself increasingly unwilling to take evidence from Powys. Mackellar finally told his colleagues that he "did not think, in view of the exhaustive nature of Mr Trivett's evidence, that any good object would be served by incurring the expense of bringing Mr Powys to Sydney." Mackellar's position was ostensibly reasonable (and may have been genuinely held) but it is also significant that soon after Coghlan's first birth rate booklet had appeared Powys had criticised it in the columns of the Sydney Morning Herald.³⁷

While it is probably an open question whether the Commission deliberately avoided hearing unwelcome evidence from Powys, there is no doubt in some other cases that a vigorous attempt was made to contravert the evidence of witnesses holding unpopular opinions. Watson-Munro and Worrall among the doctors suffered this fate, as did Edward Riley, the President of the Sydney Labour Council. Riley felt there was good reason for the poor to limit their offspring but his enthusiasm outran his logic and when he was caught out on a sweeping statement about New Zealand the Commission used the error to suggest that all his evidence was questionable. Even more striking was the treatment of the Rev W.W. Rutledge, a Methodist who was by no means a doctrinaire opponent of contraception and allowed some circumstances where it would be justifiable. The Commissioners made a strong attack on his evidence and went so far as to call a more favourable Methodist witness before the hearings were concluded.³⁸ Considering the treatment

37. DBR, Minutes of Meetings;

1 October 1903, letter from Powys "forwarding a statement of the nature of the evidence he can give".

26 October, Mackellar reports on conversation with Powys in Melbourne on the nature of Powys's evidence and Commissioners agree to seek means of getting Powys to Sydney without excessive expense.

29 October, Mackellar suggests a decision should be taken after Powys's usefulness has been tested by his answers to some written questions.

23 November, letter from Powys regarding his desire to give evidence: the letter "left to be dealt with by the President."

18 January 1904, Mackellar suggests that the cost of calling Powys would not be justifiable.

See SMH 3 November 1899 p.7G for Powys's rather ineffectual criticism of Childbirth in New South Wales. In SMH 27 April 1904 p.12F, Powys returned to the attack with a longer, more telling criticism of Decline in the Birth Rate. He also disagreed "not only with the conclusions of the Commission but the unscientific reasons in support thereof" in the course of his long, statistically sophisticated paper "On Fertility, Duration of Life and Reproductive Selection" in Biometrika IV:3 (November 1905) pp.233-285.

38. DBR Qq.2703-2707 (Watson-Munro suggests two possible motives for prevention: the Commission pursue only one- of 'moral weakness'); 3014-19 (Worrall); 5691-5781 (Riley); 6450-4, 6461-68, 6794-6827 (Rutledge, followed by the Rev P.J. Stephen).

given to witnesses of independent views, the frequently tendentious questioning and the hint of pre-fabrication given by the Brief for Clergymen, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the inquiry by the Commission was rather less than an open-minded search for truth.

The Report of the Birth Rate Commission, like its hearings, was less the work of the body of its members than of the President. In the case of the Report, though, there is an unconfirmed but plausible indication that Mackellar was much assisted with the drafting by his Associate, Robert Henry Todd. Todd was a graduate in arts, medicine and law, who had been Sydney City Coroner and was a much appreciated New South Wales Branch Secretary of the British Medical Association. If his conservative outlook was fairly estimated in the comment that "the tradition of his school [Christ's Hospital] with that of his family without doubt helped to give him that attitude of mind towards accepted tradition which marked his work in Australia", then he should have found it easy to work with Mackellar and the tone of the Report can be readily regarded as an extension of their joint attitude.³⁹

The procedure adopted in preparing the Report would have facilitated the maintenance of a strong influence by Mackellar and Todd. Meetings thirty to thirty-nine were given over to the work, which began when the Commission "deliberated upon certain suggestions brought forward by the Hon. the President as a basis for their Report." At the following meeting Mackellar asked his colleagues for written submissions about the direction the Report should take. Although one cannot judge Mackellar's intention it is worth pointing out that the written submission is a well-tried device for ensuring the primacy of the compiler's, rather than the contributors', views in the final document. When the Commissioners next met, in fact, "it was decided to adjourn for ten days in order to enable the President and officers to prepare a Draft Report..."⁴⁰ The ten day adjournment lengthened into three weeks until the President submitted the Draft, which the members had barely three days to peruse before launching into discussion. Four meetings later the Draft was adopted "after alteration...with the exception of two paragraphs." Those paragraphs must have occasioned some difficulty because, at its last working session, "The Commission again discussed

39. The estimate of Todd's outlook is given in an Obituary in MJA (March 1932) p.379, where it is also stated that "In 1904 Todd acted as Associate to the President, the late Charles Mackellar, of a Royal Commission on the decline of the birth-rate in New South Wales. He was largely responsible for the drawing up of the Report." There is a lengthy collection of tributes to Todd in ibid pp.381-387.

40. DBR, Minutes of Meetings pp.136f (Meetings thirty, thirty-one and thirty two).

various portions of the Report, and adopted them, after partial amendment. The two paragraphs specially held over from the previous meeting were again discussed. Substitute paragraphs were submitted by Mr Knox and by the President. Eventually one was unanimously adopted, and incorporated in the evidence, the other being withdrawn."⁴¹ Since Mr Knox spent most of the hearings saying nothing, it is surprising to find him taking a stand. However it is unlikely that he was successful. He remarked in later life "I cannot claim to have carried much weight at any of the meetings" of public bodies.⁴²

Out of its travail the Commission brought forth a Report of fifty-four foolscap pages, set out in five divisions and seventeen chapters. Division A was purely introductory, detailing the attendance of Commissioners, lists of witnesses and so on. Division B treated the Decline of the Birth-Rate and C dealt with Infant Mortality. In Division D miscellaneous topics were discussed which had arisen out of the evidence - sale of poisons, registration of still births and the effects of gynaecological surgery, for example. Division E was reserved for a piece of rhetoric masquerading as a Conclusion. B and E are the sections of greatest importance for this study.

The Division on the decline of the birth rate began with a chapter on the statistics of the decline and related subjects, including natural increase, marriage, fecundity and differential fertility. The disordered presentation of the argument of the chapter makes narrative comment on it almost impossible. It therefore seems best to try to construct a connected summary of what appears to be the Commission's argument before proceeding to criticize some elements of it. Setting itself three specific questions, the Commission discovered that there had been a decline in the birth rate, that it had begun about 1888 and that it was not peculiar to New South Wales. Between 1891 and 1901 not only the crude birth rate but the age-specific rates had declined, for all but the youngest conceptive ages:

41. ibid pp.138-141 (Meetings thirty-three to thirty-nine).

42. E.W. Knox: Auto-biographical Notes (Mitchell Library accession no.B1438) p.2. Looking back on his membership of sundry public bodies Knox lamented that his [sound] intuitive judgements usually went unaccepted and he lacked the debating dexterity to push his point.

TABLE 41

Movement in N.S.W. age-specific nuptial birth rates,⁴³
1891-1901.

Women aged:	under 20	+ 17.1 per cent
	20 - 25	- 4.6 " "
	25 - 30	- 15.6 " "
	30 - 35	- 22.4 " "
	35 - 40	- 27.0 " "
	40 - 45	- 25.6 " "

Not content with this picture of a short term decline the Commission struck on the similarity of the 1871 and 1881 age-specific birth rates, calculated a common rate for the two years and called it a "standard rate", by comparison with which the decline to 1901 levels was even more remarkable.

TABLE 42

Decline of age-specific nuptial birth rates⁴⁴
from 'standard'.

<u>Women aged:</u>	<u>'Standard' rate</u> <u>of births/1,000</u>	<u>% decline</u> <u>to 1891</u>	<u>% decline</u> <u>to 1901</u>
20 - 24	45.15	7.8	12.07
25 - 29	40.62	12.92	26.46
30 - 34	33.78	13.50	32.86
35 - 39	27.23	13.22	36.65
40 - 44	13.09	9.55	32.70

Having satisfied itself that there had been a "sudden and remarkable shrinkage of the birth-rate" among women of all conceptive ages, the Commission realized it should check whether this change was secular or merely demographic. The figures with which it had been supplied showed that the proportion of women of conceptive ages had risen, that there had been little change in the age distribution of those women and that the proportion of women married had not fallen between 1881 and 1901. A very small part of the decline in the birth rate was attributed to a slight increase in the average age at marriage but,

43. From DBR, Report para. 19.

44. From ibid paras. 23,24.

because they failed to take account of major redistribution in the ages of married women within the conceptive range, the Commissioners concluded that virtually none of the decline of the birth rate could be rationalized in demographic terms.⁴⁵ Although they ruled out demographic causes for the decline in fertility the Commissioners made only a cursory statistical survey of secular causes. Urbanization and industrialization were ignored and the Report discounted the possible influence of fluctuation in trade or of decay in the physique of women.⁴⁶

Turning to the question of barren-ness the Commissioners reported that the condition was more common in urban than in rural areas and more common among immigrants than among native-born women. Unfortunately the time span over which barren-ness was defined was not specified. There was a similar lack of definition in a paragraph reporting that the proportion of fecund marriages had fallen between 1861 and 1897.⁴⁷ It is also unclear how terms were defined in the statement "The average issue of marriages has declined during the period 1891-1900 for all ages at the time of marriage, and among all classes, compared with issue of marriages of epoch 1871-1880." If "average issue" meant 'completed family size' then the figures for 1891-1900 marriages would obviously include many un-completed families: if "average issue" referred to 'number of children born to families', then the statement is valueless for lack of information about the age distribution of the marriages involved. In the circumstances it is impossible to know what value to place on the contention that

The decline in average issue is the product of four factors:

- (a) postponement of marriage;
- (b) decline in fecundity (proved ability to reproduce);
- (c) cessation of fertility at an earlier age; and
- (d) decline in fertility at all ages.⁴⁸

Summing up their statistical evidence the Commissioners declared themselves satisfied that it showed "a very marked decline" of the New South Wales birth rate, commencing some years prior to 1889 but

45. ibid paras. 28-32, 40. The Commissioners' failure to discuss the age distribution of married women is dealt with at p.123f below.

46. ibid paras. 60, 65.

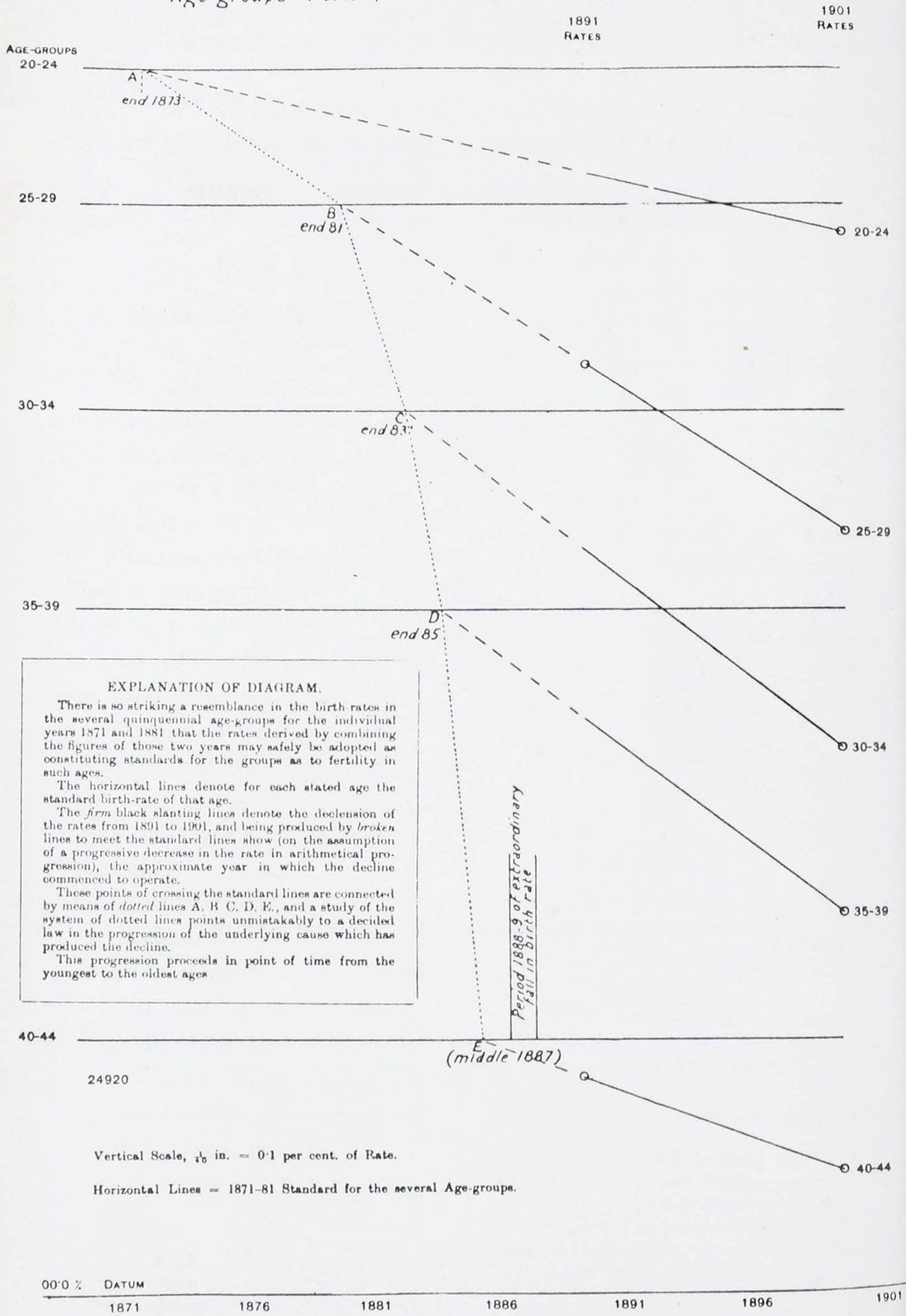
47. ibid paras. 45, 46. Since the table of decline in fecundity represented the change between 1861 and 1897, and the table of barren-ness referred to the period 1891-97 it may be that the Commissioners (and Trivett, their statistical advisor) were referring to marriages proven fecund or barren after five years duration - but they do not say so.

48. ibid paras. 52, 53.

"The Line of Declension"

Exhibit No. 144. (vide par. 6793.)

Legitimate Birth-rates.—Rate per cent. of Married Women in Age-groups—Period, 1871-1901.—New South Wales.



EXPLANATION OF DIAGRAM.

There is so striking a resemblance in the birth-rates in the several quinquennial age-groups for the individual years 1871 and 1881 that the rates derived by combining the figures of those two years may safely be adopted as constituting standards for the groups as to fertility in such ages.

The horizontal lines denote for each stated age the standard birth-rate of that age.

The firm black slanting lines denote the declension of the rates from 1891 to 1901, and being produced by broken lines to meet the standard lines show (on the assumption of a progressive decrease in the rate in arithmetical progression), the approximate year in which the decline commenced to operate.

These points of crossing the standard lines are connected by means of dotted lines A. B. C. D. E., and a study of the system of dotted lines points unmistakably to a decided law in the progression of the underlying cause which has produced the decline.

This progression proceeds in point of time from the youngest to the oldest ages.

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becoming "rapid and continuous" thereafter. They also noted a rise in marriage age in the latter period sufficient to account for a small proportion of the decline in the birth rate. From this statistical basis they inferred that

the main factor in producing the decline of birth-rate in New South Wales is one which is independent of:-

- i. variation in the age-constitution of the population;
- ii. variation in the age-constitution of the women of conceptive age;
- iii. physiological tendency towards lessened fertility;
- iv. variation in marriage-rate;
- v. birth-place of husbands or of wives;
- vi. all other natural causes;

and is a force over which individuals themselves have control.⁴⁹

Depending on how the term "main factor" is defined, the Commissioners were substantially correct in deciding that demographic influences were subordinate to secular ones in bringing about the decline of the birth rate. As it happens the correctness of the conclusion was largely independent of any validity in the method by which it was reached. For example crude birth rates were available for each year, reliable age-specific birth rates only for census years. The Commission slithered about between the two, moving from a table of decline in age-specific rates, 1891-1901, to the statement "it is thus clear that there has been a very serious decline in the birth-rate since the year 1888..."⁵⁰ Another case of invalid inference was the argument that "the decline in birth-rate started with the younger and proceeded to the older ages." To support this statement reference was made to a graph (see Fig.17, opposite) in which the 'line of declension' in the age-specific birth rate between 1891 and 1901 was projected back to the point where it intersected the, so-called, standard rate (compounded from the age-specific rates for 1871 and 1881) for each cohort. This point of intersection was said to indicate the year in which the cohort concerned had begun restricting its fertility. The fact that there was no statistical justification for the assumption of a linear relationship between the 1901 and 1891 rates, let alone a linear projection back to the 'standard', was ignored. The theory also ignored or, rather, contradicted the evidence of the preceding paragraph of the

49. ibid paras. 68, 69.

50. ibid paras. 19, 21. The intervening paragraph (20) is a parenthetical comment that changes in the birth rate are not due to registration 'leakages'. The argument therefore moves from para. 19 to 21.

Report, which could be validly interpreted as showing that the decline in birth rate did not begin with the younger cohorts.⁵¹

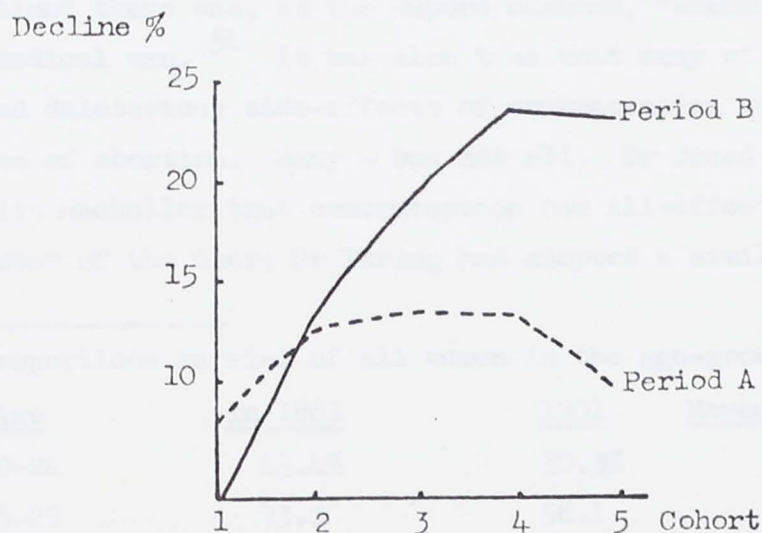
In two instances the Commissioners' statistical work was shoddy, if not mischievous. As we noted earlier, they argued that the proportion of married women in the New South Wales population had hardly altered between 1881 and 1901. Despite the ready availability of the information, and despite their comparison of age-specific fertility rates for various dates, the Commissioners failed to compare the distributions of married women in 1881 and 1901. Had they done so they would have found that the proportion of women aged 20-24 and 25-29 who were married had declined

51. *ibid* paras. 25 and 24.

Paragraph 24 had figures for the percentage decline in age-specific birth rates from the 'standard' (1871/81) rate to the actual rates of 1891 and 1901. From these may be calculated the 1881-91 and 1891-1901 declines:

Age group	Ages	Standard-1901 % decline	(Period A)	(Period B)
			Standard-1891, % decline	(hence) 1891-1901, % decline
1	20-24	12.1	7.8	4.3
2	25-29	26.5	12.9	13.6
3	30-34	32.9	13.5	19.4
4	35-39	36.7	13.2	23.5
5	40-44	32.7	9.6	23.1

Transferring the figures of the last two columns to graphic form it can be seen that the greatest decline in each period was in the 30-39 age groups, not the younger ones.



by one-third and one-fifth respectively over the vicenniad.⁵² Again, the Report regularly identified the adjectives 'high' and 'natural' when they were attached to the noun 'fertility'. For example, the concept of 'standard rate' in respect of age-specific birth data was not used in the neutral sense of standardization procedures but with the idea that the very high figures of 1871/81 represented a norm by comparison with which the rates for later years were deficient. Indeed the decline of the birth rate in the 1890s was said to point to "the existence of some unnatural condition". At no point in the Report was it indicated that the various indices of fertility had, in fact, been rising to a plateau in the 1880s which was 'unnaturally' high by comparison with earlier periods in New South Wales' history!

Such little deficiencies of method did not trouble the Commissioners, who confidently opened their chapter on "The Immediate Causes of the Decline of the Birth-Rate" with the words:

Having been led, by a careful consideration of the Statistics, to the conclusion that the cause or causes of the Decline of the Birth-rate must be a force or forces over which the people themselves have control, we proceeded to examine many prominent gynaecologists, obstetricians, and physicians, with a view to ascertain, if possible, the nature of these forces.⁵³

Having virtually ignored statistical evidence on secular factors in the decline of fertility, the Commissioners proceeded to ignore unwelcome social evidence about the same factors. The diminution of fertility was said to be due to contraception and abortion, and "pathological causes" consequent upon both practices. On the widespread and growing resort to "deliberate interference with the function of procreation" there was, as the Report claimed, "unanimity of opinion among the medical men."⁵⁴ It was also true that many of the doctors had detailed deleterious side-effects of contraception and horrendous consequences of abortion. Many - but not all. Dr Creed had refused to agree with Mackellar that contraception had ill-effects on the nervous system of the user; Dr Thring had adopted a similar position;

52. The proportions married of all women in the age-groups shown were:

<u>Age</u>	<u>in 1881</u>	<u>1901</u>	<u>Movement, 1881-1901</u>
20-24	43.4%	30.3%	- 30%
25-29	73.2	58.1	- 21%
30-34	82.8	74.0	- 11%
35-39	84.6	79.5	- 6%
40-44		Not Available	

Source: N.S.W. Census 1881 (Report) and 1901

53. DBR, Report para.70.

54. ibid para. 72, 71.

Sir James Graham (a gynaecologist) said it was "difficult to imagine" preventives having "prejudicial consequences" on a patient and thought it unlikely that tubal or ovarian inflammation would follow. None of these witnesses was cited in the Report while Sir James Graham's view on the effects of prevention was transmuted in the index to "Might, now and then, produce inflammatory conditions leading to cerosis of the tubes."⁵⁵ The remainder of the discussion on the immediate causes of the decline of the birth rate was unexceptionable. It was reported that preventives were imported in quantity and manufactured in New South Wales, and that the majority of pharmacists had been doing an increasing trade in the goods for ten or fifteen years. Trade in abortifacients was wide-spread and the number of abortionists increasing, while both abortion and prevention were widely advertised.⁵⁶

When the Commissioners turned to "The Desire to Restrict Fertility" they began sensibly enough by recognizing that the desire was "not a product of modern times, nor peculiar to New South Wales." When they concentrated on the local manifestation of the universal desire, however, there was less willingness to be open to the evidence. Inability to afford the rearing of numerous children was "almost invariably" given as the reason for restricting procreation but the Commissioners regarded this as a mistaken view, despite the fact that they had taken very little evidence about economic conditions. In addition to making their own judgement that economic reasons were mistaken the Commissioners claimed that "The witnesses...suggest that, in the majority of cases, this is not the true reason." On the contrary, the Commissioners said, the 'true' reasons

have one element in common, namely, selfishness. They are, in fact, indicative of the desire of the individual to avoid his obligations to the community; and they serve to exemplify the observation that 'the effort of the race towards its increase in numbers is in inverse ratio to the effort of the individual towards his personal development'.⁵⁷

As in the case of the doctors who discounted side-effects of prevention, so in this case, the witnesses who held a contrary opinion were ignored in the Report.⁵⁸ The witnesses were reported as saying that there were

55. DBR Qq.4236f (Creed), 3076f (Thring) and 3583-86 (Graham).

56. DBR, Report paras. 76 to 81.

57. ibid para.84. Herbert Spencer appears to have been a favoured source for Australian population theorists: Cf. Chapter VII, below.

58. ibid paras. 82, 83. Drs Cooley (Qq.3510ff), Armstrong (Q.3275) and Worrall (3014ff), and Mr Riley, of the Sydney Labour Council, (Q.5719) all held that there were some grounds for restricting families because of lack of means.

- i. An unwillingness to submit to the strain and worry of children;
- ii. A dislike of the interference with pleasure comfort involved in child-bearing and child-rearing;
- iii. A desire to avoid the actual physical discomfort of gestation, parturition, and lactation; and
- iv. A love of luxury and of social pleasures, which [was] increasing.⁵⁹

It was not pointed out that many of the witnesses had not said these things spontaneously but in response to suggestions by the Commissioners. According to the Commission, selfishness had achieved its full effect in New South Wales during the previous twenty years because of the weakening of two former restraints, "religious feeling" and "ignorance of the means of accomplishing the desire" for limitation. The decay of religious restraint was not elaborated but the spread of knowledge was blamed on the traffic in preventives and on neo-Malthusian propaganda. In particular

the adoption of these doctrines was unduly encouraged by the judicial sanction given to their publication...in the case Ex Parte Collins... The remarkable coincidence between the promulgation, in 1888, of...this judgement, and the sudden fall of the birth-rate in 1889... cannot, we think, be considered fortuitous."⁶⁰

Selfishness being elevated to primary status, economic factors in the decline of the birth rate were correspondingly discounted. The paragraph dealing with the topic began with the sentence "We have not been able to trace the decline of the birth-rate to any well-defined economic cause"; to support this view attention was directed to the diverse movements of trade and fertility indices during the

59. ibid para.83.

60. ibid paras. 85, 86.

In the Ex Parte Collins judgement [NSW Law Reports IX (1888) pp.497-535] Darley C.J., dissentiente said that The Law of Population was an obscene book but Windeyer and Stephen J.J. ruled that it was not obscene and that Collins had been justified in selling it as "a scientific and philosophic treatise in relation to social and political economy". Windeyer's lengthy defence of the publication was, as the Commission reported, "scattered broadcast, not merely in Australia, but in Great Britain."

If the Commissioners really believed that Ex Parte Collins could have affected the birth rate so markedly and so soon, they should have been able, but were not, to point to a corresponding upturn in fertility immediately after the judgement of Pring J. in "Potter v. Smith" (1902) had partially withdrawn the freedom allowed by the earlier judgement. For "Potter v. Smith", see State Reports, (N.S.W.) 1902:II pp.220-224. The Commissioners were aware of this judgement. [DBR, Report para.86].

preceding fifteen years. Having made the case against economic causation, however, the Commissioners were evidently seized by some spirit of self contradiction for they went on to say that "restrictive regulations of trade" (by which they appear to have meant the various elements of New Protection), by rendering employment and income precarious, "cannot fail to indirectly discourage the existence of large families."⁶¹ Only four paragraphs earlier in the Report, of course, the idea that precarious conditions could be associated with family limitation had been dismissed as unjustified!

From causes the Commissioners turned their attention to "The Effects of the Restriction of Child-Bearing on the Well-Being of the Community", which was the subject of the seventh chapter of their report. Three main topics were treated: the physical and mental effects of both prevention and abortion, the impact of the practices on morality, and the effect of declining fertility on the economic growth of New South Wales.

As it had done in the chapter on causes, so here, the Commission declared itself to have been "much struck with the emphasis with which learned writers, whose works have been studied, and medical and other witnesses have referred to the very serious injurious effects... of the prevention of conception". Also as before, however, the Commission was very selective in its treatment of the evidence on the point. For example the opinions were juxtaposed of Dr Morgan, who regarded prevention as "very deleterious in its effects on the nervous system of women", and Dr McCulloch, who stated that the practice "may lead to septic inflammations of the womb and of other organs of generation." It was not pointed out that Dr Morgan's evidence also contained an answer casting doubt on the validity of McCulloch's statement. In another case Dr Thring (the corruption of whose evidence we have noticed already in this chapter) was said to confirm the opinion of other witnesses that there was an association between prevention and nervous ailments. In fact this was a direct reversal of the position he held.⁶²

After quoting nine witnesses who, justifiably or not, were said to believe that prevention produced "affectations of the nervous system", "hysteria", "nerve disorders", "mental deterioration", "neurasthenia" - or simply that it made women "look old" - the Commission wondered whether the rising insanity rate of New South Wales might be related to the spread of prevention. On consideration of Trivett's

61. DBR, Report para. 87.

62. ibid para. 88: (i) Morgan; (ii) McCulloch, and: (v) Thring.

statistics on the subject the relationship was, somewhat equivocally, discounted. "It is possible", the Report ran, "that the practices resorted to for the purpose of limiting families...may be responsible for some portion at least of the increased insanity rate... [but] the chief cause...is, in our opinion, the financial depression since 1893."⁶³

In addition to possible psychical effects of prevention, the Commissioners said the practice could lower the general health of women, cause diseases of the reproductive system and induce permanent sterility. They thought the results of abortion even more dire:

Bad as are the consequences of prevention of conception, still worse is the destruction of health and life which follows the procuring of miscarriage.⁶⁴

This time it was a fair summary of the evidence to report that "without exception the medical witnesses we have examined have stated that its effects are disastrous." The disastrous effects were said to include pelvic inflammation, sepsis of the generative organs - described in extensive and colourful detail - and even death. Even here the Commissioners were unable to resist the temptation to overstate their case, saying that, given the observed increase of induced miscarriage, it was "a very significant fact that the proportion of deaths of women in childbirth increased, in the period 1890-1902, by 50 per cent. on the rate for 1881-1900." Apart from the confusion of dates (which cannot be resolved from the available evidence) this observation obscures the fact, which is evident from the supporting evidence, that a significant proportion of the increased mortality was due to puerperal fever, not to other consequences of abortion.⁶⁵

A feature of the situation causing the Commissioners "grave misgivings as to the future" was the failure of so many women to realise "the wrong involved in the practices of prevention and abortion". Examples were multiplied of doctors, pharmacists and clergymen who had observed that women were possessed of considerable determination to achieve limitation of offspring and negligible concern with the morality of their action. A-morality, rather than im-morality, was the attitude reported by the majority of witnesses but the Commissioners ignored the distinction and wrote of "the perversion of morals revealed in the evidence". They then quoted clergy of each major

63. ibid paras. 89, 90. The possibility that rising insanity may have been a simple product of age-ing population does not appear to have been considered.

64. ibid para.93. Could this be the origin of the phrase "prevention is better than curette"?

65. ibid paras. 94-97 and Exhibits 43-45.

denomination who were of the same mind (Stephen being quoted, and Rutledge ignored, as representative of Methodist opinion) before expanding on their own view of the "grave immorality" of prevention and "still graver immorality" of abortion. Although abortion was a criminal offence and prevention was not, the Commissioners regarded both as "equally opposed to that morality upon which the welfare of the race essentially depends." In addition both practices were declared to "lower the standard of right-living and right-thinking in the community, create laxity of morals, debase character, and ignore the sanctity of human life."⁶⁶

"Social and moral deterioration" were followed by "Decay of family life" in the Commission's catalogue of catastrophes resulting from contraception. No attempt was made to argue the case and no evidence was cited in support of the flat statement that large families are a 'good thing'. On the contrary the Commission merely quoted the opinions of clergymen who agreed with its own opinion that

The benefits of large families to the members of those families and to the nation composed of them cannot be over-estimated... 'only' children and members of small families are less well-equipped for the struggle of life; they do not grow up to be morally, intellectually, or physically superior to members of large families, while their social efficiency is impaired by selfishness... We also recognize that the obligations of parentage are an inducement to the right use of health and strength, and... that the effort demanded for the support of a large family stimulates a conscientious regard for duty, and promotes good citizenship. 67

In addition to the physical, mental and moral decay which it charged to the cost of family limitation, the Commission regarded restriction of population growth as "ever...an impediment to progress and prosperity." Trivett had estimated that, between 1864 and 1902, the reduction of the birth rate (from an unstated 'standard') and "the excess of mortality among illegitimate children over legitimates" had robbed New South Wales of 250,000, and Australia of 940,000 population. The Commission endorsed the statement of the Chamber of Commerce, that "in view of the restriction of immigration, the importance of vitality and progression of the birth-rate cannot be too strongly emphasised", and added its own view that declining population would bring a fall in the demand for manufactured goods and consequent under-utilization of the State's natural resources.⁶⁸

66. ibid paras. 99-101.

67. ibid para. 102.

68. ibid paras. 105-107.

Soon after the Commissioners had started to discuss their report Dr Nash had pointed out that it was outside the scope of the Commission to suggest remedies for the declining birth rate. The deficiency was remedied in time for a chapter to be included on "Suggestions...in Regard to the Birth-Rate". Strangely enough, in view of the strength of their opinions on the moral causes of the decline, the Commissioners did not offer moral remedies. Even the remedies they did propose were not expected to counteract "the perversion of human nature which causes people to limit the number of their offspring." They did hope, however, that "if...some of the disabilities... attached to child-bearing [were] removed or mitigated", if there were education in the side-effects of prevention and if the people were "assisted to adopt those occupations in which the support of large families is easier, and in which children are a help rather than a burden," much good would follow.⁶⁹ In what was probably the most sensible section of the whole Report they went on to discuss improvements in hospital and medical practice, better control of marginal institutions and practitioners, the improvement of working conditions for women, some prohibitionist panaceas and, the most popular contemporary remedy for population problems, the encouragement of rural settlement.

The Commissioners were concerned about the co-existence in Sydney of "unduly numerous" maternal deaths and "obstetric art... [of] a very high standard of excellence". They suggested that the remedy could be juxtaposed to the need by the provision of increased public maternity hospital accommodation - which should no longer be "almost entirely devoted to the care of the unmarried women". Extended hospital facilities would allow better training of obstetric nurses, closer control of puerperal fever and the earlier hospitalization of women experiencing complicated pregnancies.⁷⁰ Although the Commissioners did not make the point, a great, if incidental, benefit of extending public facilities would presumably have been a reduction in the opportunities for uncontrolled private hospitals and untrained mid-wives. The Commissioners did recognize the problem, however, and recommended "that a department of the State Government be entrusted with the licensing, registration, supervision, inspection, and control of all private hospitals, lying-in-homes, and maternity homes." The related problem of numerous mid-wives being "uneducated, untrained, and unsuitable" (and crypto-abortionists) was also considered and the

69. ibid para.108. The preferred occupations were, of course, rural ones.

70. ibid paras. 109, 110.

Commission proposed as an interim measure that every keeper of a private lying-in-home should be a trained obstetric nurse. The desirable course was thought to be examination and licensing of all mid-wives but the Commission reported that this was not possible. Inadequacy of training facilities was named as the hindrance to this plan but it is more probably that the lack of a firm recommendation reflected a division of opinion within the Commission. Dr Foreman had clashed with Sir James Graham, who favoured stricter training and control, and had himself given 'evidence' that "the registration of nurses by the State would be...an unmitigated danger, fraught with very great danger to the community".⁷¹ The strength of feeling Foreman exhibited on the question makes it unlikely that a recommendation on licensing could have been included without a fight on his part.

The recommendations noted so far were all designed for the conservation of infant and maternal life and thus pointed to that alternative to pronatalism which was soon to become the solution for the population problem favoured by most interested Australians. For the rest - apart from some suggestions about improving women's working conditions - the Commission's proposals were negative or idealistic. Legislative prohibition of trade in contraceptives and abortifacients was proposed, despite the fact that the Commissioners had evidence that women already knew how to prepare their own quinine pessaries and vaginal sponges from materials readily available for other, innocuous purposes, and that household commodities could be used as abortifacients. Similarly the Commissioners ignored evidence of the ease of evasion to recommend legislative suppression of indecent literature and advertisements.⁷² They also forgot their own acknowledgement that 'moral' remedies were unlikely to work when they invited the clergy to inculcate religious principles in the young and to "devise some means of instituting a general crusade... [to] arouse the conscience of married people."⁷³

The populist stress on the moral value of proximity to the good earth came out in the last of the Commission's suggested remedies. Ignoring the fact that the statistics were crude and that the decline had been but little slower in rural than in urban areas, the Commissioners emphasized that the birth rate was "higher in the country than in the capital" and espoused the value of familial labour in

71. ibid paras. 113, 114.

Sir James Graham's evidence was given at Qq. 3527-3551, 3593-3650 and Dr Foreman's at Qq. 6470-6484, 6500-6521.

72. ibid paras. 115, 116, 122. cf. Qq. 3917-8, 1837 and 1186, 5389.

73. ibid para. 124.

agricultural areas as a reason for the differential. Alongside the higher rural birth rate, however, they had to set the facts of under-employment in agricultural areas and restricted opportunities for industrial employment in urban areas. To overcome all these problems at a stroke the Commissioners offered a detailed remedy.

In order (i) to check this tendency to concentration of population in towns; (ii) to provide opportunity for primary production on an extended scale, which will engage the activity of the rising generation and improve its physique; (iii) to encourage the rising generation to engage in primary productiveness; (iv) to check the idleness of youth; (v) to enable the activity of the young to be wealth-producing at an earlier age; (vi) to increase the productiveness of the State; (vii) to remove some of the excuses commonly advanced by individuals in justification of the admitted practice of limitation of families; and (viii) to counteract the tendency to the increased employment of women and girls in factories; it should, we consider, be the policy of the Government to encourage the settlement of the people on the land, especially on the land suitable for agriculture, on a scale adequate to attain those objects, and thus enlist the force of self-interest on behalf of the growth of families.⁷⁴

Then, because they accepted another untested generalisation as a premiss, the Commissioners closed their chapter on remedies with a proposal which could hardly have been better designed to hinder the implementation of the previous program. "Restriction of the growth of population...is unfavourable to the moral, physical and economic welfare of the people", they said. "We therefore recommend that a vigorous policy of encouraging immigration be adopted."⁷⁵

The paragraph on migration was only a diversion from the main line of interest in the Report, sitting uneasily between the Division on the decline of fertility and a Division headed "Infantile Mortality". The latter had chapters on the statistics of infantile mortality, on its causes, on the feeding and care of infants and on remedies for the loss of infants. Statistical evidence revealed that there had been little change in the rate of infant mortality in New South Wales during the last forty years of the nineteenth century, and that the rate of mortality among illegitimate infants was nearly three

74. ibid paras. 125, 127, 128, 129. The 'argument' about "avenues for profitable industrial employment" was that the cost of labour in Australia made its products uncompetitive with overseas goods and therefore limited the demand for local manufacture. (para. 128).

75. ibid para. 130.

times as great as that of legitimates. The evidence also revealed that, while infantile mortality was slightly higher in Sydney than in the country (112 per 1,000 against 108 per 1,000, in 1902), the differential had been narrowing perceptibly for a decade. It was therefore a straining of evidence to say that "the figures indicate, as might be expected, the prejudicial effects of metropolitan rearing" - although the comment was probably predictable, given the Commissioners' previously expressed preference for rural life.⁷⁶

The underlying causes of mortality were reported to vary according to the legitimacy or otherwise of the infants. Among legitimates the insufficiency of public hospital care for poor mothers and sickly babies, the impurity of dairy milk and artificial foods, and ignorance of the elements of domestic hygiene were laid under the chief blame. Among illegitimates, foeticide, infanticide and baby farming consequent upon "maternal indifference and the social and economic disabilities of the mothers", together with the defective management of 'benevolent' institutions, were regarded as the main causes of mortality. By way of remedy the purity of artificial foods and milk supply should be regulated, girls should get more education in domestic economy, lying-in-homes and babies' homes should be controlled, and still-births and infant interments should be more strictly policed.⁷⁷

"Still-births - Undertakers - Cemeteries" were discussed again in the division of the Report dealing with "Miscellaneous Matters arising out of the Evidence". It was argued there, as it had been by a Select Committee seventeen years earlier, that the non-registration of still-births simply afforded "facilities for the concealment of crimes against the lives of young children". The Commissioners therefore urged that registration be compulsory, that midwives' records be scrutinized (to detect undue incidence of still-births in their practices), and that undertakers and cemeteries be supervised to reduce the number of interments of unwanted babies whose transient existence escaped official notice. Correction of defects in the Registration Act was also urged with the same object, and with the aim of providing "more completely and readily...the data required for the compilation of vital statistics." Control of poisons (to limit the sale of abortifacients masquerading as proprietary medicines) and a defence of gynaecological surgery were also discussed in the

76. *ibid* paras. 131-140. On "the prejudicial effects of metropolitan rearing" (para. 139) the Report cites "Exhibit no. 129" as evidence. In fact Exhibit 129 makes no urban/rural comparisons and it seems that Exhibit 120 is meant.

77. *ibid* paras. 141-148.

miscellany.⁷⁸

The conclusions of the Royal Commissioners' inquiry into the decline of the birth rate were set out in the chapters of their report dealing with statistics, techniques, motivations and remedies. The chapter they called "Conclusion" was not a conclusion, in the accepted sense of a summary of the evidence and a statement of its necessary implications, but the conservative's cry of concern at the advent of a permissive society.⁷⁹ "We have been reluctantly, but inevitably, driven to the conclusion", they said, "that the people, led astray by false and pernicious doctrine...are neglecting their true duty to themselves, to their fellow countrymen, and to posterity." They said that the doctrine of artificial limitation of families was vicious because it would destroy the family as a training ground in individual morality and as a bastion for social morality. They worried that the deceleration of population growth would prevent Australia from developing into a great nation and they drew xenophobic comparisons with "Russia and Japan, prospective rivals of Australia for supremacy in the Western Pacific.., already seeking outlets beyond their own borders for the energies of their ever-growing people..."

It was not simply an 'engineering' concern with the contraction of population growth and ways of reversing it but a threat to their social philosophy which moved the Commissioners to write:

In whatever way the waning birth-rate of New South Wales is viewed, whether in its effects on the health, character, or social worth of individuals; on the value of the family as the basis of national life; on the quality and dignity of civic life; on the character of the people; on their social, moral, and economic progress; on their national aims and aspirations; or on their capacity to survive in the rivalry of nations; and whether it is viewed in the light of history or of science, it is seen as a grave disorder sapping the vitals of a new people, dispelling its hopes, blighting its prospects, and threatening its continuance.⁸⁰

"Value", "character" and "aspirations" were all moral words used by men in whose eyes morality and the status quo were identified. In their experience talk of family limitation was radical or socialist

78. ibid paras. 149-155 ("The Poisons Act and its Administration"), 156-159 ("Still-births - Undertakers - Cemeteries"), 161-165 ("The Registration of Births and Deaths") and 166-168 ("The Relation of Operative Surgery to Sterility").

79. ibid paras. 169-176.

80. ibid para. 175.

talk, immoral and a threat to the established order of society.⁸¹
 (Hence, perhaps, their resistance to Holman's participation and their hostility to Riley, the Labour Council witness?). If the 'natural' consequences of sexual relations were questioned, the family lost its sanctity. If the family were diminished, society was threatened.

It is highly significant that when Mackellar wrote to See after the Report was submitted he said "At first I feared that the investigation would prove valueless, but as the inquiry proceeded, facts of the gravest importance not only to our State, but to the whole Commonwealth were disclosed."⁸² What Mackellar feared would be valueless, the "first" part of the inquiry, was the real evidence, the statistics of decline, the testimony of the pharmacists and the accounts of abortionists and lying-in-homes. The "facts of the gravest importance" to which the inquiry proceeded were the opinions of doctors and clergy, of whom the only ones quoted in the Report were those who confirmed the Commissioners in the belief that vice was rife and immorality was rampant and contraception was ruining the moral fibre of the nation.

What the Commissioners called a conclusion was in fact a premiss, widely held, which had directed their investigations and insulated them from alternative opinions. Insulated, rather than isolated, for only one of the Commissioners was to be found in the pro-natalist pulpit at the end of the decade. For the rest of them, as for many of the leaders of opinion, the value of the Royal Commission was as a bridge helping them to make a slow transition to a new view of the population question.

81. The years from about 1850 to the Bradlaugh-Besant trial in 1877 were the years during which the Commissioners were being educated and were also the period when "neo-Malthusianism had become a generally accepted principle of the secularist philosophy and most secularist propaganda contained some reference to it". See F.H. Amphlett Micklewright: "The Rise and Decline of English Neo-Malthusianism" in Population Studies XV:1 (July 1961) p.36f.

82. Mackellar to See 8 April 1904. NSW Archives Shelf no. 6792 (CSIL 04/8352).

EXCURSUSThe appointment of William Arthur Holman.

Among surviving files from the Chief Secretary's Office is an undated minute on Premier's Office notepaper and bearing the heading "Personnel of the proposed Royal Commission to investigate the causes of the declining birth-rate in New South Wales." The paper contains the names of Mackellar, MacLaurin, Beale, Coghlan, Foreman, Fosbery, Hughes, Knox, Littlejohn, Nash, Paton and William Arthur Holman and is subscribed with the manuscript notes "Prepare Minute for Ex Co/ 11-8-'03" and "Minute herewith/11-8-03". There is also an Executive Council Minute Paper, originating from the Chief Secretary's Office, dated 11 August 1903 and carrying a recommendation that the twelve man Commission be appointed; this document is signed by See and endorsed by Governor Rawson with the date "11-8-03". These papers would suggest that establishment of the Commission was a fairly straight-forward business were it not the case that Holman's name appears out of its proper order and were it not for an additional item in the same file. This document is also on Premier's Office notepaper and carries the sentence "William Arthur Holman, M.L.A., Barrister-at-Law, to be an additional member of the Commission." The significance of the word 'additional' lies in the fact that the paper is initialled by the Premier's Special Clerk and dated "12/8/03"; that is, Holman was being described as an additional member a day after his name was approved by Executive Council. All this might be explained by two slips of a clerical pen if it were not evident, on close inspection, that the margin at the point where Holman's name is typed is not justified with the margin of the body of typing on either of the papers dated 11-8-03. In other words Holman's name was added after the Commission had been approved by Executive Council.⁸³

The newspapers certainly thought that Holman and, perhaps two other members were late additions to the Commission. The initial announcement in the Daily Telegraph of 8 August quoted See as saying

83. NSW Archives accession number 6776 (CSIL, 1904 1171). Concerning the 'proper' order of the names, Mackellar, as Chairman, heads the list and is followed by MacLaurin as the only knight; the gentlemen are listed in alphabetical order and Holman should therefore appear between Fosbery and Hughes. The assertion that the document of 12-8-03 was initialled by the Premier's Special Clerk is based on the presumption that the initials "E.B.H." are those of Edward Burns Harkness who was gazetted Special Clerk to the Minister and Permanent Head of the Chief Secretary's Office on 31 October 1902. Since the senior officer in the Chief Secretary's Office was the Under-Secretary, Harkness as 'Permanent Head' presumably presided over the nascent Premier's Department which was soon to become a separate organization, apart from the Chief Secretary's.

"it has been decided that the Commission shall consist of men eminent in their professions... There will be several such persons on the commission which I propose to appoint early next week." On Monday 10 August the Telegraph informed its readers that "the commission will be formally appointed by the Governor at a meeting of the Executive Council tomorrow. In the meantime, however, it is possible to give the names of the members..." They were, as the Herald confirmed, Mackellar, Paton, Knox, Coghlan, Hughes, Fosbery, MacLaurin, Foreman and Nash - in that order. Tuesday 11 August brought a report in the Herald that "The Premier yesterday decided to add the names of Mr G.S. Littlejohn (president of the Chamber of Commerce) and Mr O.C. Beale (president of the Chamber of Manufactures) to the list..." On Thursday 13 August, that is two days after the date of the documents described above, the Telegraph reported "Some little delay has taken place in regard to the issue of the Royal Commission... The matter was before the Executive Council on Tuesday and the minute on the subject was approved, but the commission was not signed as at the last moment it was decided to add to it. Mr W.A. Holman M.L.A. is the new member. Mr Holman belongs to the Labor Party and is the only member of the Assembly on the commission."⁸⁴

One can only speculate about the reasons for Holman's late appointment. It may be that the Labor Party, whose support was increasingly vital to See's continuance in office, told the Premier that it expected to be represented on the Commission. An alternative theory, not incompatible with the preceding suggestion, might be that Holman, who had a Fabian-like interest in extending his knowledge of society and was at this time developing the full range of his political power, simply expressed an interest in the topic and persuaded See to add his name to the Commission.

84. Daily Telegraph 8 August 1903 p.8G; 10 August p.4E; 13 August p.4G; SMH 10 August p.9E and 11 August p.4E.

CHAPTER V

Medical Opinion

Members of the medical profession comprised the biggest group of witnesses before the Birth Rate Commission. The extent of their contribution is hardly surprising, given the close involvement of doctors in the processes of motherhood, birth and infant growth. Indeed the very extent and diversity of their opinions on those topics makes it hard to draw them into coherent categories (a difficulty compounded by the lack of a substantial history of medicine in Australia). This chapter attempts to overcome the problem by studying the ideas of some of the more vocal individuals and then proceeding to a review of the wide variety of opinions that were current on topics like abortion, the side-effects of contraception and the level of infant mortality.

Walter Balls-Headley received his medical education earlier than most of the doctors to be met in this chapter and also differed from them in having English, not Scottish, degrees.¹ Yet another distinguishing characteristic was his attempt to provide a sociological basis for opinions on aspects of the population question. His first essay of demographic interest was a rather loosely organised, repetitious piece which he wrote for the Melbourne Review in 1877, soon after his arrival in Melbourne.² Taking Hayter's official statistics for Victoria, Balls-Headley drew attention to the fact that the marriage-rate of Victorian girls was only 71% of the Australian average. This was a matter for surprise, seeing that the Victorian girls were wanting "neither in beauty, form, domestic aptitude, nor proportionate numbers" and for concern, since it was evident that "the best progress of a country is dependent upon its settled population" of married persons.³ The question his surprise and concern provoked was "Why don't the men propose?" Careful analysis of relevant social characteristics of the population convinced him that no sufficient explanation could be found in population size or

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1. MB et ChM 1865, MD 1868 (Cambridge). Details of professional qualification are given in L. Bruck (ed): Australasian Medical Directory and Handbook (edition 5 Sydney 1900). Details of Balls-Headley's career as a medical teacher in Melbourne are given by Frank M.C. Forster: "One Hundred Years of Obstetrical and Gynaecological Teaching in Victoria" in Australian and New Zealand Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology VI (1966) pp.106-111. There is also a short biography in Australian Dictionary of Biography (Melbourne University Press 1969) Vol III p.83, where it is noted, among other whimsies, that Balls-Headley was known amongst gynaecologists as "a very neat operator" - an ability retained by some Melbourne members of the profession to this very day!
 2. W. Balls-Headley: "Victorian Matrimony" in Melbourne Review II (1877) pp. 390-412.
 3. ibid p.390

density, the levels of masculinity or urbanization, the distribution of occupations or even the climate of the colony. The real reason, he concluded, must be the evaporation of prosperity in the years since the gold rush.⁴

The tone of his article suggests that Balls-Headley was not too deeply troubled about matrimony. Insofar as he had a concern it seems to have been with the deficiency of the Victorian birth rate. The "born Victorian", owning the colony as his own and knowing its habits and institutions, was preferable to the immigrant on social grounds and economic ones as well. By a remarkable series of calculations he demonstrated - to his own satisfaction, at least - that the colony's loss by babies not born to brides not married since 1865 exceeded £3,456,000!⁵ Though less ready than some of his successors to proclaim solutions for the problems he divined, Balls-Headley did anticipate their ritual references to the sad effect on France of a reduced birth rate and to the likelihood that the infertile Australians would be supplanted by "the coming race" of Chinese.⁶

It is, perhaps, unfair to mock what Balls-Headley himself may have come to regard as juvenilia. By 1892, he was at the head of his profession, being lecturer in obstetrics and the diseases of women at Melbourne University and president of the midwifery section of the Intercolonial Medical Congress. His presidential address gave a synopsis of the arguments he would soon elaborate in a lengthy book on the evolution of disease in women. "The object of woman's development is the propagation of the race", he began, "but the advantage of the degree of such propagation is dependent on the environment." Most of his contemporaries would have applauded the opening clause: some would have queried the qualification; many would have deplored the conclusion, that "The requirements of our civilization render the propagation of many children undesirable."⁷

4. ibid pp.396-9, 402 for the 'insufficient' explanations; p.408 for the economic 'answer'.

5. The figure was compounded from Victorian vital registrations and life expectancy, Graunt's presumption of an average four children per marriage, and the English Registrar-General's estimate that the value of a 25 year-old Norfolk labourer was £246. ibid p.393.

6. ibid pp.391 and 412 respectively.

7. W. Balls-Headley: President's Address to the Section of Midwifery in Intercolonial Medical Congress of Australasia, Transactions Session III (1892) p.512.

Polyandry and infanticide being "contrary to the tenets of civilization", he said, restriction of the number of offspring is effected by delayed marriage, the practice of prevention or the induction of abortion. Balls-Headley did not elaborate on the two birth controls but said that delayed marriage led to endometritis and reduced sexual capacity. Similar results followed the bad working conditions to which factory girls were subjected and another ill-effect of civilization was an increase of foetal head-size producing greater difficulties at parturition.⁸

The debt to Spencer and Darwin evident in the presidential address appeared again, and was acknowledged, in Evolution of the Diseases of Women, Balls-Headley's magnum opus of 1894.⁹ A chapter on "The influences of Civilization on the Sexual Relations and on Woman" drew on the statistical publications of Hayter and Coghlan for evidence that the rates of marriage and birth were declining in Australia, then attempted a sociological-cum-gynaecological explanation of the evidence. As Balls-Headley explained the nexus between civilization and sexual relations,

The load of supplying the increased requirements of living has fallen chiefly on the man, so that the life of him who provides for and educates his family is one of great toil and anxiety; while the disposition of the average bachelor and, indeed, of the masses of our time, with increasing knowledge, capacity and opportunity of enjoyment, is towards less work and longer periods of relaxation, whereby his personal leisure - that is, his egoism - and his sexual instinct - that is, his inclination for marriage - are in direct antagonism, and lead to almost social rupture.

But the inherent compulsion of his strongest instinct is paramount; should he thus add matrimony to his expenses, his toil must be the greater; and it is therefore found that his tendency is to delay marriage, and that prostitution is rampant. In case of marriage the tendency is to limitation or avoidance of pregnancy.¹⁰

8. ibid pp.513-515.

9. W. Balls-Headley: The Evolution of the Diseases of Women (Smith, Elder & Co. London 1894 [Geo. Robertson & Co. Melbourne & Sydney]). At p.ix Balls-Headley wrote "The sociological opinions are derived from the study of Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Schopenhauer, Letourneau, August Bebel, A. Bertillon, and others..." It is interesting to note that the copy of this work now in the National Library, Canberra, is inscribed "J.S. Colebrook Elkington Melbourne University 1895". Elkington was Professor of History and Political Economy at Melbourne but, if the description of his career in C.D.W. Goodwin: Economic Enquiry in Australia (Duke University Press 1966) pp.571-574 is fair, he is unlikely to have given his students much insight into the population debate.

10. Evolution of the Diseases of Women, p.9.

Balls-Headley cast progress in civilization as the ultimate cause of prudential checks to procreation but he also expressed himself on proximate causes, among which he included the prosperity of the economy and the level of urbanization: "men have a greater tendency to marry in prosperous than in dull times", he wrote, and "our centralization in cities diminishes the marriage rate."¹¹ The delay in marriage induced diseases that made child-bearing impossible, he said, and another loss stemmed from "the difficulty of civilized women to bear children normally".

...they become ill and desire health in order to bring up what children they have borne, and the strain, toil, and expense of no more. Hence, again, limitation of families. 12

Two other ill effects of civilization were specified. In a passage which might have come straight out of Spencer's article in the Westminster Review he said that modern education places physiological constraints on a young woman and, "should she have capacity for higher mental attainments, her nervous system is apt to develop at the expense of her body." Her descendants experience increasing difficulty in parturition, "thus high mental culture is antagonistic to healthy sexual development and childbearing."¹³ Balls-Headley's other theory is less an integral part of his sociological theory of fertility than a reflection of his attitude to events in Australia's recent past. Labourstrikes, he said, have a three-fold impact: on the striker himself, who acquires the habit of idleness and becomes "unwilling to undertake the honestly toilsome work of the support of a family"; on other unionists, whose strike levies reduce their provident capacity; and on the employer, who loses his market or his profit and retrenches staff. Hence, eventually, "all the men of the country are less capable of marrying and supporting their families" and the birth rate suffers.¹⁴

If Balls-Headley's views seem idiosyncratic it should be remembered that his contemporaries gave no sign of disapproval. He

11. ibid, p.11f.

12. ibid, p.16.

13. ibid, p.22. Herbert Spencer's views were set out in "A theory of population, deduced from the general law of animal fertility" in Westminster Review New Series I:2 (April 1852) pp.468-501, and contained the postulate that "the degree of fertility varies inversely as the development of the nervous system." [p.493]

14. Evolution of the Diseases of Women, p.31f.

was prominent in professional bodies and his book received a favourable notice in the Australasian Medical Gazette which described it as "characterised by an originality and philosophic breadth of view not to be found in an equal degree in any other gynaecology..." and praised the attribution of gynaecological disease to "absence of seasonable marriage."¹⁵

Balls-Headley had the support of his professional colleagues and a systematic, if singular, basis for his views. Alexander Paterson, who was a contemporary of Balls-Headley but practised in Sydney, also had a systematic basis for his views. He wrote in favour of family limitation, however, and did not enjoy the support of his colleagues. His Physical Health of Woman examined scientifically and presented soberly a range of "Useful knowledge for Maiden, Wife and Mother", including a chapter on "Limitation of Offspring". In his introduction he pointed out that he was going to discuss topics on which others would counsel silence, defending the action on the grounds that "true knowledge, if wisely presented, will never do harm, but on the contrary will tend to obviate it."¹⁶ Paterson recognised that commitment to truth and frankness did not endear him to his colleagues but he was undeterred in publishing his views, reporting that he had "always found science and morality going hand in hand." His belief that "where an attempt is made to force science into an unfair support of a preconceived morality, or religion, both suffer" suggested uncommon pragmatism.¹⁷ The decision whether limitation of offspring was desirable was a personal one, he said, which should be the outcome of "an impartial, scientific, and truthful investigation of the question". In this it would differ from much unscientific and erroneous writing on the morality and means of limitation.¹⁸

Contrary to the almost Manichaeian view held by many doctors, Paterson claimed that sexual relationships were good in themselves, not merely the means to the good end of procreation. If nature chose to associate a function such as procreation with a pleasure such

15. AMG XIV:3 (15 March 1895) p.122. At 16s. per copy it may be doubted whether the book enjoyed a very wide readership.

16. Alexander Paterson: Physical Health of Woman (Edwards, Dunlop & Co Sydney 1890) p.iii. The work did not take long to reach the Public Library of New South Wales, which has a copy marked 31-12-90.

17. ibid, p.iv.

18. ibid, p.108f

as sexual intercourse, then the pleasure was a natural and legitimate end of the function.¹⁹ Although Paterson did not accept hedonist, any more than Manichaeism, views of intercourse, he pointed out that there was no logic in arguments that continence was harmful: the use of preventives might lead to "too frequent indulgence" but any consequent injury was due to the excess and not the means. In any case his experience was that greater ill-health and debility in married women was caused by "the too rapid recurrence of pregnancy."²⁰

Paterson defended most techniques for preventing pregnancy, although he entirely disagreed with abortion and thought that prolonged lactation was injurious. He destroyed the moral arguments against coitus interruptus simply by showing their logical flaws and similarly despatched the physiological arguments about the 'congestive' effect of the technique on the male and female organs.²¹ Cold or astringent solutions injected after intercourse had produced no ill effects in the cases of which he was aware. On the contrary, "If cold water were less of a 'foreign' fluid to the vagina and uterus" than it was, he thought, "the gynaecologist would have less frequent opportunity to ply his skill". Turning to 'rhythm' techniques Paterson discounted the risk of ectopic pregnancy or placenta praevia but he did not recognize that the days commonly prescribed as 'safe' were not so. He called male sheaths (or 'french letters') "the best protection of which I am aware" and, reversing Madame de Stael's epigram, described them as "bulwarks for protection and cobwebs against love."²²

The two Australian medical journals and the reports of the intercolonial medical congresses of the 1890s offer no evidence that the peopling of Australia was a live topic for the medical profession during the decade. There was an extensive discussion in early years of the present century, however, beginning with J.W. Barrett's presidential address to the Medical Society of Victoria in 1901. A cartoon of Barrett aged about 60 shows a determined face

19. ibid, p.111ff.

20. ibid, p.121.

21. ibid pp.121-130. Of one doctor's condemnation of withdrawal Paterson wrote "The whole of this graphic description of the woes to follow withdrawal is purely imaginative, and in contradiction to science and experience, as I think an examination of it in detail will clearly show." (p.123).

22. ibid pp.130f (douches), 131 (rhythm), 132 ('french letters').

dominated by a pugnacious nose and his career and writings are also suggestive of an independent will. In 1885 the Medical Society reprimanded him for unprofessional conduct but the Society's minutes for succeeding years record his frequent participation in its affairs, often on topics outside the general run, and he was elected president in 1901.²³

Barrett attempted a light-hearted actuarial calculation of the "Value of a Victorian Infant" in 1898 but his major contribution to the population debate was the address of 1901. He began with a short, reasonably accurate summary of the Malthusian argument about the pressure of numbers on subsistence and recognised that, while nineteenth century inventiveness might seem to believe its advent, the Malthusian crux would operate sooner or later. In the meantime there were considerable problems latent in international fertility differentials. He cited India and France as two extremes on either side of the moderate mean, made some percipient prophecies of the problems facing India, and drew attention to the danger that the trend of Britain's fertility could take her the way of France.²⁴ The social Darwinism Balls-Headley had espoused re-appeared in Barrett's recognition that there was also a problem in the inverse relationship between intellectual development and fertility.²⁵ Barrett was not committed to the support of any particular level of fertility and contented himself with the general observation that "the sum of human progress is probably greatest with a steady moderate increase of population."

When Barrett turned to the Australian scene he was obviously mindful of the Malthusian relationship between fertility and availability of material necessities. He described Australia in

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23. Medical Society of Victoria: Minutes of Council Meetings, passim. The reprimand, for public correspondence in the Herald newspaper, was discussed at the meetings of 29 January and 26 February, 1885. The cartoon of Barrett is in the office of Professor K.F. Russell, Associate Professor of Anatomy at Melbourne University.
24. J.W. Barrett: "Presidential Address" in IMJA VI:1 (January 1901) pp.12-15. Concerning India, Barrett said that if the population grows by several millions every few years, "it is absolutely certain that they will be relatively uneducated and untrained and that, consequently, their economic and social value will be small." [p.12] His concern at the implications of Britain's declining fertility for her role in international politics was repeated in The Speculum (Journal of the Melbourne University Medical Students' Society) LV (December 1902) pp.81-89. The earlier article was "Value of a Victorian Infant" in IMJA III:2 (February 1898) p.94f.
25. "Presidential Address" pp.10-12.

general, and Victoria in particular, as "the countries in the world in which the external possibilities of happiness are most easily procured." In the circumstances he expected to find "a young vigorous race [delighting] in the rearing of sturdy families, [taking] a pride in the propagation of a branch of the Anglo-Saxon race..."²⁶ In fact he found that Australasian birth rates had fallen faster than those of almost any other European country - as, he noted, Balls-Headley had predicted they would. The tables supplied for him by J.J. Fenton, Hayter's rather pedestrian successor as Government Statist, confirmed the paucity of vital rates, relative to those of overseas countries, but did not show the cause of the Australasian decline. Deficiencies in the statistics, enforced separation of families by internal migration and the pressure of 'bad times' were all considered but shown to be insufficient explanations when applied to Australasia as a whole. Even were something allowed for each possibility, Barrett decided, there would remain a "substantial residuum" requiring other explanation.²⁷

His own "professional and general knowledge" led Barrett to the view that the 'other explanation' was provided by Coghlan's evidence, in the 1899 edition of Wealth and Progress, that the proportion of fertile marriages and the birth rate of fertile women were both declining, and that Australasian women were less fertile than European immigrants. He endorsed Coghlan's conclusions and added

The cosmic process of development has been followed by a gradual decline in the birth rate, and has, since 1888 or thereabouts, been supplemented in Australasia by the voluntary restriction of families on an extensive scale. 28

It seemed fairly clear to Barrett that newly acquired knowledge of contraceptive techniques was the immediate cause of much of the decline but the real question remained, what had motivated women to use this new knowledge? Female emancipation and the extension of women's education were major factors, he thought, with simple disinclination (undefined), the difficulty of obtaining domestic servants, pursuit of a high life style and the cost of boys'

26. ibid p.16.

27. ibid pp.18-22.

28. ibid p.22f.

education in subsidiary roles.²⁹ It had been suggested in some quarters that problems like these could be overcome by State provision of family allowances. Barrett's rejection of the idea was characteristically forthright:

...by the time a community reaches a state of things in which fundamental instincts are regarded from that point of view, some other community less logical but more vigorous, will have cleaned the Augean stable out and stocked it with a new stud. 30

Barrett's mind was not closed against prevention of conception, despite the tone of that comment and the liberal sprinkling of morally condemnatory phrases throughout his address. His understanding of Malthus was more than superficial, he had some knowledge of social Darwinist ideas and he used the statistical information that was available to him. All of this suggests that he could think about, not merely react to, social changes like the decline of fertility. Considering also his independent streak and the experimental turn of mind revealed by his papers on purely professional topics, it seems fair to portray him as genuflecting, without committing himself, to the conservative attitude on prevention revealed by many of his colleagues. His own position was more accurately indicated by his claim that the introduction of contraceptive techniques fifteen years earlier had been welcomed by many doctors as offering women relief from the incessant round of pregnancies and lactations. "Nothing seemed to us more natural than that [the mother] should be allowed a reasonable time at all events to recover. It seemed

29. ibid pp.23-27 To Barrett's credit, it must be said that these factors were still all considered to be worthy of serious consideration fifty years later. See, for example J.A. Banks: Prosperity and Parenthood (Routledge and Kegan Paul London 1954), Chapters V, VI, and XI.

30. ibid p.26. By the time his memoirs appeared his ideas on the value of State action had changed greatly: "Those of us with large families who read these words, [about the dire consequences of selfish family limitation] and congratulate ourselves righteously on the fact that they do not apply to us, only to those selfish women who refuse to bear children, are reminded, as I am, that in a properly organized community which welcomed children as an asset and bountifully dowered them with health and education..." Australia's lack of births could not have arisen. J.W. Barrett: Eighty Eventful Years (J.C. Stephens Melbourne 1945) p.98.

that, on the average, by such measures better children would be reared, and there would be fewer deaths." For Barrett it remained true that, providing it was done in moderation, family planning entailed more advantages than disadvantages.³¹

Little more than two years after Barrett had spoken on the topic the Birth Rate Commission in New South Wales presented an opportunity for a large number of doctors to give evidence and air their opinions. Many of them made only disjointed comments but more extensive positions were outlined by Ralph Worrall, specialist obstetrician and gynaecologist, and Joseph Foreman, gynaecologist and member of the Royal Commission. Worrall, like J.W. Barrett, was somewhat of an individualist and even more dogmatic in the expression of his opinions. He claimed that family limitation was increasing among all social classes in both rural and urban areas with prevention the preferred method of the higher, and abortion of the lower, classes. The determination to restrict family size would have arisen independently of neo-Malthusian propaganda because husbands and wives were agreed in the practice of limitation, chiefly out of a desire to maintain standards for their children. Among those who told him they "cannot afford to rear and educate their children" Worrall found "some very nice women...- very conscientious women - [who] say there is no prospect for children in this country now - no opening; and therefore they think it is not right to bring them into the world."³²

Worrall held a rather unusual position on the relationship between economic conditions and fertility, arguing that the relationship between fertility and prosperity was a direct one, not inverse as is held by most population theorists. "The more prosperous a State is", he said, "the less [the people] fear having a family." When pressed by Coghlan to explain the contrary example of low fertility in (so Coghlan said) prosperous France, Worrall simply replied that this was the result of partible inheritance in a land of peasant proprietors.³³ He also ran against the grain of the Commissioners' thinking in giving qualified support to the practice of prevention, for which he saw two lines of justification. On the one hand, people who wanted to limit their offspring for a time and later decided to resume reproduction could reasonably expect the

31. "Presidential Address" pp.25,28.

32. DBR Qq.2957-65.

33. ibid Qq.2975-79.

resumption to succeed if they had been relying only on preventives for the limitation. The hope of resumption would be greatly diminished if the more radical technique of abortion had been used for limitation. Secondly, Worrall had some sympathy with the motives which led to limitation and said they could "all be summed up in one word - that is, poverty."

The people are too poor, or they think they are too poor, which comes to much the same thing, to educate and rear children, and they think that when they are reared and educated there is no opening for them.

To the suggestion that desire for pleasure was a more potent reason than poverty for prevention among the working class he retorted

Oh, they have very little pleasure; it is rare to see them robust, and they have such hard work to do. They have very little pleasure or time. It is because they have not got any money to support the children. 34

Worrall's prescriptions for arresting the decline of the birth ~~rate~~ were closely linked to his more general social views. If fertility was directly related to prosperity and it was desired to increase fertility then steps must be taken to improve prosperity. This could be done by sweeping away "all the restrictions on trade and enterprise at present existing", of which the most onerous were the Arbitration system and its dreadful offspring, closed-shop unionism. Subsidiary measures would include elementary domestic education, to reduce infant mortality, and a Closer Settlement Bill, to increase the population of rural areas.³⁵

If Worrall could be categorized as having a laissez-faire philosophy, according to the labels of his day, then Dr Joseph Foreman was obviously a conservative, at least as regards prevention of conception. Where as few as ten per cent of women had known how to regulate the number of their children twenty years ago, he said there were now only ten per cent who did not know how to achieve that end. "Speaking of the knowledge that prevails amongst the women," Foreman said, "it is too astounding - even I get a little bit of a shock sometimes." Abortion, in particular, was prevalent, whether self-induced or, as often happened, procured by doctors and nurses. The physical side-effects of prevention were "always bad", their evil influence only paralleled by the current modes of female education.

34. ibid Qq.3014-16

35. ibid Qq.3019f., 3031

Concerning girls' schools he asked indignantly "If these girls have to go there on a winter's morning and strum there on the piano in a room without a fire, how is it possible for them to go on all right at the time of puberty?"³⁶ Unlike Worrall, Foreman proposed no positive solution for the problems he raised. A conservative adrift in a current of change he lacked even the conservative's conception of a better condition to which affairs might return.

Foreman was not alone in his abhorrence of abortion, as a survey of doctors' views on that topic presently will indicate. His opposition to the practice was shared, for instance, by Michael Ullick O'Sullivan, a doctor prominent in his profession and in the Catholic church.³⁷ In 1897 O'Sullivan regarded the "lamentable Neomalthusian practice" of prevention with its attendant "unhygienic contrivances and artifices" as "an obvious reproach to civilized womanhood," and more objectionable than criminal abortion.³⁸ By 1904, however, he made it clear to his fellow Catholics that he disapproved of abortion or craniotomy, even for therapeutic reasons. He also argued that the apparent necessity of these practices was negated by improvements in prenatal care, rendering complications of parturition less common, and by the fact that Caesarian section could now accomplish the same ends as craniotomy and abortion with no greater risk of maternal mortality.³⁹

O'Sullivan repeated his views on abortion in a further address in 1907, this time relating them to more general observations on the population question. He also developed his remarks sufficiently to justify their description as a systematic statement from a religious viewpoint, akin to the sociological system of Balls-Headley and the scientific, humanist system of Alexander Paterson. The 1907 address repeated the 1904 suggestion that

36. ibid Qq.6485-87 and 6498f.

37. The Pope created him a Knight Commander of the Order of St Gregory in 1905. See Argus (Melbourne) 25 June 1917, p.8A.

38. M.U. O'Sullivan: "President's Address" to the British Medical Association, Victorian Branch in IMJA II:1 (January 1897) p.19f.

39. O'Sullivan: "The Catholic Physician in Regard to Craniotomy" in Second Australasian Catholic Congress, Medical Section, Proceedings (Melbourne 1905) pp.12ff. His opposition to craniotomy was still remembered years later when his obituary included the sentence "At the Women's Hospital [in the mid-nineties] he undertook to ban craniotomy, and introduced Caesarian section in its stead." [MJA (September 1917) p.217].

in the light of modern advances in obstetrics, reputable surgeons of all shades of religious thought should no longer claim the right to perform an operation involving the mutilation or destruction of a living child in utero at any stage of gestation,

a line of argument that seems to depend on technological contingency rather than logical necessity, although O'Sullivan did raise supporting legal, moral and scientific arguments.⁴⁰

Abortion had been introduced by O'Sullivan as one of three common causes of disease in women but he claimed that the effects of prevention were even more deleterious. Following Heron and Sydney Webb he asserted that the practice was most common among "the well-to-do married", who could least justify it, and he waxed indignant concerning the cause of prevention, the nature of preventive devices and the result of their use. Of the cause he wrote

This detestable practice...may come from fashion, cowardice, or shiftless poverty; it comes from the aimless dilettantism of women who will not mar their beauty, or disturb their patrician pleasures with the cares of maternity; it comes from too high a standard of living, which creates many artificial wants and demands many expensive luxuries.

and, even more colourfully, of the result:

...when a wife defiles the marriage bed with the devices and equipment of the brothel, and interferes with nature's mandate by cold-blooded preventives and safeguards; when she consults her almanac, and refuses to admit the approaches of her husband except at stated times; when a wife behaves in so unwifely and unnatural a manner, can it be otherwise than that estrangements and painful suspicions of faithfulness should from time to time occur? Can a home with such an environment be a happy one? Many husbands so situated are, I fear, tempted to seek elsewhere the pleasures denied them at home. Such are nature's reprisals; such, indeed, her unflinching retributions. 41

Delivered at a time when Australian Catholicism was trying to identify with the Australian nation, O'Sullivan's

40. O'Sullivan: "Presidential Address" to the Medical Society of Victoria in IMJA XII:2 (February 1907) pp.60-65. At the present time it seems possible to suggest that the Catholic Church again may have been forked, by Humanac Vitae and the practice of many of its members, into a position where a technological development (regularisation of the menstrual cycle, for example) would bring welcome release from a theological hook.

41. ibid pp.65-67

attack on abortion and prevention was not merely moralistic but nationalistic as well. He used both the crude and the refined birth rate for Victoria to show the diminution of its fertility since 1860 and drew a parallel with the situations preceding the collapse of Greece and Rome. The message of those empires was that "national sins beget national woes" and the message could apply to Australia also.⁴² O'Sullivan said that the remedy for the 'evils' of birth control lay chiefly in education and partly in legislation. Legislative control should be possible over advertisements for abortifacients or by abortionists but the more substantial remedy lay in the educative functions of the clergy and the professions. The clergy should be able to reprove the selfishness which motivated the practice and instruct their people regarding its moral error. The medical profession could ensure that the young man knew the "highly probably penalty to be paid by his own body" if he indulged in sexual irregularities, and that the young woman was aware of the "unnatural state produced by cohabitation coupled with the prevention of conception".⁴³

Most of the opinions reviewed so far in this chapter were also given expression (less extensively) by other doctors. Barrett may have been temperamentally more inclined than most to re-examine the 'conventional wisdom' about population questions and Worrall linked his view on population more closely than was common to a particular view of society, but only Paterson was without supporters in the profession.⁴⁴ The social Darwinism of Balls-Headley, the statistical awareness of Barrett and the moral attitude of O'Sullivan were all echoed, albeit muted or with mutations, by others. The best way to demonstrate the point is to review the opinions expressed, chiefly in the medical journals and before the Birth Rate Commission, on several topics including general population questions, population statistics, abortion and prevention of conception, their

42. ibid p.68f.

43. ibid pp.70-74

44. I am indebted to Sir Edward Ford, the Australian medical bibliographer, for the opinion that Paterson's "public advocacy of hypnotism, which he used in obstetrics and minor surgery, brought him into professional conflict. This was intensified by his extremely free publications and lectures on the sexual functions, which were many years before their time." It is significant that, although it was almost the automatic practice for Australian works to be reviewed in the local medical journals, neither Sir Edward nor the present writer has been able to find any notice of Paterson's Physical Health of Women or The Male Generative Function.

causes and side-effects, infant mortality, and remedies proposed for the decline of fertility. In addition it is worthwhile examining the state of doctors' knowledge and education in subjects related to reproduction.

In common with most other groups in the Australian community, doctors said less about the size and growth of the country's population during the 1890s than they had before 1890 and after about 1898. We have already seen that Balls-Headley based his early article about Victorian matrimony on such vital data of the colony as were available to him. In 1882 Dr James Jamieson, lecturer on obstetrics and diseases of women and children at Melbourne University, attempted to extend the range of information by using the outpatient records of Melbourne Hospital as the basis for a study on conditions of childbirth. He showed that pregnancy wastage and maternal mortality were both adversely affecting the natural increase of Victoria's population, compared with other countries. The reproductive histories of 500 women, "all married, who had been pregnant once or oftener", revealed a ratio of abortive to natural terminations of labour of 18.1 per cent, a figure much higher than that reported in the European literature. In addition 52 per cent of the women had at least one abortive pregnancy.⁴⁵ Maternal mortality, like miscarriage, was shown to have been "consistently greater especially of late years" than it had been overseas. Jamieson thought the higher figure may have been partly, but certainly not entirely, due to better registration procedures in Melbourne. He also felt that most methods of calculating infant mortality erred in selecting their numerator and denominator from different universes, thus giving results of limited value, particularly in non-census years: he therefore proposed linking infant deaths to births in the same year, a technique which did not become common until many years later.⁴⁶

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45. James Jamieson: Contributions to the Vital Statistics of Australia (L. Bruck Sydney 1882) p.1f. The pamphlet was reprinted from AMG I:8 (May 1882) p.103. Jamieson's 500 women reported 3,113 pregnancies, 2,547 of them successful - i.e. 5 births per woman.
46. "Contributions..." pp.12 (on maternal mortality) and 19ff (on infant mortality). As with McLean's use of fertility standardisation, so with Jamieson's suggestion about infant mortality, it is difficult to establish the originality of the technique. There is obviously a golden opportunity for someone with five clear years to write an intellectual history of demographic technique. Jamieson also used his statistics of maternal mortality to show that puerperal fever was probably contagious - a theory that was still being debated at the time.

Jamieson made one of the few original attempts by an Australian doctor to manipulate population statistics in 1894, when he attempted a quantitative estimate of the decline in Melbourne's population during the preceding two years. Multiplication of the 1894 numbers by the 1891 birth rate gave him an estimate of 386,700 as the population of Melbourne in 1894.⁴⁷ The figure is questionable, being based on an indirect calculation with a multiplier of doubtful validity, and there is more value, in the present context, in mentioning the inferences he drew from his figures on vital events. He felt that a recent large reduction in the number of marriages might partially, but by no means entirely, account for the diminution in the number of births. He generalized that "in times of severe depression it is quite to be expected that there should be some lowering of the birth-rate, not of course very quickly produced and mainly by the previous production of a lowered marriage rate." He rejected the idea of a correlation between death rate and depression and doubted whether a depression such as Victoria was then experiencing had any direct influence on public health. As a paediatrician he also noted what many people ignored, the "distinct effect" of a reduction in the number of births lessening the death rate through a contraction of infant mortality.⁴⁸

Jamieson's papers were notable for their scientific detachment, a quality rare enough among writers in his profession where population questions were concerned, but his willingness to gather together the available facts and be content with straightforward explanations of their meaning was shared by Dr Thomas Borthwick, a Medical Officer of Health in Adelaide's eastern suburbs. Borthwick's booklet included sections on the size of South Australia's population and its distribution by age, sex, nationality, occupation and so on, as well as birth-, marriage- and, especially, death-rates. Contrary to the New South Wales statisticians, he did not regard recent declines of the birth rate as a fall from normal but as a variation from a rate that had "always been high". His explanation of the high rate that had prevailed and of its recent decline was, at least, reasonable:

47. Jamieson: "An attempt to estimate the population of Melbourne at the present time" in Royal Society of Victoria, Proceedings, VII (1895) p.174. [Paper read on 13 September 1894]

48. ibid p.176f.

The constant stream of young adult immigrants was doubtless the chief factor in causing the high birth-rate, and the decrease in recent years is in great part the result of an exodus of young adult population to the Barrier silver fields... and probably in part to the period of depression through which the colony has been passing. 49

Jamieson, Borthwick and Balls-Headley appear to have been the only doctors to comment on the demographic events of the 'nineties, at least until 1898. The medical journals emanating from Sydney and Melbourne published estimates of vital rates occasionally as they were prepared by the government statisticians, but no interpretation was offered until November 1898 when the Sydney journal published a short editorial on "The Decreased Birth-rate in New South Wales".⁵⁰ Figures were quoted from Coghlan's Vital Statistics for 1897 which showed a decline of the birth rate of 9 per 1,000 in the nine years to that date. The editor then expressed his concern at the decline, nominated some causes and suggested a remedy. The decline was described as alarming and, unless arrested, a portent of "a weak and degenerate country." The causes were divided into the comprehensible and the contemptible. On the one hand it was allowed that "Many young men who were in good positions a few years ago have now insufficient means to allow them to take on the responsibilities of matrimony." On the other hand it was asserted that there was "a growing disinclination on the part of young married women to become mothers...they do not wish to be troubled with children, and they either make use of artificial checks to conception or call in the aid of the abortionist." Both themes were to be heard often, and with few variations, during the next six years. The remedy proposed by the Gazette was simple. The Legislature must act. "Abortion must be put down, indecent advertisements must be suppressed, quack literature must be prevented from falling into the hands of our young people."

Apart from printing Barrett's address, which made a fairly lengthy attempt to deal with local vital data, the Melbourne based Intercolonial Medical Journal displayed no similar concern about Australia's demographic condition. It appears that the impact of decline was felt either later or more severely in New South Wales

49. Thomas Borthwick: A Contribution to the Demography of South Australia [Being the thesis presented to the University of Edinburgh for the Degree of M.D.] (Bailliere, Tindall and Cox London 1891) p.34.

50. Editorial on "The Decreased Birth-rate in New South Wales" in AMG XVII:11 (November 1898) p.502f.

than in Victoria. Perhaps one might suggest (not too seriously) that the Victorians saw little profit in the penning of agitated editorials. Certainly the Sydney essay might have been so viewed for within seven months further concern was expressed and the dire prophecy made that, in the event of continued decline, New South Wales would "eventually emulate France in its weakened, nerveless people."⁵¹

When publication of Coghlan's second "Essay" raised the decline of the birth rate to a public issue in 1903 the Gazette carried a further, longer editorial on the topic. The form was similar to that of 1898, beginning with an expression of concern and ending with a call for action. On this occasion, however, there was more sympathy towards the motives for family limitation, more stress on the side-effects of the practice and a change in the remedy proposed. Dealing with the motives for limitation the Gazette recognized "The decline in average income, the increased cost of living, [and] the difficulty in securing efficient domestic service" as being "all factors which render it increasingly difficult to rear and maintain large families..." As we shall shortly see the journal went further than many of its readers in allowing it to be "an open question whether it is not better for a married couple to have two or three children whom they feel they can feed well and maintain in good health than to have seven or eight children whom they are quite unable to properly feed and clothe..." It is not clear how the careful parents were expected to achieve the accepted end for the editor said that "all kinds of artificial methods of preventing pregnancy" reacted on the users' "moral and physical health" and he hoped that the profession would help educate public opinion accordingly.⁵²

After the flurry surrounding the Birth Rate Commission medical statements of a demographic nature again became rare. The Gazette speculated on the relationship between an improvement of vital rates in 1905 and the publicity the Commission had received while a 1907 note on a recent rise in the Sydney birth rate was cautious in tone, suggesting that no one should be surprised if threatened drought, together with the tariff on foodstuffs, should bring a rising cost of living and a falling rate of fertility.⁵³ 1907 also brought evidence that at least one doctor recognized the

51. ibid June 1899, p.255-6.

52. ibid XXII:8 (August 1903) p.360f.

53. ibid XXVI:11 (November 1907) p.587f.

necessity of looking first for demographic explanations of demographic phenomena. In a letter to the Intercolonial Medical Journal a Melbourne doctor, assuming the contraceptive effect of lactation, suggested that where breast feeding was common - as in Australia - a fall in infant mortality would prolong the average span of lactation and cause a decline in the frequency of conception. "Thus," he said, "natural causes tend to bring about decline in the number of births, as well as unnatural ones."⁵⁴

While there may have been few members of the medical profession willing to comment in general terms on the progress of Australia's population or able to investigate the relevant statistics, there was no shortage of doctors ready to offer an opinion about the methods by which births were being limited. Abortion, in particular, was widely mentioned and in their extremely unfavourable view of the practice the profession were more united than on any other demographic topic. Their opposition was not conservative reaction to a novel custom, for the procurement of abortion had been a matter of professional concern at least since a Select Committee of the New South Wales Legislative Council investigating the practice of medicine and surgery in the mid-eighties gathered considerable evidence (not all 'proved' in the legal sense) that abortion was widely procured by people on the fringe of the medical profession.⁵⁵ Part of the opposition to the practice may have been a function of the campaign by the 'professional' doctors to raise their status by excluding fringe practitioners but it also seems likely that the majority of doctors simply found abortion a distasteful or objectionable business. The presidential address to the New South Wales branch of the British Medical Association in 1898 included attacks on the Government for its failure to deal with newspaper advertisements "that most openly and unblushingly invite people to send for remedies which are 'certain to remove obstructions'" or with others that promise to "remove obstructions without medicine", and on the police for their failure to act against the numerous

54. Walter Summons: letter in IMJA XII:3 (March 1907) p.181. The clinical validity of Summon's statement is irrelevant: the important thing is that he realised the necessity of seeking answers from the same universe of discourse as his questions. Summons drew his supporting tables from Powys's article in Biometrika (see p.117 n.37, above).

55. NSW Legislative Council, Journal (1887-8) Vol XLIII Part IV, Report of a Select Committee on the Law Respecting the Practice of Medicine and Surgery.

abortionists "well known" to be operating in Sydney. Later in 1898 the Gazette again carried editorials alleging that abortion was widely sought - and achieved - in Sydney. These generalized claims were given some support throughout the latter part of the decade by fairly frequent reports, in clinical papers, of the results of abortion coming to the notice of doctors.⁵⁶

The most concentrated body of evidence and opinion about abortion was that gathered by the Birth Rate Commission. Several of the doctors questioned by the Commissioners said that they had been asked themselves to induce abortion and that they believed induction was common. Just how common they did not make clear, and the few who gave figures were far from agreement. Dr Barrington estimated that he had come across the after-effects of abortion in about 150 hospital cases during a 5-year span; Dr M'Kay estimated 300 cases in 6 years and, at another point, suggested the level was 400 per annum at "all the hospitals in Sydney". It must be remembered, of course, that the numbers quoted relate to hospital cases or abortions that had 'gone wrong' and are only a partial reflection of the number of abortions being procured. Dr Arthur reported that the volume of requests had been constant for the preceding twelve years but Dr Worrall claimed abortion was increasing and Dr George Armstrong said it was less common than at the end of the 'nineties.⁵⁷ While doctors agreed that abortion was a factor in the limitation of families they did not agree in their estimates of its incidence by social class. Dr Barrington claimed that abortion was less usual among the labouring classes than among the wealthy and Dr M'Kay said it was most commonly sought by the white collar class. The view that the poorer classes were the main users of abortion was held by the Government Medical Officer (Dr Taylor), whose experience was amongst people seeking admission to public hospitals; Dr Skirving; Dr Harris, who had lengthy experience at Newcastle; and Dr Cooley, who practised among unemployed or underpaid factory workers

56. See C.P.B. Clubbe: "Presidential Address" in AMG XVII:4 (April 1898) p.141 and editorials in ibid XVII:10 (October 1898) p.454 and XVII:11 (November 1898) p.503. For two among the many clinical reports see W. Cavenagh-Mainwaring: "Rupture of the Vaginal Wall" in ibid XIX:4 (April 1900) p.146f and R.H. Fetherston: "An Unusual Case of Extra-Uterine Foetation" in IMJA I:9 (September 1896) p.540f.

57. DBR Qq.3382 (Barrington), 3326 and 3332 (M'Kay). Cf. Qq.5264 (Dr S. Jamieson) on ratio of revealed to procured abortion, 5126f (Murray Oram) and 5256 (Jamieson) on requests for abortion. Also Qq.5249 (Arthur), and 2939 (Worrall) and 3240-58 (Armstrong).

in the industrial suburb of Botany.⁵⁸ There is obviously a problem of definition here, since those whom M'Kay, say, labelled "white collar" may have seemed poor to Barrington and wealthy to Taylor. Nevertheless the evidence of Barrington seems hearsay while Taylor and, especially, Cooley and Harris were aware of the bias due to their practice and it may be concluded that induced miscarriage as a means of family limitation found greatest acceptance among the less well-to-do.

Doctors attacked prevention of conception with less vehemence than they vented on abortion, although the majority were far from approving of preventives. J.M. Creed, whose experience as Chairman of the Select Committee on the practice of medicine should have given him a reliable idea of the matter, told the Royal Commission that the practice had been "growing up within the last thirty years." No one denied this assertion and other doctors claimed that prevention had been going on throughout the fifteen or twenty years of their experience in New South Wales. Their evidence was almost unanimous in depicting the attitude of their patients toward prevention as a-moral, not im-moral and there was general agreement that the practice was spreading. This view was taken by the Catholic, G.L. Mullins; by M'Kay, who thought coitus interruptus was the predominant technique; by Scot Skirving, who bracketed douching and the use of 'french letters' with coitus interruptus; by Dr Harris, who said the douche and home-made pessaries were replacing prolonged lactation as a means of limitation; and by Murray Oram, who said that "Quinine pessaries were not; but sulphate of zinc, as an injection, was used" when he commenced practice, adding that "medicinal preventives" were now in use to a considerable extent.⁵⁹ There was considerable evidence of a class differential in the use of preventives. Dr. S.H. MacCulloch did say that the practice was in the process of spreading to the lower class but only Watson-Munro and Dr Grace Russell placed much stress on working-class prevention: their evidence was probably biased, however, by the concentration of their professional work among lower class patients. Barrington said a "middle" class, earning £300 to £600 per year, were the main users and Dr Harris, who

58. *ibid* Qq.3401-03 (Barrington); 3324f, 3328f (M'Kay); 3654-70 (Taylor); 3183-85 (Skirving); 3856f (Harris) and 3497-3508 and 3513-19 (Cooley).

59. *ibid* Qq.4226-31 (Creed); 2334-36 (Lane Mullins); 3318 (M'Kay); 3160 (Skirving); 3908ff and 3917-21 (Harris) and 5123 (Oram). Creed was also editor of the Australasian Medical Gazette from 1882-1892.

appears to have had a varied practice in Newcastle, reported that prevention was least common in the rural and mining population and most common in the highly educated among his patients.⁶⁰

Few doctors regarded propaganda about birth control as a major factor in its spread, although that might have been the first suggestion of anyone looking for a simple explanation of declining births. Dr Thring, who was not prepared to let the Commissioners press him into stereotyped answers, thought birth control propaganda and the advertising of preventives had greatly familiarised the general public with the fact that family size could be controlled. Worrall, who was at least as independent as Thring, took the position that propaganda was incidental to, not instrumental in, "the determination to limit the family." Neither Thring nor Worrall nor, indeed, any other of the doctors indicated that he had more than a superficial acquaintance with the neo-Malthusian movement except as highlighted by the Bradlaugh-Besant and Collins trials.⁶¹ More of the doctors were acquainted with the fears and pains of parturition and discussed their role as deterrents to child-bearing. Oram, with a turn of phrase one presumes would not have been used at the bedside, said "a woman's mind is always on her pelvis now" but he did not think the trials of pregnancy a valid reason for avoiding it. His opinion was echoed, more or less forcefully by Scot Skirving, who placed dislike of parturition in his category of less excusable motives for prevention, and Barrington who labelled the aversion as "cowardice". George Armstrong and Sir James Graham both saw that a question about changes due to obstetrics required an explanation dealing with changes in obstetrics - but then gave opposing answers. Graham said that the Australian woman experienced considerable risk in labour, compared with the British woman, but Armstrong held that modern obstetric practice had removed the need to fear parturition. R.H. Marten, speaking a little earlier in Adelaide, had it both ways:

60. ibid Qq.2667-2677 (Watson-Munro); 3482 (Russell); 2483-85 (MacCulloch); 3400 (Barrington); 3856f and 3883-88 (Harris).

Harris' own evidence of the extent of his practice is given some confirmation by obituary reference (which seems more than ritual) to his "large and extra-ordinarily successful practice." MJA (May 1923) p.540. He also had a largish family, being survived by 5 sons and 4 daughters!

61. DBR Qq.3065 (Thring), 2965 (Worrall). The Collins trial in NSW is discussed at p. 126, above. Glass: Population Policies... p.56, while more positive than Worrall, concludes that in England the link between birth control propaganda and practice was an in-direct one.

"with regard to midwifery", Marten said, "my impression is that on the extremely hot days the poor women become exhausted sooner, but that the confinements are easier. This may be due to the relaxation from the heat."⁶² On balance it can be said that while a number of doctors thought fear of parturition was real, few thought it justified. Fewer still allowed it a reasonable motive for refraining from procreation.

A theory about the declining birth rate on whose merits doctors differed greatly and which they, like other groups in the community, discussed at length was that dealing with people's response to current economic circumstances and estimates of the economic future. Nearly all doctors took it for granted that economic conditions were straitened about the time of the Birth Rate Commission. The debate between them centred on the questions whether straitened conditions amounted to economic hardship and whether economic hardship justified a married couple in limiting the size of their family. Those who did not consider current circumstances a sufficient reason to limit the family did not even argue the hardship issue since they regarded the plea of impecuniosity as an attempt to excuse selfishness. Lane Mullins, for example, lumped together the claim that children were too expensive and "the desire not to be burdened with children", saying of people who made the claim, "they probably want the money for other purposes". Oram also said that "in the majority of cases" he was not satisfied by people who claimed an inability to provide for children and he accepted the suggestion that the 'real' reason was a desire for easier living.⁶³

A much larger group of doctors gave qualified acceptance to the plea of necessity and made some concession to people who limited their families with an eye to future economic and social prospects. Sample attitudes included those of George Armstrong, who rejected claims by the upper class that they could not afford more children but said of men earning £2 per week "it must take them all their time to get along if they have more than two or three children"; of Worrall, sympathetic to those lacking either money for children or alternative pleasures and Creed, who took it for granted that limited means were a bar to family expansion; of

62. DBR Qq.5132, 5136 (Oram); 3166 (Skirving); 3394 (Barrington); 3558 (Graham) and 3279f (Armstrong). Cf. R.H. Marten: The Effects of Migration from the Northern to the Southern Hemisphere (Scrymgeour Adelaide 1900), p.17.

63. DBR Qq.2336-9 (Mullins) and 5133ff (Oram).

M'Kay who allowed that people might aim for a standard of living above the minimum, Scot Skirving who thought the restriction of the family to a size consonant with proper education was at least "excusable", and Watson-Munro who was prepared to accept the lack of employment opportunities for boys as a reason for restricting their number.⁶⁴ Perhaps it is not surprising that the status oriented motivations mentioned in the previous sentence gained sympathy from the doctors, whose own social position was achieved and maintained by following just those kinds of motivation.

The Birth Rate Commission and its report of doctors' evidence on the side effects of prevention would provide a well supported case for any critic wishing to show that medical training is no guarantee of ability to conduct a scientific argument. Sir James Graham and E.T. Thring both refused to generalize about the physiological or psychological effects of preventive practices, but their caution was not matched by their colleagues, according to whom preventive practices were the source of almost every ill to which mind and body can be heir. Watson-Munro, for example, blamed preventives in general for "septic disease of the uterus and Fallopian tubes and other uterine appendages" together with "backache and pains about the pelvis"; from the use of the douche came "irritations and congestions and disturbances of the circulation in the organs," not to mention "the introduction of microbes". Watson-Munro was unique only in the range of side-effects he blamed on prevention. Nearly every ill he listed was mentioned by others and there were even some additions to his catalogue. To take but two further instances, coitus interruptus was said by Skirving to produce neuroticism and "functional diseases of the nervous system", while Worrall claimed that the same practice was "liable to be followed by growths of the womb from chronic congestion".⁶⁵ Opinions like these being common among doctors, it seems fair to conclude that, even if they had some sympathy with the motives for prevention, their prescription of preventives can not have been a factor of any importance in the decline of the birth rate.

64. *ibid* Qq.3274ff (Armstrong); 3014-16 (Worrall); 4238 (Creed); 3354-58 (M'Kay); 3170f (Scot Skirving) and 2703f (Watson-Munro).

65. *ibid*, Qq.3585 (Graham); 3076f (Thring); 2687-2700 (Watson-Munro); 3155ff (Skirving); 2934 (Worrall). Dr C.W. Morgan supported Skirving on the effects of withdrawal, saying "I have more than once seen that cause a woman to become insane" [Q.1076]. Australian doctors were not alone in ascribing such a catalogue of ills to contraceptive practices. John Peel: "Contraception and the Medical Profession" in *Population Studies* XVIII:2 (November 1964) p.136 describes a similar outlook among British doctors in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Although some doctors were interested in the social aspects of a declining birth rate, the more substantial concern of their profession was with the 'mechanics' of birth or its restriction. It is not surprising, therefore, that they paid less attention to remedies for the decline than to problems of prevention, pregnancy and parturition or that their prescriptions for recovery were few. Regarding the improvement of the birth rate by a policy of land settlement, which was a widely-approved panacea, Dr Harris made the sensible observation that it would only work if settlers were innocent of contraceptive knowledge before they left for their land. Other doctors gave brief answers to the Commission indicative of less thought and more confidence in the advantage the farmer would gain from cheap family labour but Harris thought that "once they contract bad habits the promise of assistance from a large family will hardly overcome the disinclination they have to bear children". Dr Creed was sure that tax concessions or baby bonuses proportionate to family size would bring an end to the decline but few shared his politician's optimism about a legislative solution. Even Scot Skirving did not see how the law could ever touch a thing "so absolutely simple, secret, and generally sure" as the evasion of child bearing, and disenchantment with legislative remedies was nicely illustrated by the Australasian Medical Gazette. In 1898 the Gazette said the remedy for limitation of families lay in legislative control of abortion, indecent advertising and quack literature. In 1904, however, the Editor agreed with Skirving that legislation would not arrest the decline since prevention would be achieved even if preventives were banned, and suppression of abortionists would be met with self-induction. His answer was to make large families fashionable.⁶⁶

The medical profession may not have been a fountain of effective ideas about arresting the decline of the birth rate but they did have something to say about offsetting the decline by improving infant welfare. Concern at the high rate of infant mortality was expressed even before the profession was aware of a

66. AMG XVII:11 (November 1898) p.503 and XXIII:3 (March 1904) p.120. Insofar as he suggested any method for achieving the large family fashion it seems to have been by making small families unfashionable! Harris's comments are found at DBR Qq.3891, 3903 and Creed's at ibid Q.4238. It is doubtful whether Creed's suggestion was very realistic: as J.W. Barrett had already pointed out ["Presidential Address" (1901) p.26], economic assistance was unlikely to change the mind of a parent set on family limitation. Glass: Population Policies... Chapters II and III, has since gathered substantial evidence to support Barrett's generalisation. Cf. Hope T. Eldridge: Population Policies: A Survey of Recent Developments (International Union for the Scientific Study of Population Washington 1954) Chapter 2.

decline in the birth rate: in an address in 1880 Dr S.J. Magarey said he was troubled by the incidence of fatal diseases of infancy and childhood, which he blamed on the intemperance of parents and the hot, dry climate.⁶⁷ Other doctors placed more stress on infant feeding than on parental temperance but Magarey's comment on the climate was repeated by others. Dr P.E. Muskett, whose manual on the Feeding and Management of Australian Infants went through at least six editions between 1888 and 1903, linked the semi-tropical climate with rapid urbanization as one of the "two prominent conditions" influencing infant health. Muskett received a favourable notice from the Gazette for the 1900 edition of his manual, in which he listed government assisted publicity on child care and infant feeding, extension of the mountain sanatorium system, improved milk supply, more press coverage of vital statistics and the establishment of foundling hospitals (to curb infanticide among illegitimates) as measures necessary for child conservation. When Muskett's "Appeal" for the regulation of baby-farming is also taken into account it can be seen that he raised nearly all the issues of child conservation that were discussed by the medical profession in Australia.⁶⁸ The call for a better milk supply was heard from the Australian Health Society in 1896 and, at considerable length, in the proceedings of the Birth Rate Commission; in 1897 the President of the Melbourne Medical Society advocated the establishment of a foundling hospital and that call, too, was repeated at and by the Commission; better vital registrations were sought by Mullins in 1892 and 1903.⁶⁹ It is possible that concern about infant feeding was at the back of some doctors' opposition to preventives. If preventives were reducing reliance on the - alleged - contraceptive effects of prolonged lactation, then an incidental result could have

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67. S.J. Magarey: Infant Mortality and the fatal diseases of infancy and childhood (Webb, Vardon & Pritchard Adelaide 1880) A Paper read at the Adelaide City Mission Hall, 1 July 1880". Magarey was Honorary Medical Officer to the Adelaide Children's Hospital. Speaking in midwinter at an institution having the professed aim of evangelising the "neglected classes", he might be said to have been preaching to the unconverted!
68. P.E. Muskett: The Feeding and Management of Australian Infants (Various editions, 1888-1903. Edition 5 W.C. Penfold & Co. Sydney n.d. [1900]), reviewed in AMG XIX:5 (May 1900) p.215, and Muskett: An Australian Appeal (Various publishers n.d. [1892])
69. Australian Health Society: Infant Feeding (Melbourne 1896); P.E. Bennie: "Presidential Address" to Melbourne Medical Society in IMJA, II:9 (September 1897) p.581; G. Lane Mullins: "The Registration of Still-births and the Protection of Infants" in Intercolonial Medical Congress of Australasia, Transactions III (1892) p.600f, cf DBR Qq.2315-2333.

been a swing away from breast-feeding and a rise in deaths due to infant diarrhoea or other accompaniments of careless artificial feeding.

One subject bearing on the welfare of infants but not pursued by Muskett was the state of domestic education. Watson-Munro, who linked the topic with the provision of better pre- and post-natal hospital and nursing services, said that "the future mothers, should be taught a little more about hygiene, domestic economy and dietetics in some way". He was supported by Dr Richard Arthur in a Gazette article, repeated before the Birth Rate Commission. In Arthur's opinion the solution of the infant mortality problem lay in

educating the persons...to whose ignorance of the feeding and hygiene of the young the appalling infant mortality is due... The organization for giving the needful instruction already exists in the public school system of the colony. There is no reason why all the elder girls who pass through the schools should not receive thorough instruction in the care and management of infants. 70

This chapter has dealt almost exclusively with evidence given by doctors on prevention, pregnancy, parturition and paediatrics. There are also two strands of evidence about doctors which are pertinent to this thesis, one dealing with the treatments they prescribed, the other with the education they received. In his history of female medicine Harvey Graham points out that gynaecology did not develop as a separate discipline until well into the nineteenth century. J.M. Duncan's Fecundity, Fertility and Sterility, "the first scientific work on these subjects in England", did not appear until 1868 and up to and beyond that date a variety of suggestions were being put forward as universal explanations for gynaecological disorders. One late suggestion was that "uterine displacements could explain everything. The result of this...belief was a whole series of minor operations and major mechanical devices".⁷¹ What was true of England was also true

70. Worrall's views are stated at DBR Q.2776 and Arthur's at ibid Q.5244, where he quoted from his own article in AMG XX:1 (January 1901) p.43f. Arthur's plea for a diminished death rate was part of an argument more common outside the medical profession than within it. The first premiss ran "...what with Russia, Germany and France becoming Pacific powers, and the yellow peril looming up again as a possibility of the future, a population sufficiently large to discount any thought of invasion is a vital necessity." Contraception can only be expected to increase as knowledge of its techniques becomes more widespread; legislative control of contraceptives would be illiberal; assisted immigration is out of favour; and baby bonuses don't work. The problem therefore becomes one of lowering the infant death rate.

71. Harvey Graham: Eternal Eve (Heinemann [Medical] London 1950) pp.490, 496f and 568.

of Australia where the heroic willingness of doctors to perform all manner of operations - ovariectomy, shortening of ovarian ligaments, resiting of the uterus, introduction of pessaries - was amply attested by their conference papers and journal articles.⁷² Two of the doctors' own anecdotes will illustrate the point. Concerning the 'minor operations' Dr Roger Cope, Honorary Assistant Surgeon at the Lewisham Hospital for Women and Children in Sydney, wrote "Now that the populace is crying out about the decrease in the birth rate in New South Wales, one necessarily turns one's thoughts to the uterus and its appendages, and asks a simple question - Why should this be?" He decided that causes included hysterical females focussing their mind on "the womb and its appendages" and excessive use of ovariectomy. "As an example of the terrible effect a diseased ovary has on the system," he continued, "I well remember a mother bringing her son to the outpatients department of one of our Sydney hospitals, saying the lad was very ill and she thought he should have his ovaries removed." As for the 'major mechanical devices', in 1902 Dr Ralph Worrall was pleased to report "'the passing' of the pessary" as a corrective for uterine displacements: illustrating the extent of its former use he recalled that at the 1889 Medical Congress "a gentleman was good enough to show me a large cabinet which he had had made solely for various kinds of pessaries."⁷³ It is an interesting speculation whether zealous medical practitioners might materially have lowered women's child-bearing capacity in the 1890s,

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72. See Intercolonial Medical Congress of Australasia, Transactions (1887-) passim (Gynaecological Section), especially I (1887) pp. 204ff, 214ff; II (1889) p.629; III (1892) p.543. Cf. Felix Meyer: "President's Address" in AMG XIX:1 (January 1895) p.26; B.S. Jackson, letter on "Over-operating in Gynaecological practice" in IMJA I:2 (February 1896) p.123f; Marten: op cit p.17f; S.H. MacCulloch in DBR Qq.2509-2515 and Skirving in ibid Q.3173. Even Balls-Headley condemned the pessary as a device calculated to "frequently cause or exaggerate disease" - see his chapter in T.C. Allbutt & W.S. Playfair: A System of Gynaecology (Macmillan London 1896) p.148.
73. H. Roger Copes: "Preventive treatment in diseases of women" in AMG XIX:1 (January 1900) p.30f, and Ralph Worrall: "The Progress of Gynaecology since the First Interstate Medical Congress..." in Australasian Medical Congress, Transactions VI (1902) p.367.

as they were alleged to have done elsewhere.⁷⁴ It is just as likely that women who were being taught by their gynaecologists that there was no harm in introducing pessaries into the vagina for the treatment of 'uterine displacement' and other ills might have begun to think about the use of soluble pessaries for other, preventive, purposes.

If the doctors who had established their reputations were not equipped to help their patients make rational assessments of family planning questions, no more help would have been available from the young doctors who trained and began to practice between 1890 and 1915. According to lists of prescribed texts in the Adelaide University Calendar only ten books were set between 1890 and 1910 for the courses on obstetrics, gynaecology and paediatrics. Examination of copies of the six titles still available reveals only one reference related to the limitation of offspring: in a passage on "Criminal Abortion" there is a statement that "Medical men are sometimes requested by married women to induce abortion because pregnancy is inconvenient or motherhood expensive; but for reasons so inadequate as this, the operation should not be performed."⁷⁵ The situation was hardly better at the medical school of Melbourne University. One of the texts set there, but not in Adelaide, was Balls-Headley's on The Evolution of the Diseases of Women. As we have seen, both the book and its author were distinctive enough for the possibility to exist that students were stimulated to think about population questions. Melbourne students should have been provoked also by the lectures of James Jamieson,

74. See Joseph J. Spengler: "Notes on Abortion, Birth Control, and Medical and Sociological Interpretations of the Decline of the Birth Rate in Nineteenth Century America" in Marriage Hygiene II (1935-36) p.168 n.45:

In a letter to Henry Holden of London, England, February 21, 1910, Dr F.L. Hoffman [statistician of the Prudential Assurance Company and a correspondent with T.A. Coghlan] expressed the opinion that "a considerable proportion of ovarian operations and other operations are for the direct object of preventing child birth and that the practice is enormously on the increase to prevent conception by every possible method, criminal or otherwise." Holden had previously expressed the opinion that "over ten millions of ovariectomies" had been carried out in white countries since the introduction of pelvic and abdominal surgery fifty years ago," that over two millions had been performed in France, and that the decline of the American birth rate was in part attributable to the physiological and pathological sterility of modern woman...

75. T.W. Eden: A Manual of Midwifery (J & A Churchill London 1908), p.476. The other textbooks examined were Playfair: Science and Practice of Midwifery; Galabin: Student's Guide to the Diseases of Women; Hart and Barbour: A Manual of Gynaecology; Dakin: Handbook of Midwifery and Dudley: Diseases of Women.

with his hallmark of detached scientific observation, but it is clear that the obstetrics and gynaecology lectures of 1903 and 1904 were adding nothing to the meagre information supplied by the text books. A surviving, extensive, manuscript record of lectures for those two years is entirely devoid of references to problems of population and its procreation.⁷⁶ The lecturer of 1903, G. Rothwell Adam, himself summed up the situation at the end of the decade, complaining that "obstetrics, and to some extent gynaecology too, has occupied the unenviable position of a Cinderella in the medical course."

surely a branch of medical study like obstetrics, dealing, as it undoubtedly does, with events not only of individual interest, but of national welfare, is worthy of more consideration at the hands of medical educational authorities than it now receives.

Better recognition of obstetrics and gynaecology would remove the problem that

the difficulties of giving adequate instruction in gynaecology to students are very great; in fact, so surrounded is the practical teaching of gynaecology with difficulties...that it is doubtful if it is wise to attempt more than that of an elementary type. 77

Medical students were given no formal teaching about family limitation during our period and the evidence makes it clear that leading doctors whose views were publicised are unlikely to have prescribed preventives. There is almost no evidence of 'ordinary' doctors' opinions about the peopling of Australia or their attitude to preventive practices. (Only four of the twenty-seven doctors interviewed by the Birth Rate Commission were

76. Mary C. De Garis: MS notes of lectures by Dr Rothwell Adam on Obstetrics and Diseases of Women in Fourth Year Medicine Course at Melbourne University, 1st and 2nd terms 1903. [And 1st term, 1904] (Two volumes held in the Library of the Australian Medical Association, Victorian Branch.) A table of teachers of obstetrics and gynaecology at Melbourne University, with the dates of their tenure, is provided by Forster: *op cit* pp.109, 166. Jamieson was Lecturer in Obstetric Medicine and Diseases of Women and Children from 1879 until 1888 (when he became Professor of Medicine) and was succeeded by Balls-Headley (1888-1900) G.R. Adam held the successive posts of Lecturer in Obstetrics and Diseases of Women (1900-1906) and Lecturer in Obstetrics and Gynaecology (1906-1914).

77. G. Rothwell Adam: "Presidential Address" to the Section of Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Australasian Medical Congress, Transactions IX (1911) pp.325, 327.

general practitioners). The general membership of the British Medical Association in Victoria did defend one of their number whom the Branch executive tried to expel for his involvement in a contraceptive syndicate but this is not conclusive evidence of opinion in the profession at large.⁷⁸ Evidence from two recent overseas surveys suggests that doctors are still rather reticent about offering contraceptive information to clients so we may, perhaps, assume that a similar attitude was common at the beginning of this century.⁷⁹ While the judgement must be based only upon opinions expressed by leaders of the profession, there seems little doubt that, saving exceptions like Barrett and Jamieson, doctors did little either within their profession or outside it to foster an understanding of the changes that were taking place in Australian fertility patterns and reproductive practice. In addition the case of Paterson suggests that the open discussion of the physiology of conception (and its avoidance), and the recommendation of simple mechanical techniques of contraception for which the materials were readily available, was contrary to the professional desire to preserve the occult mysteries of medical art. The result was that doctors did nothing deliberately to contribute to the democratisation of birth control knowledge which was changing family patterns all around them.

78. See the case of Dr H.M. O'Hara in AMG (April-October 1900) passim. Only one-third of Victorian doctors were members of the branch and the reports suggest that the case may have been, at least in part, an occasion for settling some intra-Branch personal scores.

79. Mary J. Cornish et al.: Doctors and Family Planning (National Committee on Maternal Health New York 1963) found wide variations in doctors' willingness to proffer family planning information. Ann Cartwright: "England and Wales: General Practitioners and Family Planning" in Studies in Family Planning (The Population Council New York June 1968) p.15 found that "Less than a quarter [of the GPs in her sample] would raise the questions of family planning with a married woman with three children and no social or health problems, or a woman just getting married."

CHAPTER VI

Religious Opinion

In Christian thought sexuality has always occupied a precarious place on the border of reason, making it difficult for Christians to accept a naturalistic estimate of sexual behaviour and its results.¹ The difficulty was undiminished in Australia between 1890 and 1911, when spokesmen of all the major denominations showed a remarkable degree of uniformity in their reaction to evident changes in the results of marital coitus. This chapter will therefore begin with a description of the chorus of clerical comment, before isolating the emphases of the various denominations.

Seven of the eight clergymen who gave evidence to the Birth Rate Commission had been born and received their education in the British Isles. They may not have reflected precisely the British-ness of the ministry as a whole but, in the '90s at least, the opinions of Australian clergymen were predominantly of overseas formation. Excellent examples can be found in the church papers, which paid as much attention as the secular press of the day did to news from 'Home', and in the establishment of Central Missions in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide by men who, through reading and personal experience, were greatly influenced by similar institutions in England.² The English influence on Australian churchmen was probably less in the field of theological developments than in the realm of social concern. The Forward Movement in church work was fairly widely accepted in Australia by the end of the 1890s but the condition of Australian theology was more akin to that of England in the 1880s: "It had not really recovered from its negative and panic-stricken reaction to Darwinism and Essays and Reviews", let alone accommodated Lux Mundi!³ Even this statement needs a qualification for, just as there were some up-to-date apologists,

1. See D. Sherwin Bailey: The Man-Woman Relation in Christian Thought (Longmans London 1959); J.T. Noonan: Contraception (Harvard University Press 1965) for a discussion from the Catholic viewpoint; Richard M. Fagley: The Population Explosion and Christian Responsibility (OUP New York 1960), Chs. IX-XIV, for a discussion from the Protestant tradition.

2. The English contribution to the Sydney and Adelaide Central Missions is discussed in Hicks: op cit Chapter I. The inspiration drawn by the New South Wales Anglican Congress of 1889 from the Lambeth Conference of 1888 is noted by J.D. Bollen: "The Protestant Churches and the Social Reform Movement in New South Wales, 1890-1910" (PhD thesis University of Sydney 1965) p.82.

3. The 'low ebb' of English theology is so described by A.R. Vidler: The Church in an Age of Revolution (Penguin Books Harmondsworth 1961) p.190. The term "Forward Movement" was being used in England and Australia by 1900 as a talisman for almost any new Protestant venture but it originally applied to the thought of men like Hugh Price Hughes, John Scott Lidgett and Thomas Champness, who were convinced that Methodism must both meet the demands of an industrial environment and reassert the evangelicism of the Wesleys.

so there were still ministers who had not begun to move from an evangelical insistence on individual regeneration towards an interest in social reform.⁴

During much of the nineteenth century there were Australian clergymen equipped and ready to follow the example of the Reverend Thomas Malthus by interesting themselves in matters of political economy. At mid-century principles of political economy were receiving wide pulpit publicity and "clergymen were leaders among the propagandists"; in the late 'eighties there were men like the Congregationalist, Thomas Roseby, who could claim familiarity with the writings of Marx, Lassalle and the Georgeites.⁵ Another field, of some importance to this study, in which clergymen showed interest was evolutionary and social evolutionary theory. A number of leaders of most South Australian denominations are said to have had some knowledge of Darwin's and Spencer's work and tried to make an assessment of it; a paper read by Roseby to a Sydney audience in 1895 indicated that he had given fairly thorough attention to Spencer; and by 1901 the Rev John Meiklejohn of Melbourne evidently thought his audience would understand the reference when he dropped the name of Benjamin Kidd into his Moderator's Address for that year.⁶ Against these signs of intellectual vitality among the clergy, it has to be noted that, by one of the few tests available, their participation in secular disciplines declined throughout our period.⁷ Thus the development of a remarkable demographic situation after 1900 found a dearth of clergymen equipped to utter more than moralisms and generalisations of doubtful sociological validity.

In 1888 the Rev H.T. Burgess, a South Australian Methodist, offered one assessment of Australia's population outlook which made a

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4. Apologists in Australia are discussed in W.W. Phillips: "Christianity and its Defence in New South Wales, c.1880 to 1890" (PhD thesis ANU 1969) Chapter 4.
 5. Goodwin: op cit p.607 on the propagandists; Phillips: op cit p.265 on Roseby.
 6. See Jillian I. Roe: "The Impact of Darwinism in South Australia in the Latter Half of the Nineteenth Century" (BA thesis University of Adelaide 1962), Chapter II; Thomas Roseby: "Is there any Social Question?" in Australian Economist IV:12 (23 February 1895) p.463ff; Presbyterian Church of Australia, General Assembly: Minutes (1901) p.21.
 7. At a time when 'science' was a carry-all term for nearly every academic discipline, clerical membership of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science fell from 4 per cent of the total membership in 1891 to 2.8 per cent in 1900 and only 1.8 per cent in 1911. The change was not due to an increase in the total membership.

show of coherent argument even if it was highly optimistic. He declared that "the special capabilities of Australia, and inherent qualities of Australians" included a sufficient territory for a large population, climatic conditions favourable to a hardy race and "rapidity of numerical growth, ensuring the strength of numbers."⁸ In view of the fact that three-fifths of Australia lies within the temperate zone, he argued,

If it be true that dwelling in a temperate climate tends to the improvement of the race, the ascendancy of Australians over all other people in their own part of the world seems assured...as also is their ability to manfully hold their own against all comers.⁹

He indicated at least a general awareness of current sociological views when he went on to say

Other things being equal the race that increases its numbers more rapidly than others must win in the constant competition of nations, and incessant struggle for existence...The law of the survival of the fittest operates in this department as elsewhere. With us 'other things' are more than equal, and hence the favourable aspect Australia presents in regard to numbers becomes a factor of the highest importance in the calculation of probabilities.¹⁰

The last sentence may sound like the characteristic 'puffing' of a prize essayist but Burgess had made some attempt to justify his claim by communicating with H.H. Hayter, the Government Statistician for Victoria. On Hayter's estimate of a forty-two per cent decennial growth rate, the continuance of which Burgess thought it "not unreasonable to expect", Australia could look forward to a population in excess of thirty million by 1950. The strongest support for this prophecy lay in the fact that Australia had a "peculiarly rapid natural increase" ensuring that "it must of necessity outstrip, and eventually overtake, older, and at present more populous nations", and in the fact that Australian colonists were "the pick of the most energetic and superior races of mankind" ensuring that "their descendants may be expected to be in general healthy and strong."¹¹

8. H.T. Burgess: "The Future Position of Australia Among the Nations", *The Year Book of Australia Ltd., Prize Essay for 1888* published in the commercial *Year Book of New South Wales* (1889) p.54f.

Burgess was President of the General Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Australia from 1897 to 1901.

9. *ibid* p.57f.

10. *ibid* p.60.

11. *ibid* p.61. We noticed earlier (p.95, above) that Hayter himself soon came to doubt this estimate of growth and to question its likely continuance. The population of Australia at the 1954 Census was only 8,987,000.

The demographic data available to Burgess probably justified his optimism, while the purpose of his essay would have made gloomy reflections on the Malthusian crux seem out of place. These circumstances did not apply in 1899 when the Reverend John Blacket, another Methodist from South Australia, included a section on "Population and Subsistence" in his criticism of Henry George's Progress and Poverty. As Blacket saw it, George was arguing that "the means of subsistence cannot be exhausted" and no danger of overpopulation exists, because he wanted to locate the blame for poverty "in the complex relations of capital and labor". Blacket, wanting to locate the blame in some other complex, agreed with George that 'every mouth brings with it two hands' but countered him with a modified Malthusian argument that "much of the poverty that we find in the world today may be attributed to unfriendly influences in Nature."¹²

Even as Mr Blacket was using a little population theory for his immediate argumentative purposes others were becoming aware of real population problems. A Baptist minister, the Reverend E. Harris, in a paper which "occasioned considerable discussion" noticed "the decrease of the marriage and birth rates" in Australia and attributed them to "the weakening of the marriage vow, the facilities for obtaining divorce" and "the widespread unblushing impurity of life."¹³ In the observation he was ahead of most of his clerical contemporaries but in the explanation he merely anticipated their coming flood of moralism. Evidence of the trend of religious reaction to demographic change came in 1901 from the Sydney Mothers' Union, whose report quoted, approvingly, the Bishop of Carpentaria's opinion that "...impurity...is eating out the heart and destroying the vitality of the Australian race. It is the national sin. The birth-rate is declining at an alarming rate, and the proportion of illegitimate births

12. John Blacket: Social Diseases and Suggested Remedies (Hussey & Gillingham Adelaide 1899) p.26f. The particular 'unfriendly influence' he had in mind was the South Australian drought of 1894-97. He went on to contend that the community's real need was "an increased demand for labour. A demand for labour is conditioned by the expenditure of capital; hence, in every possible way, legitimate speculation and enterprise should be encouraged." (ibid p.43). He was evidently familiar with the theme of Wesley's sermon 44, "gain all you can, save all you can, give all you can"! [John Wesley: Sermons on Several Occasions, First Series (Epworth London 1787/1944) p.576].

13. Rev E. Harris, paper on "Australian Morals and Homes", delivered at a meeting of the Baptist Union and reported in Age 15 November 1899 p.8D.

Harris was President of the interdenominational Council of Churches in Victoria in 1902.

increasing as steadily..."¹⁴

When the Report of the Birth Rate Commission in 1904 drew more people's attention to the extent of family limitation, one Sydney cleric linked the findings of the Report, the moral tone of Mr Harris and the contra-Malthusian optimism of Mr Burgess in a sermon more notable for passion than for homiletic craftsmanship:

What a commentary is the report of the Royal Commission upon this teaching of our Lord! Yes! we have been seeking to save our life to the vengeance, and lo! we have lost it. A decreasing birthrate, and want and woe in the homes of the multitudes, in a land, the natural resources of which, if only we were wise enough to 'lose our life for Christ's sake and the Gospel's' would give us all food enough and to spare.¹⁵

The name of his publishers and the titles of his other works make it clear that the preacher, the Reverend Mervyn Archdall, stood firmly in the tradition of Australian low-church, evangelical Protestantism. Certainly his views were shared by others in that tradition. For example the evangelicals' concept of sin as wrong actions, rather than wrong intention, and their anti-intellectual distrust of technology were apparent in an editorial on the Royal Commission's Report by the Australian Sentinel, organ of the Loyal Orange Lodges in Victoria. To the widespread complaint that people had to limit their families through lack of income, the Sentinel's response was:

millions of people spend all their earnings week by week. They are the improvident and thriftless, or the selfish and luxuriating of the earth...A huge proportion of men gamble away every week on horse-racing what would keep an additional child or two; as many more drink it. Many wives unfortunately, too, are not exempt from these costly vices.

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14. Mothers' Union of the Diocese of Sydney: Annual Report (1901) p.8. Interest in child numbers was not confined to the diocesan leaders: the Hunter's Hill branch reported in 1903 that "at the last meeting an article from the Sydney Morning Herald on the decreasing birth-rate and great mortality among infant children was read and discussed." ibid (1903) p.18.
15. Rev Mervyn Archdall: Murder and the Birthrate A sermon preached in St Mary's, Balmain and in St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney on 10 April 1904. (Protestant Church of England Union Sydney 1904). Mr Archdall had his say on a wide range of matters: under his name the Mitchell Library lists pamphlets on Higher Criticism, Darwinism ("an exploded theory"), Ritualism and Romanism.

Concerning the methods by which families were limited, the paper said

This country is suffering - in common with Britain, the Continent, and the United States - in a large resort by her people to a ready means which prostituted science has prepared. Chemistry is as ready to slay as to save life.¹⁶

Archdall's sermon and the Sentinel's editorial represent the point at which demographic perception, as opposed to moralistic opinion, virtually disappeared from clerical utterance. Burgess, still writing for a secular audience, continued to make optimistic use of vital statistics¹⁷ but majority opinion was mirrored more accurately by the National Christian Citizens' League, which convened a meeting in the Melbourne Town Hall in November 1904 to discuss the birth rate question. Participants included "ministers from leading churches, and representatives of the medical profession, the Australian Health Society, and the Salvation Army", who were addressed by the Victorian Government Statist, William McLean.¹⁸ McLean "agreed with the finding of the New South Wales Commission, that the birth-rate had declined; but said he was wholly at variance with the Commission as to the cause. The decrease was in every way a natural one, and was not brought about by restrictive measures..." Despite the warm reception McLean's address received it does not seem to have influenced Dr Lowther Clarke, the Anglican Bishop of Melbourne who presided over the meeting. He said flatly that the New South Wales Report was an alarming indication of deliberate race suicide, of which the cause was "pure selfishness". He also thought McLean's suggestion that the State should take more responsibility for the care of children as a means of reducing infant mortality was a dangerous proposal, "likely to conduce to immorality."

In view of their unsophisticated response to the fact of a declining birth-rate the kind of explanations that clergymen offered for the decline is not surprising. In general they laid heavy stress on alleged 'moral' interpretations of causes of the decline and either dismissed or paid little attention to possible sociological explanations. The most commonly expressed opinions at the Birth Rate Commission were that public morality was decaying and that this decay and the liberalization of divorce laws were eroding the status of marriage and the family. The Reverend Dill Macky of the Presbyterian Church and the

16. Australian Sentinel (Melbourne) 31 March 1904 p.8B.

17. Burgess (ed): Cyclopaedia of South Australia (Cyclopaedia Co. Adelaide 1907-1909) Vol I p.305, comments on vital rates for 1904 and 1905.

18. The meeting was reported in Argus 11 November 1904 p.9A and Christian Citizen 18 November p.4f.

Anglican Archbishop Smith each thought that there had been a decay of morals since he had arrived in Sydney. Macky said the morals of the community were "degenerating fast" and Smith said he had observed a similar decay in religious sentiment since 1890; "...there is a large absence of reverence and serious views", he reported, and "I think life here is apt to be very flippant."¹⁹ Archdeacon Langley, a humane and intelligent witness giving evidence based on observation rather than hearsay, was more cautious than his Archbishop. In general, he thought, there was "just as much religious feeling" as there had been fifty years earlier but he could detect a "chilling of feeling on the part of the more cultured classes", among whom the effect of "the higher criticism and other matters connected with religious thought" had been serious.²⁰

In 1889 the Anglican Headmaster of the old-established King's School had seen signs of social impurity in frequent reports of "...concealment of births, of infanticide, of artificial abortion... suggestive literature, acting, advertisements".²¹ All of these sins reappeared in subsequent discussions of the population question, along with the reduced status of marriage and the laity's a-moral attitude towards prevention of conception which many clergymen believed were symptoms of decaying religious sentiment. In 1895 the Wesleyan Conference acted against the marriage bureaux then coming into vogue, while Archbishop Smith told his Anglican Synod that they should recognise the disgrace of "the tendency to extreme laxity in the view taken of Marriage and in the whole matter of sexual relations."²² When the

19. DBR Qq.5944 (Macky) and 6364 (Smith). Because the Commission's examination of clerical witnesses was so tendentious short responses to leading questions have been largely ignored for the purposes of this chapter, major reliance being placed on those cases where clergymen developed their answers at length.

20. ibid Qq.6381-6

21. Rev Edward Harris, paper on Social Purity in [Church of England, New South Wales] : Papers Read at the Church Congress (Joseph Cook & Co Sydney 1889) p.76.

22. See Church of England in New South Wales: Proceedings of the Provincial Synod (1895) p.18, "Address of the Metropolitan" (i.e. W.S. Smith) and New South Wales [Wesleyan] Methodist Conference: Minutes (1895) p.85.

Marriage bureaux had developed a reputation for rather unorthodox methods of bringing ladies and gentlemen together and for having a 'Marrying Sam' - often of doubtful ecclesiastical status - on the premises to perform the ceremony. The bureaux came under fire again in 1908 when the Social Questions Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Victoria was asked by the Melbourne North Presbytery "to take steps to prevent the scandals associated with matrimonial agencies, etc." See Presbyterian Church of Victoria, Committee on Public Questions, Minute Book (1889-1913) entry for 18 March 1908.

intended Royal Commission into the decline of the birth rate was announced the Church of England Outlook (which appears to have been the 'Bishop's paper' on the Sydney diocese) took up the 'sanctity of marriage' slogan:

We believe that we have contributed more to the reasonable discussion of this problem than any other Australian paper because we have been expounding for the last three months what is really the secret of the whole matter, the sanctity of marriage. [Until] that important truth [is hammered home] we shall do nothing by Royal Commissions.²³

Shortly afterwards Dill Macky, who had been a Presbyterian clergyman in New South Wales for seventeen years, told the Royal Commissioners that there had been "a great lowering in connection with the sanctity of marriage from what existed in our fathers' and grandfathers' days" and the Congregationalist, Hennessy, who had been living in the heart of Sydney for eight months, said that lodging-house talk showed that "marriage is regarded by a large number of those who are unmarried in this city almost contemptuously."²⁴

Divorce reform was before the New South Wales Parliament on several occasions between 1886 and 1899 with the debate twice issuing in liberalisation of the law.²⁵ Amendment was also considered in Victoria where, as early as 1889, a Presbyterian committee had prepared a petition against the Divorce Law Amendment Bill and discussed the possibility of cooperating with the Anglicans and the Wesleyans on the matter.²⁶ The reason for their concern was undoubtedly that expressed in the mid-nineties by Archbishop Smith: "Divorce made easy tends to lower the value of true Marriage", by lowering the sense of responsibility, making people not think enough before marriage and stirring up strange feelings after marriage if people became incompatible. Opinions similar in import, though different in detail, were also expressed by Dill Macky and Archdeacon Langley.²⁷

23. Church of England Outlook (Sydney) 21 September 1903 p.193.

24. DBR Qq.5956, 5987f. Macky's opinion was, characteristically, based on hearsay; his direct knowledge of attitudes to marriage in "grandfathers' days" can hardly have been extensive!

25. Easily the best study of divorce reform in this country is Martha Rutledge: "Sir Alfred Stephen and Divorce Law Reform in New South Wales, 1886-1892" (MA thesis ANU 1966).

26. Presbyterian Church of Victoria, Committee on Public Questions, Minute Book, entry for 21 November 1889.

27. Church of England in New South Wales: Proceedings of the Provincial Synod (1895) p.18 and DBR Q.6360 (Smith). DBR Qq.5941f (Macky) and 6391f (Langley).

Not only marriage was wrongly regarded, in the clergymen's opinion. One of their number was "actually surprised at the want of moral sensibility on the subject" of family limitation shown by a layman whom he found to be preventing conception "without the slightest idea that he was doing what was wrong."²⁸ The Rural Dean of Richmond reported that, far from regarding prevention as immoral or obscene, laymen "argue that it is perfectly right and perfectly moral, and that no one with any reason at all could possibly condemn them for the practices in which they indulge."²⁹ A more balanced assessment was given by a Methodist, the Rev. W. Woolls Rutledge, who thought there was a distinction made in the minds of some between prevention of birth, meaning abortion, and prevention of conception; few would make a moral defence of abortion but persons of acknowledged moral standing and character would allow prevention in cases of risk to the mother or lack of means to support a larger family.³⁰

The clergymen's belief that the reduced status of marriage and lay amorality regarding prevention of conception were symptomatic of general moral decline provided the context for their reactions to the decline of the birth rate and the practices alleged to be causing the decline. There were few dissentients from the opinion that big families were preferable to small from the point of view of the children's social development, the parents' strength of character and the nation's well-being.³¹ Conversely there were few who disagreed either with the opinion that birth control was both immoral and conducive to immorality or with the Reverend Howell Price's statement that his attitude to abortion and prevention "would be summed up practically in one word - murder."³² The witnesses at the Commission - Rutledge excepted - did not elaborate on this question but the whole tenor of their evidence suggests that they took it for granted that birth control had no place in moral behaviour. There was not much explicit condemnation of birth control in public either. Reticence may have been due to fear of being "lampooned afterwards in one of the illustrated papers" or fear

28. ibid Q.5957f (Macky).

29. Qq.6087-88 (Howell Price).

30. DBR Qq.6414-18. Rutledge's views are discussed at p.187, below.

31. Most of the clergymen at the Birth Rate Commission simply accepted the suggestion that this view was their own. Two who gave more extended answers were Macky (Q.5933, 5935-9) and Archbishop Smith (Qq.6352-8).

The slogan "The larger the family the greater the opportunity" was still being used by the Archbishop in 1910 - see Mothers' Union of the Diocese of Sydney: op cit (1910) p.7.

32. DBR Q.6102.

of "the pressure of the purse", as Howell Price reported, to clerical ignorance of the practice - as the commission hinted - or to a feeling that more harm than good would issue from publicising the practice.³³

Clergymen had a fairly simple explanation for the widespread practice of birth control. In the private field they blamed selfishness and in the public field, indecent publications. Even before the hearings of the Birth Rate Commission there had been an expression of concern about selfishness and family limitation from the Bishop of the Victorian country diocese of Wangaratta, who warned that

...there is reason to fear that the birth of children is regarded as such a tax upon selfishness that it is being steadily discouraged... But for people to deliberately refuse parental responsibilities for no higher reason than an unwillingness to lessen the power of gratifying their own selfishness is a bad lookout for the future of our Commonwealth.³⁴

At the Commission itself the Reverend J. Howell Price elaborated on the elements of this selfishness. "Wives", he said, "want to go with the husbands wherever the husbands go"; they therefore want to be as free as possible from home ties and, since they have found that children tie them too much to the home, "they regard maternity as martyrdom." Hennessy, the Congregationalist, acknowledged the wife's desire to be with her husband but blamed him, not her: the man, Hennessy said,

goes to entertainments, he goes to out-door gatherings, and the wife is left at home pregnant...In course of time she begins to resent that, and he agrees that if there were no children she would be free to go with him where he goes, and it may be then that if he suggests there should be a check put upon procreation in their particular case she consents.³⁵

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33. The clergyman lampooned in Melbourne was Canon Robert Potter of the inner-suburban parish of Hotham. Price himself had known the displeasure of voluntaryist parishioners; *ibid* Qq.6110-25. A number of clergymen were asked for their response to the sentence "It has been stated to the Commission that clergy of all denominations are much less in touch with the inner life of the people than they used to be..." *ibid* Qq.6382 (Langley), 6041 (Moran), 6109 (Price), and 6365 (Smith). Elaine M. Wilson: "The Campaign for National Righteousness. The Methodist Church and moral reform in Victoria, 1900-1910" (BA thesis Melbourne University 1957) p.48, has pointed out that Methodist social reformers were as concerned about sexual morality as they were about the totalisator and alcohol but thought the topic less amenable to a public campaign. Cf. Victorian Methodist Conference, *Minutes* (1909) p.275 on work done "through various channels" against traffickers in abortion and preventives.
34. T.H. Armstrong, Bishop of Wangaratta, paper on "Home Life" in F.W. Samwell (ed.): Official Report of the Proceedings of the Adelaide Church Congress, 1902 (Church Office Adelaide 1903) p.253.
35. DBR Qq.6128, 6082-5 (Price) and Q.6024 (Hennessy).

The Commission included this condemnation of selfishness in its Report, thus gaining the support, expressed with typical terseness, of the Presbyterian Church which saw a low view of marriage, "a love of ease, a reluctance to personal sacrifice, and a general lowering of the ideal of marriage...at the bottom of this sin and scandal." Two years later the Presbyterians' attitude was unchanged: in response to the Beale Commission's indictment of the use of abortifacient medicines they condemned "The callous selfishness of...large sections of our population [who] evidently deliberately enter upon marriage, and then, in defiance of both God and nature, refuse the burden of parenthood."³⁶

If the people's practice of prevention was grounded in a sinful nature, the clerics believed, then the tendency was stimulated by indecent literature and informed by birth control propaganda. In the eyes of the clergymen 'indecent' literature was a term covering a fairly wide range of publications. Howell Price, for example, condemned the circulation of books by Mona Caird and "all the leading thinkers of that school" who advocated greater freedom for women, of "general low-class novels, French novels" and of "newspaper literature like the Broad Arrow and of the Dead Bird type."³⁷ Hennessy was not greatly bothered by the English sex novel but thought cheap translations of French novels which could be obtained without difficulty in Sydney did "a deal of harm", especially in an era of increasing literacy. Archbishop Smith was not very familiar with the literature and uncertain of its effect on morality but he still considered the sex novel as "distinctly unwholesome" - a view in which, not surprisingly, he was supported by Dill Macky.³⁸ (In Victoria the Methodist Spectator suggested that, far from being entirely sordid, there was a considerable amount of literature "by good men and women, who advocate the regulation of the number of children".)³⁹ Another category of publication which the clergy regarded as indecent, and which they often spoke about in the same connection as the novels, was 'medical' advertising. The

36. Presbyterian General Assembly, NSW, Minutes op cit (1905) p.98 and Presbyterian General Assembly, Australia, Proceedings op cit (1907) p.99. The Beale Commission is discussed at p.227, below.

37. DBR Qq.6178, 6130-32 and 6161-64. Rutledge: op cit pp.176, 187, 229, provides evidence to confirm Price's belief that Mrs Caird's work was well-known in Sydney; Is Marriage a Failure? was the title which caused particular agitation. S.J. Kunitz: (ed.): British Authors of the Nineteenth Century (Wilson New York 1936) p.108 provides the following comment on Mrs Caird's work: "Mrs Caird was an early advocate of 'women's rights'. Her book Is Marriage a Failure? had a sensational success and aroused much controversy...She is chiefly known for her novels, which were didactic, sometimes sentimental, and frequently sensational, but which in their time were very popular."

Bird and Arrow were successive names for a sporting news-sheet which had occasional topical paragraphs. Its only substantial reference to family limitation (24 May 1902 p.4) was opposed to the practice.

38. DBR Qq.5999-6002 (Hennessy); 6370 (Smith); 5962 (Macky).

39. Spectator 29 April 1904 p.653C.

Methodists attacked it in the latter half of the 'nineties and they were supported by the Presbyterians, who expressed satisfaction that the Government's attention was being directed to the "great and wide-spread Evil to National and Social life" being wrought by the advertisements.⁴⁰

Informative birth control literature of the type which the Malthusian Society distributed in large quantities in England was also available in Australia. Howell Price said that he had not seen any neo-Malthusian leaflets in the rural area of Richmond but had seen them "some years ago" in Sydney. On the other hand he reported that "Bradlaugh's books, and Mrs Besant's books, and other books which are freely available in Sydney, are largely read in country places", while a discussion in the Sunday Times a couple of years earlier had done a great deal of harm in making prevention more acceptable. All of this literature Price believed, must have had "a very large share" in spreading the knowledge of birth control.⁴¹ Archdeacon Langley agreed that the publication of Fruits of Philosophy had shown a way of escape for women who "shrank from the pains and penalties of child-bearing"⁴² but that knowledge was available through an oral, as well as a written, tradition. Dill Macky said he knew that prevention was "commonly advocated" and that his own wife "again and again, when she was child-bearing" had been advised by lady friends to take preventive measures.⁴³ Howell Price reported a similar experience of his own wife's at the hands of a woman who was "intelligent, widely read and thoughtful" but was "a most active propagandist" for prevention throughout his parish, and a Methodist minister from the inner-Melbourne circuit of Fitzroy also reported that "women working under the auspices of Christian organizations" were fostering the idea that it was wrong to have more

40. NSW Methodist Conference, Minutes, op cit (1895) p.81. Presbyterian Church of Victoria, Committee on Public Questions, Minute Book entry for 14 July 1897. Cf. entries for 21 September 1898, 2 December 1898 and 20 June 1900. The Presbyterian Church in New South Wales displayed similar interest: see Assembly Proceedings, op cit (1899) p.88 and (1900) p.89.

41. DBR Qq.6096-99. Hennessy also reported that the Sydney shops dealt in "books which direct themselves to questions akin to those discussed in The Fruits of Philosophy - one sold at 3s 6d I take to be an outrage." ibid Q.5099.

42. ibid Q.6401.

43. ibid Q.5964. The advice was evidently ignored for there were three sons and five daughters in the Macky family. Although there is only a smattering of evidence on the point, one would guess that information passed from one woman to another by word of mouth would have had at least as much effect as printed material on the decline of family size.

children than parents could afford.⁴⁴

Clerical commentators on the decline of the birth rate gave heavy emphasis to individual and social sinfulness as explanatory factors, dwelling on the decadence of a society which allowed the publication of 'indecent' literature and the guilt of individuals who availed themselves of preventive techniques. The logic of their position, if they had rigorously pursued it, should surely have led them to a different conclusion for if, as orthodox Christianity has always maintained, Man is innately sinful, those whose opinions are discussed above should not have been saying 'men are preventing conception because they have become sinful', but asking why the sinfulness of man had taken this (apparently) new form. Even liberal theologians, rejecting the orthodox doctrine of sin, should have asked themselves why men, as essentially good creatures destined to become better, had taken the apparently backward step to prevention.⁴⁵

Logical or not, the attitude to prevention adopted by many Australian clergymen caused them to place social factors well below moral ones in their hierarchy of causes. This is made clear by the relative paucity of Christian material on social factors and by the content of the small amount of recorded Christian discussion of poverty in the 1890s, when there were suggestions that economic conditions restricted young people's chances of early marriage. J.M. Day, whose appearance before the Society for the Study of Christian Sociology may be presumed to indicate a rational, as opposed to a moral, approach acknowledged the difficulty and suggested State appropriation of rent as a means of keeping house-rent low and giving young couples a better start in the financing of their home. In contrast Henry Varley, an evangelistic moral reformer, said financial problems were illusory and the moral dangers of delayed marriage considerable. His second point was supported by the White Cross League which noted the restrictions some commercial institutions placed on the marriage of their junior staff but made no suggestion that a remedy might lie in increased

44. ibid 6168-75 (Howell Price) Cf Christian Citizen IV:41 (15 April 1904).

45. The characterisation of liberal Christian anthropology is derived from the articles on "Man" in Alan Richardson (ed.): Dictionary of Christian Theology (SCM London 1969) p.202ff. and John Macquarrie (ed.): Dictionary of Christian Ethics (SCM London 1967) p.204.

Himes: op cit, passim, makes it quite clear that, while some novel techniques may have become available in the late nineteenth century, there was nothing novel about the desire to control conception. Hence the stress on the fact that the "backward step" was only apparent, not real.

salaries for the staff.⁴⁶ A similar contrast can be made between the attitudes to poverty of two of the witnesses at the Birth Rate Commission. Dill Macky, whose condemnation of prevention was much the stronger of the two, said that poverty was the result of indolence whereas Archdeacon Langley explained the "real and respectable" poverty prevailing in Sydney by reference to unemployment caused by the heavy immigration accompanying a high rate of investment in earlier years.⁴⁷

The remedies prescribed to halt the decline of the birth rate were of a type with the diagnosis made of its causes. Dill Macky, who had been so sure of the immoral causes of the decline, naturally thought that the time had come when "the clergymen must wake up to their duty and speak upon this subject...the moral sensitiveness of the people must be aroused as to their duty in this respect." The Assemblies of his Church agreed with him, it appears, for the New South Wales Assembly thought that "the influence of the Church should be earnestly directed towards impressing upon the people a higher ideal of the marriage relationship..." and the General Assembly of Australia was asked to recognize that "the call to the Churches and to all other associations of loyal and self-respecting men and women, to protest against the evil is most urgent."⁴⁸ Dr Clarke, the Anglican Bishop of Melbourne, who had

46. J.M. Day: "Wages", a paper read before the Society for the Study of Christian Sociology in Adelaide 7 July 1892. (Hussey & Gillingham Adelaide 1892).

Henry Varley: Lecture to Men on a vitally important subject...

(Varley Bros. Melbourne 1894) p.22f. Varley's background is sketched in Henry Varley Jr.: Henry Varley's Life Story (London 1913), quoted by Phillips, op cit p. 119 n.2.

Varley's attitude to the neo-Malthusian movement can be inferred from the title of his pamphlet, Mr Bradlaugh Shown to be Utterly Unfit to Represent any English Constituency: An Appeal to the Men of England. '15th thousand' London [1881] noted in Peter Fryer: The Birth Controllers (Secker & Warburg London 1965)

p.

The White Cross League was an Anglican purity society: its secretary's letter drawing the Birth Rate Commission's attention to the salary bars against marriage is summarised in DBR Minutes of Meetings p.125 No.181.

At the Christian Citizens' conference in Melbourne in 1904 the Rev Jas Gibson again raised the question of salary bars: so far as one can gather from a brief report, he was against the practice. (See Christian Citizen 18 November 1904 p.5).

47. DBR Qq.5947-9 (Macky) and 6395-6 (Langley).

48. ibid Q.5967. Cf Presbyterian General Assembly, N.S.W., Minutes (1905) p.98 and Presbyterian General Assmebly of Australia, Proceedings (1907) p.99.

blamed the limitation of families on "wrong ideals and selfishness" believed the time had come for the clergy "to speak with no uncertain voice. He, however, thought the subject was one to be handled delicately, and not to be raised in mixed congregations." In the event the subject was not handled at all in his cathedral until 1912, when a number of talks were given on "The Empty Cradle", "Race Suicide", "The Value of a Child", "The Slaughter of the Innocents".⁴⁹

Victorian Methodists, having been less dogmatic about the causes of decline, were less certain about remedies. The Editor of the Spectator aired their doubts about the effectiveness of pulpit calls for reform and the Reverend F.J. Rankin of Fitzroy agreed that even if a clergyman were careful in his discussion of limitation he would raise a storm of protest. The Spectator, having in mind its defence of some of the literature in which limitation was mentioned, pointed out the obvious corollary:

In this age people will read and largely follow the advice of good and respected authors. While such books remain in the hands of so many, the call to the churches to institute a 'general crusade' against the evil will be little heeded.⁵⁰

The clearest contrast with Macky's moral cause/moral remedy outlook was made by Archdeacon Langley. Having acknowledged the reality of poverty and unemployment he argued that there was plenty of land available to feed and provide for four times the unemployed population, if only measures for closer settlement were taken in hand.⁵¹ Although the Langley plan was similar to that espoused by a number of secular commentators - albeit somewhat earlier in their case - it was almost the only clerical proposal that amounted to more than a wringing of hands. When the main stream of opinion turned away from fruitless concern about declining birth rate after 1905 to concentrate on increasing immigration or improving child life, clerical voices were much less audible than they had been in the previous decade.

In a discussion of English Nonconformity and social reform during the 1880s and 1890s Professor K.S. Inglis suggested that the apparently greater radicalism of Anglicans as compared with, say,

49. Christian Citizen (18 November 1904) p.5. Cf. Church of England, Melbourne Diocese, Social Questions Committee, "Social Sins". Talks given in St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne during Lent 1912.

50. Spectator (18 March 1904) p.435 and (29 April 1904) p.654A Cf. F.J. Rankin: "Race Suicide" in Christian Citizen (15 April 1904).

51. DBR Qq.6399f.

Wesleyans, may have been a function of church polity. Thus it was easy for "any group of people with a programme to form a society" in the Church of England but in Wesleyanism such societies were possible only if a majority of the Connexion supported them.⁵² Geography and demography were two factors which militated against a repetition of the pattern in Australia where dispersion of parishes and smallness of ministerial numbers restricted the opportunities for the formation of 'ginger' groups in the Church of England and probably made the Wesleyan Conference a less formidable body than it was in England.

There were individualists in the Anglican ministry in Australia, of course, but it is possible to speak of an Anglican attitude without having to make too many qualifications. Theologically this attitude was evangelical, socially it was conservative.⁵³ This meant that the cause of declining birth rate and prevention was found chiefly in individual sinfulness and the remedy in moral reform and suppression of vice. Much the same can be said of the Presbyterian position: the difference in their case being a heavier reliance on government initiative to legislate against and suppress vicious habits. The Presbyterian Assembly in New South Wales, the General Assembly of Australia and the Social Questions committee in Melbourne all took steps to provoke stricter enforcement of existing laws or the passage of new laws where the old seemed inadequate. Compared with the Anglicans, who paid a good deal of attention to the condition of the home and family life, the Presbyterians ranked such matters below precedence, sabbath observance, gambling and temperance in their table of social problems.

Methodism was more flexible in Australia than in England.

52. K.S. Inglis: "English Nonconformity and Social Reform, 1880-1900" in Past and Present XIII (April 1958) p.73.

53. Although the point has not been pursued here, there is some evidence that the Anglican bishops in Australia, being elevated from England, shared the assumption of their colleagues assembled at Lambeth that God was uniquely concerned with the world-wide extension of the English race. So, for example, the Bishop of Riverina (N.S.W.) in a pastoral charge:

"He referred at length to the...Lambeth Conference, which he attended. The Bishop also referred to the growing practice of artificial restriction of families...'In the name of all that is rational', he said, 'what is the use of waving our flags... and making our patriotic speeches, when we are conscious of having this rottenness at our doors?...What is the use of augmenting our navy, when we are undermining our true source of strength..? The palmy days of Empire are numbered, and unless we mend our ways nothing can prevent us becoming an easy prey to any nation that may be told off in God's good providence to bring us to our senses'." - SMH 27 May 1909 p.80.

The 'God and Empire' thinking of the 1908 Lambeth Conference is noted by W.G. Coughlan: "Developments in Anglican Thought on Family Planning 1867-1968" in St Mark's Review (Canberra) No.55 (February 1969) p.7.

Annual district synods, and even the Conference, were small enough to enable real discussion at their meetings, while the Forward Movement, being the most novel element in English Methodism, was the most noticed in Australia.⁵⁴ As a result, Methodists seem to have viewed social questions in broader terms than the majority of Anglicans or Presbyterians did. A third factor, in New South Wales, at any rate, may have been the relationship between the Wesleyans and the Primitives, who were the only significant body of non-Wesleyan Methodists in the State. Since the two bodies were in the final throes of a successful union movement at the turn of the century, one might expect the Wesleyans to have been aware of the social interests of the Primitives, and the union to have stimulated an uncommon flexibility of mind.⁵⁵ The social meliorism and social aspirations of the small-scale entrepreneurs who were so significant a component of Methodist membership may also have to be written in to a discussion of Methodist attitudes.⁵⁶ The initiative of Wesleyan employers in shortening employees' working hours and the practice of Moran & Cato (Wesleyan partners in a Melbourne grocery chain) of raising the employee's salary on marriage, for example, provide a nice contrast with the attitudes of Varley and the White Cross League to the same problem.⁵⁷ Status-oriented social thinking is characteristic of a Church, like the Wesleyan body in Melbourne, which has many influential members experiencing upward social or occupational mobility.⁵⁸ If the theory of Banks and others is accepted that relatively mobile people are strongly motivated to restrict their

54. The membership of the Sydney District Synod in 1900 was 48 and that of the whole Ministerial Conference in New South Wales only 162, including supernumeraries and missionaries in the field.

55. 87,000 Wesleyans and 20,000 Primitives were counted in the New South Wales Census of 1891. There were only c.2,000 'other' Methodists.

The Primitive Methodist tradition of social activism in England is described in H.B. Kendall: The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church (E. Dalton London n.d.) Vol II Chapter VIII. A tradition of social activism is not, of course, a guarantee of a liberal attitude to birth control in New South Wales but the Primitive Methodist Minute Books which might settle that difficulty are no longer available.

56. See Renate Howe: "Social Composition of the Wesleyan Church in Victoria During the Nineteenth Century" In Journal of Religious History IV:3 (June 1967) pp.206-217.

57. ibid pp.215f. Cf. note 46, above.

58. ibid pp.210-214 summarises the Melbourne evidence. For a useful characterisation of [American] Methodist social thinking as either conservative, adjustive, status-oriented or inventive see Georgia Harkness: The Methodist Church in Social Thought and Action - A Summary (Abingdon Nashville 1964) p.146f.

family, then one explanation of the comparative liberalism of Methodist statements on the subject may be the pressure of leading laymen for a status-oriented ethic.⁵⁹ A plausible alternative explanation would be that Methodism, which has traditionally elevated individual experience to the authority which Anglicans and Presbyterians give to the Church and its dogmas, is naturally more liable to modify its teachings to accord with secular contributions to the experience of its members.

Whatever the reason, Methodist reaction to the restriction of population growth in Australia does seem to have been more flexible than that of either the Anglicans or Presbyterians.⁶⁰ Even if Burgess' and Blacket's special circumstances put their writings out of account, the point can be sufficiently supported from the church paper in Victoria and the evidence given to the Birth Rate Commission by the Rev W. Woolls Rutledge. The range of Victorian opinion was illustrated by items in the Spectator in April and May 1903. The first expressed alarm at statistical evidence of reduced family size, and at the physical deterioration or "distressing unwillingness to accept the responsibilities of marriage" which the reduction was said to indicate. On the second occasion it was correctly pointed out that public discussion of the declining birth rate was ignoring one aspect of the problem:

Population is not the only thing a nation requires; it wants a physically strong population. It wants a wise and strong motherhood for its sons and daughters, and where physique suffers through numerical strength, it is questionable in these days of keen competition, teeming city population and struggle for existence, whether the command to be fruitful and multiply must not have a more wise interpretation than it is generally given.⁶¹

Later issues of the paper did not fail to air the 'common Christian' response to Australia's population problems but space was also found for a range of comments rarely expressed in other denominations. In 1904, for instance, support was given to the Birth Rate Commissioners in their emphasis on the immorality and selfishness of family

59. See Banks: op cit p.133, where he takes up Arsene Dumont's argument about social capillarity. Cf. John D. Allingham: "Occupational Mobility in Australia: A Career and Generational Study..." (PhD thesis ANU 1965) pp.31f, 329f. H.Y. Tien: "The Social Mobility/Fertility Hypothesis Reconsidered: An Empirical Study" in American Sociological Review XXVI:2 (April 1961) pp.247-257 has questioned the validity of the mobility/fertility hypothesis but his comments apply to a period of more widely diffused contraceptive knowledge than the other authors (or this study) are contemplating.

60. There is some evidence that Nonconformists took a more liberal view of birth control than others in England - see F. Campbell: "Birth Control and the Christian Churches" in Population Studies XIV:2 (November 1960) p.133f.

61. Spectator 10 April 1903 p.548 and 27 March 1903 p.463.

limitation - but another paragraph was added condemning the bad effect of unsatisfactory conditions in which employers forced women to work.⁶² Later in the same year the idea that marriage is a luxury was criticised but the writer added "it is useless, also, to advise marriage without aiming at a living wage that will make marriage possible."⁶³ Again, in 1906, an editorial on threats to the Christian view of marriage criticised the threat to the ideal from "a certain set of Socialistic writers" - but also from the environment created by industrialised society.

Where families are herded together in small areas, sometimes in a single room, true family life almost ceases to be. Family life demands appropriate environment for its existence and culture.⁶⁴

In New South Wales the liberal Methodist position was articulated by the Rev W. Woolls Rutledge. Rutledge was an Australian-born minister who had worked as a journalist and newspaper editor before entering the ministry. He was President of the first Conference of united Methodism in New South Wales, in 1902, and appeared at the Birth Rate Commission as the nominee of his successor in that office.⁶⁵ Rutledge was the witness who told the Commissioners that abortion was commonly regarded as immoral while prevention of conception was not, and that many upright people regarded risk to the mother or excessive family size as reasonable justification for the use of preventives. It appears that the tone in which he spoke of the ground of excessive family size led the President of the Commission to suspect him of being

62. ibid 18 March 1904 p.435.

63. ibid 21 September 1904 p.1685.

64. ibid 19 October 1906 p.1721.

65. Rutledge's career is outlined in an article by his son-in-law, F.H. McGowan: "The Rev W. Woolls Rutledge" in Australasian Methodist Historical Society, Journal and Proceedings VI:3 (April 1938). To put his practice into tentative apposition with his opinions on family limitation, it should be recorded that Rutledge fathered six sons and a daughter. On his nomination to give evidence to the Commission see DBR, Minutes of Meetings p.129 (meeting of 16 November), where the Rev Rainsford Bavin, who nominated Rutledge, is wrongly designated as President of General Conference, instead of New South Wales Conference. An indication of Rutledge's general social views appears in his Official Address to the New South Wales Methodist Conference (Epworth Sydney n.d. [1903]) p.11ff; "The Church has a social, as well as a spiritual, work to do...She should never rest until... every man...shall have a home, however small, where he can live in decency with his wife and children." For evidence that Rutledge was not alone in this attitude, see the address of his predecessor in Methodist Church of Australasia: Souvenir of the Official Year of the Rev W.H. Beale (Epworth Sydney 1901), especially pp.8-10.

'soft on prevention', for the following exchange ensued:

"6420. [By the Hon. the President] Q. What are your own views in that regard? A. I do not know that my views are sufficiently crystallised to be very definite, but I have a tendency in this direction - that sin is sin; but the question is: What is sin? Drunkenness is a sin, for instance, according to the Scriptures, which I, of course, accept; but I should be very sorry to say that every man who takes a glass of ale sins. It would be a sin for persons to deliberately, and by means which you have referred to, prevent the natural order of things being carried out in reference to family life; but whether a person, say, with eight or ten children, and having, perhaps, had one or two risky confinements, or where there is little possibility, from the standpoint of the parents, of their being able to rear as many children as they could procreate, would be guilty of the same amount of sin as in the case of a person who had had no risky confinements, or had either one or no children, is, to my mind, a doubtful question - I am not going to say.

6421: Q. But would you not consider it as an exceedingly immoral thing for people to gratify a strong instinct while deliberately avoiding all the duties attached to it? A. That is putting it rather broadly, to say "all" the duties attached to it.

6422: Q. All the unpleasant duties attached to it? A. I mean the duties, of course, of rearing a family. I am not prepared to say that in every case people who marry should bring into the world as many children as they can. I am not prepared to go that far.

6423: Q. But they all have a means of preventing the birth of children if they are unable to maintain them? A. They have means.

6424: Q. Perfectly moral means? A. Of course, that is the point.

6425: Q. That is to say, they can avoid sexual intercourse? A. I recognise the fact, Mr. President, that we have been made by the Creator, and the Creator has placed in man, who, after all, is an animal, though a very superior animal, certain - if you like to call them so - passions, and these natural passions are intended to be gratified to a certain extent. There may be an intemperate gratification of them; but they are placed there by the Creator for a specific purpose, and I am not prepared to say that persons should not have intercourse except for the specific purpose of begetting children. And if that is so, then, if they are to be separated and these passions are to be restrained, the probability is that something worse will happen unless they are of very strong will.

...

6449: [By Mr Coghlan] Q. There is nothing then in the act of restraining the birth of children that is wrong: it is the conditions that make it right or wrong? A. Quite so. There is nothing wrong in

married people escaping (if conception has not taken place) the result of connection providing other conditions are satisfied, and there is no injury to the health of either party. When I say this, I do not know that I am prepared to say what means may be, or are used. I can only know from what one hears as to what means are used for the purpose of preventing conception; but I presume that there are two ways, one being the use of some drug or something of that kind which the woman uses; and another being an act of the man himself in withdrawing. So far as I have been able to make inquiries those are the principal methods of preventing conception. I am not prepared to say that under any possible circumstances, the one or the other would be unjustifiable."

Not only did Rutledge question the view that prevention was immoral but he went on to question whether the effects of preventive practice were universally degrading, in the process showing himself less willing than other witnesses had been to accept the Commissioners' interpretation of "well-known authors on the topic."⁶⁶

"6432: [By the Hon. the President] Q. Many of the authorities who are best acquainted with the subject have stated that it [prevention] invariably leads to the degradation of the woman, at any rate, whether of the man or not? A. If continued as a practice, that might be so.

6433: Q. Would you be prepared to accept that view? A. If my recollection serves me aright, Dr. Pomeroy (author of "The Ethics of Marriage") does not quite hold that opinion without qualification.

6434: Q. Under what circumstances? A. He does not state the circumstances; but, if I remember rightly, there is a qualification of that very general statement.

6435: Q. The circumstances are those stated by Sir Normand MacLaurin? [i.e. risk to the mother's life] A. Yes, and others; and he hints, too, at the economic reasons. He does not state it in plain language, I think, but he hints at it.

6436: Q. Do you think that...parents are justified in limiting the number of children born to them? A...I can conceive circumstances where it would be justifiable.

6437: Q. Do you recognise the danger of that sentiment? A. I do.

6438. Q. As being liable to lead to a very great amount of immorality? A. I do; but at the same time I recognise that there are dangers of a similar kind everywhere - there is a danger of a man who takes a glass of beer with his dinner, or a glass of whisky with a friend, becoming a drunkard.

66. Each of the clerical witnesses was asked for his reactions to H.S. Pomeroy's Ethics of Marriage (which Rutledge mentions in Q.6433, above) and all except Rutledge applauded the work.

6439: Q. I think that the circumstances are hardly parallel? A. Well, there are, perhaps, as many evidences of the danger of that as of anything else. There are certain things which, up to a certain extent are, or may be, legitimate and right, but which, beyond a certain point, become wrong, and each case must be treated on its merits.

Asked whether he agreed with the thesis, attributed to F.S. Nitti, "voluntary prevention simply leads to the degeneration of the senses, the decadence of the race"?, Rutledge said [6458...A] "I am not in a position to say 'yes' or 'no'... It is a question which is more in the realm of medical and physical science..." In fact he could see that circumstances might arise where immoral consequences would follow from a failure to use prevention: the "natural passions" being placed in man "to be gratified to a certain extent" it was unreasonable to demand prolonged continence because "there are persons who marry who may have this special passion developed in a way that they are not responsible for - it may be hereditary - and in a case like that, to use a Scriptural term, he will 'burn'."⁶⁷

Rutledge elaborated on his view of the 'natural passions' saying that, although maintenance of the race was one of the objects of marriage, "the promotion of mutual enjoyment and companionship" were also legitimate objects. He would not push this view too far for, when the President suggested that Rutledge regarded sexual intercourse as "a pleasant amusement" his reply was "Not amusement so much; but the legitimate gratification of a passion placed there by the Creator."⁶⁸ In discounting the primacy of procreation Rutledge took a line eschewed by most other clergymen at the time. Dean Cowper of Sydney had said that "social happiness" and "intellectual enjoyment" had their place alongside procreation but the range of opinion was more accurately indicated by Dill Macky, who thought the command "a very plain one: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth'"; and by the Rev J.S. Hart, who contrasted the secular emphasis on gratification with the Church's proclamation of procreation.⁶⁹

Methodist opinion as represented in this chapter was more liberal than that of the other two major Protestant denominations but it would be wrong to imply that Rutledge's views were representative

67. DBR Qq.6425, 6455.

68. ibid Qq.6447, 6461-2.

69. Very Rev W.M. Cowper: Two Sermons upon Marriage and Divorce (Cook & Co Sydney 1888) p.5.
DBR Q.5961 (Macky).
Rev J.S. Hart, paper on "Marriage and Divorce" in Proceedings of the Adelaide Church Congress (1902) op cit p.263f.

of all Methodist opinion. Before the Birth Rate Commission closed the Rev P.J. Stephen, a Methodist with similar background to Rutledge's, was called and gave evidence much more in the conservative Protestant main stream.⁷⁰ On the other hand there can be no doubt that Rutledge was in good standing with his fellow ministers. In March 1904, only three months after his appearance at the Commission, they placed him second in a ballot for New South Wales representatives to the Methodist General Conference. Stephen, by contrast, was placed fifteenth, polling 94 votes against Rutledge's 166.⁷¹ There is some evidence that the more radical members of the Methodist ministry tend to be the more articulate as well⁷² but it is doubtful whether this is true (at least to the same extent) in the other denominations. This observation raises the whole problem of the status of the evidence used so far in this chapter. Did the clergymen who have been quoted speak for their denomination or only for themselves? The answer must be that, although they spoke for themselves, there is a degree of homogeneity about the views expressed (at least in printed form) within each denomination. In addition there is no evidence of fierce disagreement within any denomination about the views expressed by its members, while the ecclesiastical positions held by most of the men who have been quoted indicate that they had the confidence of their co-religionists.

There was some diversity blurring the outlines of a common opinion about population both among the Protestant group and within each denomination. Catholic attitudes did not display even this variety. Not every Catholic commentator expressed his opinion in the same way, of course, but there was no disagreement about basic doctrines. Unity of belief may have been partly a function of the tendency of Catholics to rely on their bishops for definitive moral guidance, although it will be seen in a moment that Australian laymen took part in discussion of population and family problems. A more weighty reason for the united approach will probably be found in the "ready acceptance of Roman pronouncements on matters of faith and morals" and "the degree of passivity in the face of Rome with which the young [Australian] Church was imbued" after the pontificate of Pius IX.⁷³

70. DBR Qq.6794-6827. The President of the Commission tacitly acknowledged that Stephen was called because Rutledge's viewpoint was unacceptable to the Commissioners.

71. SMH 3 March 1904 p.3E.

72. A.D. Hunt: "General Conference Social Pronouncements, 1904-1960" (Unpublished MS Adelaide 1963) has made a cursory survey of the relationship between Methodist leadership and membership.

73. John N. Molony: The Roman Mould of the Australian Catholic Church (Melbourne University Press 1969) p.167 offers this summary of the alignments of the Catholic Church in Australia in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and afterwards.

It follows that a survey of Roman opinion offers the best introduction to Australian Catholic opinion about population, and procreation and contraception in between 1890 and 1910.

Professor Noonan's study of theological and canonical treatment of contraception reveals a period of relative leniency lasting from the middle of the eighteenth century until well into the nineteenth.⁷⁴ There was renewed concentration on the topic after 1872 when French requests for Roman guidance brought a papal encyclical on marriage and a number of rulings by the Sacred Penitentiary, the tribunal dealing with matters of conscience.⁷⁵ The encyclical made no specific reference to contraception but stressed the 'holy', as opposed to the 'natural', view of marriage and the Church's responsibility to rule on marital matters.⁷⁶ The decisions of the Penitentiary tightened up pastoral oversight of marital practices: the grounds on which a wife might - unwillingly - cooperate in her husband's practice of coitus interruptus were narrowed; ignorant practice of contraception 'in good faith' was no longer considered excusable; and confessors were urged to substitute active enquiry concerning conjugal practices for their previous compliant silence.

The fifty years after 1880 saw Catholic teaching on contraception steadily hardening to the position propounded in Casti Conubii. There is no reason to suppose that Australian Catholicism stood apart from the trend and some evidence that the clergy welcomed it. Leo's 1880 encyclical, for example, was "widely published in Catholic press and pulpit..."⁷⁷ Thus the encyclical's teaching was soon reflected in Australia by Cardinal Moran's pastoral of 17 April 1886, which discounted divorce legislation then before the New South Wales parliament on the ground that the Catholic Church did not recognize the right of the State "to trench upon the Christian Sacrament or to dissolve the

74. Noonan: op cit Chapter XIII

75. The catalyst for renewed discussion was the combination in France of falling birth rate and defeat by Prussia. See Glass: op cit p.148.

76. Leo XIII: Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae published 10 February 1880.

77. P.D. McCarthy: "A History of the Attitude of the Australian Catholic Hierarchy to Social Problems, 1841-1910" (MA thesis University of Western Australia 1957) p.80f, claims that "the Australian Catholic hierarchy led by Cardinal Moran, who was an intimate friend and appointee of Leo XIII, widely publicized the papal teachings...In the formation of Australian Catholic attitudes to socio-moral and political problems, they held both a primary and a decisive influence..."

marriage bond."⁷⁸ In the mid-'nineties the Australian hierarchy were as concerned as the Anglican leaders by the erosion of family life and declining status of marriage. Given the high view of marriage adopted in Leo's Arcanum and Moran's Pastoral, mixed marriages were naturally seen as deleterious to its sacramental status and were vilified accordingly by a Pastoral letter in 1895.⁷⁹ (Mixed marriages were still causing concern in 1902.)⁸⁰

The next major Catholic statement on marital and related matters was provoked by the conjunction of two events in 1899, and came from Archbishop Carr of Melbourne, who was in the midst of exposing a contraceptive-peddling syndicate when his ire was raised by a judgement in divorce. On 16 November 1899 the Age reported the case Buckloy v Buckley, heard before Mr Justice Williams. Mr Buckley deposed that his wife had deserted him after several years of marriage and the advent of eight children, ostensibly because she refused to add to the eight.⁸¹ Plaintiff was left bereft of family and only formally consoled by the judge for, while granting a decree nisi on the ground of desertion, Mr Justice Williams went on to say that "If the law said it was desertion for a woman to refuse to go on bearing children after having already brought nine or ten into the world, the law was an ass." If the law required a woman to bear successive children at her husband's behest, he would enforce the law but with regret.⁸²

Three days after his Honor's opinion was published the Archbishop went to open a new Church of the Sacred Heart at Carlton. He took the occasion to upbraid the learned judge. As the Argus reported it, the Archbishop said that

The purposes for which such churches are built are mainly to guard the faith and promote piety and the practice of morality...From true and living faith naturally spring a correct idea and strict observance of morality. Just as from abuses or weakness

78. Pp.7-11 of the Pastoral are quoted in P.J. O'Farrell: Documents in Australian Catholic History Vol II p.63ff.

79. See "Pastoral letter of the Archbishops and Bishops of Australia assembled in second plenary council" in Australasian Catholic Record II:1 (January 1896) p.12f.

80. According to M. Macnamara: "The Catholic Church in New South Wales and the Census" in ibid VIII:3 (July 1902) pp.293-315.

81. In fact other evidence (accepted by the Judge) showed that Mrs Buckley's affections had fallen upon another.

82. Age 16 November 1899 p.7C. The judge elaborated on his statement a few days later (Age and Argus, both 23 November 1899 p.6E) but, as the Age editorial writer said, his explanation left the matter "very much where it was." (Age 23 November 1899 p.4G).

of faith follow such perversions of morality as we have reason to deplore in public and private life. Within the last few days many of you must have read in the papers a judicial opinion which laid down opinions concerning marriage, and the duties and responsibilities of married life, which seems to be singularly dangerous at the present time.⁸³

Dr Carr said it was not for him to debate the legal question (which was irrelevant in the Buckley case, anyway) but he claimed the right to record a strong moral protest. The judge's opinion, he said

is calculated to do serious harm, by suggesting to married women that their duties and responsibilities are not for life...but for a time, to be determined by the number of children they have borne. It may also easily suggest both to husband and wife that a large family should be regarded as involving an intolerable inconvenience and that such an inconvenience should be specially avoided.⁸⁴

The Archbishop found the judicial statement particularly irritating because it came at a time when he was attempting to initiate an action against the purveyors of an allegedly contraceptive device. A proprietary company whose directors included "some well-known city men" had purchased the invention of "a well-known Collins-street doctor" and circulars, of which Dr Carr had one, had been issued to pharmacists and physicians to publicize the invention. The Archbishop's efforts to have the company and its circular suppressed by the Attorney-General were unsuccessful although the attendant publicity, as Detective M'Manamy reported, induced the promoters to wind up the company immediately.⁸⁵

Three principles were implied in Dr Carr's statements. He saw morality, and marital morality in particular, as fixed in one "correct idea." He rejected any suggestion that considerations of convenience or marital relationship should influence the bearing of children. And he claimed, in his letter to the Attorney-General, that the spread of birth control propaganda was a threat to social and national life. This doctrine was sufficiently general to attract the support of several non-Catholics: congratulatory letters came to Carr

83. Argus 20 November 1899 p.5B.

84. loc cit

85. The Archbishop's first account of the syndicate was reported in Age (20 November 1899) p.6C and Argus (21 November 1899) p.5C.

A slightly embellished version was given in his written submission to the New South Wales Royal Commission - DBR, Exhibit n.71.

The Archbishop's letter to the Attorney-General appeared in Age (23 November 1899) p.6E and the report of Detective M'Manamy's investigation in Argus (22 November 1899) p.4D.

from "an unknown and humble individual [and his] dear wife", the Archdeacon of Ballarat, "a Protestant by an accident of birth" whose wife had become "charged with the false philosophy that now prevails", the Prahran Citizens' Association and the Secretary of the Victorian Council of Churches. Even Dr Rentoul, a frequent critic of Romanism, told the Presbyterian Assembly that the Archbishop should be thanked for his "courageous utterance" and the Roman Catholic church honored "for the high estimate that it had always put upon the marriage tie."⁸⁶

Carr referred to the 1899 affair again in a pamphlet reprinted from the Church's journal, Austral Light, in 1900. On this second occasion he came much closer to proclaiming a procreationist view of marriage:

It has been shown that an organized attempt has been made...to interfere with the primary end of marriage, to frustrate the principal purpose for which the Almighty instituted matrimony, and to bring down the marriage state to a condition little elevated above concubinage."⁸⁷

He again assumed that there is an objective morality and was critical of those practitioners who did not try to bring their work into conformity with morality, as well as those who supposed "the prevention or immediate relief of pain, or the pleasure of the patient" to be their primary consideration.⁸⁸ The latter point was worked out in an explicit condemnation of therapeutic abortion: "induction of premature birth and the Caesarian section" were permissible alternatives, he said, but the destruction of foetal life was not permitted "even for the purpose of saving the mother's life."⁸⁹

Carr's line on therapeutic abortion was much tougher than that of the Protestants considered earlier in the chapter who gave priority to maternal, not foetal, life but it was accepted by many of his fellow Catholics. At the Catholic Congress in Sydney in 1900 Dr G.L. Mullins, who was later to appear as a medical witness before the Birth Rate Commission, read a paper on "Catholic Teaching and Medical Practice" which encapsulated the contemporary Catholic position in syllogistic form:

"(a) From the moment of conception the child is possessed of a separate life or soul.

86. Originals of the letters to the Archbishop (all written within a few days of his statement) are held by Father J. Keaney of 33 Howard Street, West Melbourne. The Rev Dr Rentoul's views were reported in Age (24 November 1899) p.6A.

87. T.J. Carr: The Morality of Medical Practice (W.P. Linehan Melbourne 1900) p.4.

88. loc cit.

89. ibid p.11.

- (b) To destroy life is contrary to the Fifth Commandment.
- (c) Abortion is never justifiable, nor may Craniotomy be performed upon a living child."⁹⁰

Caught between this theological prohibition of abortion and a humanitarian interest in preserving maternal life, Catholics who gathered for another Congress in 1904 found an escape from their dilemma via the recently popularized technique of Caesarean intrusion. Dr M.U. O'Sullivan, sometime President of the Victorian Branch of the British Medical Association, restated the definitive Catholic position:

By a decree of the Holy Office, dated March, 1902, the universal rule had been made clear - that in no condition in which there is a living foetus, ectopic or otherwise, is the physician justified in doing anything which might lead directly to the death of the foetus.

This rule applied even in cases where intra-uterine Baptism had been administered.⁹¹ O'Sullivan was also able to report that maternal mortality from Caesarean section was now no higher than that associated with craniotomy or abortion and that improved pre-natal care was also altering the situation.⁹² Archbishop Carr, more gratified than logical, said he was pleased to hear that obstetric developments were bringing the medical profession into line with the Church's teaching.⁹³

The Report of the Birth Rate Commission being only seven months old at the time, it naturally provided the basis for a good deal of comment when the Congress met in Melbourne. Since the Report strongly reflected what may be called the 'common Christianity' of the witnesses, Catholic comments on this occasion were very similar to those of Protestants. Lieutenant-Colonel Ahearne told the Congress that the decline of the birth rate undoubtedly resulted from an increase in

90. George Lane Mullins, MA., MD.: "Catholic Teaching and Medical Practice" in First Australasian Catholic Congress Proceedings (Sydney 1900) p.241. A tacit premiss, which would appear between (b) and (c), is that the Commandment is universal in its force.

For Mullin's appearance at the Birth Rate Commission see DBR Qq.2312-2364.

91. See Discussion in Second Australasian Catholic Congress, Proceedings (Medical Section) (Melbourne 1905) pp.44f. O'Sullivan's statement was supported by Co-adjutor Archbishop Kelly of Sydney, who noted that "The Catechism for Priests denounced abortion as a conspiracy to murder."

92. ibid p.12ff.

93. ibid p.44.

"the deliberate and intentional avoidance of procreation", caused by the decay of religious feeling and the growth of preventive knowledge. Dr J.B. Nash reiterated the Commission's finding that parental selfishness was the motivating force in these developments and Dr O'Sullivan stressed the deleterious effect of "the newspaper advertisements of abortifacients."⁹⁴

As well as agreeing with main-stream Protestant opinion on these matters O'Sullivan, Ahearne and the others were in close accord with their Cardinal, P.F. Moran, who had been a witness at the Birth Rate Commission himself. Moran began his evidence on that occasion with the statement that artificial restriction of marital fertility "violates the natural law, and violates still more the religious conditions and sanctity of marriage." There might be a few, grave, unspecified circumstances in which a couple could live as brother and sister so that no more children would be born but any restriction by interference with intercourse he considered to be "repugnant to the natural law, and repugnant to the religious duty of the contractors." Further, he said, "the practice of prevention certainly undermines the belief in the dignity of womanhood, and in the dignity of the married state, and in the whole supernatural order in which we, as members of a Christian community, live."⁹⁵ In the latter opinion he was giving expression, whether consciously or not, to those positive elements of Christian concern for the status of the married woman which had been the occasion for the formulation of Catholic teaching on contraception centuries before.⁹⁶

Moran thought that the causes of the practice he deplored were both religious and social. On the religious side he repeated his 1886 criticism of the State for taking to itself the right of divesting marriage of its religious character by legislating more liberal grounds for divorce. He also impugned the "great humiliation, derogatory to the whole idea of the sacredness of the marriage state" of recognizing the administration of marriage by officers of the Salvation Army.⁹⁷

94. ibid pp.30f. (Ahearne); 41f. (Nash); 45 (O'Sullivan).
Dr Nash was himself a member of the Birth Rate Commission.

95. DBR Qq.6031, 6034. As with Protestant witnesses, so with the Cardinal, only developed answers have been used and brief responses to leading questions have been ignored.

96. Noonan: op cit chapters III, IV and VI, on the Gnostic, Manichaeian and Cathar heresies, describes the Christian reaction to these attempts to devalue sexual life.

97. DBR Q.6044. There was a certain lack of tolerance about the Cardinal's views on these topics: for example he said that Sir Alfred Stephen, who was the 'father' of divorce legislation in New South Wales, "was insane on the matter of divorce." ibid Q.6038.

On the social side he offered a whole cluster of causes of the decline of the birth rate: "the deterioration in the moral tone of our people" was put down to the too great availability of corrupt literature in the form of newspapers, novels (especially those of Zola) and the Bulletin; there was insufficient parental control over children in the city and excessive barefaced immorality at the beaches; a further "source of the prevalent immorality" was the public school system, which the Cardinal thought to be "really undermining the morality of the community". The poverty which many people regarded as a possible cause of the decline in family size was dismissed by the Cardinal as "factitious poverty" produced by improvidence or indolence, or by the fact that "nearly every class is living beyond its means".⁹⁸

If the Cardinal's collection of causes was rather inchoate, his suggested remedies for communal ills showed no more social sophistication. The State should take some steps to curb immoral literature and police supervision of the beaches should be increased. Prostitution should be put down and abortion prevented. The State should also limit the number of pharmacies or tighten police control over their sale of preventives, perhaps to the point of prohibition, and it would also be salutary if the medical profession were cleaned up, as it had been in Melbourne after Archbishop Carr's expose.⁹⁹

The Cardinal, Archbishop Carr and a number of their laymen shared definite theological beliefs about marriage and the family which had been recently re-stated with considerable force by the highest authorities of their Church. Identification of the acts of conception and information made abortion entirely unacceptable and the sacramental view of marriage and its purposes excluded the possibility of any other kind of family limitation. In 1890 Protestant teaching was hardly distinguishable from Catholic but by the end of our period some differences had begun to appear. Protestants were as strongly opposed as Catholics to the practice of abortion (where the mother's life was not in danger), although less explicit about the theological basis of their position. They were more equivocal about prevention of conception: some regarded it as essentially bad, others regarded it as an expression of bad motives - such as selfishness - and a few believed that the morality of the practice depended on the circumstances of the practitioners.

98. ibid Qq.6046, 6063-67, 6069. "Factitious" (sic).

99. ibid Qq.6047-50, 6065.

An explanation of the appearance of differences in denominational attitudes probably must begin from the premiss that the family has always played a very important role in the Christian estimate of human life. The family has been regarded as a spiritual institution and attacks on it have been regarded as an attack on spiritual values and, thus, on religion itself. Between about 1880 and 1930, in Australia as in Europe and North America, the sacramental view of marriage and its purposes was being questioned, usually, though not exclusively, by critics who were hostile to religion as well. Whereas developments of Christian sexual thought in the past had come "slowly and somewhat erratically in response to internal pressures", after 1880 rapid response was required to pressures from outside the churches.¹⁰⁰ It is not surprising that the majority of Christian ministers reacted adversely to the apparent threat to the religious and spiritual concept of the family, especially when they knew that members of their flocks were actually employing techniques such as the critics advocated. Since the threat to the spiritual concept of the family incidentally threatened the ministers' own role as spiritual advisors, it is no more surprising that hostility to the devaluation of the family was least in the Methodist community (where the emphasis on individual experience reduces the relative importance of the institution and the minister), and greatest in the Catholic Church (where institution and minister are most highly valued), with Presbyterians and Anglicans in between. In the face of rapid change in lay beliefs about marriage and its purposes the majority of clergymen reacted with an exaggerated opposition to family limitation and a commensurate lack of understanding about the reasons why people were practising it.

100. See Bailey: op cit p.239f., Cf. Herbert Waddams: "Family" in Macquarrie: op cit, and Arthur W. Calhoun: A Social History of the American Family (Barnes & Noble New York 1919/1960) Vol III, Introduction.

CHAPTER VII

The Population Debate

Australia did not experience a theoretical debate about population as vigorous or varied as that which occurred in France, Britain and, to a lesser extent, the United States of America during the last third of the nineteenth century.¹ Whereas one can speak of a post-Malthusian debate in those countries from about 1870, in Australia the argument continued almost entirely in Malthusian terms. Ideas from the post-Malthusian debate overseas appeared only rarely in Australia before 1900 and chiefly as slogans of popular opinion thereafter. Neo-Malthusian ideas also were largely absent from the Australian debate because the interest in this country was not so much about natural increase in particular as about total population size and growth in general. Neo-Malthusianism was of popular, rather than theoretical interest. This chapter and the one following will show that the theoretical debate in Australia declined in intensity during the 1890s, giving way to windy talk, as distinct from debate, and to more popular discussion of family size and growth by migration in the late 1890s and early 1900s. It will also be argued that more of the participants in the debate were critics than supporters of Malthusianism and that the ideas of Henry George were a significant polarizing influence.

Dr Craufurd Goodwin's comprehensive bibliographic survey of the subject indicates that population theory was discussed more extensively in Australia during the 1880s than during the 1890s.² It is therefore somewhat misleading, albeit necessary, to plunge into the debate at the beginning of the 'nineties. However a useful springboard is provided by two articles which came from the pens of A.J. Ogilvy and Charles Rennick in 1891. Ogilvy was a Tasmanian landowner and a vice-president of the Land Nationalization Society of London. By the time of his death he had become a "well-known writer on land nationalization and social questions".³ In his article "Malthusianism", which first appeared in the Westminster Review of

1. On the debate beyond Australia see, for example, J.J. Spengler: France Faces Depopulation (Duke University Press 1938), especially chapters VI and VII; D.E.C. Eversley: Social Theories of Fertility and the Malthusian Debate (O.U.P. 1959); Spengler: "Population Doctrines in the United States" in Journal of Political Economy (U.S.A.) XLI: 4 (August 1933) pp.433-467 and XLI: 5 (October 1933) pp.639-672; and Hutchinson: op cit, especially chapters VIII-XIII.

2. Goodwin: op cit Chapter 12, "Population Studies".

3. Daily Post (Hobart) 2 July 1914 and The Land Nationaliser (London) September 1914, p.130. The British Museum catalogue lists seven titles under Ogilvy's name.

September 1891, he attacked Malthus on both empirical and theoretical grounds. The tendency of population to increase at a geometrical rate was disputable, Ogilvy said, because of the extent of mortality before the age for marriage, the failure of many marriageable people to enter the estate "for various reasons that have nothing to do with subsistence", and the limited fertility of many who did marry. On this basis six children would be required of every fecund couple "merely to keep up the population." He also suggested that the actual growth rate "of about 2 per cent per annum" in Australia, where subsistence was cheap and catastrophic checks unknown, was "far from being a 'geometrical' rate." Even if mortality and celibacy did not operate, he added, geometrical increase would be prevented by the diminution of fertility as life became more artificial and regular, and brain power was cultivated.⁴

Not only did population fail to increase geometrically, Ogilvy contended, but subsistence increased more than arithmetically. He identified three stages of human development in which man simply consumed subsistence, husbanded subsistence and, finally, improved or invented subsistence. In this last, "progressive", stage, provided there was **sufficient** land, the rate of increase in production would be more nearly geometrical than the increase in population. The idea that increasing population pressed upon subsistence was simply the result of confusing Diminishing Area (which would eventually be a problem) with the, falsely labelled, 'Law' of Diminishing Return. Following very closely after Henry George, Ogilvy said that, rather than diminishing the return from a given area, concentration of population increased the return because of the efficiencies following upon greater division of labour.⁵ Besides claiming that the Malthusian analysis was wrong as regards both numbers and subsistence, Ogilvy objected that the Malthusian remedy of prudential restraint would aggravate any situation in which a catastrophic check was threatening. "For the remedy is offered to the poorer classes where want threatens, not to the rich who are secure; and no one imagines that the whole body of the poor would adopt it at once." In fact the effect of restraint would be dysgenic for the "best" people would

4. A.J. Ogilvy: The Third Factor of Production (Swan Sonnenschein & Co. London 1898) pp.157-160. This work includes the Westminster Review article of September 1891.

5. ibid pp.160-166. George elaborates the division of labour argument in his Progress and Poverty, Book IV, Chapter II.

"leave no children to transmit their excellencies" while "the inferior" would multiply to fill the additional room.⁶

Ogilvy's article was published in London but that did not prevent it having Australian currency. The Westminster Review was taken by public and private libraries while the Melbourne Argus, which shared with other newspapers the habit of reviewing the English magazines, told its readers that Ogilvy "exposed...the fallacies of the Malthusian doctrine."⁷ One person who saw the article was Charles Rennick and he proceeded to write a refutation of it for the Melbourne Bankers' Magazine. He pinpointed the intellectual paternity of his adversary's ideas with the comment that Ogilvy could "hardly be congratulated on taking Henry George for his guide, philosopher and friend" on the subject. He also shortly stated his view that Ogilvy's "attempt to upset the Law of Population" was unsupported either "by new knowledge, or by sound reasonings on old data."⁸

After two paragraphs of preliminary rhetoric Rennick settled down to the defence of Malthus. He acknowledged that strict geometrical and arithmetical ratios of increase in numbers and subsistence were "now discarded as inaccurate" and not considered essential to the doctrine of population but he stood by the statement "that population tends to increase faster than the means of subsistence" as the law of population. He defended Malthus' empiricism, which he contrasted with the abstract doctrines of "the single taxers [Ogilvy?] and socialists," and held it to Malthus' credit that he was supported by Darwin and by "almost every economist of note since his own day" including Henry Sidgwick and Alfred Marshall.⁹

Turning to Ogilvy's strictures on Malthus, Rennick pointed out that they were wrong in two particulars, the discussion of catastrophic and prudential checks and the argument about the availability of subsistence. Ogilvy had given it as Malthusian doctrine that the pressure of numbers on subsistence would necessarily issue in catastrophe: but, Ogilvy had said, the

6. ibid p.172.

7. Argus 17 October 1891 p.4D. Circulation of English magazines in Australia is discussed at p.223 below.

8. C. Rennick: "Review. The Malthusian Doctrine" in Bankers' Magazine and Journal of the Bankers' Institute of Australasia V:5 (December 1891) p.289 and 282.

9. ibid p.283. Rennick described Sidgwick and Marshall as "the two most eminent living economists."

pressure would never reach that level because some people would always refrain from marriage or procreation. He did not see that the behaviour he regarded as invalidating Malthus' argument was the same behaviour which Malthus had called prudential restraint! As Rennick was quick to point out, Ogilvy had misapprehended Malthus' argument about positive and preventive checks and the attempt to refute the doctrine of increase therefore failed.¹⁰

In Rennick's opinion, Ogilvy had also failed to show that scarcity of subsistence was but a remote possibility. People crowding on a given territory might gain increasing wealth by specialization, Rennick said, but the attempt to discount the law of diminishing returns with this argument simply confused wealth with subsistence. It was clear that the increase of one did not necessarily insure a greater supply of the other. To the argument that presently uncultivated, inferior land could be brought into cultivation to meet any population increase in the foreseeable future, Rennick replied that a price which made additional cultivation profitable to the landowner might equally well deprive the poor man of subsistence by putting it beyond his power to purchase. As an illustration that land supply did not guarantee food supply he pointed to the contemporary coexistence in Russia of thousands of unused acres and thousands of famished peasants.

Population may be checked not only by absolute scarcity of food, but also by inability to purchase food where there is no absolute scarcity. 11

Having argued against George-ite criticism of Malthus, Rennick took his own stand on a conditional, rather than an absolute, statement of the Law of Population: The Law, he said,

asserts that the fecundity of the human race is so great that if it were not arrested by checks, population would outrun subsistence. Population never does and never can outrun subsistence, because the checks in question come into operation to prevent it. 12

Rennick did not draw any inferences about population policy from his theoretical considerations although one practical implication for Australia of his views was clear enough. If large supplies of unused land were no guarantee of largely increased subsistence, then the popular argument that Australia's extensive lands should be filled up with a numerous population was at least opened to debate. If one wanted to draw a policy from Ogilvy's theory, on the other hand, it could be that of attracting numerous

10. ibid p.284f.

11. ibid p.287.

12. ibid p.290.

migrants of a 'superior' type, settling them on the land, encouraging them to procreate and waiting for the increase of their wealth.

Although it has been useful to juxtapose the views of Ogilvy and Rennick, it would be wrong to give the impression that they initiated the population debate in the 1890s. Already in 1890 Malthusianism had been discussed in two papers, by Andrew Garran and H.A. Ellis, delivered to meetings of the Australian Economic Association in Sydney. Garran told the Association that Malthus had made an empirical observation that fertility varies between the animal and vegetable kingdoms, then added the non-empirical labels 'geometrical' and 'arithmetical' to give "a form of mathematical demonstration to his argument without the reality." Garran criticised this as an example of the tendency, which he regarded as the bane of political theorists, "to find a single cause for a complex result" and warned his hearers against attempting simple refutations of the Malthusian position.¹³

Garran should have been pleased with the views of H.A. Ellis. Unlike Charles Rennick, who had disparaged reliance on the doctrines of Henry George as a counter to the doctrines of Malthus, Ellis wanted to have a foot in each camp. He accepted "the fundamental propositions of Malthus" as true but suggested that they were sufficiently conditional to allow other conclusions than Malthus's to flow from them. For example, he thought relief from the Malthusian crux could be sought in two directions, "first limiting of population, and secondly, increasing production." Ellis regarded the former alternative as outside his province but for the latter way out of the crux he thought Henry George had supplied a mechanism: land nationalization would do away with middlemen, get more labour onto the land and thus increase available nourishment.¹⁴

In another part of his paper Ellis claimed that Malthus had held the numbers/subsistence crux to be ineluctable and that Darwin had taken this up as the motive power of the struggle for existence. Ellis argued that the amelioration of the struggle by modern social developments showed that man had the ability to modify his surroundings and evade the Malthusian crux. Archibald Forsyth, who was among Ellis' audience and himself something of an economic

13. A. Garran: "A criticism of Malthus' doctrine" in Australian Economist II:6 (August 1890) p.61f. Garran had a distinguished career in journalism and public affairs. In 1890 he was a member of the New South Wales Legislative Council.

14. H.A. Ellis: "The theory of Malthus" in ibid II:4 (June 1890) pp.38-40.

theorist, agreed that technological change had dispelled the Malthusian spectre. For the rest, however, Forsyth dismissed Ellis' paper as a pointless collection of contradictions about Malthus and misunderstandings of George!¹⁵

Neither Forsyth nor Ellis, nor their theoretical forebears impressed Samuel Clemes, a Tasmanian schoolmaster who presented a paper on population theory to the 1892 meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science.¹⁶ Clemes made the rather surprising claim that population studies lacked a good theoretical base. He thought that statistical studies had elbowed aside the possible contributions of physiology and other sciences, notwithstanding the pioneering but partial treatment of the topic by Malthus and the investigations by Darwin and Spencer. As an example of the deficiencies of a purely statistical approach Clemes pointed to the, so-called, geometrical progression of population which had raised bogies in the Australian context of high fertility. The absurdity of the geometric rate was evident if the world's present population were extrapolated back in time: "This only gives us, at the most, two or three thousand years for the existence of man on the earth. Geologists would want 50,000 or 60,000 years at least." As well as advising Australians not to worry about geometrical progression Clemes told them not to fear that overpopulation would result from the prevailing high rate of fertility. In a statement notable for its recognition of the changeable nature of demographic phenomena, he said

The birth-rate is very fluctuating, and this is a much more important factor than the death-rate. There is nothing really to be alarmed at since the present rate of increase in Australia is due to many causes exceptionally favourable to increase of population. These will be gradually changed again and the rate will infallibly be lowered. The population of the world...has always been a variable quantity and constantly changing its location. 17

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15. *ibid* pp.40f (Ellis) and 53 (Forsyth). J.A. Ferguson: Bibliography of Australia (Angus & Robertson Sydney 1941-1969) Vol V lists seven papers by Forsyth.
16. S. Clemes: "A Layman's Criticism of Current Theories of Population", abstract in Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, Proceedings IV (1892) p.590f. Clemes appears to have been an enlightened and liberal headmaster of Hobart's Friends' School from 1887-1900, and deserving of the remark that he "was well ahead of his times as a thinker and an originator in education." [The Friends' School 1887-1961 (Friends' School Hobart 1961) pp.7-15. I am grateful to Mr W.N. Oats, the present headmaster of the school, for supplying me with a copy of this chronicle].
17. Clemes may not have been aware that the crude birth rate had, in fact, begun to fall in 1891. Nevertheless the contrast between his attitude and the Birth Rate Commissioners' later insistence that the high rate should be regarded as 'normal' is worth emphasizing.

But there was a last word of caution: "...in any case Malthus's moral checks should still be urged on all who will listen to them."

Theoretical debate about population diminished after 1892 as economic ruin forced most people to look to their more practical affairs. For example, the last attempt by the Australian Economic Association to dabble in population theory (before the Association drifted into limbo in 1899) was made in 1893 when a Miss Louisa MacDonald gave a paper setting out an emancipiste view of the economic position of women. She called attention to prevailing concern about aspects of overpopulation and reported that the phenomenon of female employment was commonly said to be caused by "the existence of a large surplus female population." The superficial reason for this view seemed to lie in "the ideas that abound everywhere now concerning the necessity of some check on population", she said. It was also notable that the beginning of the 'woman's movement' was coincidental with "the first expression of what we call Malthusianism". Miss MacDonald's paper was rather slight but she was making a serious attempt to relate contemporary events to a theoretical framework (even if she did call "Malthusianism" what might better have been called neo-Malthusianism.) For her troubles the pundits of the Association treated her as patronisingly as they had treated Ellis before her. Professor Walter Scott, the academic lynch-pin of the Association, and the Hon. L.F. Heydon ignored her Malthusian comments and spoke of her paper as if it were merely a diversion. Arthur Duckworth, the Association's secretary, also ignored her theoretical points and damned the woman movement for causing "serious injury to the upgrowing generation."¹⁸

If Miss MacDonald was a figure of slight consequence the same could hardly be said of C.H. Pearson, an Oxford-trained historian, liberal politician and minister in Victoria, leader writer for the Age and "a thoroughgoing individualist".¹⁹ His most influential publication was certainly an individual piece of work: National Life and Character was a forecast that the "higher races" could not expect to expand beyond Europe and the Temperate Zone colonies but, rather, would come under increasing pressure from the more prolific black and yellow races. The consequent concentration of European peoples would be followed by State Socialism, with

18. Louisa MacDonald: "The Economic Position of Women" in Australian Economist III:11 (December 1893), p.267. Discussion by Scott and Heydon in ibid IV:1 (February 1891) p.375 ff and by Duckworth and J. Hurst Jun., p.380f.

19. J.M. Tregenza: Professor of Democracy. The Life of Charles Henry Pearson... (Melbourne University Press 1968) p.227.

increasing national indebtedness, and by urbanization on a scale inimical to physical stamina, genius or intellectual distinction.²⁰

This forecast did not amount to "the most detailed and carefully reasoned statement of the new Australian concern with Asian overpopulation"²¹ but National Life and Character did have echoes of the kind in later years. Alfred Deakin was "an intellectual disciple" of Pearson and there are obvious reminiscences of the book in Deakin's second reading speech on the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, the legislative confirmation of the White Australia Policy. The speech shows that Deakin, like Pearson, was free of gross racial prejudices and "avoided crude general implications of 'superiority'."²² Pearson would have been less happy with two men from Deakin's electorate who claimed Pearson as their intellectual champion in a stridently racialist defence of the White Australia policy in 1904.²³

Pearson appears to have been familiar with Malthusian doctrine without being committed **either** for or against it. He certainly did not hold to any law of increase in population and agreed with Clemes that the comparison of past and present world population made the invalidity of the law plain to everyone. In fact he thought it a "matter of extreme difficulty to predict what the rate of increase in any particular country, or at any given time," would be. On the other hand he believed that the catastrophic checks of "Misgovernment, war, and pestilence" had perpetually foiled the natural increase of population in all centuries before his own.²⁴ The disappearance of those checks meant that, as they became hemmed in by the more rapid

20. C.H. Pearson: National Life and Character: A Forecast (Macmillan London 1893/1894).

21. So described by Goodwin: op cit p.418

22. On Deakin's relationship to Pearson see J.A. La Nauze: Alfred Deakin (Melbourne University Press 1965) Vol.I pp.19,29. Cf. Tregenza: op cit p.230 for Deakin's own tribute to Pearson in letter dated 12 August 1892. Deakin's speech is found in Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (Representatives) 12 September 1901 pp.4804-4817. The defence of the speech is made by La Nauze: op cit p.278

23. O.P. Law and W.T. Gill: "A White Australia: what it means" in Nineteenth Century LV (1904) p.146. Pearson would certainly not have accepted responsibility for sentences like these: "Her position and climate render Australia particularly liable to be made the resort of coloured people of low morality and social development..."; "Speaking generally, the coloured aliens are inferior to the whites in physique and morals and low in the social scale." (p.149). Law and Gill came from the Victorian provincial centre of Ballarat: a fairly safe guess would be that their paper was first aired at the strong local branch of the Australian Natives Association.

24. Pearson: op cit p.71f.

increase of negro and Asian peoples, the European races would have to "stint the increase of population." If this were done by "a patient self-restraint" showing itself in "a limitation to late marriages" - the 'moral' restraint of classical Malthusianism - there would be material decline but no harm to national character. But if it were done by "methods...inconsistent with morality, the very life-springs of the race [would] be tainted."²⁵ In his hint at the dire consequences of non-moral limitation of fertility and his rather jaundiced view of towns as consumers of men, constantly needing vigorous countrymen to replenish them with new life,²⁶ Pearson was touching themes that were soon to have wide currency.

Pearson had a rather aloof personality and his book, too, stood a little apart from the common debate. The same could not be said of Maximilian Hirsch, political economist, single-taxer and prominent publicist for free-trade in the tariff debates which raged in Victoria throughout the 1890s. His theory of population, like that of many other anti-Malthusians in Australia, owed a good deal to Henry George but he was no slavish disciple. On the law of diminishing returns, for example, he argued that increase of population does constantly tend to raise the final cost of primary products. On the other hand, he held, "the cost of production of any manufactured commodity constantly tends to fall as population increases." When primary costs were weighed with secondary benefits Hirsch's position was the same as George's:

The final outcome of increase in population...is a general decrease in the cost of production;...the more numerous the population of a country becomes, the more easily and the more fully can the wants and desires of all of them be satisfied. The exertion required for the production of a given amount of wealth per head becomes less as population increases.²⁷

These assertions confuted the Malthusian view that the factors population and exertion varied directly in the production of given wealth, Hirsch claimed, and thus took away from political economy the stigma "dismal science".

Hirsch failed to make a possible extension of his theory, which surely would have been appreciated in depressed Victoria, and suggest that rapid population increase would lead to quick satisfaction of wants. However no mere theorist's bidding was needed to make

25. *ibid* p.137.

26. *ibid* pp.161-173.

27. M. Hirsch: Economic Principles (Beacon Newspaper Co Melbourne 1896) p.24f.

Australian commercial and industrial leaders see that point! They had a good deal to say about population questions during our period, chiefly from the aspect of the numbers and growth rate necessary to maximise business profits. Since little of their commentary proceeded from a clear conceptual framework it might be included in the chapter on popular opinion, were it not for the facts that it appeared in the specialist, rather than the secular, press and that it does develop some lines of thought inherent in the 'theoretical' debate.

There were a few, not very sophisticated, attempts to relate economic and demographic phenomena. In 1893, for example, W.H. Eldred, writing in the New South Wales bankers' Journal, listed among the causes of the financial crisis "the cessation of immigration caused by the withdrawal of government aid, whereas the true policy of the country lies in encouraging population..."²⁸ Shortly afterwards another correspondent of the Journal earnestly assured bankers that "an observant student" would find that "vital statistics afford as reliable a test of [economic] progress as can well be found." The writer also appears to have regarded the converse as true, that economic trends are useful indicators of demographic progress. Presenting readers with the immigration returns for 1891-93, he said

...with the commencement of the crisis, and trade and industrial depression, our normal rate of increase began to decline. How long this movement will continue it is next to impossible to say, but there can be no reason for doubting that, with the first symptoms of returning prosperity, our population will resume its wonted rate of increase. 29

Four years later an unsigned article in the same journal implied that a relationship existed between investment policy and population growth. The writer compared the six-fold increases of both public and private borrowing with the population increase of less than 40 per cent during the 1880s and lamented that the borrowed money had not been invested in productive works. If that course had been followed, he said, "the demands incidental thereto upon our limited supply of labour would have been of so great a magnitude that it could not have failed to attract the attention of the European

28. W.H. Eldred: "The Financial Crisis" in Journal of the Bankers' Institute of N.S.W. II:7 (July 1893) p.227. Eldred was a former bank director acting in 1893 as Consul-General for Chile in Sydney. The article was part of a consular report.

29. "Population", "(From a Correspondent)" in ibid III:3 (March 1894) pp.104-106.

emigrant class..."³⁰ The Melbourne bankers' editor made a similar point, with additional political overtones. The emigration of 50,000 adults in three years had cancelled the natural increase of Victoria's population, he claimed, but there was yet hope.

Directly our people have an idea...that we may hope for liberal Government..., plus a good season or two, they will cease to leave us... Melbourne has had quite enough spent on her. What is wanted is the opening up of back country like the mountainous parts of Gippsland, or water conservation in the arid Mallee country. 31

The central theme of the population-and-profits debate among business leaders was an attack on the Malthusian spectre of overpopulation. The business men mostly took the George-ite line (divested of George-ite trimmings, of course!) that Australia could support a much larger population than it was doing and indeed, should encourage immigration to achieve the increase as quickly as possible. Throughout the 'nineties, and beyond, the call for population growth was often linked with optimistic predictions about the effect of growth on productivity. After about 1904 there was a companion call for population growth as a good-in-itself. The main variants in the latter period were an occasional suggestion that natural increase would be preferable to increase by migration and some sharp differences of opinion about the restriction of immigration to whites only.

Throughout the 1880s Victorian business leaders dwelt on the advantages, to themselves, the workers and the colony, of an increase in population and, thus, in the size of the market.³² This theme was carried on into the 'nineties. An early statement linked improvement of trade with the currently fashionable schemes to relieve urban congestion by settling people on the land³³ but

30. ibid VIII:8 (August 1898) p.292.

31. Editor's note: "Victoria's Loss" in Bankers' Magazine... XI:8 (March 1898) p.648. Similar sentiments were repeated in the following issue, p.677f.

32. See, for example, Australasian Trade Review (Melbourne) XIV:13 (December 1884) p.760: "No greater piece of absurdity could have been practiced than when Victoria, adopting protection, abandoned immigration...there must be a large outlet for manufactures." Cf. Melbourne Chamber of Commerce: Report of the Committee (1883) p.29; ibid (1884), President's Address p.44: ("...every pair of hands added to the country means increased lodging requirements, increased demand for food, clothing, etc., and thereby increasing the wealth of the country."); ibid (1888), President's Address p.35f.

33. "The State of Trade" in Australasian Trade Review XXII:4 (April 1892) p.125.

as the depression of trade grew deeper the stress was simply on the therapeutic value for commerce of an increase in numbers. The point was made twice during 1894 by writers in the New South Wales bankers' Journal. One writer confined himself to the opinion that "The certain outlet for Australian products will be promoted by the increase of population, and all energies should be directed to aid immigration of the most desirable class." His colleague was more extravagant:

...it is monstrous to suppose Australia is to be for ever inhabited by only 4,000,000 people - and when, as assuredly will happen, we have 10,000,000 inhabitants - securities of all kinds will be greatly enhanced in value... With increased population our own markets will greatly expand. 34

The quintessential statement of the commercial view about the relationship between population and business conditions appeared in the Journal in 1897. A writer calling for increased immigration by Britishers "of the right stamp" assured his readers that New South Wales alone was "capable of supporting twenty times her present population at least..." He urged the encouragement of immigration on the economic grounds that "Population and revenue are seen to increase in almost equal ratios, falling and rising the one with the other." So far as the Australian colonies were concerned, in his view

fresh blood and moderate capital [were] urgently needed to hasten production... With a healthy immigration flowing in... a fresh impulse would be speedily perceptible in trade, both land and house property would rise and the securities at present clogging our financial institutions would again assume a nearer approach to their old valuations. 35

After 1900 the profit motive for population growth remained a common topic among business leaders, its currency in New South Wales becoming nearly as wide as it had been in Victoria during the 1880s. The President of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce for 1903 deemed it necessary to have a population "which steadily expands as commerce itself does." In 1905 the New South Wales Chamber of Manufactures supported Prime Minister Deakin's immigration proposals on the ground that "Desirable immigration means more people, and more people means more capital, and the utilization of

34. Journal of the Institute of Bankers... III:1 (January 1894) p.5, "Financial Review", and ibid III:12 (December 1894) p.562, "Our Present Position and Future Outlook".

35. ibid VI:10 (October 1897) p.394f, note on "Imperialism and Immigration."

millions of acres of unused territory, and thus increasing our national wealth." The following year the acting-President of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce, obviously directing his remarks at labour leaders' fears for job security, announced it as an indubitable truth "that an increase in population means an increase of wealth not only of the few but of the many." The President of the Melbourne Chamber, aiming his words at similar ears in 1908, said that suitable immigrants "would be consumers as well as producers and should therefore be welcomed by all classes." In 1907 the General Council of Chambers of Commerce besought the government to ensure a steady stream of immigration to cope with the "growth in industrial manufactures which will shortly exceed the volume of consumption of the present population." The great adaptability of the population-and-profit doctrine was finally demonstrated in 1908 when it was linked with developments in fiscal policy: the President of the New South Wales Chamber of Manufactures told his members that

If they wanted to get any benefits from increased protection they must get increased payment and that could not come from their own limited populations. A wisely managed scheme of immigration would be as much the saviour of the manufacturers as anything could be. 36.

Some commercial men thought mere increase of population failed to provide the whole answer to their problems. There was also a good deal of interest in the way population was distributed between town and country. At the beginning of the decade the Australasian Trade Review reported in gratified tones that the population in the Melbourne metropolitan area had advanced by leaps and bounds since the census of 1881. By 1893, however, in the aftermath of the crash, a chastened Review was saying

the great problem which overshadows all is how to bring surplus labour and idle land into contract... It is not to tide over some temporary depression that is now the task, but to relieve Melbourne of a population of many thousands without allowing the overflow of energy to drain away to other colonies... Our [able-bodied, male] population has been ebbing away from us for many months past... In the meantime,

36. J.G. Farleigh: "President's Address" in NSW Chamber of Manufactures Annual Report (1908) p.17.

For the other opinions cited in this paragraph see J. Barre Johnston: "President's Address" in Sydney Chamber of Commerce: Annual Report (1903) p.39; Report of the Council in NSW Chamber op cit (1905) p.9; George Merrivale: "Acting-President's Address" in Sydney Chamber op cit (1906) p.31f; R.J. Larking: "President's Address" in Melbourne Chamber of Commerce op cit (1908) p.59; General Council of Chambers of Commerce of the Commonwealth of Australia Report (1907) p.47.

close to our capital, thousands of acres lie idle, waiting for the application of such energy to turn them into teeming gardens. 37.

This theme of the need to promote the growth of rural population was one which survived the mid-'90s. The President of the Bank of New South Wales reported in 1893 that "one of the greatest evils" facing the Australian colonies was "the concentration of an unnecessarily large population in the cities and towns" while there was "an enormous area of splendid land wasting." His sentiments were repeated almost verbatim by his successor in 1895 and were echoed by the President of the Australian Economic Association in 1896.³⁸ In 1904 the same theme was heard, with a variation, from the Melbourne bankers' magazine. The magazine reported that far too many young men were seeking scarce city office jobs for which the salaries were slight. Consequently "the men cannot marry, the women must work, the land is undeveloped, the population remains stationary..." The remedy was said to lie in a system of Government loans "to induce young men of good character and upbringing to try the experiment of open air life."³⁹

In addition to these population-for-profit calls, there were numerous other calls by commercial leaders for an increase in population for its own sake. Statements of the second kind were most common between about 1902 and 1910 and stressed immigration rather than natural increase, as the following list indicates. Concern at the lack of immigration was expressed by the President of Melbourne's Chamber of Commerce in 1903, while the President of the South Australian Chamber of Manufactures urged encouragement of immigration in 1904; in 1905 the Insurance and Banking Record declared that "Australia would benefit enormously" from the importation of "a few thousand sound agricultural labourers" and in 1906 the General Council of Chambers of Commerce urged government action to meet "the pressing need of increased population." W.M. M'Pherson, President of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce in 1909,

37. Australasian Trade Review XXIII:5 (May 1893) p.163, "The Question of the Day in Victoria". Cf. ibid XXI:5 (May 1891) p.181, "Population of Melbourne and Suburbs".

38. Remarks by Thomas Buckland Esq., at the Half-yearly General Meeting of the Proprietors of the Bank of New South Wales, 30 October 1893; J.R. Hill: Presidential remarks at the second half-yearly meeting of the Bank of N.S.W., 31 October 1893, quoted in Journal of the Institute of Bankers IV:11 (November 1895) p.473; R.J. Black: "Presidential Address" in Australian Economist IV:23 (February 1896) p.555.

39. Editor's notes in Bankers' Magazine... XVII:8 (March 1904) p.332.

said that "the peopling of this great continent", preferably by "the man of British birth", should be the first question for statesmen. By 1911 his successor was able to refer to the topic in pleased, rather than hopeful, tones as Australia moved into the first of its twentieth century migration booms:

we must rejoice in the fact that we have had quite a respectable stream of immigrants during the last few months, and from all accounts the stream is still running.⁴⁰

Virtually all the articulate members of the commercial community were united in desiring an increase of population for Australia. Most supported the opinion that immigration was an acceptable, and the most probably effective, means of achieving the increase. Comments offered in the shadow of a Royal Commission which had offered no real hope of a rise in fertility were, understandably, unfavourable to natural increase as a source of growth. G.S. Littlejohn, who had been a member of the Birth Rate Commission but was speaking in 1904 as President of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce, felt the baby was commercially inferior to the immigrant who was usually an adult, brought "more or less capital, skill, knowledge already acquired" and was therefore "of great value as a producer, direct or indirect, and as a consumer."⁴¹ M'Pherson of Melbourne and Jeffrey Dennis of Sydney agreed that, besides lacking skills, the baby was rather too long in coming. Dennis reported himself "very much grieved" by a colleague who had stated that the best immigrants would be babies. "Babies are all very well in their places", Dennis replied, "but for us to wait for the country to be populated as fully as it ought to be by the Australian born only, would be for us to wait a very long time

40. F. White: "President's Address" in Melbourne Chamber of Commerce Annual Report (1911). Other references in this paragraph are from M.D. M'Eacharn: "President's Address" in Melbourne Chamber: op cit (1903) p.42; J.M. Reid: "President's Address" in Committee of South Australian Chamber of Manufactures Annual Report (1904) p.27; Australasian Insurance & Banking Record XXIX (September 1905) p.736; General Council of Chambers of Commerce of the Commonwealth Report (1906) p.77; W.M. M'Pherson: "President's Address" in Melbourne Chamber op cit (1909) p.54.

41. G.S. Littlejohn: "President's Address" in Sydney Chamber of Commerce Annual Report (1904) p.31f.

indeed."⁴²

Commercial men not only preferred immigration to natural increase but were, by and large, indifferent to the racial origin of migrants. The 1902 Committee of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce were critical of legislative restraints on either non-European migrants or European laborers entering Australia under contract. A possible political motivation in these attitudes was revealed a year later when the President of the Chamber called on "the entire commercial community of the Commonwealth" to join in "emphatically condemning the action of the Federal Labor party in forcing an issue on the coloured labour question."⁴³ The Insurance and Banking Record also twice criticized the exclusion of coloured immigrants in the early months of 1904, when the white population was proving incapable of growing at a sufficient rate to people the northern regions of the continent. The problem was set in two rhetorical questions:

Are [Australians] compensating for the exclusion of others by the peopling of the country by themselves?

Are they a virile race or are they retrograding?

To which the answer was equally rhetorical:

White Australia, unfortunately, is not carrying out the Divine injunction to be fruitful, to multiply, and to replenish the earth. 44

The commercial case in favour of restrictive immigration was put, forcefully, in 1905 when the President of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce declared "These aliens are useless to us. They are not consumers worthy of the name, and what they do consume they

42. W.M. M'Pherson: Speech on Encouragement of Immigration, in General Council of Chambers of Commerce Report (1905) p.49; Jeffrey Denniss "President's Address" in N.S.W. Chamber of Manufactures Annual Report (1905) p.12.

J. Blakiston: Speech on Encouragement of Immigration, in General Conference op cit (1908) p.130 gained no support for his advocacy of equal emphasis on growth by natural increase and by migration. The General Council's annual debate on Encouragement of Immigration was a somewhat ritual affair and might therefore be discounted as a mirror of opinion. But notice that the sentiments expressed in the 1905 debate were echoed elsewhere, and that Blakiston's opponents in 1908 were echoed in F.E. Winchcombe: "President's Address" in Sydney Chamber of Commerce Annual Report (1908) p.39f.

Tradition dies hard and the successors of Littlejohn, M'Pherson and Denniss are to be found today amongst the strongest supporters of Australia's immigration programme. See Charles Mitchell: "A Herd of Sacred Cows" in Nation (Sydney) 18 October 1969, and reactions in succeeding issues.

43. J. Barre Johnston: "President's Address" in Sydney Chamber of Commerce Annual Report (1903) p.39; cf ibid (1902) p.31f.

44. Australasian Insurance & Banking Record XXVIII (19 March 1904) p.212f. cf. ibid XXVII (21 January 1904) p.5.

purchase from their patriots [sic]..." In the same year, however, Denniss was commending an open door policy and a resolution decrying the folly of barring coloured access to tropical Australia was moved at the General Council of Chambers of Commerce.⁴⁵ After 1905 the 'white Australia' issue seems to have dropped out of discussion in commercial circles, possibly because it was recognized that restriction had become a settled policy or because the rapid growth of non-coloured immigration in the latter half of the decade took the urgency out of the matter.⁴⁶

Spokesmen for the labour movement gave less evidence than the employing class showed of interest in every aspect of population growth except migration. Few individuals spoke out on population questions and the labour press was almost devoid of comments. The movement was nearly unanimous, however, in its opposition to migration. Working class leaders made a continuing attempt to have the immigration vote removed from New South Wales Budgets throughout the 1880s. Their agitation was strongest during periods of economic depression and was based chiefly on the belief that immigration cheapened labour.⁴⁷ There was so little immigration during most of the 'nineties and for much of the decade after 1900 that labour men had no occasion for comment. At the end of our period, however, opposition reappeared when an Adelaide Trades Hall meeting, the Port Melbourne branch of the Political Labour Council, political and industrial labour organisations in Broken Hill, and the Port Adelaide Trades and Labour Council were numbered among the protestors against the encouragement of immigration. Migrants were opposed because they were alleged to be found wandering about the cities in search of work (instead of settling on the land), because there was no land for them to settle or because they would "flood the country with cheap labour" and destroy the workers' ability "to

45. George Wall: "President's Address" in Sydney Chamber of Commerce Annual Report (1905) p.33f; Denniss loc cit; General Council of Chambers of Commerce Report (1905) p.25ff. Wall also spoke in the General Council debate - see ibid p.31.

46. In 1906 New South Wales received 680 assisted settlers, the first to come for seven years. Assisted arrivals then climbed to 2,845 (1907); 2,896 (1908); 4,308 (1909); 5,058 (1910) and 9,922 (1911). See Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Immigration: Australian Immigration No.1 (Canberra 1966) p.12.

47. So A.A. Hayden: "The Anti-Immigration Movement, 1877-1893" in Royal Australian Historical Society, Journal & Proceedings XLVIII:1 (March 1962)

dictate something like decent terms."⁴⁸

Labour's demand for security was opposed to Capital's demand for labour but there was no theoretical confrontation between them. The evidence is far too meagre to permit a generalisation but it may be pointed out that, while there were two radical assessments of the problem in Queensland, opposition to family limitation does not seem to have been put in ideological terms in the southern States. In 1892 H.E. Boote, a Queenslanders who tended to confuse Malthusian doctrine with neo-Malthusian practice, flatly declared that "probably no doctrine ever promulgated [had] done more to retard the true solution of social problems." The Essay on Population had dispirited the rank and file ever since its appearance by suggesting "that after all they were their own worst oppressors." Boote took the contrary view that poverty was the cause of overpopulation, on the grounds that

Where there are few opportunities for intellectual life, as in new settlements, the birth-rate is notoriously high and it is in the slums of the cities, and in the hovels of the country, that the children swarm like rabbits. Poverty is a prolific breeder... Extirpate poverty, and the population problem would solve itself.

Australia itself was said to confound the Malthusian theory that poverty results from overpopulation, for examples of poverty could be found even in this land of sparse population, few large families and soil offering limitless possibilities for wealth. Boote did have one good word for the followers of Malthus. Despite their error about the cause of misery, he said, their stress on the dangerous rate at which population could increase was salutary "at a time when the rapid reproduction of the species has been elevated to the dignity of a social virtue". Australia's high rate of increase was not natural, however, but the abnormal product of poverty. The remedy was not sexual restraint but improvement of the people's condition.⁴⁹

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48. Argus 27 June 1910 p.8C (Adelaide Trades Hall); 13 September p.8B (Port Melbourne Political Labour Council); 22 September p.4D (Amalgamated Miners' Association, Broken Hill); 24 May 1911 p.5B (Barrier District Parliamentary Labor League, Broken Hill) and 20 October p.9F (Port Adelaide Trades and Labour Council). The Argus had a strongly conservative political bias but there is no reason to doubt that it accurately reported the facts of these meetings, even if it did make unfair editorial use of the reports. (eg. 8 March 1910 p.6D and 15 August p.6C.)
49. H.E.B.: The Catholicity of Socialism (Queensland Social-Democratic Federation Brisbane n.d.). Ferguson: op cit item 7274B, suggests that the author's initials stand for Henry Ernest Boote and that the publication date was late-1892. Cf. p.205 n.17, above on the unusual recognition that Australia's birth rate was 'high', rather than 'normal'.

The Brisbane Worker's analysis of fertility problems was similar to Boote's but more explicitly Marxist. The paper said that the paucity of the birth rate was

an effect whose cause is deep laid down in the very foundations upon which this rotten system of capitalistic society is based...Labour-saving appliances mean reduced wages... By displacing workmen also they increase competition in all other branches of trade... This increased competition decreases wages all round and the security of employment...

The reduction of employment leads to a contraction of marriage and an increase in the number of women entering an already congested labour market. Thus forced to recognise their true interests, the Worker predicted, women would range their forces

in line with men who are already fighting the battle of the disinherited...And this is the redeeming feature about a capitalist system of society, founded on competition - it breeds within it and fosters the forces that will ultimately destroy it. 50

Labour spokesmen in the south were less radical. William Maston of the New South Wales Trades and Labour Council suggested in 1891 that Australia was overpopulated or, at least, that there was a surplus of labour. He thought the causes of this situation included "(1st) The natural increase of population; (2nd) the introduction of labour-saving machinery; (3rd) immigration; (4th) the breaking down of small manufacturing enterprises." Some largely unrelated remedies were offered but Maston did not suggest that immigration should be halted or that limitation of natural increase should be encouraged.⁵¹ The trade unionist's fear of technological developments was reiterated in 1903 by Edward Riley, who appeared before the Birth Rate Commission as President of the Sydney Labour Council.⁵² Riley said that there was very little discussion of the declining birth rate in trade union circles. However his own view was that mechanisation was making employment uncertain: as a result building tradesmen were sometimes earning only thirty shillings a week, a sum on which, he thought, the upkeep of a family was hardly to be expected.

50. Worker (Brisbane) 6 May 1899 p.5B.

51. William Maston: "The Surplus Labour Problem" in Australian Economist II:20 (November 1891) p.169. Maston received no support from the members of the Australian Economic Association to whom he read his paper. The remedies he suggested were a labour bureau, medical advice for weak workers and labour settlements, to be financed by the State and run by the Trades and Labour Council.

52. DBR Qq.5666-5781. Riley became member of the House of Representatives for South Sydney in 1910.

The distinctive feature of Riley's evidence was that he emphasised the importance of people's social expectations, whereas most discussion of socio-economic influences on the birth rate dwelt on the simple relationship between income and family size. When Mackellar (presiding over the Commission) pilloried the poor for trying to ape the pleasures which he was able to indulge with ease, Riley struck back:

Do not you think you make a mistake when you educate a man or woman up to a social standing when you try to deny them all the rights and social comforts that they see other people enjoying?...When people's minds are educated they crave for social enjoyments.

...

the industrial classes, born into this world, and producing all the wealth of the world, have as much right to their enjoyment and pleasure as any other class. If the upper class, and the middle class, and the civil service class, enjoy these things, then I hope they will have the aim and ambition to do it. If you once deprive them of that you will lower their standard of living - you just bring them down to the same condition as in the Asiatic countries and Europe. 53

Riley's sympathy for those who could not afford a large family did not extend to approval of family limitation and his remedy for declining fertility was the standard one for the time - promotion of closer settlement on the land.⁵⁴

J.E. West, President of the Trades Hall Committee and himself a master plumber, told the Birth Rate Commission he agreed with Riley that employment was very uncertain in Sydney and that it would be a struggle to keep a family on prevailing wages. He also agreed that social enjoyments and a large family were incompatible but took the opposite side of the disjunction from Riley, saying that, in the long run, the poor man would gain no enjoyment from his small family because the means taken for limitation would destroy the health of the wife. Seeing selfishness, not necessity, as the cause of limitation, West did not bother to propose a remedy.⁵⁵

Apart from the widespread opposition to immigration, the labour movement continued as silent on population questions after the Birth Rate Commission as it had done before. The meagre evidence of a single pamphlet suggests, as one might expect, that

53. *ibid* Qq.5707, 5716.

54. *ibid* Q.5724

55. *ibid* Qq.5782-5816. West was member of the House of Representatives for East Sydney from 1910-1931. His own family numbered 2 sons and 7 daughters.

Labour's interest in collectivist improvement of social conditions was leading it towards the same interest in infant life conservation as was taken by those who proceeded from individualist assumptions. In 1908 the veteran union organiser and politician, W.G. Spence, amalgamated the collectivism and interest in conservation with the currently popular themes of evolution and racial decay:

We are working toward the time when the aim of our collective action will be in the direction of deliberately and consciously trying to produce the highest type of man and woman possible...It is only by giving opportunity for bringing out all the best qualities latent in each new-born unit that the evolutionary gain of our race will appear. Just as we work to that end will degeneracy be prevented. 56

Spence's proposals for the improvement of each child's opportunities included governmental supervision of housing standards, governmental provision of lying-in homes, district nursing services and domestic training for mothers, and the use of the arbitration system to obviate juvenile labour by making wages high enough to secure "that standard of comfort which would enable the husband...to provide liberally for mother and children."⁵⁷

The evidence reviewed so far in this chapter has shown that theoretical debate about the peopling of Australia petered out in the 1890s and degenerated into an exchange of articles of faith about migration in the early 1900s. If it had not been for the businessmen discussion of population questions would have been almost extinguished between 1895 and 1903. The vigorous and varied overseas debate had no echo in Australia yet it is clear that the resources for such a debate were widely distributed in Australia. Writings by Mill, Darwin and Spencer, for example, were readily available. Budding radical politicians like Hughes and Holman read Mill and Spencer.⁵⁸ By 1903 Mill's Principles of Political Economy, with its strong links between production theory and Malthusian population theory was (or had been) available from the Free Public Library of Sydney and the libraries of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce, the New South Wales Institute of Bankers, the Melbourne Bankers'

56. W.G. Spence: The Child, the Home, and the State (Worker Print Sydney 1908) p.1.

57. ibid pp.1-7.

58. See L.F. Fitzhardinge: William Morris Hughes, (Angus & Robertson Sydney 1964) Vol I p.24.

Institute and the Australian Economic Association.⁵⁹ Darwin's Origin of Species, with its explicit Malthusian overtones, was available in the metropolitan public libraries and the Mechanic's Institute of the 'frontier' town of Port Augusta.⁶⁰ Various works by Herbert Spencer were in the public and bankers' libraries and even the village library at Saddleworth in South Australia. Nor was the circulation of these, and other, men's ideas limited to books. Mill and Spencer had written for the Westminster Review which was taken by the South Australian and Victorian State libraries throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. The Nineteenth Century, to which Spencer and his disciples were frequent contributors, was taken in the 1890s by libraries as diverse as those of the Sandhurst Mechanics' Institute in Victoria and the Advertiser newspaper in Adelaide.⁶¹

Spencer's work seems to have been particularly widely known and was even the subject of two lengthy editorials in the Adelaide Advertiser during 1901. The first of these essays was provoked by an article in the Saturday Review, which questioned the desirability of the United Kingdom's prevailing growth rate. The Advertiser expressed surprise at this challenge to the prevailing assumption "that mere increase in population is evidence of national strength", then proceeded with its own argument. Science has ensured means of subsistence adequate to dispel the Malthusian spectre, the argument ran, but there remains "an ever increasing struggle among the many to procure the necessaries and comforts of life". The struggle is "essential to the evolution of the higher types, both of individuals and nations". For this reason

the population problem...will settle itself when, through a changed environment, the masses improve in morality and intelligence. And certainly, if there is anything assured

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59. See Catalogue of the Free Public Library, Sydney (1869-87) and Supplementary Catalogue of the Public Library of N.S.W. (1896-1900); Sydney Chamber of Commerce Annual Report (1893) p.49f; Journal of the Bankers' Institute... II:3 (March 1893) p.97ff; Bankers' Magazine... VI:12 (1893) p.1481. Details of holdings by and borrowings from the library of the Australian Economic Association are contained in a notebook of the Association held by Professor S.J. Butlin of Sydney University, who kindly allowed me to see it. The register of borrowings began in January 1888 and was last used in August 1891.
60. The Catalogue of the Port Augusta Institute (1885) is in Pamphlet box Z018 + a, (Library and Booksellers' Catalogues), at the State Library of South Australia.
61. The stamp of each of these libraries appears on different copies of Nineteenth Century during the 1890s in the file now held by the National Library of Australia, Canberra.

amid the seeming paradoxes yielded by the operation of laws governing the multiplication of any species, it is that on which Herbert Spencer has laid so much stress. Along with development there goes a diminution of fertility...On the principle that 'individuation and genesis vary inversely', advancing evolution is accompanied by declining fertility, and given any change which raises the human species to a higher intellectual and moral plane, there will be a corresponding abatement of its reproductive power.

Competition is also socially desirable because "there are a thousand potential reasons for human exertion." Other motives than subsistence inspire the labour of many and it is from them, "moving on the higher planes of life, those of the intellect, that the higher types are evolved."⁶²

A later editorial took up the implications of this social evolutionary theory for an age of universal education.

It is amongst the most highly educated classes that the smallest families are to be found, and this is surely a significant fact...Education has opened to the masses new careers, success in which is dependent upon a self-regarding prudence. Late marriages are the result, and the personal tastes which education brings with it, the love of books, music, &c., can only be gratified if the family is kept down. [Hence] the duty of replenishing the population is left to the classes below them.

As a result

At one end of the social scale there is an artificial restriction of the high types, and at the other, all the greater scope is afforded for the multiplication of those who carry on a more or less animal existence.

The editorial concluded with a passage which indicates that the writer's pursuit of population theory led him to conclusions very close to those which the Daily Telegraph and Argus newspapers were to reach without an explicit theoretical framework. People who emphasised the better care which could be given to children of small families were said to miss

the point on which Herbert Spencer lays great stress, that declining fertility may be a natural and not an artificial accompaniment of advancing civilisation... The restriction of population so far as it is to be accounted for on natural grounds may mean not national decadence, but better homes, a longer education period, and a more cultured life. Where the result is brought about by artificial means, where a policy of individual selfishness is at work,

62. Advertiser 1 July 1901 p.4D.

the virility of a nation must suffer, and its decadence and ruin will indeed have begun. 63

The Melbourne Age and other metropolitan dailies frequently summarized the contents of topical articles (including population) from overseas magazines in their Saturday editions and the register of borrowings from the Australian Economic Association suggests that magazines like the Westminster, Quarterly, Fortnightly, Contemporary and North American Reviews were popular.⁶⁴ Finally mention must be made of the influence of the Bulletin, which was known as 'the bushman's bible' but was also kept on file in the reading room of the New South Wales Chamber of Manufactures! In the mid-'nineties the Bulletin's review page kept its readers informed about current literature including Spencer's Study of Sociology ("the essence of the mind of the greatest living philosopher"); Havelock Ellis's Man and Woman ("an up-to-date statement of sex relations"); Kidd's Social Evolution, which was compared unfavourably with Geddes and Thompson's Evolution of Sex; J.B. Haycroft's Darwinism and Race Progress ("It insists strongly on the duty of individuals to the race...") and Nordau's Degeneration (from which the "nugget" was quoted, "A man cannot beget both thoughts and children").⁶⁵

63. Advertiser 18 September 1901 p.4D. The views publicised by other Australian newspapers are discussed in Chapter VIII, below.

The Advertiser itself has very poor records of its early editorial management so it is not possible to say with certainty who was the author of the editorials. However the centenary issue of the Advertiser (12 July 1958, p.38f) and the Bulletin (4 May 1905 p.21B) both suggest that Langdon Bonython, who owned the paper, was also editing it in the early years of the century. The passages quoted above would not be out of keeping with Bonython's image as a striving, self-made man.

64. Between July 1895 and October 1896 the Age published notes on American Economist, St. James Gazette, Cologne Gazette, Nineteenth Century, The Arena, Longmans Magazine, Cornhill Magazine, Fortnightly Review, Westminster Gazette, Century Magazine, National Review, Chamber's Journal, Pall Mall Gazette and Harper's Magazine. Many of the magazines dealt with questions related to fertility - national progress, racial decay, the 'right age to marry', the 'New Woman' and so on.

65. The "Bulletin Book Exchange", later called "Literary Notes" appeared on the inside of the front cover of almost every weekly issue after 1894. The selections used above are from the issues for 22 September 1894, 29 September 1894, 23 March 1895, 21 December 1895. Pearson's National Life and Character had also come under notice on 15 September 1894 ("A cheaper reprint of a remarkably able book... It is a scientific forecast...and well deserves the attention of thinkers".)

If their appetite was whetted by newspaper reviews or by the magazines, Australians could easily obtain copies of current books from overseas. The "Bulletin Book Exchange" gave readers of that paper an opportunity to obtain cheaply books on 'the woman movement' (the movement was approved, the books generally panned) and works pertinent to the population debate, including Letorneau: Evolution of Marriage, Guyot: Principles of Social Economy and Leroy-Beaulieu: The Modern State.⁶⁶ An even cheaper source of books was the Bankers' Institute of Australasia which circulated boxes of books from its Melbourne library to interstate and Victorian country branches during the early 'nineties.⁶⁷ For buyers rather than borrowers, "Evolutionist works were available readily in bookstores throughout the colonies."⁶⁸

The members of the Birth Rate Commission were certainly aware of the overseas literature. Mackellar's personal papers, for example, contain hand written notes from Toynbee's article on "Malthus and the Law of Population", Leroy-Beaulieu's Essai sur la répartition des richesses... and Kidd's Social Evolution.⁶⁹ In addition Dr R.H. Todd, Mackellar's associate, presented the Commissioners with a considerable volume of material which he said "would assist in supplying some historical and scientific basis" for the consideration of declining fertility.⁷⁰ Todd brought together the work of a variety of writers: Levasseur, Molinari, Dumont, Leroy-Beaulieu and Guyot from France; Pomeroy, L.F. Ward, Edson, Bisland and Billings from the United States of America. The method by which he presented his material, however, itself amounted to a contribution to the debate for he consistently drew heavily from writers with a conservative attitude to change and neglected radicals. Thus he began with a series of quotations from Principles of Economics by Alfred Marshall, who gave only very qualified approval to the practise of family limitation, but followed these immediately with

66. See Bulletin 15 and 29 September 1894 and 24 November 1894.

67. See Bankers' Magazine... III:38 (October 1889) p.968 and III:39 (November 1889) p.1008. The boxes were still circulating in January 1893 (VI:6 p.1116)

68. So Goodwin: op cit p.328, who quotes Australasian Critic (1 October 1890) p.ix to the effect that "Petherick bookstores in Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney in 1890 stocked fourteen different titles by Darwin and eleven by Spencer."

69. Mackellar's notes are held by the author.

70. For the method by which Todd claimed to have approached his task see DBR Q.6532. Todd's evidence is found in DBR Qq. 6533-6610.

two quotations from Stephen Bourne, who regarded "the law of increase [as] of natural and divine enactment."⁷¹ Arnold Toynbee senior's work on The Industrial Revolution was represented by a passage which gave some place to moral restraint but applauded an attitude of "strong moral repugnance" towards 'artificial' restraints. Again, Benjamin Kidd, author of Social Evolution, was quoted at length on the necessity for society to evolve through stress and rivalry; Todd's comment was "the importance of this book to the Commission arises from the fact that the views expressed by Kidd are **diametrically** opposite to the tendencies observable in New South Wales at the present time, which are socialistic, and seek to kill competition and rivalry." In addition Todd drew out Kidd's thesis that socialism leads to absence of competition and thence to restriction of families, suspension of selection and, eventual racial degeneracy - but failed to take account of the criticism of Kidd contained in Carr's Social Evolution and the Evolution of Socialism.

The fact that Australians had adequate opportunities to become acquainted with the steady stream of articles and books which should have kept them abreast of overseas developments in population theory naturally provokes the question, Why was the post-Malthusian debate carried on elsewhere so muted in Australia? A full answer to that question would require not part of a chapter in a thesis but an intellectual history of Australia from 1870 to 1914. However a short and, hopefully, plausible, answer is that from the beginning of the 1890s, when the post-Malthusian debate might have begun to flower in Australia, a succession of circumstances pushed it into the background of discussion. First of all Henry George excited the Australian colonies, then the depression of trade crushed the momentum out of progressive and evolutionary social theories, federation occupied the stage at the end of the decade, and in the early 1900s the realities of Australian demography combined with the psychology of infant nationalism to form a climate inimical to detached debate.

We noticed earlier in this chapter that Henry George's ideas exercised a pervasive influence in Australia, being used by pro- and anti-Malthusians alike. During the first half of 1890 George had toured in Australia where he was "received with an enthusiasm greater than anything he had experienced before... He

71. Bourne is best known as the author of Trade, Population, and Food (1890), from which Todd took the greater part of his quotation. See DBR 6542-5.

was feted and banqueted...he spoke every evening and sometimes twice a day."⁷² The newspapers gave extensive coverage to his tour; T.A. Coghlan recalled that "in South Australia, as in other colonies, he was greeted almost as a prophet, and drew adherents from every class of the community"; and W.M. Hughes, his memories of the 'nineties perhaps exaggerated by the years, wrote that "This was the hour of Australia's great awakening...Henry George... captured the imagination of thousands of young and ardent spirits."⁷³

George's visit to Australia was but the climax to a decade of influence by his ideas. It was also the last occasion for publicising a system of political economy before the bank crash turned men's minds away from discussion of theories to the hard practicalities of ruin and recovery. Where references to population questions had been common in the Report of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce during the 1880s, in the '90s the most prominent topic was the depressed state of trade: snippets of political economy appeared less and less often in speeches at annual meetings of the South Australian Chamber after the early 'nineties; in the columns of the New South Wales bankers' Journal the discussion of population questions declined in the second half of the 'nineties and was non-existent after 1898, while the same was true of the Australian Economist, which itself went out of existence early in 1899.

Even the appearance of Coghlan's first booklet, Childbirth in New South Wales, at the end of the century attracted little attention. His 1903 publication, Decline of the Birth-Rate, and the work of the Birth Rate Commission in 1903-04 generated more publicity but still did not spark much theoretical debate. Coghlan's revelations about demographic trends in Australia made over-population seem a non-problem. The way was therefore opened for social and social evolutionary theories about falling fertility,

72. G.R. Geiger: The Philosophy of Henry George (Macmillan New York 1933) p.71.

73. Coghlan: Labour and Industry in Australia (Macmillan Melbourne 1918/1969) Vol IV p.1914.
W.M. Hughes: Crusades and Crusades (Sydney 1947) p.60, quoted by F. Picard: "Henry George and the Labour Split of 1891" in Historical Studies VI:21 (November 1953) p.47. Picard argues that it was the crusading spirit of George's adherents in Australia which put Single Taxers "among the forefront in the organization of political Labour in New South Wales" (p.63). George's impact on Hughes is discussed in Fitzhardinge: op cit p.25f. Goodwin: op cit p.118 remarks that "In South Australia the writings of Henry George achieved such a peak of popularity that in 1892 C. Tucker, Mayor of Port Adelaide, was moved to award a twenty guinea prize for the best essay on the single tax".

only to be blocked by the Birth Rate Commissioners, who began and ended their work in the fixed belief that there were moral reasons for Australia's difficulties and that other explanations were morally evasive. In that kind of intellectual climate absence of detached theoretical debate is hardly surprising.

Soon after the Birth Rate Commission had published its Report, Australian growth by natural increase and by migration began to recover. Even if the emotional reaction to population problems, exemplified by the Commission itself, had not stifled theoretical discussion the resurgence of growth probably would have caused the population question to fade from view. After 1905, in fact, only Octavius Charles Beale appears to have made a sustained attempt to keep the discussion alive and his work received negligible support. Beale had been a moderately active member of the Birth Rate Commission without evincing any consuming interest in the topics considered but in his Royal Commission on Secret Drugs, published in 1907, and his book Racial Decay, published in 1910, he presented a huge volume of ill-ordered material which indicated that the decline of fertility and the means by which it was achieved had become an obsession with him.⁷⁴

The Drugs Commission grew out of Beale's request to his political friend Alfred Deakin, then Prime Minister of Australia, for "an authoritative Commission, to obtain, at my own expense, records of Legislation passed in other countries" to control the sale of patent medicines.⁷⁵ In July 1905 Deakin provided Beale only

74. Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers (1907) Vol IV p.61, Report of the Royal Commission on Secret Drugs, Cures, and Foods. O.C. Beale: Racial Decay. A Compilation of Evidence From World Sources. (Angus & Robertson Sydney 1910)

75. See "Correspondence relating to the appointment of Mr O.C. Beale as a Royal Commission to inquire into the legislation and administration of laws to check and prevent the sale of secret drugs, etc." in Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers (1907) Vol II p.1333.

Cf. numerous items of Prime Minister's Department inward correspondence in the Commonwealth Archives Office, Canberra, accession numbers A48 (2), (3), (4) and Department of External Affairs inward correspondence, number A31 (4). Deakin's Liberal Protectionist Party was poorly organised in New South Wales and Beale tried hard to remedy the lack. He conducted a considerable correspondence with Deakin between 1904 and 1911, usually on political matters but occasionally on a personal plane as well. Some of the letters are held by the National Library of Australia, accession numbers MS2281 (Beale Correspondence) and MS1540/17 (Deakin Papers). The bulk of Deakin's letters to Beale are held by Mrs A. Jones, 4 Ainslie Close, St Ives, NSW. (Photocopies held by the author.)

with a letter of introduction for use overseas. The Royal Commission was not issued until December 1906 when it became necessary to give Beale the benefit of privilege to protect him from threatened libel suits.⁷⁶

The six divisions of the Secret Drugs Report ran to 457 foolscap pages and were very neatly described by the Australian pharmacists' journal as "a big scrap-book with a running comment."⁷⁷ The utter confusion in which Beale presented his material makes it impossible to say what his argument was. However it is possible to specify certain themes which recurred throughout the divisions of the Report dealing with Prevention of Conception and Foeticide, and with Infanticide and Infantile Mortality. The justification for publication was said to be that

The practice of interferences with the sexual function is so common, and the knowledge of it so universal that it would be the thinnest hypocrisy upon the part of any grown persons to pretend that modesty may be shocked at considering its causes and consequences...

Just because deception and falsehood are widespread there is occasion to confront them by candid truth. 78

Beale believed that, although the immoral flood against which he was contending was purveyed in novels, plays and "licentious literature", "the real and proximate cause of the decline in Anglo-Saxon productiveness" was "the mischief wrought by...Mrs Annie Besant" and her supporters, especially the prophets of "the Manchester doctrine...this doctrine of laissez-faire, of unrestraint,..in diametrical antithesis to the Christian philosophy..."⁷⁹

In keeping with the main purpose of his Report he concentrated on abortifacients, rather than preventives, reprinting numerous open and covert advertisements for abortifacients from the daily papers and calling repeatedly for legislative restraint of the trade. He gave a few statistics of vital events in New South Wales but these were mostly derivations from the Birth Rate Commission's evidence, brought up to date in a few cases with additional material prepared by Trivett. Beale's heavy reliance on legislative action to restrain what he clearly regarded as a moral decline was evident in the two recommendations he made to deal with the evils he had discovered:

76. See Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (Representatives) Vol XLV p.10309, and the departmental correspondence mentioned in note 75.

77. Chemist, Druggist & Pharmacist XXII:9 (September 1907) p.245.

78. Secret Drugs Report paras 1,2.

79. ibid paras 5, 8, 18 and p.428.

- X. That no anti-conceptual preparations, or articles expressly for that purpose, be held for sale or sold.
- XI. That the importation, holding for sale, sale, hiring out, or giving away, of objects intended for indecent interferences with the sexual organs be made by express provision a felony. 80

Racial Decay, which carried the subtitle "A Compilation of Evidence from World Sources", seems to have been designed to publish all the material that could not be fitted into the Secret Drugs Report. It was a collection of quotations from writers on the population problems of England, North America, Australasia, modern Europe and ancient Rome, strung together with comments by Beale - and fully meriting the description "Quite the oddest book ever published against contraception, in a field where competition is heavy."⁸¹ The tone was set with an opening section headed "Malthus and Manchester":

We may leave to [the Malthusians] the whole field of logic, but we are bound to deny their axioms, to expose the failure of their forecasts and to place the facts of nature opposite to their conclusions...The most ancient maxims and the oldest discoverable experiences of mankind shall suffice. We shall take as guiding principles primordial truths and only seek to reassert unique perceptions of the relation of man to his Creator. 82

As in his earlier Report, so in the book, Beale was severely critical of laissez faire political economists, depicting their work as the source of the "carcinoma" of racial decay and the vehicle by which the "poison" spread, first to France, then back to England and on to other Anglo-Saxon nations, including Australasia. Eighty pages were devoted to quotations from French writers lamenting their nation's demographic decline, and a further thirty to a "History of the French Extra-Parliamentary Commission Upon Depopulation", on the grounds that "France affords us a mirror in which to see our present position, and thus supplies a prognosis of our disease." One hundred pages were given over to "pathological consequences" of birth control, which were said to include "uterine inflammations, bleeding and cancer, ovarian diseases and male debility." Division V, on "The Progress of Decay - Depopulation in Graphic Form", had line and bar graphs comparing births, deaths and total increase of population in France, Japan, England,

80. ibid paras 52-60 (advertisements), 86-94 (legislative restraint), 147-175 (statistics) and p.430 (recommendations).

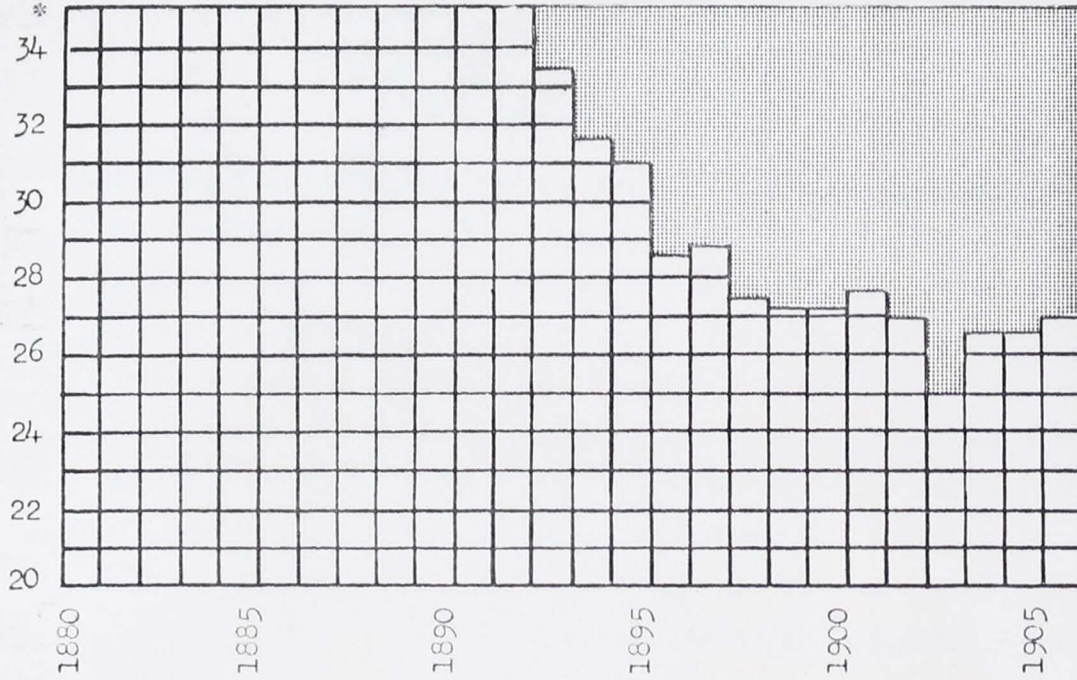
81. Fryer: op cit p.360. Fryer's darts are not always accurate but this one fixes Beale's work precisely.

82. Racial Decay para 56. (Paras 1-53 were really a Preface, although Beale labelled the section "Introduction".)

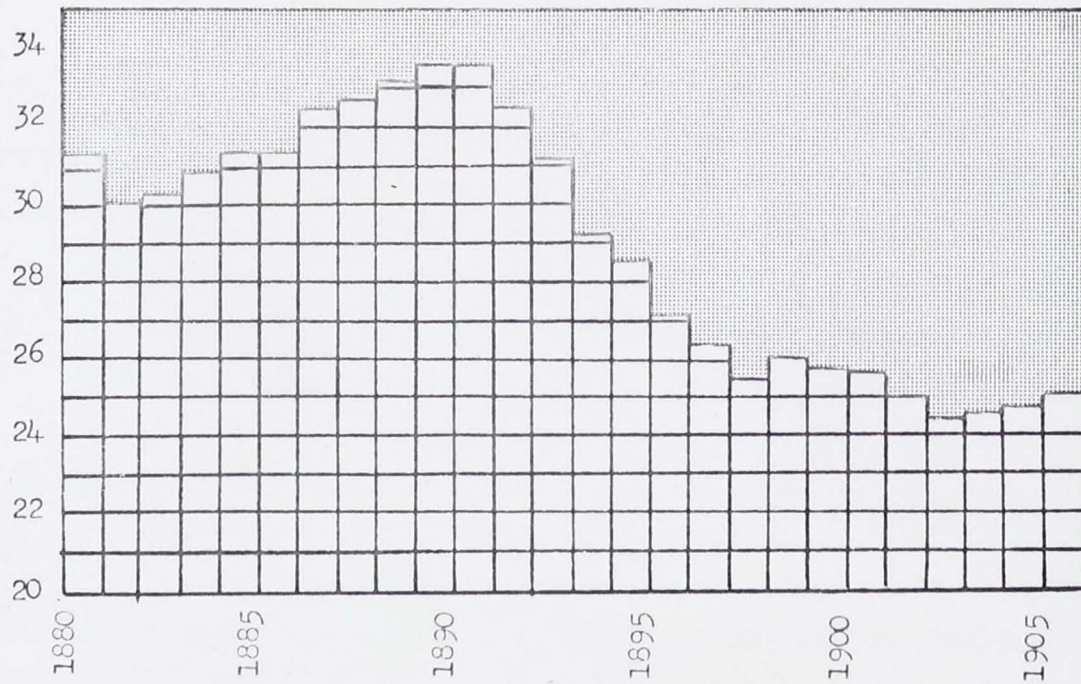
"THE CLOUD OF EXTINCTION"

*(Crude birth rate)

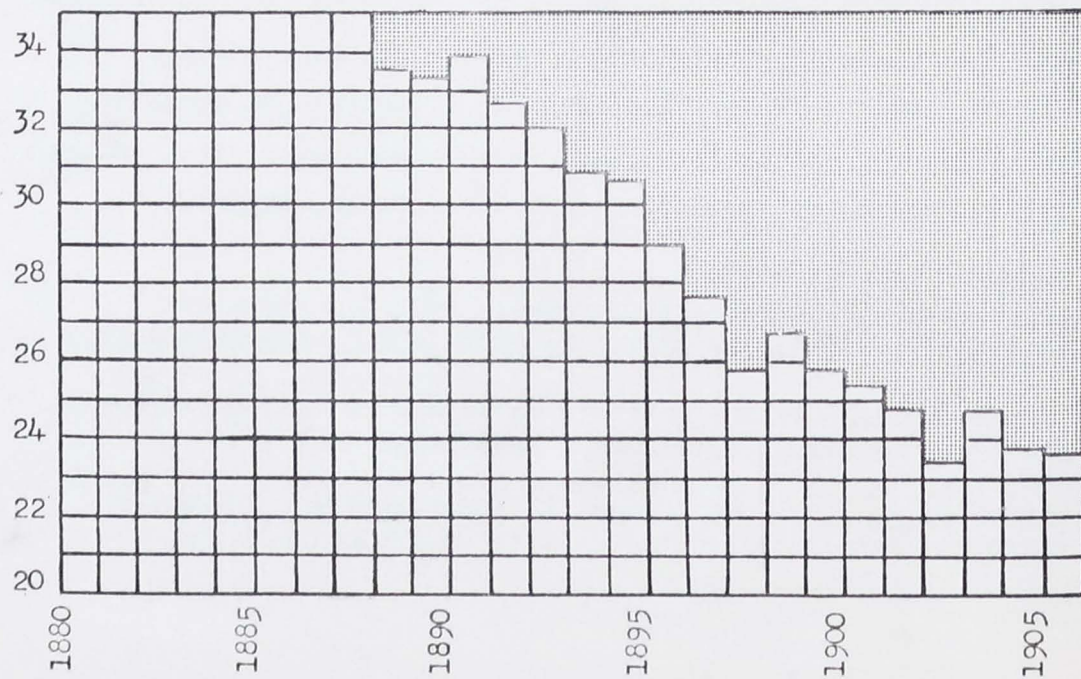
New
South
Wales



Victoria



South
Australia



Australasia, even Austria and the Argentine. Two novelties were "The Cloud of Extinction" and a graphic demonstration of an alleged link between falling fertility and rising insanity. The "Cloud" (see Figure 18, opposite, for an example) was designed to dramatise the fall in the crude birth rate, which Beale regarded as the only useful measure of fertility, from an upper figure of 34 births per 1,000 population to a lower figure of 20 per 1,000. Beale described the higher number as "a moderate, normal and quite satisfactory rate, from which all Anglo-Saxon communities, unless they alter their morals, have for ever retrograded": the lower number was "the line of national dissolution".⁸³ In the case of the fertility/insanity 'correlation', Beale simply assumed a casual link and did not consider the possibilities that rising insanity and falling fertility might both be the product of increasing social stress or age-ing population. "The Progress of Decay" was followed by a chapter on "The Parallel of Ancient Rome", which seems to have been no more than a vehicle to display Beale's self-taught classical knowledge, and another which praised the Churches for their concern, and condemned Parliament for its carelessness, about the decay.

The "Conclusion" of Racial Decay contained a disordered summary of the preceding 425 pages, but was dominated by an attack on J.S. Mill's private morality (Indelibly besmirched, Beale believed, by the philosopher's liaison with Mrs Taylor). The implication was that Mill's morals destroyed the credibility of Mill's social theories and, by association, those of the whole neo-Malthusian movement. No attempt was made to analyse the works of Mill or any other writer to whom Beale was opposed, or indeed, any of the "authorities" with whom he agreed. Eighty-three books were listed in Beale's bibliography and many more were quoted in the text: Dumont and Nitti, Levasseur and Leroy-Bealieu, James Bonar and Leslie Stephen, Benjamin Kidd and Max Nordau, even Lydia Kingsmill Commander were ransacked for quotations to bolster Beale's 'heroes versus villains' view of the Malthusian debate. Thus Abbé Corbière, whose views Beale approved, appears as "the unpretentious cleric" who writes with "gentleness of diction and exceeding grace of expression" but J.S. Mill "labours the subject at great length in his usual cock-sure and didactic style."⁸⁴ Malthus is criticised for faulty

83. ibid para 1529.

84. ibid paras. 106 and 108, 272, and 160. Cf para 384: "We can hardly find stronger contrast between the inspired grandeur of Baruch de Spinoza, insignis per honestum, and the unspiritual debasement of Mill, Bradlaugh and their unsexed associates, notabiles dedecore. On the one hand, the clear, exacting Hebrew intellect directing man to the contemplation of his glorious and eternal essence. On the other hand, the apostles of a godless and mammonistic hedonism turning man's thoughts and his natural functions to distorted sensuality..."

grammar. In no case was the context of a quotation explained or any systematic criticism applied. The reader is left only with a dizzy head and the impression that the mass of material must have been heaped together with the sole purpose of providing a pedestal for this conclusion:

Etymologically and essentially, 'nation' (nascor, natus, natio) means a succession of births, generation, reproduction. A general restriction of births, as successfully preached by John Stuart Mill and his School... is therefore a poisoning of the nation itself. The continuous practice of interference with the life-principle - whether by mechanical and chemical destruction of the germ, by foeticide, by infanticide, or by all three - is the deadliest of all misfortunes to the nation...

Nature, nation, natality, are inseparably related, each meaning birth, therefore whatever strikes at Nature, strikes at the perpetuity of the nation...Called by any of the jocular, flattering, or apologetic names used by its advocates in a flippant press: 'the strike of a sex, the revolt of woman, stopping the flood of babies, stemming the devastating torrent of babies, limitation of family, the American ideal, scientific prevention, scientific meliorism, neo-Malthusianism,' the end is the same - national death. It is as sure as sunset, and the only question is of acceleration. 85

In addition to showing that the whole range of overseas debate was accessible to any Australian who cared to seek it out, Beale's two collections of quotations represent a natural extension of the pro-natalist views which had been espoused by many of his colleagues in business and on the Birth Rate Commission. The significant fact is that he gained negligible support for his extension of the common position. No one stood to his defence when his Report was under attack in the Commonwealth Parliament in 1907 and 1908. In 1910 he had to publish Racial Decay at his own expense, then hand the 1,000 copies to a distributor for sale at five shillings each. "In 1913, since the book sold poorly, the price was reduced to one shilling a copy, And, in 1917, 635 unsold copies were returned to the author."⁸⁶

85. ibid paras 1879, 1880.

86. Miss Beatrice Davis, Editor of Angus & Robertson Ltd, kindly supplied the distribution history of Racial Decay in a letter of 24 March 1969. Julia E. Johnson: Selected Articles on Birth Control (Wilson New York 1925) p.LXXV gives publication details for Racial Decay as "(A.C. Fifield London 1911)" but there is no way of telling how many copies were sold in London or whether they were additional to the 365 disposed by Angus & Robertson. On the parliamentary career of the Secret Drugs Report see Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (Representatives), 29 August 1905 p.1565, 15 August 1907 p.2612f, 30 August p.2663, 6 September p.2995, 11 September pp.3091-3105, 26 September p.3899, 8 October p. 4309, 13 December p.7508f, 17 March 1908 p.9092, 25 March p.9580, 1 April pp.9956 and 9975-9983, 8 April p.10309, 15 April p.11159, and 20 May p.11261.

CHAPTER VIII

Newspaper and Popular Opinion

Anyone seeking an estimate of popular opinion on a social question today would automatically regard depth interviews, questionnaires, opinion polls or sample surveys as appropriate techniques. In 1900 such helpful devices were not available. An estimate of 'popular' opinion at that time must therefore rely on documentary sources and reflect the views of the more articulate members of the community. In this chapter, therefore, 'popular' opinion must be defined to mean the opinions of articulate individuals, chiefly correspondents of the metropolitan daily papers. It is also popular in that it is the opinion of individuals acting alone, not (as in earlier chapters) of people in a corporate context.

Popular discussion of population questions flourished in Australia in the early 1900s, a decade after the theoretical debate had begun to wane. The discussion was aired chiefly in the newspapers and this chapter begins with a study of their treatment of census results, the Birth Rate Commission and population questions in general. An analysis is then made of the three substantial expressions of popular opinion in newspaper correspondence columns during 1903 and 1904. The majority of these lay opinions, together with those of the Age and the Bulletin, are shown to differ considerably in content (though not greatly in form) from the views espoused by the Royal Commissioners and the editors of the Daily Telegraph, the Sydney Morning Herald and the Argus. Some evidence is given relative to the three main themes of newspaper opinion and the chapter closes with a vignette of opinion in 1911.

It need hardly be said that no attempt has been made to read every page in each issue of all the major newspapers. Time and the availability of files were the first limits to observe. Within those boundaries attention was concentrated on significant years: 1891, 1901 and 1911, when the census results could be expected to provoke comment; 1903 and 1904 for the context of the Birth Rate Commission. Where an index was available it was used, hence the Age for 1892-1899 and the Argus for 1910-1911 have been examined more fully. Finally the Bulletin, representing a stream of thought not usually tapped by the more staid dailies, was read from 1891-1904.

During the 1880s twenty-six thousand more people left South Australia than arrived in the State. Since the net outflow amounted to more than ten per cent of the 1881 population, it is not surprising that the approach of the 1891 census attracted attention. The Adelaide Register said in its Commemoration Day editorial for 1890 that the long period of emigration seemed to be ending. The paper therefore looked forward to the 1891 census which, it patriotically asserted, would show progress to be "the inevitable destiny of South

Australia". Early in 1891, with the census still three months ahead, the Register devoted two editorials to the enumeration. Geographical distribution of population was expected to be of particular interest because of the allegedly unhealthy tendency of South Australian population to become centralised in Adelaide. The Register suggested that an indication of continuing urban drift could show the need for corrective land settlement legislation. Also the known radicalism of urban people should make any increase in their numbers a matter of interest to the politician.¹ At the end of January 1891 the paper returned to the question of urbanisation, queried the adequacy of proposed questions on conjugal condition, gave a lengthy description of the census form and explained what would be required from the householder. On the day before the census further stress was laid on the importance of the information to be collected about migration and urbanisation and readers were urged to take a responsible attitude towards the completion of the schedule. The Melbourne Argus, which had not otherwise previewed the census, and the Adelaide Advertiser also commended careful completion of the form.²

The Argus had more to say when the census returns began to appear, chiefly on the relative growth of Melbourne and Sydney and on the welcome increase in the proportion of males among the Victorian population. Although the Argus thought that both cities had "every reason to be content" with their growth, it was concerned about the relative numbers of Melbourne and its hinterland. While the growth of great cities might be "one of the features of the age", it was appearing in an exaggerated form in Australia where it was doubtful whether there was "a population...and a development behind the cities sufficient to justify their existence." Not that the Argus wished to see Melbourne diminished (for what would the paper's commercial clientele think of that!). Rather was a larger rural population required and to redress the balance it was "obviously becoming necessary to make agriculture more attractive to young men of industry and enterprise".³

The Register indicated equal concern over the metropolitan concentration of population, noting that "a colony is not at its greatest point of true prosperity when its people are centralised within cannon range of Government House". Adelaide was better placed than Melbourne and Sydney in this regard, nevertheless "the chief lesson taught by the census" was that South Australia's aim should be

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1. Register (Adelaide) 29 December 1890 p.4E.
 2. Register 7 January 1891 p.4E, 30 January p.4F, 4 April p.4F; Argus 4 April p.9A; Advertiser 4 April p.5E.
 3. Argus 30 April 1891 p.4F, 1 May p.4F, and 5 May p.4E.

"to encourage the permanent settlement of the country and the development of all the natural industries." Just how the population for rural settlement was to be gathered is unclear because the Register was simultaneously concerned at the decline of the South Australian birth rate and the "excessive emigration" of adults.⁴

At the time of the 1901 census the Argus played politics with the population figures, grumbling that the more rapid growth of Sydney than Melbourne was an indictment of the protectionist tariff constricting the latter city. Otherwise the Argus let the census pass unnoticed.⁵ In Sydney, however, much more was written. The Daily Telegraph, like the Argus, used the census results to bolster its free trade theories. Thus the first editorials drew attention to the "great increase in the population of Sydney", whose growth had nevertheless "been part of, and uniform with, that of the State" in a way that Melbourne's growth had not. The Telegraph's logic then became a little jumbled. On the one hand it defended Sydney against the charge of parasitic growth and lauded its vitality, prophesying that fifty years on "all the elevated country within twenty miles of Pitt Street [would] be crowned with the homes of those who inhabit one of the world's noblest cities." On the other hand Melbourne was criticised for having long drawn too many people to itself and, in a later editorial, it was noted that cities in many countries were only replenishing themselves by draining the country of population:

If the next two or three decades show a proportionate rate of city increase and that increase has to be provided for by immigration from the country...a condition of affairs must arise that threatens to be seriously inimical to civilised race development.⁶

The Telegraph's later thoughts seem to have been its best considered ones. Early in June it expressed concern at the lag in Australian population growth as a whole and in its elements. The Commonwealth's population increase of 19 per cent for the decade to 1901 was described as poor by comparison with the increases of 35 per cent in 1871-1881 and 41 per cent in 1881-1891. This reduced rate of growth was the more disturbing to the paper because immigration had lately slackened and there was "no longer a possibility of doubt regarding the unsatisfactory state of the Australian birth rate."⁷

4. Register 2 May 1891 p.4F, 16 May p.4F, 5 June p.4F and 6 June p.4G.

5. Argus 24 April 1901 p.4G and 3 May p.4G.

6. DT 23 April 1901 p.4E, 25 April p.4D, 7 May p.6D. and 25 May p.8D.

7. ibid 3 June 1901 p.4E.

By 1911 growth by migration and natural increase was accelerating and the tone of editorial comment on the population was correspondingly less concerned than it had been at the beginning of the century. The Sydney Morning Herald regarded the prevailing birth rate, much improved from 1901, as a pleasing indication of general prosperity and the rate of increase by immigration as equally satisfying.⁸ In the circumstances the 1911 census attracted little editorial attention and provoked less concern. The Daily Telegraph, for example, simply used the appearance of the returns as an occasion for puffing the virtues of Sydney as "first city of the Commonwealth", and the New South Wales contribution to Australian growth. The Argus was enthusiastic and the Register not displeased at the figures but the Advertiser thought that the decade's increase was "far from satisfactory". The Adelaide papers did agree, however, that measures should be undertaken to make country life more attractive and so reduce the continuing high level of urbanisation in Australia.⁹ It is understandable that the newspapers should have been pleased with the results of the 1911 census but it is symptomatic of the whole course of opinion over the two decades covered by this thesis that the improvement of growth factors was seen as a return to high, 'normal' rates, rather than part of a long fluctuation, and that virtually no attempt was made to analyse the reasons for the upturn.

The fact that the Australian newspapers gave more attention to the 1901 census than to the preceding or following one serves to underline the fact that the five years around 1901 marked the peak of press treatment of population questions. Most of the newspapers expressed concern at the picture of incipient decline laid before them in Coghlan's first pamphlet, on Childbirth in New South Wales but there was little attempt to discuss the details of his work. The Advertiser described the contents of the pamphlet as "highly interesting, and at the same time depressing", while the more emotional tone characteristic of the Argus was evident in its question: "Is our confident expectation that Australia is destined to become the home of a white race, thriving and prolific, to be dissipated like the airy fabric of a dream?"¹⁰ The Sydney Morning Herald reviewed the pamphlet at length without showing undue concern at its implications. Within a month, in fact, the Herald suggested that, while the slow growth of Australia's population

8. SMH 24 February 1911 p.6C.

9. ibid 4 May 1911 p.6E, 6 May p.12F, 9 May p.6F, 15 June p.8E; Argus 1 April p.191 and 2 May p.7C; Register 13 May p.4D; Advertiser 22 June p.8D and 23 June p.6D.

10. Advertiser 21 September 1899 p.5A; Argus 16 September p.12F.

was striking, too much stress was laid on the declining birth rate.¹¹

During the first half of 1903 most of the papers returned to the question of Australia's population size and growth. On this occasion the leader-writers were stimulated by the report of a statement by President Theodore Roosevelt deploring the tendency of his own country's population to restrict reproduction. The Argus made the general comment that "no young country can prosper so long as population is sparse and the birth-rate unprogressive", and added its usual local application of the generalisation - that White Australia would be a delusion if the country continued to stagnate while "the hordes of India, China, and Japan continue to multiply with their traditional vigour." In Adelaide the Advertiser stressed that "Population, of the right kind, [was] Australia's crying need, and public policy...ought to be shaped with a view to its attraction."¹² The Sydney Morning Herald thought it surprising, in view of the salubrious social conditions of Australia and the predominance of people from British stock, that the Australian birth rate was "even lower than that of any other country except France...a reversal of every recognised order of things." If rapid increase from births could not be expected, then Australia's 'closed door' policy on immigration must be changed: "No country in the world's history has become great by shutting out the brains and muscle needed."¹³ The Herald was not consistently gloomy about the country's prospects, however. In May 1903 it suggested that, given the impact of the depression in the early 'nineties, the drought ever since, and the recent spate of "injudicious legislation", the progress which had occurred in population growth was "simply marvellous".¹⁴

We saw in Chapter IV that the Sydney Morning Herald, Daily Telegraph, Evening News and Bulletin all commented on (and, in the first two cases, probably helped to provoke) the establishment of the Royal Commission. When the Report of the Commission was published the Sydney papers were joined by those of Melbourne and Adelaide in commenting on the outcome of the inquiry. The Herald, Telegraph and Argus complimented the Commissioners, approved of their 'analysis' and supported their proposals for reversing the decline of the birth rate. The Age, Advertiser, Register and Bulletin all were more critical.

11. SMH 10 October 1899 p.6E.

12. Argus 26 March 1903 p.4F and 31 March p.4G; Advertiser 25 April p.6C and 29 April p.4B.

13. SMH 21 March 1903 p.10C and 22 April p.6E.

14. ibid 4 May 1903 p.6B.

The Sydney Morning Herald stressed the quality of the report and the reputation of the men who had signed it, saying that it represented "the result of independent investigation by a representative body of citizens, officials, and medical men" who could "fairly be complimented upon the admirable and exhaustive manner in which a difficult investigation [had] been carried out." The Commissioners' conclusions were "commended to general attention", with the proviso that they should be prefaced by "the statement of principle that nothing can replace the influence of a trained and educated moral habit of thought among our people as a counteracting influence..."¹⁵ If the summary of the Report offered in Chapter IV of this thesis is correct, then it can only be said that the Herald praised the Report's most glaring weaknesses.

The Daily Telegraph gave a similar welcome to the "exceedingly able and well-reasoned report" and also highlighted the Commission's moral emphases. It devoted a few sentences to the "terrible revenge" which Nature would wreak "for her outraged laws" on the practitioners of contraception, then gave over several column inches to the spectre of Yellow Peril invoked by Australia's lagging growth.

If the evil [of diminished fertility] is to increase much further, the dream of a great Australian nation guaranteeing the peace and progress of the Southern World must soon come to an end...If our population is to remain stationary while that of the overpopulated countries of Asia goes on increasing at the tremendous pace which a normal birth rate amongst so many hundreds of millions implies, the maintenance of a White Australia must sooner or later become impossible. The sterility which is blighting these States does not go un-noticed amongst the cramped up but still prolific myriads of Japanese and Chinese.¹⁶

The Argus was as pleased as the Sydney papers with the Report which it described as a "forcible and clear spoken" treatment of a "most serious economical and moral problem". Mr Richard Teece's independent survey, which had appeared shortly before the Commission's findings, was also noted and attention was drawn to his emphasis on the ill-effects of increasing female employment. The Argus thought that the decline in fertility described by both the private and the public inquiry had important political and economic implications for the Commonwealth, but it concluded that the decline could be remedied only through "the exercise of moral and religious influences" by a

15. SMH 5 March 1904 p.10D and p.10F.

16. DT 5 March 1904 p.8C.

church-led crusade. The paper went on to state its own social philosophy of fertility, which was heavily dependent upon Benjamin Kidd's suitably conservative theory of social evolution. The law deduced by Kidd, the Argus reported, is that

each generation is controlled and governed unconsciously to itself, by profound considerations for the future of the race it belongs to. The controlling influence of the future solves, for him, all current social and political problems.

Then came the moral:

If his argument is correct, one important section of the people is evidently seeking, with an easy conscience, for an escape from the burden laid upon it. It is emancipating itself from Mr Kidd's law.¹⁷

The Age, the Register, the Advertiser and the Bulletin were each, in varying degree, more critical of the Royal Commission. The Age acknowledged that warnings about the ill-effects of continued decline were useful but thought that more could have been made of the fact that, even after fourteen years of decline, the Australian birth rate was only down to the prevailing English level. As for the remedies proposed in the Report, the Age commented that "the Commission doubtless does its best, but cannot be expected to succeed where so many philosophers and philanthropists have dismally failed." The utility was recognised of suggestions for the greater protection of unborn or illegitimate children but other schemes for reducing the level of urbanisation were dismissed as "quite unworkable". Immigration would not help the birth rate either, since the newcomers "would speedily conform to the Australian standard." Taken together the proposals amounted to very little, the Age said, but this was hardly surprising since Australia was participating in a world-wide movement of embourgeoisement. Having dismissed the Commission's panaceas, the paper closed by offering one of its own: the real solution to the birth rate problem, it claimed, lay in consistent proclamation that "maternity gives to women the most intense and most abundant human felicity."¹⁸

The Adelaide Register thought that the Commission had served a useful function in publicising the problem of declining fertility but, for the rest, took the same view as the Age:

17. Argus 8 March 1904 p.4F.
Richard Teece was general manager of the Australian Mutual Provident Society. His survey for the Society was reported in DT 3 March 1904 p.3D and SMH 4 March p.6D.

18. Age 12 March 1904 p.10C.

The population problem of New South Wales is that, with few exceptions, of every civilised community; and is coincident with such conditions as general prosperity, universal education, the 'new democracy' and the declining power of the church.

Like the Age, again, the Register offered its own remedy: moral statesmanship, moral crusade, and moral additions to modern education.¹⁹

The Advertiser, Adelaide's other daily, took the occasion to publicise Spencer's individuation theory, yet again, before summarizing the Commission's recommendations and stating, quite erroneously, that the Commission had "recognised that, after all, economic reasons finally account for the practices which are condemned, and...that with better conditions the tendency to limit families will cease..."²⁰

By far the most vigorous criticism came, characteristically, from the Bulletin which devoted nearly four column-feet to its attack on "Certain Tory Doctors..." Although the Bulletin overstated its case, there was reason for its complaint that some of the Commissioners and the newspapers which shared their views had unfairly blamed "Trades-Unionism and Labor legislation" for the decline of fertility. A logical slide then took the paper onto an effective, if irrelevant, demonstration that it was not within the class of trades unionists, but the professional and commercial classes of the Commissioners themselves, that low fertility prevailed. The Bulletin gave more evidence than its competitors showed of understanding the social realities behind the dwindling birth rate. It was also more percipient in recognising that even if the Commissioners were authoritative on matters of medicine and statistics, they did not thereby acquire authority on sociology and politics. Finally it must be said that, if the description (in Chapter IV) of the Commissioners' backgrounds and methods was correct, the Bulletin's criticism of their Toryism had more justification than the Herald's claim that they were "representative citizens."²¹

The opinions expressed by Royal Commissioners, doctors, clergymen and the Sydney papers were predominantly conservative but the spectrum of thought on population questions also included more radical strains which found expression in the Age and the Bulletin. Both were more concerned than their competitors about specific

19. Register 8 March 1904 p.4C.

20. Advertiser 11 March 1904 p.4C.

21. Bulletin 17 March 1904 p.8, "Certain Tory Doctors, Some Facts, and a Lie" and 24 March p.8, "Certain Tory Doctors and the N.S.W. Birth-rate".

problems in the 1890s, and less concerned about demographic trends around the turn of the century. Both found an early target in the suggestion that Australia might provide a home for lower class immigrants from Britain and the Continent. In 1891 the Salvationist General William Booth suggested that some of London's "submerged tenth" could be settled on farm colonies in Australia. The Bulletin utilised the cartoon as well as the editorial pen to keep up a sustained, sarcastic attack on the idea throughout 1891 and 1892. There was equal hostility towards a proposal by the London Evening Standard that surplus single females should be shipped out to Australia. "Women are already a drug on the market in Australia", the Bulletin said. "Under present social conditions, when any country contains two women to every three men, it has as many as can be sufficiently provided for...There is no room in Australia for the superfluous women of England." Or for the Italian labourer; or, in the opinion of the Age, for any English or European paupers.²²

From about 1893 both papers expressed great hostility towards the idea of Asian immigration to Australia. The Age feared that Australia's geographical position would lead to her being over-run by "hordes of Asiatics", and pointed to the social complications experienced in other countries where racial mixing had occurred.²³ The Bulletin was more explicitly and blatantly racist. In its eyes European labourers were only objectionable because they depressed wages but Asians, be they Afghans, Chinese, Indians or Japanese, depressed wages and were unassimilable.

...the Asiatic can't be absorbed, and even if his presence raised the scale of wages until it was as high as Koscuisko he would remain the same old racial curse to the bitter end.

There were varieties of objectionable Asiatic, of course. The Chinese was objectionable because of his menial nature, "bred in the bone of him for thousands of grimy years", the Japanese because he was an "apt and ingenious workman...as progressive as the Australian and possibly more energetic." All varieties were unnecessary, even in the tropics, because already, the Bulletin said,

In New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and South Queensland, a new white race is... formed which can stand the climate of any part of Australia...the white Australian will swarm

22. Bulletin 27 February 1892 p.7, on the Booth plan; 12 March p.6, on the superfluous women; 8 August 1891 p.7 and 12 March 1892 p.7, on "The Cheap Italian Labourer". Age 30 December 1892 p.4F.

23. Age 13 September 1893 p.4G, 11 February 1895 p.4G, 26 September 1896 p.6F.

into the North when the South gets a little more crowded.²⁴

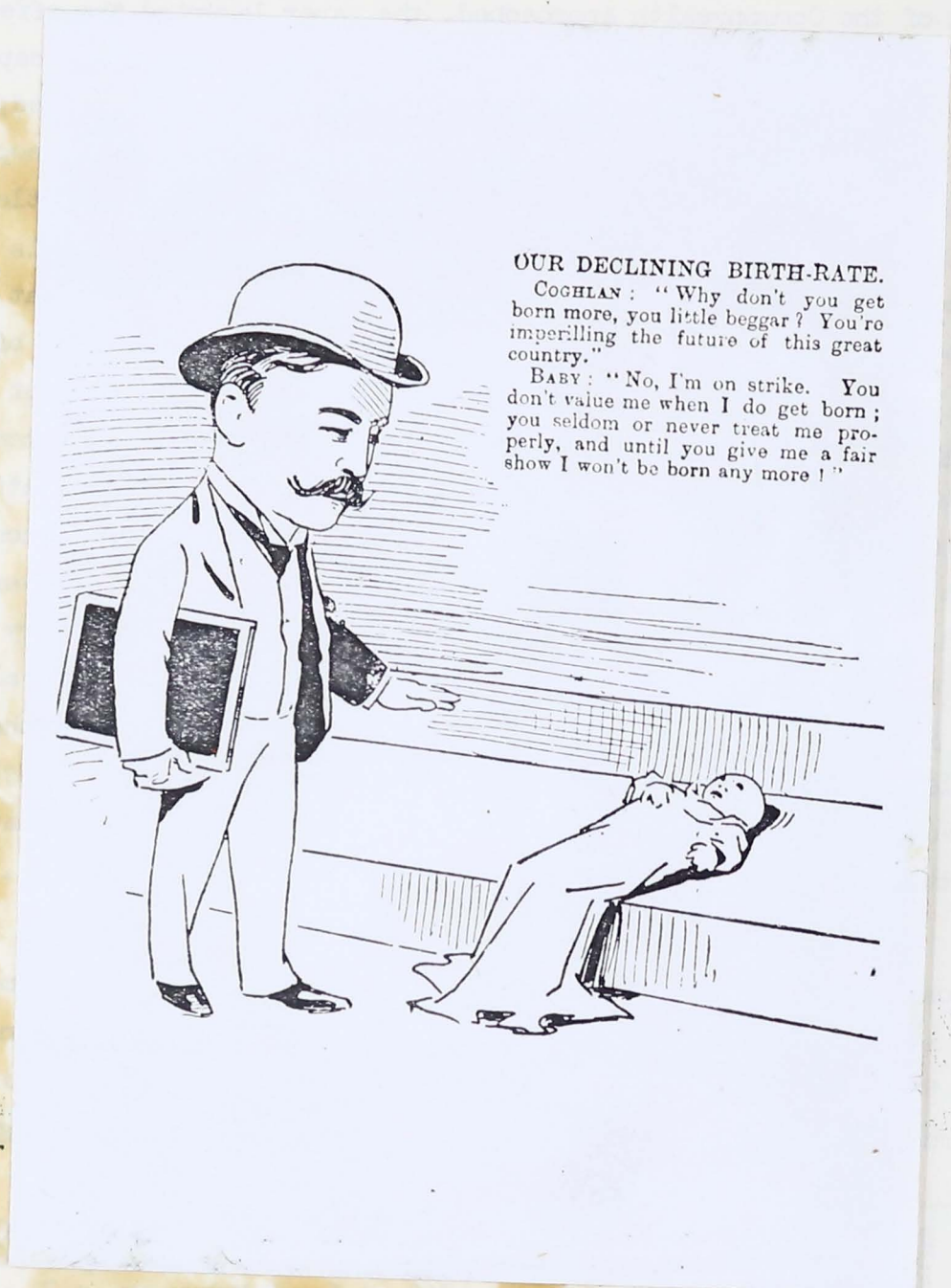
Readers of the Bulletin could have been forgiven for wondering where "in the South" the new race was being formed. As the inauguration of the Commonwealth approached, the paper lamented the effects of a long trend to concentration of population in Australia's capital cities. "In our overgrown cities health and strength are sapped; the habit of productive labour is lost; and the character of the people sensibly deteriorates..."²⁵ The paper urged large-scale resettlement of city people on independent homesteads in the country but this was no novel policy for the Age had always contended that "the great want of modern times is the permanent withdrawal of a large section of the town population to productive areas in the country." Throughout 1892 the Age had argued with growing enthusiasm against "the undue concentration of population in the towns" and in favour of village settlement schemes to relieve the pressure. Expressing an opinion uncommonly close to that of the Argus, its arch rival, the Age was sure everyone would admit "that a moderate migration to the towns is necessary to keep up the stamina of the population, but no one wants to see all the best young men deserting the country." The Age's support for the village settlement method of getting men on the land continued until 1896, then lapsed, to be revived in 1899. At no stage was it suggested that resettlement would stimulate the natural increase of population.²⁶

The interest which the Age and the Bulletin showed in the composition and distribution of Australia's population was not matched by a similar intensity of interest in the size of the population. Even when Victoria was losing large numbers of its people by emigration in the mid-'nineties the Age described the exodus as "serious enough to

24. Bulletin 24 March 1894 p.5, 31 August 1895 p.6, 21 September p.7, 2 November p.13, 16 November p.6, 18 January 1896 p.6, 25 January p.7, 22 January 1898 p.6, 5 February p.7.

25. Bulletin 8 December 1900 "Red Page".

26. Age 22 January 1892 p.7A, 8 February p.4D, 2 May p.4E, 20 October p.4F, 24 April 1893 p.4G, 11 July p.4E, 12 July p.4G, 24 August p.4G, 12 September p.5H, 12 July 1895 p.4F, 13 August 1896 p.4E, 4 May 1899 p.4F, 3 June p.9I. The Age's generalised enthusiasm for village settlements gives some point to the remark that they "functioned rather as an opiate than a solution" for social problems [-so R.E.W. Kennedy: "The Leongatha Labour Colony: Founding an Anti-Utopia" in Labour History XIV (May 1968) p.54]. The provision of small workingmen's blocks in South Australia was only marginally more successful than the settlements. [See J.B. Hirst: "G.W. Cotton and the Workingmen's Blocks" (BA thesis Adelaide 1963)].



The Bulletin (2 December 1899 p.5) comments on the appearance of Coghlan's Childbirth in New South Wales.

arrest attention" yet "not so alarming as the figures would indicate": many of the emigrés, it said, were men "who left their country for their country's good." As the depression in Victoria ground on the Age sympathised with "the woes of the women of the poorer classes...burdened with progeny far too numerous for [their] physical strength and precarious family income..."²⁷ Consequently it is not surprising to find the Age unconcerned that some women were seeking relief from their burden, even when the practice began to be a matter of concern elsewhere: there was no reflection of the misgivings the Argus and the Daily Telegraph entertained about the political implications of the decline in the birth rate.

...there are, as yet, at any rate, no grounds for a scare. It may or may not be the case that parents are beginning to adopt what has euphemistically been termed the 'prudential system' in regulating the size of their family...

but even if they are, the situation in Australia still compares favourably with that in other countries, so

...the 'new woman' may still continue to live, and liberal politicians to pursue their aspirations for advanced legislation, without the fear before their eyes of striking all the gentler half of the race with sterility.²⁸

The Age was troubled more by the dysgenic implications of family planning, believing that the practice must lead to deterioration of the race,

inasmuch as the limitation of families would be the least practised by those who are physically and morally most unfit. It is just those who are most weedy and incapable of self-control who would multiply as does a rabbit warren...²⁹

The Bulletin, by comparison, was not only unworried about Australia's population but scornful of those who were concerned.

The country where population is increasing fast is supposed to be prosperous; the one where it isn't is going to the dogs. It is the business of every well-ordered community now to show a diminishing death-rate and a growing birth-rate. The provinces got this complaint so badly that at one time they piled up huge debts merely that they might buy ready made population in Europe with the money.³⁰

The Age was sympathetic to the problems of those whose

27. Age 16 January 1896 p.5B, 13 October p.5G, 22 January 1898 p.9A.

28. Age 13 September 1899 p.8G.

29. Age 9 December 1899 p.8G.

30. Bulletin 5 March 1898 p.6.

families outran their means and, like the Bulletin, was relatively liberal in its attitude to a number of social problems associated with family life. Others raised the spectre of rampant promiscuity if foundling homes should be established on a 'no questions asked' basis: the Bulletin and, with less conviction, the Age said that such institutions would be better than the social hypocrisy which made unwanted babies the object of abortion and infanticide. In the Bulletin's view the chief sin of the abortionist was against the 'law' of population "that it is the business of every nation to increase in number...and to expand the census returns at any cost." Furthermore the law connived at abortion by "allowing nostrums for the 'restoration of regularity' to be openly advertised and sold, without taking any steps against either sellers or buyers."³¹

The Age and the Bulletin differed from the majority of Australian newspapers in their response to the social aspects of declining fertility. It could therefore be argued that they are used unfairly as evidence of popular opinion, were it not that similar views were expressed in many (but not all) of the large volume of letters published in the other newspapers. The Argus and the Advertiser published over fifty letters to the editor during March and April 1903 on the topic "Large Families or Small"; the Daily Telegraph carried an extensive correspondence on population both before the Birth Rate Commission was appointed and after it had reported; and the Telegraph again received a flood of mail about 'racial suicide' in May 1911. In addition the Bulletin itself had occasional correspondents supporting its contentions that abortion and infanticide were social rather than moral problems, that Japanese immigrants were highly undesirable and southern Europeans hardly better, and that a scheme of land settlement plus protective tariffs would ensure the increase of population.³²

On 17 March 1903 the Argus printed a report from its North American correspondent that President Theodore Roosevelt had named race suicide as his nation's most immediate problem. The report sparked a controversy. The following day the leader-writer for the Argus pointed out that race suicide was not confined to America, that the Australasian birth rate was already behind that of most European countries and that Victoria's record was the worst to be found in Australasia. If it

31. Bulletin 19 November 1892 p.4, 4 January 1896 p.7, 20 November 1897 p.7, 13 August 1898 p.7. Cf. Age 14 November 1892 p.4D, 4 December 1893 p.4F, 28 August 1897 p.7G.

32. Bulletin 12 October 1895 p.7, letter from "Warra" on abortion and infanticide; 16 November p.7, "Cephalos" on the Japanese; 19 February 1898 p.7, "Old Jack" on southern Europeans; 23 August 1903 p.29, "N.F." on closer settlement; and 10 September p.9, unsigned letter on settlement and protection.

were not for an exceptionally low death rate the country "would already be near stagnation". There seemed to be "no way of checking the evil" of decline, which was tentatively blamed upon female emancipation. The position was serious, the Argus said, because there was no point in talking of a White Australia if the white Australians became extinct while "John Chinaman" flourished.³³

Only about one-tenth of the Argus's correspondents agreed with it. Two allowed that female employment was a factor in the reduction of fertility but differed on the causal mechanism: one said that women were keeping men out of work but the other said that women had to go to work because men could not get work!³⁴ Several correspondents said that limitation of families was immoral and unnatural and proposed legislative or moral remedies. "Benedict", properly pastoral in his attitudes, declared it to be "an axiom that Nature avenges any infraction of her laws" and called upon the clergy to educate young women against practices which would transgress the axiom. "Onlooker" agreed that the Church should act but he wanted the additional safeguard of restraints on the publication of "certain advertisements and pamphlets". His desire for legislative restraint of the preventive trade was shared by two pharmacists and "A Father of Five Who Cannot Afford More".³⁵ The threat which declining fertility posed to national existence was emphasized by three gentlemen who, with irony that can only have been unconscious, took a religious view of the need to populate the country and a thoroughly un-Christian view of the alternative population. The nicest expression of their attitude was that of "Paterfamilias" who called on the clergy to challenge the birth controllers and added "Surely, as has been well said, such people shall not inherit the land, and their place shall be taken by others, even the despised Chinese."³⁶

33. Argus 17 March 1903 p.5D, 18 March p.5A.

34. Argus 27 March p.6F, letter from William A. Quick (a supernumerated Methodist minister), and 19 March p.5E from "M". "M" thought that mothers' "enforced absence from their natural duties" might also be a factor in "the appalling mortality among young children."

35. Argus 24 March p.5C, from "Benedict"; 20 March p.5B, "Onlooker"; 21 March p.15D, "Chemist"; 23 March p.5E, "Another Chemist"; and 20 March p.5B, "Father of Five..." Cf. letters of 24 March p.5C, "Man to Man" and 25 March p.5B, "Nemesis".

36. Argus 19 March p.5E, "Paterfamilias". Cf. the letters of "C" (20 March p.5B), who thought that only the "lower classes" and "heathen and half-civilised nations" would survive the era of family limitation, and "For God and Country" (26 March p.7B), who said that any nation which flaunted the Divine Creator was heading for "the inferno of obscurity and weakness."

Ranged against those who thought that limitation was immoral and extinction was in train were a larger number of correspondents who believed that the quality of child life was more important than the number of children. The neatest statement of their position was made by "Mother of Four", who said that it was "a cruel thing to bring children into the world unless the parents know they can properly provide for them", and went on to argue that careful parenthood would preëempt Malthus' catastrophic checks:

we are told that unless there were occasionally wars and plagues to carry off the surplus population the world would become overcrowded. Well, would it not be better not to have the surplus population?³⁷

Others put the "not quantity but quality" position more bluntly, one of them using the very phrase and arguing that "the rearing of children should be carried on on the same plan as the rearing of other stock, balancing numbers against subsistence." Another proponent of this view, who quoted Cotter Morrison's Service of Man and Arnold White's Problems of a Great City in support, held that "the real power of a nation for good" lay in the quality of its people, while a third upholder of the national welfare declared "sickly, short-lived and unhealthy children will never build up a white Australia."³⁸ Other correspondents rejected all notions of corporate welfare and held that family size was a subject for private decision, not patriotism, since the happiness of the home would be "of far more consequence than the magnitude of the State's population twenty years hence..."³⁹

The great majority of the Argus's correspondents believed that the cause of family limitation was the prevailing low wage/high cost structure in Victoria. One or two correspondents said that lack of domestic servants was the real problem or that pleas of economic hardship were only a cover for selfishness⁴⁰ but they were outnumbered by people who diagnosed economic causes and prescribed economic remedies for the decline. In many cases the blame for high food prices and

37. Argus 19 March p.5E, "Mother of Four".

38. Argus 23 March p.5, "The Father of Two"; 24 March p.5C, Frederick F. Smith (who quoted Cotter Morrison on the criminality of begetting children one cannot support, and Arnold White on the dysgenic effects of differential fertility in the city); 21 March p.15D, "Australian Mother of Two".

39. Argus 28 March p.16C, "Commonsense" and "Workman's Wife"; 21 March p.15D, "Father of Three"; 25 March p.5B, "Mother of Five".

40. Argus 20 March p.5B, "Mutterchen"; and 24 March p.5C, "Mother of Three Young Victorians".

small families was laid on the protective tariff levied in Victoria.⁴¹ The Argus being the free trade paper, it is not surprising that its correspondents used the lag in population as a stick to beat protection, although there was no automatic congruence of opinion between paper and readers on other aspects of the question. In any case it is unlikely that the Argus would have had much sympathy with the interventionist remedies proposed by those who diagnosed economic causes of decline. Several writers proposed tax concessions for parents, generally on a scale sliding according to family size, and one proponent of this idea suggested that the concessions should be financed by an imposition on bachelors.⁴² Others called for the payment of baby bonuses or child endowment, while yet another suggested that if pensions were more readily obtainable parents would take less thought for the future and be more willing to spend their income on children.⁴³ Two letter writers thought that a scheme of land settlement would remedy the decline and a third said that land settlement, irrigation, immigration and free trade would offset the deleterious effect on girls of modern education!⁴⁴ In general, though, it is fair to say that correspondents who discerned a moral cause for declining fertility espoused a negative legislative remedy (such as a ban on the advertising or sale of preventives), whereas those who thought there was an economic cause suggested

41. Argus 19 March p.5E, "Fiat Lux", decrying "A policy which sends foodstuffs to abnormal prices", and "Parent", suggesting that family limitation is not surprising when "everything a family eats, drinks and wears is so heavily taxed"; 20 March p.5, "Mother of Two" complaining that "even the babies' shoes are taxed". Cf. 21 March p.15D, "£2 Per Week"; and 27 March p.6F, "Mother of Thirteen".

42. Argus 19 March p.5E, "Parent"; 21 March p.15D, "Member"; 26 March p.7B, "Happy Father of Five"; and 28 March p.16C, "Taxpayer".

43. On bonuses and endowments see Argus 20 March p.5, "Mother of Two"; 27 March p.6F, "Another Mother of Thirteen"; and 28 March p.16C, Thomas MacPherson. On the indirect value of old-age pensions see Argus 20 March p.5B, "Ibex" and 21 March p.15D, "£2 Per Week". Limited old-age pension privileges (not rights) were introduced in Victoria in 1900 but by 1906 a Commonwealth Royal Commission on Old-Age Pensions could report of the Victorian system: "Owing to the stringent character of the investigations made, particularly as to the ability of parents to support parents who are claimants for pensions, the number of pensioners is decreasing." [Commonwealth of Australia, Royal Commission on Old Age Pensions: Report... (1906) pp.vii-ix, quoted in T.H. Kewley: Australia's Welfare State (Macmillan of Australia Melbourne 1969) p.45.]

44. Argus 21 March p.15D, "Give Them Room"; 25 March p.5B, "And There Was Light"; and 21 March p.15D, "A Happy and Contented Husband".

a positive legislative remedy of an economic kind.

The Argus itself was dismayed by what its correspondents wrote and, in attempting to sum up the discussion, seized on the moral cause and ignored all the remedies. "Statistics make it very clear", the editor wrote, "even without the candid admissions by correspondents, that 'race suicide' is extensively practised in Australia". Prudence might be the reason occasionally but in most cases the motive was nothing but

the determination to indulge a desire to marry without fear of losing any of the comforts and luxuries to which young people have become accustomed. A pitiable incapacity to practice self-denial explains, in the majority of cases, the prevalence of the small family... That is not the spirit which built up the British Empire. Nor is it the spirit that is likely to convert Australia into a puissant and prosperous nation.⁴⁵

The Advertiser picked up the Argus discussion and gave it a brief airing in Adelaide at the beginning of April 1903. The paper itself was much less sententious than the Argus had been but the correspondents, so far as one can generalise from a few examples, were rather more conservative than those in Melbourne. In its opening editorial the Advertiser commented that the Melbourne correspondence was salutary because it threw some light on personal aspects of a question usually considered "in the abstract or in its bearing upon the general interests of the State". Noting that the Argus highlighted "selfishness and the absence of...self-denial" while correspondents urged "considerations of individual prudence", the Advertiser came down on the side of the correspondents. Australia might have "vast territory and undeveloped resources" sufficient for a larger population, the Advertiser admitted, but it nevertheless sympathised with young men who were disinclined to marry when faced with "industrial depression, uncertain employment and limited earnings", and with married people who did not want to reduce a moderately comfortable standard of living by "encumbering themselves" with large families.⁴⁶

Some of the readers did not agree. "A Believer in God and Nature", evidently more orthodox in ethics than faith, was in "no doubt that nature has placed a curse upon the abuse of sexual passion. The aim of that passion is the procreation of children". There were other, less dogmatic, supporters of this position, ranging from one who wanted more honour, praise, comfort and blessing bestowed upon

45. Argus 26 March p.4F.

46. Advertiser 2 April 1903 p.4B.

the nation's mothers to others who would allow the limitation of families to a reasonable size (like seven or eight children) provided abstinence was the technique employed.⁴⁷ Against these advocates of the moderate-to-large family only two pens were raised: one to say that the difficulty of obtaining employment showed South Australia to be overpopulated, the other to argue that Australia had come up against Malthusian parameters of a fixed food supply and fixed number of jobs, so that any increase in numbers "must result in starvation and in an increase in the number of unemployed".⁴⁸

The limited evidence of letters to the Advertiser can be supplemented from the records of one of the bodies, still flourishing in 1903, which had caused Coghlan to remark on "the amazing energy of debate, of argument...of oratory" in the Adelaide of the 1890s. The Literary Societies and their Union Parliament were dominated by professional and commercial men: nevertheless they add a little to the picture of articulate opinion on population questions.⁴⁹ When the birth rate controversy was at its height in New South Wales during September 1903, Mr C.A. Hack introduced to the Union Parliament a "motion for arresting the decrease in the birthrate." Like others elsewhere, he suggested a bachelor tax to mitigate the evil. In April 1904 the editor of the Societies' Journal took a more radical line, suggesting that where population was so scarce and resources so abundant as in Australia policies of restrictive immigration and racial exclusiveness were inappropriate. The familiar theme of "The Overgrowth of Australian Cities" was sounded again in the May issue of the Journal and in June causes of, rather than remedies for, the hiatus in population growth were at last considered by one of the Union parliamentarians. He took up most of the points beloved of letter writers

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47. Advertiser 6 April p.7E, "A Believer in God and Nature", H.M. Addison, and "One of a Happy Family [of 10]"; 11 April p.10E, "Sea Breeze".
48. Advertiser 7 April p.6I, "Bachelor"; and 9 April p.6I, H.W. Clancey. A strong statement of the difficulties involved in maintaining a large family on low wages and uncertain employment appeared in a letter by "Asparagus" published on 14 July 1903 (p.7F).
49. Coghlan: Labour & Industry Vol IV p.1914. According to the Literary Societies' Journal (Adelaide) 10 November 1904 p.5, membership of the various societies comprising the Union had been as high as 2,000 in 1893 and as low as 913 in 1897; in 1903 there were 1,288 members, of whom an average of 617 attended weekly meetings. The names of 133 members appeared in the Journal between October 1903 and July 1904. Of the 88 who can be identified in the South Australian Directory, 51 were professional men, 19 were engaged in commerce, 8 were women and there were 10 "others". There is undoubtedly some bias due to the fact that the Directory was primarily compiled for commercial use.

in Sydney and Melbourne: the preference in employment given to single over married men; low wages; and the prevalence of female employment which, he said, injured the females and deprived the men of work.⁵⁰

The Adelaide controversy was small by contrast with that in the Melbourne Argus but Sydney's Daily Telegraph matched the Argus for volume with a correspondence that filled its letter columns from March to July 1903. As in Melbourne, so in Sydney, the discussion was provoked by Roosevelt's remarks on race suicide. There were two main groups of letters, dealing with the morality of family limitation and a variety of alleged causes of the decline in family size, together with a small number of letters whose authors were obviously trying to tie their opinions to a theoretical framework. Few letters proposed any remedy for the decline, except by implication. There was no dialogue between the moralists, whose letters were simply a series of confrontations ranging from those who thought God was irrelevant to the procreative decision against those who thought Him central, and those who saw limitation as selfish against those who saw it as rational.⁵¹

Correspondents looking for causes of limitation found them in social, political and economic fields. The employment of females, for example, was blamed for lowering the breadwinning capacity of males (by depressing wages or glutting the labour supply) and for reducing the reproductive capacity of the women themselves. Others saw family limitation as a function of the process of civilization - which reduced women's physiological and psychological capacity to rear children, of the Australian climate - said to have similar effects, of urbanisation, of the cost of education, and of protective, socialistic legislation.⁵² The argument that economic conditions were unfavourable

50. Literary Societies' Journal October 1903 p.10 for Mr Hack's motion; May 1904 p.10, Stirling Smeaton on "The Overgrowth of Australian Cities; its cause and cure"; July 1904 p.10, report of the June meeting of the Union Parliament. The disadvantages of restrictive immigration and racial exclusiveness [i.e. the White Australia policy] were rehearsed at length in the issue of the Journal for November 1904 (p.4) and in August 1907, when assisted immigration was becoming a live topic in all States, that subject, too, was duly raised in the Union Parliament (ibid September 1907 p.6, report of the August meeting).

51. DT 17 June 1903 p.10D, "Manton Hall"; 19 June p.8D, "Cosmos", "H.M." and "Another Citizen"; 23 June p.3E, "Domestic Happiness"; 27 June p.11F, "One of Twelve" and "M"; p.11G, "A Mother"; 30 June p.8D, "An Australian Mother" and "B"; 8 July p.9D, "Australian Born"; and 11 July p.13D, "A Farmer".

52. On the effects of female employment see DT 18 June p.3G, "Home"; 11 July p.13D, A.C. Bennett and "H". The other 'causes' were mentioned on 25 June p.3H, "A.B.C."; 2 July p.6C, "An Observer in the Country"; 7 July p.3E, "Australian"; 11 July p.13D, "S.J."; and 14 July p.8C, "Australia". The citation of "Australian" on both 7 and 14 July is not an error.

to large families was put most simply by the correspondent who wrote "I am convinced that it is the low rate of wages and the scarcity of work which are responsible for the declining birth rate." In his view the severity of the times had hit the middle and lower classes very hard and had "prevented hundreds of young fellows from taking upon themselves the responsibility of married life."⁵³

A feature of the 1903 correspondence in the Daily Telegraph was a group of letters which may not have expressed beliefs that differed significantly from those in the Argus and the Advertiser but were distinguished by some striving after a rational framework for the belief. The writer of the first letter of this kind suggested that the fuss about the decline of fertility among native-born white Americans was unimpressive because it failed to allow for 'relative deprivation' and the struggle for existence. Fertility depended on the intensity with which a man was forced to struggle to raise a family "on a plane and in harmony with his own tastes". Taste was a relative term, the writer suggested, "as a condition which would seem hopeless poverty to one would be affluence to another". It was said to follow from these premises that, while "relative hard conditions and social exactions" had caused "a vast army" of native-born Americans to remain unmarried, the large number of immigrants of the early 1890s, "mostly of decadent alien blood", had become "relatively so happy as to be glad, with their chattering progeny, to furnish the standard bearers of the future."⁵⁴ The writer did not attempt to relate his rather complicated theory to Australian conditions but another correspondent did, neatly utilising the widely approved remedy of land settlement. This second writer agreed with the first that limited opportunities produced dysgenic differentials of fertility. Conversely, he argued, the survival of the fittest could be ensured only by the provision of equal opportunities for all. This happy situation would be simply achieved by breaking up the land monopoly to establish a "prosperous agricultural community".⁵⁵

J.A. Hendry made a quite different contribution to the discussion with letters in both the Daily Telegraph and the Sydney

53. DT 30 June p.8D, Albert E. Grout. Cf. 25 June p.3H, "An Old Woman"; 7 July p.3E, "Physical Wreck" and Louis H. Paul.

54. DT 14 March 1903 p.13D, letter from "Nemo". G.D. Mitchell (ed.): A Dictionary of Sociology (Routledge & Kegan Paul London 1968) p.145, claims that the concept of relative deprivation was only "introduced" in 1949 and "formalized" in 1961 - but it is clear that "Nemo" had a very similar concept in mind and came close to using the term 46 years earlier.

55. DT 23 March p.3F, letter from "E.S.C."

Morning Herald. At a time when the sole idea of many more notable people in the community was that Australia's current levels of fertility were abnormally low and portentous of national calamity, Hendry produced a piece of rational economic analysis which hit at the foundations of the received demographic wisdom. In 1903, he said, Australia was suffering from "a plethora of population, born a generation ago, when parents were deceived by the nation that the opportunities afforded by this continent were boundless." A generation earlier heavy borrowing of British capital, "the reckless auctioning of the public estate", speculation in property and unthinking exploitation of productive resources "gave an altogether artificial stimulus" to commerce which was reflected in high marriage and birth rates. Now that the boom days were over, Hendry suggested,

The national aim should be in population, not quantity but quality. Today the standard of living is higher, sanitation allows a higher proportion of people to survive, and if the birth-rate be reduced somewhat, the result in due course will be a better equipped population...

The lessened birth rate...means self-restraint and prudence, which are signs of getting away from the condition of mere animals, whose surplus offspring have to perish. Surely this is a matter for congratulation rather than regret.⁵⁶

"H--A P--S", who need not have been so shy about revealing his identity, made the last of the amateur theorists' contributions to the Daily Telegraph correspondence. The ideas he collected were held separately by others but he forced them into a framework that might be labelled 'individualist variations on social capillarity' - although Spencer and Dumont may not have recognized it as such! "H--A P--S" said that the common argument whether a family of a few children was preferable to a numerous but ill-kept brood appeared to be synonymous with the question whether Australia wished to become "(a) a self-contained, mentally high cultured nation for a limited period, or (b) a less cultured, robust and prolific nation - dominant through quantity - for an unlimited period..." He did not answer the question himself but the remainder of his letter suggests that he believed Australia had chosen the former alternative. After pointing out that Australia was untroubled by problems of subsistence, he suggested that the chief cause of declining fertility was

the intense egoism of the age, which compels the fiercest struggle in order to reach a higher step on the social ladder, a consummation which children would greatly hamper and often prevent. We find that in democratic countries the birthrate is generally lower than in countries where rigid

56. DT 31 March 1903 p.3E and SMH 22 June 1903 p.5G. Note the similarity between Hendry's analysis of the effects of the boom and the analysis put to the Birth Rate Commission by Archdeacon Langley later in the year. (See p.182 above).

caste barriers make the wholesale transference of individuals from one stratum to another impossible... There is a large percentage of the educated classes for whom there might be some excuse for refraining from having children; namely, those who receive proportionally less remuneration for their work than the artisan, and yet are expected by their employers and friends to 'keep up appearances'...

... It is only where intellectual pursuits are considered the only possible career, that a child is a serious financial consideration; therefore those who wish for numbers for the sake of military protection should discourage extreme intellectual culture for the masses, and encourage handicrafts...⁵⁷

There were elements in the "H--A P--S" theory making it even more scrappy than appears from the extract just quoted. Nevertheless his letter and those of "Nemo", "E.S.C." and Hendry all give evidence of a groping attempt to fit pieces of experience into half-understood, but broader, themes. Taken together these letters give additional support to the suggestion made in the preceding chapter, that the resources for a 'post-Malthusian' debate were available in Australia and might have coalesced into a respectable intellectual controversy had not the Birth Rate Commission supervened. It is significant that, of the twenty-five letters printed by the Daily Telegraph in the week following the publication of the Commission's Report, not one attempted a systematic argument from theoretical premises. In addition only three of these later correspondents shared the Commission's (and the Telegraph's) concern with the national and moral implications of the decline in the birth rate. Two-thirds of the writers, by contrast, dwelt on social and economic causes of and remedies for the decline.⁵⁸

Three points arising from the account of opinion given in this chapter and the one preceding it deserve further comment: the fear that failure of Caucasian (and, especially, Anglo-Saxon) fertility in Australia would see the continent invaded by hordes from more

57. DT 19 June 1903 p.8D.

58. DT 5 March 1904 p.8C, Editorial; 8 March p.3F,G, letters by Edward A. Beeby, "Father of Seven", "Father of Six", "A Mother", "Pater" and R.W.H. Bligh; 9 March p.5H, Fred Porter, "Duty", "Father of a Few" and "Balgownie"; 10 March p.6E,F, "A Woman" and Benjamin Backhouse; 11 March p.3D,E,F, "Socialism", "Father of Eight", "Critic", "Parablax", "Old Physician" and "Kurri Kurri"; 12 March p.12C,D, A.M. Hall, "Mother of Four", Lavinia Mann, and "Hopeful"; 14 March p.3D, "A Suburban Woman", "A Willoughby Mother" and "One of Eight". Bligh, "Parablax" and Lavinia Mann were the three who shared the Commissioners' views.

prolific races; the repeated suggestion that financial want or uncertainty of employment caused people to limit the number of their offspring; and the lack of comment on the availability of birth control literature and equipment.

"Give the Yellow Man once firm foothold in the North and he will gradually overrun the continent", the Bulletin warned during 1893 in a passage that was not novel.⁵⁹ The theme was sufficiently dramatic and, evidently, popular to attract the attention of novelists and short story writers. In 1895 J.A. Kenneth Mackay, a member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, published The Yellow Wave "A Romance of the Asiatic Invasion of Australia" which forecast what a reviewer called "the future of Queensland when the colored-labor policy and the land-grant railway policy and the country-for-the-coolie syndicates policy are pushed to their probable limits..."⁶⁰ In this case the 'probable limit' turns out to be a Russo-Chinese invasion which sweeps the inadequate white population of Queensland to the coast. Mackay's was not the only Australian voice prophesying war.⁶¹ There was even a motion picture on the invasion by Yellow Peril theme⁶² and the literary magazine Lone Hand, an offshoot of the Bulletin, specialised in articles warning of "the danger of allowing so rich a treasure as this vast Commonwealth to be guarded by so small a population." It even proposed, with nice irony, that Australian and Papuan aborigines should be given military training to defend Australia against Japan.⁶³ The most successful

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59. Bulletin 3 August 1895 p.7. This is not the place to say all that could be said about the social Darwinist, and merely racist, elements in Australian attitudes to Asia [along the lines of the chapter on "Racism and Imperialism" in Richard Hofstadter's Social Darwinism in American Thought (Rev. edn. George Braziller New York 1959), for example.]
60. "Bulletin Book Exchange" in Bulletin 4 January 1896. The full citation of the book is J.A. Kenneth Mackay: The Yellow Wave. A Romance of the Asiatic Invasion of Australia. (Richard Bentley & Son London 1895). The Bulletin's reviewer was not Mackay's only reader: the copy in the Australian National Library has an Angus & Robertson sales sticker and is autographed "John Walker Sept. 1899".
61. I.F. Clarke: Voices Prophesying War (O.U.P. 1966) discusses the widespread appearance of this genre of literature in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.
62. The film was "Australia Calls", produced by Raymond Longford in 1913. One of the script writers was C.A. Jeffries, the author of "A Hero of Babylon" cited in n.63, below. See Ross Cooper: "Australia Does Have a Film Heritage" in Rabelais (Students' newspaper of La Trobe University) 14 October 1969.
63. So R. Bedford: "White, yellow and brown..." in Lone Hand IX (July 1911) pp.224-228. Cf. "Prolific Australia" in ibid I (May 1907) p.67f; C.A. Jeffries: "A Hero of Babylon" in ibid I (May 1907) pp.61-65 (an Asiatic squadron hold Sydney to ransom - until the Hero thwarts their designs!); L. Esson: "The Asiatic Menace..." in ibid III (October 1908) pp.617-619, IV (November 1908) pp.1-4, and V (December 1908) pp.121-123.

piece of the kind was The Australian Crisis, an apocalyptic account of a Japanese invasion of Australia. The author said in his introduction that the book had developed from an attempt to write a magazine article about "the dangers to which the neighbourhood of over-crowded Asia exposes the thinly populated Commonwealth of Australia." At the time of starting work, he confessed, his thoughts on the subject "resembled those of the Australian multitude: they were disconnected, and more in the shape of a vague fear than defined clearly."⁶⁴ All the other evidence we have reviewed suggests that the description of Australian opinion was accurate.

At least half of the people who wrote to the Press about the peopling of Australia made some reference to an economic cause of family limitation, usually complaining of difficulties in obtaining regular employment or of increases in the cost of living. This thesis does not set out to answer the question whether the increasing limitation of fertility around the end of the nineteenth century was due to unemployment, a rise in costs or, even, a development of contraceptive technique but it is necessary to ask whether the opinion that conditions were becoming harder had any basis in fact. It seems reasonable to say that it did.

The Melbourne Age published numerous articles and editorials during 1892, 1894 and 1899 on the impact of unemployment. The detail of the reports suggests that there was a good deal of distress in the city (although the Age did not suggest at any time that unemployment was directly influencing the size of families).⁶⁵ Similarly in the New South Wales Parliament, where debates on the problem of unemployment

64. C.H. Kirmess: The Australian Crisis (Lothian Melbourne 1909) p.5. An identical text was published as "The Commonwealth Crisis" in Lone Hand between November 1908 and April 1909. It would be a shame not to give the reader some of the flavour of this work which makes entertaining reading, these closing lines notwithstanding:

A truce has been cried until 1940 A.D. Till then the Commonwealth must get ready for its relentless march to the North to save the purity of the race by sweeping the brown invaders back over the coral sea. The alternative is the irretrievable conquest of tropical Australia by the hordes of the Orient. In this struggle the still larger issue is bound up, whether the White or the Yellow race shall gain final supremacy. Christian civilization cannot afford the loss of this continent, FOR AUSTRALIA IS THE PRECIOUS FRONT BUCKLE IN THE WHITE GIRDLE OF POWER AND PROGRESS ENCIRCLING THE GLOBE.

65. Age 22, 23, 24 June 1892 pp.5H, 5H, 6A, respectively; 28 March 1894 p.5D; 2 April p.5G; 3 April p.4E; April-May 1899, passim; and 23 August p.8A.

were almost an annual ritual in the 1890s, there was never a hint that reduced family size was resulting from lack of jobs.⁶⁶ There can be no doubt, however, that unemployment or, at least, underemployment, was severe, especially in New South Wales, about the time of public discussion of the birth rate question. T.A. Coghlan certainly believed that there was severe unemployment in New South Wales, Victoria and, for a shorter time, South Australia during the 1890s and there was other evidence besides that of parliamentarians and editorialists to support him.⁶⁷ More than 10 per cent of Australian trades unionists are said to have been unemployed in the mid-1890s and over 6 per cent in 1901. Almost 5 per cent of all New South Wales male breadwinners aged 20 years and over were unemployed at the time of the 1901 Census.⁶⁸ In 1898 the New South Wales Government Labour Bureau reported that there were "a large number of men who [could] only perhaps obtain one or two days work per week" and that in a year when the employment situation was said to have improved. Some idea of the pressure on jobs, even at a later date, can be gathered from the Reports of the Public Service Board in New South Wales: in 1901 the Board received 5,910 applications for the 462 positions it advertised, the heaviest pressure being for unskilled, non-manual jobs like storekeeper or timekeeper. In 1902 the response rose to 6,101 applications for only 372 posts.⁶⁹

Even those who had regular work frequently earned little more than subsistence. A number of newspaper correspondents specified £2- per week as the income on which a small family could be maintained in modest comfort in 1903. Thirty-six per cent of New South Wales public servants were receiving £2- per week or less in 1902 and nearly two-thirds of the service had less than £3- per week. (In Victoria in 1894 and 1896 thirty-one per cent of public servants were paid less than £2- and ninety per cent had less than £4- per week).⁷⁰ In 1907

66. New South Wales Parliamentary Debates (Assembly) 16 November 1893; 21 December 1894; 14 November 1895; 15 June 1897; 12 July 1900; 28 July 1903.

67. Coghlan: Labour and Industry Vol IV pp.2018-2045 (on New South Wales); 2047-2057 (Victoria); and 2067-2074 (South Australia).

68. The trade union figures are from C. Forster: "Australian Unemployment, 1900-1940" in Economic Record XLI:95 (September 1965) pp.426-450. The breadwinners figure is calculated from the Census figures for 1901: in 1891 5.3% of breadwinners were unemployed, in 1901 4.95% and in 1911 2.7%.

69. Report of the Government Labour Bureau in New South Wales Legislative Council Journal Vol I (1898) p.637. Report of the Public Service Board in ibid Vol I (1902) p.446f and Vol I (1903) p.530f.

70. Calculated from New South Wales Public Service Board Report, (1902) p.431 and Victorian Year Book (1895-8) p.121.

Mr Justice Higgins of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court set £2-2-0 per week as "fair and reasonable remuneration" for a group of factory workers in Victoria.⁷¹ Mr Higgins said, in part,

I propose to take unskilled labourers first. The standard wage...is 6s. per day...There is no constancy of employment...But even if the employment were constant and uninterrupted, is a wage of 36s. per week fair and reasonable, in view of the cost of living in Victoria?... The usual rent paid by a labourer...appears to be 7s.; and, taking the rent at 7s., the necessary average weekly expenditure for a labourer's home of about five persons would seem to be about £1 12s. 5d...I have confined the figures to rent, groceries, bread, milk, fuel, vegetables, and fruit...This expenditure does not cover light...clothes, boots,..tram and train fares,..school requisites, amusements and holidays,.. or any expenditure for unusual contingencies...

£2-2-0 per week may have been "fair and reasonable" throughout most of the period we are dealing with. It is difficult to get an accurate index of industrial incomes (the States' statistical registers give such a range of wages for each occupation as to make averages meaningless) but the Commonwealth Statistician calculated an index of "effective wages" (1911=1,000) which stood at 945 in 1901 and 940 in 1906. A more recent attempt to calculate average effective wages in manufacturing (1911=100) has produced the series 93 (1901), 87 (1902), 86 (1903), 96 (1904), 86 (1905) for New South Wales and an almost constant index for the same period in Victoria, when the approximate "average wages paid (in Victorian manufacturing) to non-casual, manual workers for a standard working week during November of each year" were about £1 15s.⁷²

Effective wages were evidently stable during the early years of this century but for anyone whose income fell or even failed to rise between 1901 and 1905 conditions would have been uncomfortable due to rises in food prices, as the following table makes clear:

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71. "Ex Parte H.V. McKay" [the Harvester Judgement] in Commonwealth Arbitration Reports, II (1907-8) p.1.
72. Australia, Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics Labour Reports no.2 (1912) p.66.
P.G. Macarthy: "Wages in Australia, 1891 to 1914" in Australian Economic History Review X:1 (March 1970) p.67 and Macarthy: "The Harvester Judgement - An Historical Assessment" (PhD thesis ANU 1967) p.58.



*A MEDICAL ITEM.
In plain wrappers, secure from observation.*

(Bulletin 11 June 1898 p.11).

TABLE 43

Retail Price Index Numbers, 1901-1905^a
(Groceries, Dairy Produce, Meat)

	<u>1901</u>	<u>1902</u>	<u>1903</u>	<u>1904</u>	<u>1905</u>	<u>1911</u>
Sydney	881	1,085	1,013	804	896	
Melbourne	969	1,047	969	907	937	
Adelaide	975	1,025	937	865	909	
Weighted average for 6 State capitals	945	1,068	1,002	871	927	1,000

a. Derived from Commonwealth of Australia, Bureau of Census and Statistics, Labour Reports No.6 (1916) p.26.

It is noteworthy that 1902 and 1903 were the years of high prices in Sydney and of frequent complaint about the cost of supporting a family.

Very few newspaper correspondents spoke about the advertisement or use of birth control methods, even where it is clear that they approved of the limitation of family size. Nevertheless a chapter could easily be filled with material on the availability of birth control aids - if this were a thesis on contraceptive technique. Leaving aside the extensive mechanical induction of miscarriage,⁷³ it is clear that chemical abortifacients and a variety of contraceptive aids were publicised and procurable at least from the beginning of the 1890s. In one debate in 1889 half-a-dozen members of the New South Wales Parliament spoke of newspaper advertisements and postal pamphlets about preventives circulating widely in the State.⁷⁴ The Bulletin regarded contraceptive advertisements, with their coy promise of despatch 'under plain brown wrapper', as sufficiently commonplace for cartoon comment (see facing page) while the Birth Rate Commission was told that a survey of 141 New South Wales newspapers in April 1903 had

73. DBR Exhibits 55 and 66 show that just two of the Sydney hospitals (The Coast Hospital and the Prince Alfred) treated 97 cases of abortion or miscarriage in the first 9 months of 1903; as the medical witnesses pointed out to the Birth Rate Commission, the number of treatments was only a fraction of the number of successful abortions. Cf. ibid Exhibit 63.

74. NSW Parliamentary Debates (Assembly) 12 July 1889, debate on the Publication of Obscene Evidence Prevention Bill. Speeches of Messrs. O'Sullivan, Edmunds, Melville, Molesworth, Seaver and Hutchinson. Melville claimed that The Law of Population, which had recently been cleared for publication in the judgement Ex Parte Collins (see p.126 above), was "being sold throughout the country at the price of 2s.6d."

counted 237 advertisements of pills for women's "irregularities" (i.e. abortifacients), preventives and books of advice "for the Married" or "for Ladies and Gentlemen".⁷⁵ In the intervening years interested persons could have read Mrs Bessie Smyth's pamphlets on limitation of offspring and the diseases of women or attended her lectures in several parts of Melbourne; bought works by Allbutt, Edward B. Foote, Annie Besant and Knowlton from Sir Robert Bear's well-stocked Sydney bookshop or similar titles from Saunders' bookshop in Melbourne; or perused Australian editions of Warren's Wife's Guide and Cowan's Science of a New Life.⁷⁶ Anyone wishing to apply the knowledge thus acquired could purchase Malthus Soluble Quinine Tablets, Lambert's Improved Secret Spring Check Pessary, the 'Sanitas' Sponge, or the 'Hygena' Spray Syringe in Melbourne's main shopping area; 'Malthus' Sheaths ("guaranteed extra strong"), Lambert's Improved Vertical and Reverse Current Syringe, Rendell's Quinine Pessaries or the Marvel Whirling Spray in Sydney; even, if one's pharmacist dealt with the right agents, the "No More Worry Co's" Patent Pessary.⁷⁷

There was considerable demand for contraceptive equipment. During the month of October 1903 imports to New South Wales of sheaths

75. DBR Q.6743.

76. Mrs B. Smyth: Limitation of Offspring... (Rae Bros Melbourne 1893), which has notes of her appearances in the suburbs at pp. 30-38, and Diseases Incidental to Women (H.J. Prender Melbourne (1895)). Both publications advised that "Mrs Smyth has always in stock and on sale" over twenty lines of contraceptive device. Marcus Lafayette Byrn: The Book of Nature... (Modern Medical Publishing Co Sydney n.d.) carried Bear's stocklist on the endpapers. There was also a Melbourne 'edition' of this title which Sir Edward Ford informs me attributes authorship to Thomas Faulkner M.D. Saunders & Co's list appears in "Oxoniensis": Early Marriage and Late Parentage; or was Malthus wrong? (Saunders Melbourne 1900). Australian editions of the Wife's Guide were published in 1893, 1898 and 1912 by Will Andrade, the Melbourne freethought publisher. Cowan: Science of a New Life was published in Melbourne by Fergusson & Mitchell (1882) and E.W. Cole (after 1900). The copy of an American edition now in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, is endorsed "Wilfred Hodgson June 15th '74". Hines: Medical History... p.266f comments "Cowan is best described as a popularizer and pot-boiler. His account of contraceptive technique, though unimpressive, must have played some role...in popularizing contraceptive knowledge."
77. The first group of items was advertised by Will Andrade, 201 Bourke Street, Melbourne; the second group were advertised by Bear, 16 Park Street, Sydney, The Marvel Co. of Australia, 418 George Street, Sydney [who advertised in the Bulletin (e.g. 2 March 1903 p.5) and informed customers "Lady Specialist in attendance"], or many of the pharmacists who told the Birth Rate Commission that Rendell's Pessaries were a popular line. The 'patent pessary' could be obtained from Brisbane, according to handbills reproduced in DBR Exhibit 165.

and pessaries alone amounted to more than twenty-one thousand pieces. Three wholesalers questioned by the Birth Rate Commission admitted sales in excess of two hundred thousand pieces per annum.⁷⁸ Add to this the local output of pessaries and sponges, syringes and abortifacients not included in the two hundred thousand and it becomes apparent that, whatever the opinions, the evidence is that very many attempts were made to limit the size of families.

After the Birth Rate Commission's Report had been presented and discussed the urgency went out of discussions about the peopling of Australia. There were still some opinions expressed about the decline of fertility but the main interest after 1905 was in the conservation of infant life or the development of immigration. Only O.C. Beale continued to hie verbosely after a world that was lost. The slow recovery of the birth rate and the faster growth of immigration seem to have set minds at rest where the demographic future of the nation was concerned. Even the 1911 census failed to attract as much attention as those which had preceded it. Then, for one week in May 1911, the Sydney Daily Telegraph provoked and publicised a controversy which gives an excellent picture of the state of opinion about the peopling of Australia at the end of our period.

It ought not to be surprising that the Telegraph should have been the vehicle for the controversy since that paper, far more than the Sydney Morning Herald or even the Bulletin, had been the one to highlight problems of population. On 17 May 1911 the Telegraph printed an article on "Racial Decadence" by Theodore Roosevelt, whose interest in the question had been revived, particularly with respect to the Australian experience, by the appearance of Beale's Racial Decay. Roosevelt described the book as "not good in form but in substance I believe better worth the study of any sincere patriot...than any other book that has been written for years."⁷⁹ In Beale's work Roosevelt found evidence that the Western world was following France "in that rapid decline of birth-rate which inevitably signalizes race decay and which, if unchecked, means rasial death." He went on to say that

One of the strangest and saddest things in the whole sad business is that the decline has been most marked in the very places

78. DBR Exhibit 76. According to the Collector of Customs at Sydney (ibid Exhibit 72), imports in September 1903 were only 13,000 pieces. It may be that the higher figure simply represents fulfilment of precautionary orders placed by importers when the inquiry was mooted in August. On wholesale turnover see DBR Qq.717f, 750; 841-844, 858; 905-915.

79. DT 17 May 1911 p.7A. The article was reprinted from Outlook 8 April 1911.

where one would expect to see the abounding vigour of the race most strikingly displayed. In Australia and New Zealand there is no warrant whatever in economic conditions for a limitation of the birth-rate, and the course of events in these great new countries demonstrates beyond possibility of refutation that the decline in the birth-rate is not due to economic forces...

Taking up two other issues which had frequently been raised in Australian discussions, Roosevelt gave the opinion that Australia was a continent

which could support, without the slightest difficulty, ten-fold the present population, and at the same time raise the general standard of well-being. Yet its sparse population tends to concentrate in great cities of disproportionate size compared to the country population... and it increases so slowly that, even if the present rate were maintained, the population would not double itself in the next century... If this is so, then the men who rally to the battle-cry of 'A White Australia' have indeed ground for anxiety as they think of the teeming myriads steadily increasing north of them.

Roosevelt was in line with much Australian opinion in deploring the drift to the cities and in raising the 'populate or perish' theme and he was not alone, either, in regarding "disproportionate love of luxury and of comfort" as one of the causes of the decline in the birth rate. He was out of step with many of Australia's pronatalists, however, when he said "I do not believe that, in itself, the growth of independence among women has anything to do with the trouble". He also set his target a little lower than others in prescribing four children per family as the number needed to keep the nation's population stable.

The ex-President's article appeared on the 17th May. In the following five publication days, from 18 May to 23 May, there were no less than thirty-four contributions to the discussion in the form of reported statements or letters to the editor. (There was also an advertisement by the enterprising LADIES' COLLEGE OF HEALTH which took up the theme of "Roosevelt's Bomb" and offered its course of "Home Treatment" as a cure for sterility!)⁸⁰ On the first two days after Roosevelt's article there were few letters and the Telegraph kept up interest in the topic by reporting the reactions of various Sydney notables. Most of their opinions fell into three categories which might be called (for the want of more precise labels) moralistic, economic and conservationist.

The long-held view of most churchmen, that prevention of conception indicates serious moral sickness, was represented on this

80. DT 20 May p.7G.

occasion by the Rev R. Kay, Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly. Having opined that "motherhood, properly viewed, is woman's grandest glory", he went on to blame "the worldly butterfly" for causing "children and the care of children to be regarded as encumbrances. A most fatal view." Kay's concern would certainly have gained the support of Mr David Storey, leader of the Independent group in the House of Assembly, who felt that the "race suicide evil" was "more likely to be diminished by moral suasion and by a proper conception of the duties of citizenship as expounded by the Christian Churches than by any laws that can be enacted..."⁸¹

Neither Kay and Storey nor Dr Charles Mackellar seem to have felt any need to justify their opinions with evidence. Mackellar, who was interviewed a day after Kay and Storey, simply recalled the conclusions of the 1903 Royal Commission on the birth rate. He gave his support to Roosevelt's opinion that economic factors were not the root cause of the decline and said that the ostensible reasons people offered all indicated "the desire of the individual to avoid his obligations to the community." Such individuals had succumbed to the desire because of the weakening of religious feeling and had succeeded in avoiding their obligations because of "a traffic in the materials used for the purpose of prevention."⁸² It is noteworthy that Mackellar apparently felt no need to change his opinions from those set down in the Report of the Royal Commission seven years earlier and that, despite his involvement in childrens' welfare work, he had not joined those advocating better care of existing children as a partial compensation for the non-arrival of others.

Three commentators went beyond the blanket condemnation of all contraceptors which had been the norm in earlier years to concentrate on the bad example of the rich. "A French priest of the Roman Catholic Church", apparently resident in Sydney, said there was "more selfishness in this respect in the upper circles than among the poorer people." W.L. Duncan, who was President of the New South Wales Labour Council and whose attitude might therefore have been predicted, thought it undoubtedly true of the rich that "the mere force of their pernicious example has assisted to some extent in reducing the birth-rate among the less favoured sections of the community." The Acting-Premier, Mr W.A. Holman, who had also been a member of the 1903 Commission, pushed the point about the bad example of the rich a little further and gave it a slight Darwinian flavour, suggesting that the decline of the birth

81. Both Kay and Storey were reported in ibid 18 May p.10F,G.

82. ibid 19 May p.11A.

rate would be "a very great menace to the State" if it were not that the selfish class "necessarily tends to disappear as a result of its own vices."⁸³

Not only the example of the rich but also the condition of the poor was given some consideration as a cause of the alleged decadence of the race. The Minister for Public Instruction was convinced that the alleged lowering of the moral tone of the community was merely a symptom of the laissez-faire economic system. "Given conditions in which every normal individual is guaranteed the right to work and a reasonable standard of comfort," the Minister said, "the birth-rate will increase."⁸⁴ W.L. Duncan of the Labour Council estimated that the dread of poverty was the reason animating "at least 75 per cent of our people in their desire for small families" and the Rev Dr Thomas Roseby of the Congregational Church said that Roosevelt was quite incorrect in ignoring economic conditions. According to Roseby the declining birth-rate was "very much a question of prospects in life, of an assured career, of employment, cost of living and daily bread."⁸⁵

In addition to the economic pressures on those already married the difficulties of setting up a home were thought to be deterring some young men from even embarking on marriage. That was the opinion of both the politicians, Storey and Holman. The former observed that "Many young men today do not like to take up the responsibility and cost of married life". Mr Holman claimed that "Ambitious young men who have a career to make won't marry early" and the kind of jobs most were able to get prevented them from setting up a family much before the age of thirty. To help ameliorate the financial pressure on parents Sir James Graham suggested a recompense or reward which "could be given in the shape of a bonus; and, negatively, by a remission of taxation." This kind of bonus could also solve some associated problems, Sir James believed, since "a grant of land for each child might at once increase the resources of the parents, provide for the future of the child, and promote the land settlement of Australia."⁸⁶ Dr Arthur thought the only real solution to Australia's problems lay in migration but he

83. All three were reported in ibid 18 May p.10E,F,G. Holman's view was a nice inversion of the more widely held opinion that differential fertility was dysgenic.

84. ibid 19 May p.11A Remarks of Mr Beeby.

85. loc cit col.G On Roseby's important place in the history of Australian Nonconformist social thought see Phillips: Christianity and its Defence... pp.265-9.

86. ibid 18 May p.10F Cf. his evidence in DBR Qq.3527-3652.

did give some support to the bonus scheme - with the reservation that he did not believe "increased material comforts would produce an increase in the birth-rate" since limitation was "far more pronounced among those well able to support large families."⁸⁷

The proponents of bonuses serve to introduce a group whose views represented the most distinct addition to those that had been current throughout most of our period, namely the people who regarded preservation of existing child life as a partial compensation for the decline of new life. As the Daily Telegraph put it in the heading over one statement of this opinion,

Do Not Cry Over The Unborn
Save The Infants Who Are Here

Sir James Graham "laid a good deal of stress on the need for reducing mortality among infants" and Mr Holman felt that "As there is a diminution in the birth-rate...the great thing is to preserve the lives of the children that are born and put an end to the appalling infant mortality."⁸⁸ While this desire to deal with the infant death rate did mark a considerable advance on the moralistic lamentations which had formerly prevailed its empirical foundations were hardly more solid: the infant mortality rate in Australia had, in fact, been falling rapidly since just before the turn of the century and by 1911 was little more than two-thirds the level of a decade earlier.⁸⁹

Most people who looked to the problem of preserving child life obviously meant to deal with more than the infant year, however. Holman was concerned about the numbers living to five years of age and thought it

mainly a question...of educating young mothers...
a question of an absolutely pure and dependable
milk supply...a great deal can be done by a large
increase in the maternity homes...the institution
of State creches...close medical inspection of all
children at school...

Holman's ministerial colleague, Mr Beeby, looked to "Better education in domestic science, free medical inspection and treatment of poor children, and the creation of healthy surroundings", while Sir James Graham drew attention to dispensaries and home visiting as "agencies in assisting the poorer classes." The city health officer, Dr W.G. Armstrong, hoped something might be achieved by giving mothers better education in child care.⁹⁰ Just as Holman imported traces of 'survival

87. ibid 19 May p.11B Dr Arthur had a well-publicised interest in immigration.

88. ibid 18 May p.11E. The headline related to the opinions of Mrs K. Dwyer, President of the Women Workers' Union. See ibid 19 May p.12A.

89. See Figure 3, facing p. 12 above.

90. DT 18 May p.10G.

of the fittest' theory into his comments on class-differentiated fertility, so did some of those concerned with children's welfare import eugenic ideas into their arguments. The feminist leader, Rose Scott, thought it was better in a world where so many children starve that parents should limit their families to a size they could care for, adding that "In every other department of life we consider quality before quantity."⁹¹ Dr Thomas Roseby was another who thought that eugenics should be discussed, though this was not a view that would have appealed to many of his brother clergy.

In addition to the three main groups already mentioned the Daily Telegraph also obtained statements in which public figures ascribed racial decadence to the emancipation of women (another of Dr Arthur's views), the physical strain of female employment (Mr Beeby), and the increasing difficulty of obtaining domestic assistance (the opinion of Archdeacon Boyce). To cure the decadence Sir Joseph Carruthers "urged legislation."⁹²

With all these opinions to stimulate controversy the Daily Telegraph naturally reaped a harvest of letters to the editor. The main categories of opinion were 'moral' and 'economic', as usual. First among the moralists was Lancelot Victor Wilkinson, who believed that "blindness to our obligations to humanity at large" stemmed from an "increase in the power of sense gratification" followed by "a decrease in the moral sense". This was not unduly worrying because "all progress [was] wave-like in its course" and an early return to self-renunciation could therefore be expected. In the interim people should be educated to a higher ideal of national welfare and morality.⁹³ A more personal view of the question came from "A Mother", who suggested that children should be taught that parentage is a sacred right and duty - but another mother (of three) agreed only with the individualist emphasis, asking: "As for the 'sinfulness' of limited families...whose word are we to take for that, against our own reasons and conscience?"⁹⁴ Two of the correspondents mixed their moralism with some 'yellow peril' alarms.

91. ibid 19 May p.11G.

92. Archdeacon Francis Boyce was well-known as a Church of England social worker and agitator for slum clearance. His views were quoted in ibid 18 May p.10F. Sir Joseph Carruthers was Leader of the Opposition at the time of the Birth Rate Commission and later became Premier of New South Wales. The tone of the reported interview with him (ibid 19 May p.11G.) suggests that he would have "urged Legislation" whatever the problem.

93. ibid 19 May p.12A.

94. ibid 22 May p.3F, letters from "A Mother" and "A.W.H.H." (who was the mother of three).

'A White Man' sounded the clarion with the warning that "Eight hundred millions of coloured people swarm above Australia, most of them within a few days steam of the Northern Territory. And they are arming and drilling." 'N.S. Welshman' shared the view that Europeans must prepare "to hold back the teeming and ever-multiplying Eastern peoples who will slowly, if surely, force their way in a westerly direction."⁹⁵ In respect of perils from the north opinion was unchanged from 1890.

As with the notables, so with the general public, the economic argument came in two forms, one concerned with the difficulty of setting up a home and the other with the difficulty of maintaining a family. A working-man claimed that "if young men were given more chance to settle upon the land, more chance to build up permanent homes, they would have more inducement to get married." Another contributor complained that he was unmarried because "...living is high, wages are low, the expenses of preparation for my life's work heavy, and I cannot see my way clear to marry for a year or so yet." He thought many other young people were similarly placed and, while he did agree that many delayed their marriage because of unduly grand expectations (girls in particular attracting his criticism), he believed that "a fair prospect at least is necessary to start married life on."⁹⁶ The laymen also gave hard evidence to back up the opinions of those public figures who had recognised the difficulty of raising a large family on a limited income. One example is worth quoting at length:

...perhaps the opinions and experiences of an ordinary working-man earning £3/10/ per week may be worth reading by thoughtful people. My family consists of a wife and four children...I am buying a four-bedroomed, weatherboard cottage on the weekly rental scheme at 10s. per week, which added to the following, makes up the total cost of running my home per week:- Insurance 1/6, lodge 1/3½, municipal rate 8d, music for one child 1/2, fares to work and newspaper 2/-, tobacco 6d, food, lighting and fuel for six persons £1/16/ - total £2/13/3½ per week, leaving a balance of 16/10½ for dentist, boots and clothing (two big items), breakages, renewal of such items as blankets, bedding, furniture, school books, etc.,
...what inducement [is there] for my wife and I to bring more children into the world, when we can only decently exist on present wages?

Another correspondent spelled out the meaning of living in a cheap

95. *ibid* 23 May p.3F, "N.S. Welshman" and 20 May p.6D, "A White Man". Although there is no concrete evidence to support the opinion, it seems possible that 'White Man' was a Daily Telegraph staff writer. The style is that of the paper rather than a layman and the lack of letters on the same day suggests the controversy may have seemed in need of further stirring. Was the 'White Man', perhaps, Kirmess?

96. *ibid* 19 May p.12A, "A.E.B." (the waiting bachelor); and 22 May p.3G, R.R. Alley (the working-man).

four-roomed cottage. It would be in a back street, he said, where the front door abuts on to the roadside, the back door on to a yard of meagre dimensions. For 8/ or 10/ a week the landlord provides neither copper nor bath. The mother has to perform her weekly wash in a kerosine tin or similar utensil on the kitchen fire. The children's playground is the street, their mates are the victims of a similar environment..."⁹⁷

In view of the earlier strong support for some form of governmental aid to the parents of large families there was surprisingly little lay interest in the topic in 1911. One lady did condemn various facets of child care and suggest that more creches, playgrounds and clinics should be set up but no other correspondent suggested either direct or indirect government action.⁹⁸ The most likely explanation is that by 1911 it had come to be popularly recognised that the habit of family limitation had become widely established in Australia.⁹⁹ Preferred family size would then be a matter of long term intention rather than short term reaction to economic stimuli. Economic aid on the small scale a government could provide would have only the most marginal of effects on a couple's intended family size.

The material that has been outlined in the last few pages provides a sample of the opinions current in Sydney at the end of our period concerning the growth of Australia's population. Admittedly the opinions are drawn only from the Daily Telegraph, which was more conservative than the Bulletin and more noisy than the Sydney Morning Herald (to name two other papers where discussion might have been expected), and its letters may therefore have been somewhat unrepresentative of public opinion. Some useful inferences can nevertheless be drawn from the letters, while the statements of the public figures are particularly helpful as indices of the changes in attitude that had taken place since the 1903 Commission and, even, since the early 'nineties.

Compared with the expressions of opinion in the middle of our period - from, say, 1898-1904 - there is a much greater acceptance of the decline in the birth rate. The decline is still lamented and men moralize on the question but in most cases they appear to have recognized that the high fertility of the 1880s has irrevocably disappeared.

97. Both the letters on living costs appeared in ibid 23 May p.3F. The first was from "N.S. Welshman" and the second from "G.J.B."

98. loc cit Letter from Maybanke Anderson.

99. As was pointed out at the beginning of the chapter, the word 'popular' could be used with more confidence if the authors of the letters could be identified. In the very few cases where identification was possible it has been noted above.

In 1903 many of them would have believed that the decline was but a temporary phenomenon, the accident of a lapse in public morality. Compared with the expressions of the early 'nineties, the opinions of 1911 are less self-consciously theoretical. Where the earlier statements would have referred explicitly to Malthus, Henry George or, possibly, Darwin, depending on the speaker's predilection in social theory, by 1911 one can speak only of 'a Darwinian twist' or 'a hint of eugenic theory'. The labels that had been bandied about and the theories that had formerly been thought an essential preface to any statement on the population question were taken for granted or assimilated into the conventional wisdom by 1911. While the discussion had become less theoretical and less **urgent** by 1911 it was hardly more empirical than it had been at the beginning of the century. Nearly every one of the expressions in 1911 referred to the 'declining' birth rate even though the New South Wales birth rate had risen in four of the preceding five years.

Australian women who completed their child-bearing in 1891 had at least seven children, on average. Women who bore their children between 1891 and 1911 had only five children and the average completed size of families begun in 1911 was slightly less than four children. This revolution in completed family size was reflected in the indices of current fertility. Between 1888 and 1903 the fall in the crude birth rate was as great as any Western nation except France had known in modern times, and even more rapid than the French decline had been. The fall was greater than at any subsequent period in this country and, because it represented a radical change in expectations about family size at all levels of the community, was more significant than the sharp recessions of the birth rate in 1928-33 or 1961-62. Declining fertility in the 'nineties was accompanied by virtual cessation of immigration and, in some states, by a net loss of population. Seen in the short term, the peopling of Australia underwent a crisis at the end of the nineteenth century. On a longer perspective there was merely one of Australia's recurrent fluctuations in population growth.

The work of the Government Statisticians in New South Wales and Victoria ensured that the decline in fertility was well publicised. Indeed the emphasis given to easily understood, crude, vital rates, especially in New South Wales, magnified the extent of the real changes which were occurring. In the context of severe economic depression and the virtual disappearance of the stimuli of immigration and overseas capital, the speed and wide extent of the decline in fertility produced a loss of confidence in national vitality.

National confidence was a precious commodity in the early years of this century. Federation was a very recent achievement and Australia was seeking her identity at a time of political instability around the Pacific. The outside world was seen through anxious eyes, as the first Commonwealth Parliament showed in long hours of debate on an Immigration Restriction Bill. Federal politics also attracted the best men and left a dearth of strong political leaders in the States: reform movements in New South Wales and Victoria were symptoms of the resulting political malaise.

In 1903 the conjunction of circumstances provided C.K. Mackellar with the opportunity to initiate a Royal Commission of like-minded men to consider the decline of the birth rate. Their

inquiry was conducted in a manner inimical to the discovery of evidence running counter to their conservative social and political opinions: they heard nothing to shake their rooted belief that the decline of fertility was the result of moral degeneracy and a harbinger of national decay. Their Report produced no theoretical insights, offered few effective remedies and made little contribution to public understanding of the reasons for the decline of the birth rate.

The public figures who made up the Commission were not alone in their inability to come to terms with the major changes taking place in the Australian family. Their political conservatism was reinforced by the professional conservatism of the majority of doctors and clergymen. The doctors were disturbed by the adoption of simple contraceptive techniques which made general knowledge of a field previously reserved for professional wisdom. The clergy had been disoriented by decades of theological ferment and were not prepared for the upheaval of sexual ethics implicit in the limitation of family size. When the future is uncertain the voices which are heard belong to men with a grip on the past: among the doctors and the clergy the conservatives were in the majority.

The Commissioners, doctors and clergymen, all being either secure or affluent, were largely out of touch with the circumstances leading a large proportion of the population to limit the size of their families. The commentators' opinions were mostly independent of the evidence, even where they were not in conflict with it, and the criteria by which they made their judgements were moral, rather than rational. They therefore failed to add to Australian society's self-understanding and their opinions had virtually no effect on popular practice. During the 1890s, for the first time, many Australian couples began effectively to please themselves about the results of their sexual behaviour. It is not surprising that the novel freedom of choice was unwelcome to those who were accustomed to see themselves as moral exemplars.

Appendix I

Geographical Differentials in Fertility

A. New South Wales. In groups 1 to 3 all pertinent counties were included. In groups 4 and 5, where only a sample of pertinent counties was included, the criterion for selection was the population density of the county at the 1891 Census. Thus county Rous was removed from Group 4 to Group 3 in 1901 but no new county was added to the list in Group 4. The composition of the groups was

	<u>1891</u>	<u>1901</u>	<u>1911</u>
<u>Group 1.</u> (Counties having more than 50 persons per square mile).			
Cumberland	Cumberland	Cumberland	Cumberland

<u>Group 2.</u> (20-50 persons per square mile).			
Northumberland	Northumberland	Northumberland	Northumberland

<u>Group 3.</u> (10-20 persons per square mile).			
Bathurst	Bathurst	Bathurst	Bathurst
Camden	Camden	Camden	Camden
Clarence	Clarence	Clarence	Clarence
Sandon	Cook	Cook	Cook
	Rous	Inglis	Inglis
	Sandon	Rous	Rous
	Wellington	Sandon	Sandon
	Yancowinna	Wellington	Wellington
		Yancowinna	Yancowinna

Group 4. (2-10 persons per square mile. There were 41 counties of this density in 1891. Every fifth county has been included in the group).

Argyle	Argyle	Argyle
Brisbane	Brisbane	Brisbane
Dampier	Dampier	Dampier
Gloucester	Gloucester	Gloucester
Hume	Hume	Hume
Mitchell	Mitchell	Mitchell
Oxley	Oxley	Oxley
Rous	Wynyard	Wynyard
Wynyard		

Group 5. (Less than 2 persons per square mile. There were 90 counties of this density in 1891. Every tenth county has been included in the group).

Arrawatta	Arrawatta	Arrawatta
Burnett	Burnett	Burnett
Culgoa	Culgoa	Culgoa
Farnell	Farnell	Farnell
Gresham	Gresham	Gresham
Leichhardt	Leichhardt	Leichhardt
Nicholson	Nicholson	Nicholson
Taila	Taila	Taila
Waljeers	Waljeers	Waljeers
Young	Young	Young

B. Victoria Shires were the geographical regions employed in 1891, counties were the regions in 1901 and 1911. Therefore it was necessary to make a fresh list of groups for 1901 but, as in the New South Wales case, the 1911 list contains only those counties which appeared in 1901 - regrouped according to changes in their density of settlement.

1891

1901

1911

Group 1. (Shires [1891] or counties having more than 50 persons per square mile).

Bungaree	Bourke	Bourke
Doncaster		
Heidleberg		
Moorabbin		
Nunawadding		
Preston		

Group 2. (20-50 persons per square mile. There were 24 shires of this density in 1891: every fifth shire has been included in the group. For 1901 and 1911 the group includes all appropriate counties)

Ballarat	Bendigo	Bendigo
Bunibyong	Grant	Grant
Glenlyon	Grenville	Grenville
Maldon	Talbot	Mornington
Newstead		Talbot

Group 3. (10-20 persons per square mile. There were 35 shires of this density in 1891. Every eighth shire has been included in the group. For 1901 and 1911 the group includes all counties with the appropriate density).

Avoca	Dalhousie	Dalhousie
Bet Bet	Evelyn	Evelyn
Goulburn	Moira	Moira
North Yarrowonga	Mornington	Rodney
Strathfieldsaye	Rodney	Villiers
	Villiers	

Group 4. (2-10 persons per square mile. There were 59 shires having this density in 1891: every tenth shire has been included in the group. There were 20 counties of the appropriate density in 1901: every third county has been included. Karkaroc is added to the group in 1911, having moved up in density from group 5).

Alberton	Anglesey	Anglesey
Buln Buln	Bogong	Bogong
Glenelg	Borong	Borong
Maffra	Gunbower	Gunbower
Oxley	Hampden	Hampden
Talbot	Tanjil	Karkaroc
		Tanjil

Group 5. (Less than 2 persons per square mile. All appropriate shires have been included in 1891 and all appropriate counties in 1901 and 1911).

Dimboola	Croajingolong	Croajingolong
Lawloit	Karkaroc	Millewa
Omeo	Millewa	Tambo
Tambo	Tambo	Weeah
	Weeah	Wonnangatta
	Wonnangatta	

C. South Australia Because density of population was calculated only at the 1911 Census, selection of appropriate counties for each group was made on the basis of 1911 densities. The groups for 1891 and 1901 are identical because there was no way of knowing whether density of settlement in any county changed between censuses.

<u>1891</u>	<u>1901</u>	<u>1911</u>
<u>Group 1.</u> (More than 50 persons per square mile)		
Adelaide	Adelaide	Adelaide
<u>Group 2.</u> (South Australia's lack of provincial towns is reflected in absence of any county with a density of 20-50 persons per square mile).		
<u>Group 3.</u> (10-20 persons per square mile)		
Daly	Daly	Daly
Gawler	Gawler	Gawler
Hindmarsh	Hindmarsh	Hindmarsh
Light	Light	Light
Victoria	Victoria	Victoria
<u>Group 4.</u> (2-10 persons per square mile. There were 10 counties with this density of settlement: every second county is included in the group).		
Dalhousie	Dalhousie	Dalhousie
Ferguson	Ferguson	Ferguson
Frome	Frome	Frome
Newcastle	Newcastle	Newcastle
Russell	Russell	Russell
Sturt	Sturt	Sturt
<u>Group 5.</u> (Less than 2 persons per square mile. There were 32 counties with this density of settlement: every sixth county is included in the group).		
Albert	Albert	Albert
Buxton	*Buxton	Buxton
Granville	Granville	Granville
Kimberley	Kimberley	Kimberley
Musgrave	*Musgrave	Musgrave
Young	Young	Young
* Boundaries varied, 1891/1901		

The fertility ratios for each group were calculated by calculating the total number of children aged 0-4, the total number of married women, and the total number of married women aged 20-45 (except for 1911, when no figures were available) in each group, then calculating the ratio of the appropriate totals.

Appendix II

Fertility by Fathers' Occupations

To constitute the list of fathers' occupations every tenth birth certificate was examined in the South Australian birth registers for 1891, 1901 and 1911. In cases where the designated certificate did not record the father's occupation the next entry in the register was included instead. By this method the occupations of 1,026 fathers were recorded for 1891, 908 for 1901 and 1,086 for 1911. (There is a very small deficiency in the lists for 1891 - 1,075 entries would be needed for an exact 10% sample - and 1911 - when 1,105 entries would be needed.)

To constitute the list of occupations in South Australia at large, the first entry on each column of the even-numbered pages and the first and eleventh entries on odd-numbered pages of the South Australian Directory, 1891, were examined. Corporate entries and females were disregarded and the list of occupations was compiled from the remaining entries. A similar procedure was followed for 1901 and 1911. By this method 674 occupations were listed for 1891, 1,526 for 1901 and 1,513 for 1911.

The occupations on the lists were separated initially into ten categories:

- I. Professional (including doctors, head masters, clergymen, mining engineers, solicitors, etc.)
- II. White collar (including accountants, postmasters, shipping agents, civil servants, etc.)
- III. Trade (including grocer, miller, chaff merchant, etc.)
- IV. Artisan-trade (including baker, saddler, builder, etc.)
- V. Artisan (including carpenter, coachbuilder, printer, etc.)
- VI. Miner
- VII. Marginally skilled (including gardener, palliase maker, storeman, etc.)
- VIII. Transport, (including wood carter, mail contractor, porter, etc.)
- IX. Unskilled (including labourer, railway ganger, wood cutter etc.)
- X. Agriculture (including farmer, dairyman, orchardist, etc.)

Because of the obvious difficulty of overlapping categories - when is a mason (category V) a builder (category IV) or a builder a company manager (category II), for example? - and because the numbers in some categories were too small for useful inference, the ten categories

were collapsed to the four used on p.59.

Thus:

1. "White collar" = I + II + III.
2. "Apron" = IV + V.
3. "Blue collar" = VII + VIII
4. Primary = X

Categories VI and IX were omitted for reasons which will be evident when the directory population is discussed.

Using these four categories the numbers in each cell were:

	1891		1901		1911	
	<u>Register</u>	<u>Directory</u>	<u>Register</u>	<u>Directory</u>	<u>Register</u>	<u>Directory</u>
1.	178	201	144	461	171	413
2.	172	141	169	249	162	208
3.	184	90	155	324	212	363
4.	250	236	167	492	243	353

The most obvious deficiency in method is that of bias in the Directory population: labourers were almost entirely excluded from the Directory, which was produced for commercial use and weighted its entries accordingly. The figures in line "1", column "1891 Directory", for example, tell us only that one-third of the Directory entries were in white collar occupations, not that one-third of the South Australian population was in those occupations. It is not a defect of the method, but it should be noted, that the occupations of fathers recorded on the birth certificates were nominated by the informant, not decided by the registrar. If fertility is related to perceived status, however, it is more important to know that a man thought of himself as a carpenter, say, than to know that he was really a builder's labourer.

A more refined analysis might have been made if more time had been available to pursue the problem of occupational differentials. The work which has been done is sufficient to show that differentials of fertility according to occupation are very difficult to recover from Australian data for the period 1891-1911.

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- B. OFFICIAL PUBLISHED SOURCES
 - 1. Parliamentary
 - 2. Non-descriptive statistical
 - 3. Descriptive statistical
 - 4. Legal

- C. NEWSPAPERS, PERIODICALS AND OTHER SERIAL PUBLICATIONS
 - 1. Newspapers
 - 2. Periodicals
 - 3. Proceedings of corporate bodies

- D. CONTEMPORARY BOOKS, ARTICLES AND PAMPHLETS
 - 1. Australian
 - 2. Overseas

- E. LATER BOOKS, ARTICLES AND PAMPHLETS
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