

Gender, Race and Colonial Identity:  
Women and Eugenics in New Zealand, 1918-1939

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A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the Degree  
of  
Master of Arts in History  
at the  
University of Canterbury  
by  
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University of Canterbury

2001

## ABSTRACT

The very general nature of eugenics allowed many diverse groups and individuals, that on the surface had little in common, to form alliances along eugenic lines. Social and moral reformers, politicians, scientists, academics and medical authorities were among the many supporters of eugenics. This thesis traces the participation of the National Council of Women, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Society for the Protection of Women and Children, and the Women's Division of the Farmers' Union, as well as female government officials and professional women who as teachers, doctors, nurses, writers, and feminists acted to produce a gendered and raced discourse of eugenics in interwar New Zealand. At the same time, it is argued that New Zealand was not merely a consumer of eugenics, as eugenics was expressed in Britain, but that it was adapted to the geographical and metaphorical spaces of New Zealand. Further, New Zealand eugenics was re-represented in its colonial form, with an emphasis on environmental reform, to Britain. Meanwhile, New Zealand's dawning nationalism saw it turn to countries beyond Britain for alternative models of eugenics, to construct and develop a New Zealand eugenics relative to the geographical, racial, economic and political terrain of the country. This thesis suggests that overseas models and influences contributed to a making of a colonial eugenics, where a distinctive New Zealand voice and anxieties were present. It is also suggested that what has been written about eugenics has neglected the colonial setting and has often viewed eugenics as a monolithic discourse that was culturally and geographically invariant. In short, this thesis deals not only with gender but also with the themes of race and colonial identity, arguing that like feminism, eugenics is subject to historical specificity.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Katie Pickles, for her assistance and supervision in giving this thesis direction. Her support and encouragement during the research and writing of this thesis has been invaluable.

For their help in gathering and obtaining resources I would like to thank the staff of the Macmillan Brown Library, University of Canterbury; the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington; the National Archives, Wellington; the Canterbury Public Library, Christchurch; and the Canterbury Museum, Christchurch. I would also like to thank Jean Sharfe for searching the Christchurch 2000 Database and Rowena McCauley of the Sociology Department, University of Essex, England for tracking down and allowing me a copy of a hard to find thesis on women and eugenics. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Dr. Philippa Mein Smith for commenting on, and reading, chapters in progress.



## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AJHR</i>	<i>Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives</i>
ATL	Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington
CM	Canterbury Museum Library, Christchurch
CPL	Canterbury Public Library, Christchurch
DSA	The Dominion Settlement Association
FPA	The Family Planning Association
<i>KT</i>	<i>Kai Tiaki: the New Zealand Nursing Journal</i>
MBL	Macmillan Brown Library, Christchurch
MP	Minister of Parliament
NA	National Archives, Wellington
NCW	The National Council of Women
NZBMA	The New Zealand Branch of the British Medical Association
NZEES	The New Zealand Eugenics Education Society
NZFUW	The New Zealand Federation of University Women
<i>NZJH</i>	<i>New Zealand Journal of History</i>
<i>NZMJ</i>	<i>New Zealand Medical Journal</i>
NZMWA	The New Zealand Medical Women's Association
<i>NZPD</i>	<i>New Zealand Parliamentary Debates</i>
SHBRS	The Sex, Hygiene and Birth Regulation Society
SOSBW	The Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women
SPWC	The Society for the Protection of Women and Children
TVNZ	Television New Zealand
VL	The Victoria League
WCTU	The Women's Christian Temperance Union
WDFU	The Women's Division of the Farmers' Union
<i>WR</i>	<i>The White Ribbon</i>
YWCA	The Young Women's Christian Association

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## INTRODUCTION

An acknowledgement that eugenics was present in New Zealand from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century is often left out of the history books of this country. *Our People Our Century*<sup>1</sup>, a book released in 1999 in conjunction with a Television New Zealand (TVNZ) series of the same name, offers a social history of the twentieth century. As a popular and readable history of New Zealand over the past 100 years, it is celebratory, narrating a view of New Zealanders as resilient and pioneering colonials coming of age. Eugenics is absent from this narrative of celebration. Eugenics is also absent from the academic histories of New Zealand. The popular edited text, *The Oxford History of New Zealand* gives little acknowledgement to the eugenics movement and eugenics in this country, nor does Keith Sinclair's New Zealand history text, *A History of New Zealand*.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, what has been written on eugenics in New Zealand has been largely dismissive of the gender and race aspects of the theory, choosing instead to focus upon its institutional beginnings in this country.<sup>3</sup> Following Bronwyn Dalley, I argue that "New Zealand historians have failed to examine systematically the importance of eugenic thought to politics, feminism, social policy or on a popular level" in social, cultural and popular histories.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, little recognition has been given by New Zealand historians, to the popularity of eugenic language amongst women's organisations and female professionals during the interwar period.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Smith and Louise Callan, *Our People Our Century, 1900-2000*, (Auckland, Hodder Moea Beckett, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> G.W. Rice (ed), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, (Auckland, Oxford University Press, 1995 edition). Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, (Auckland, Penguin, 1988 edition).

<sup>3</sup> See Philip Fleming, "Eugenics in New Zealand, 1900-1940", (MA, Massey University, 1981).

<sup>4</sup> Bronwyn Dalley, "Making Bricks Without Straw: Feminism and Prison Reform in New Zealand, 1896-1925", *Women's Studies Journal*, 9(2), 1993, p.38.

For example, in 1918 the National Council of Women (NCW) was re-established after lapsing in 1905. Their Annual Conference of 1919 included a remit on the menace of the feeble-minded and pointed out the country's, and women's, duty to the unfit. Its duty, as outlined, was to halt the reproduction of the unfit and to encourage the better classes to reproduce – a central platform of eugenic population control. Speaking on the state's urgent need for children who were “well and healthily born, well nourished and well educated”, Kate Sheppard, the president of the NCW, articulated a feminist-eugenic desire for white perfection.<sup>5</sup> Sheppard's and the NCW's overt interest in the quality of the population and the race in 1919 signifies the desire of eugenicists and feminists to produce a better race, and at its heart, to maintain New Zealand's identity as the ‘Best of British’. It is in these terms that Shawn Michelle Smith defines eugenics as the desire to imagine the nation in terms of racialised bodies or the “fantasy of white perfection”.<sup>6</sup> Thus, both gender and race, were intimately connected to the production of national identities, built upon a platform of eugenic ideology.

This thesis examines the historical relationship between women and eugenic discourse and practice in New Zealand from 1918 to 1939, problematising the history of eugenics and interwar feminism from a feminist perspective. Professional groups and individuals, social reformers, politicians, scientists, intellectuals and medical authorities were among the many supporters of eugenics. As a theory that was supported by many different groups, many individual and professional women were, argues Lesley Hall, “advancing very personal and often idiosyncratic arguments concerning

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<sup>5</sup> NCW Annual Conference Report, 1919, p.9. MS Papers 1371-107, (ATL).

<sup>6</sup> Shawn Michelle Smith “Baby's Picture is Always Treasured”: Eugenics and the Reproduction of Whiteness in the Family Photograph Album’, *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 11(1), Spring 1998, p.204.

eugenics and its implementation.”<sup>7</sup> This thesis traces the participation of the NCW, the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the Society for the Protection of Women and Children (SPWC), the Women’s Division of the Farmers’ Union (WDFU), the Family Planning Association (FPA), and the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), as well as female government officials, individual professional women - teachers, doctors, nurses, writers, - and feminists in the gendered and raced discourse of eugenics in interwar New Zealand. Through examining the agency of white women in a discourse of social engineering that, in advancing a conservative gender ideology of motherhood and domesticity, was unfavourable to them, white women are viewed as actors in an imperial, nationalist and racial drama from which they benefited. Race and gender, are assumed, like eugenics, to be historically constituted in different ways in different historical periods.<sup>8</sup> Eugenics played a part in the construction of race and gender representations, while gender and race “discursively intertwined in the debates about identity and fitness.”<sup>9</sup> This thesis asks what part women played in these constructions of the eugenic ideal of racial health.

### **Historiography**

Eugenics is both a contemporary and an historical issue. Increasingly, historians from a number of different disciplines and those working in a variety of fields are recognising that eugenics has a variety of political, social

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<sup>7</sup> Lesley Hall, “Women, Feminism and Eugenics”, R.A. Peel (ed) *Essays in the History of Eugenics*, (London, Galton Institute, 1998), p.41.

<sup>8</sup> Nancy Leys Stepan, “*The Hour of Eugenics*”: *Race, Gender and Nation in Latin America*, (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1991), p.12.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.

and cultural meanings.<sup>10</sup> For historians of women, eugenics has become an increasingly important site of research. Lucy Bland has examined the relationship between male and female constructions of sexuality in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain, arguing that eugenics is central to these histories.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, Jeffrey Weeks, Roy Porter and Lesley Hall suggest that the history of sexuality cannot be separated from a history of eugenics.<sup>12</sup> Greta Jones' work highlights the increasingly closer ties between feminism and the history of eugenics. Jones initially examined the links between eugenics and political conservatism, but has moved to research the links between feminism, religion, social policy and eugenics.<sup>13</sup> In the United States, feminist historians such as Elizabeth Lunbeck have also moved towards an examination of the links between the construction of female sexuality and eugenics, arguing that medical surveillance and professionalisation was integral to eugenic constructions of sexuality.<sup>14</sup> In Australia, Ann Curthoys has argued that there is a "strong link between eugenics and feminism" which are, "not self-evident to modern eyes".<sup>15</sup> More

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<sup>10</sup> For example, David Green, "Veins of Resemblance: Photography and Eugenics", *Oxford Art Journal*, 7(2), 1984, 3-16. James Ryan, *Picturing empire: photography and the visualization of the British Empire*, (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1997). Allison Carey, "Gender and Compulsory Sterilization Programs in America: 1907-1950", *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 11(1), March 1998, 74-105.

<sup>11</sup> Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality, 1885-1914*, (London, Penguin, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The regulation of sexuality since 1800*, (London, Longman, 1989), Roy Porter and Lesley Hall, *The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650-1950*, (London, Yale University Press, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> Greta Jones, "Eugenics and Social Policy Between the Wars", *Historical Journal*, 25(3), 1982, 717-728, Greta Jones, "Women and Eugenics in Britain: the case of Mary Scharlieb, Elizabeth Sloan Chesser, and Stella Browne", *Annals of Science*, 51, 1995, 481-502. Greta Jones, "The Theoretical Foundations of Eugenics", in Robert A. Peel (ed), *Essays in the History of Eugenics*, (London, Galton Institute, 1998), 1-19. Greta Jones, "Eugenics in Ireland: the Belfast Eugenics Society, 1911-15", *Irish Historical Studies*, 28 (109), May 1992, 81-95.

<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth Lunbeck, "A New Generation of Women": Progressive Psychiatrists and the Hypersexual Female", *Feminist Studies*, 13(3), 1987, 513-543.

<sup>15</sup> Ann Curthoys, "Eugenics, Feminism and Birth Control: The case of Marion Piddington", *Hecate*, 15(1), 1989, 73-89, p.73.

recently, literature on white women and imperialism has taken the feminist approach further by examining the complicity of white feminists in the imperial project, arguing that, “white women were not the hapless onlookers of empire but were ambiguously complicit both as colonizers and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting”.<sup>16</sup> This introduction connects two histories – that of eugenics and feminism.

Sir Francis Galton first introduced the term eugenics in his book *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development* in 1883, defining it as “the study of the agencies under social control that may improve the racial qualities of future generations, either physically or mentally”.<sup>17</sup> Eugenics refers to the social engineering of a selected population by direct intervention through sterilisation, segregation, marriage certificates, immigration restrictions and the eugenic use of birth control. In late nineteenth and early twentieth century New Zealand, those deemed as unfit included criminals, the insane, and those described under what were, in the interwar years, scientific definitions of the “imbecile” and “feebleminded”, as well as the diseased at birth, the physically deformed, deaf, blind and those who transgressed the moral code.<sup>18</sup> All were classified under one umbrella term as “mental defectives” under the 1928 Mental Defectives Amendment Act. Included within this classification were seven classes of “degeneracy” along physical, intellectual and moral lines. They included “Persons of Unsound Mind; Persons Mentally Infirm; Idiots; Imbeciles; Feebleminded; Epileptics and the Social Defective”.<sup>19</sup> At the centre of these definitions was a reliance on biology. The belief that certain traits

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<sup>16</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, (Routledge, New York, 1995), p.6.

<sup>17</sup> Cited in Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945*, (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1990), p.15.

<sup>18</sup> Fleming, p.3.

<sup>19</sup> Theodore Gray, ‘Mental Deficiency and its Treatment’, *AJHR*, 1927, H-7A, p.1.

such as intelligence, feeble-mindedness, alcoholism and criminality were hereditary meant that by intervening into reproduction the social engineering of the white population could be achieved.

Historians of eugenics divide this theory of social engineering into two strands of thought – positive and negative eugenics.<sup>20</sup> Positive eugenics was designed, through state intervention, to encourage the reproduction of the best, or ‘fittest’, stock while negative eugenics devised strategies to identify the ‘unfit’ and to prevent their reproduction. These two strands of thought were built upon eugenics’ founder Sir Francis Galton’s belief that, not only were physical traits inheritable, but so were intellectual and behavioural characteristics passed from generation to generation. Thus, alcoholics begot alcoholics, the insane begot the insane and those identified as ‘mentally defective’ begot mental defectives. In short, by preventing the reproduction of the ‘unfit’ through sterilisation, segregation or marriage certificates of health, society could be freed from the financial strain and social responsibility of the ‘unfit’. Depending upon the circumstances, the ‘unfit’ represented the most visible and, at times, most vulnerable groups of society with the negative eugenic gaze including single mothers, sexual offenders, juvenile delinquents, the feeble-minded, subnormal children and other social deviants. The threat that these groups posed to New Zealand was believed to be present at the state, national and imperial levels. Through sterilisation, immigration restriction, segregation and restrictive marriage laws, it was proposed that the country could maintain its image as a social progressive. If not, the ‘healthy country’ image, identified by Barbara Brookes, Margaret Tennant, Linda

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<sup>20</sup> See Daniel Kelves, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Use of Human Heredity*, Angus McLaren, 1990, and the essays in Robert A. Peel (ed), *Essays in the History of Eugenics*, (London, Galton Institute, 1998).



Bryder, Claudia Bell, and Keith Sinclair as significant to New Zealand's national identity, was undermined.<sup>21</sup>

The importance of 'place' is becoming widely acknowledged in not only the way national identities are constructed but also the way in which eugenics and feminism, both international movements, differed by location. Much of this insight has derived from the research of geographers such as Peter Jackson and Jan Penrose who argue that 'race' and nation are constructed in relation to perceptions of place.<sup>22</sup> As a result of the recognition of the importance of place to the history of feminism and eugenics, is the production of new histories of eugenics that explore its development outside of Germany, Britain and the United States. Nancy Stepan has produced work on the importance of gender, race and identity to the politics of eugenics in Latin America, specifically arguing that the variable of place had played a central role in the development of environmental rather than hereditarian eugenics in that continent.<sup>23</sup> Stepan has provided an excellent illustration of the way in which eugenics in Latin America was not a mere imitation of eugenics, as it was played out in Europe and North America. Instead, she draws upon the active process of inscribing eugenics with the cultural uniqueness of Latin America. Likewise, Carol Bacchi and Angus McLaren have also conveyed the importance of geographical differences in their work on eugenics in Canada, where they argue that the perception of that country's

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<sup>21</sup> Barbara Brookes, "Aspects of Women's Health, 1885-1940", L. Bryder (ed) *A Healthy Country*, (Wellington, Bridget Williams Books, 1991), 149-164. Margaret Tennant, *Children's health, the nation's wealth: a history of children's health camps*, (Wellington, Historical Branch, 1991). Linda Bryder, *A Healthy Country*, (Wellington, Bridget Williams Books, 1991). Keith Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart: New Zealand's Search for National Identity*, (Wellington, Allen & Unwin/Port Nicholson Press, 1986). Claudia Bell, *Inventing New Zealand: everyday myths of Pakeha identity*, (Auckland, Penguin, 1996).

<sup>22</sup> Peter Jackson and Jan Penrose (eds), *Constructions of Race, Place and Nation*, (London, UCL Press, 1993).

<sup>23</sup> Stepan, 1991.

environment played a central role in the construction of a particularly Canadian eugenics emphasising reform.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, research on eugenics in Scandinavia, Mexico, Canada, Japan, Ireland, France, Russia, Australia, and South Africa highlights the shift towards historical and cultural specificity in the writing of the history of eugenics.<sup>25</sup> What is now acknowledged, is a process whereby the eugenics of Britain, Germany and the United States, those countries in which eugenics is most identified and written about, is seen as being modified to the particular national identities and constructions of place outside of those national boundaries.

This thesis does not accept that New Zealand was merely a consumer of eugenics as it was expressed in Britain, but that it was adapted to the geographical and metaphorical spaces of New Zealand. Further, it was re-represented in its colonial form in the imperial centre. In short, a dialogue of eugenic language existed between Britain and its 'white settler colonies' of New Zealand, Australia and Canada. Moreover, it is argued that the relationship between Britain and colonial New Zealand, concerning eugenics,

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<sup>24</sup> Carol Lee Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred?: The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918*, and Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945*, (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1990).

<sup>25</sup> See Robert A. Peel (ed), 1998, and Mark B. Adams (ed), *The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil and Russia*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1990). On South Africa, see Morag Bell, "'The Pestilence that walketh in darkness': Imperial health, gender and images of South Africa c.1880-1910", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers N.S.*, 18, 1993, 327-341 and Susanne Klausen, "'For the Sake of the Race': Eugenic Discourses of Feeble-mindedness and Motherhood in the *South African Medical Record*, 1903-1926", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 23(1), March 1997, 27-50. On Australia, see Stephen Garton, "Sound minds and healthy bodies: reconsidering eugenics in Australia, 1914-1940", *Australian Historical Studies*, 26(103), October 1994, 163-181"; Rob Watts, "Beyond Nature and Nurture: Eugenics in Twentieth Century Australian History", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 40(3), 1994, 318-334; and Ross L. Jones, "The Master Potter and the Rejected Pots: Eugenic Legislation in Victoria, 1918-1939", *Australian Historical Studies*, 30(113), October 1999, 319-342. On Mexico, see Alexandra Minna Stern, "Responsible Mothers and Normal Children: Eugenics, Nationalism, and Welfare in Post-revolutionary Mexico, 1920-1940", *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 12(4), December 1999, 369-397. On Japan, see Sumiko Otsuba and James Bartholmew, "Eugenics in Japan: Some Ironies of Modernity, 1883-1945", *Science in Context*, 11(3-4), 1998, 545-565.

was a paternal one. As this thesis will show, while New Zealand maintained close ties to Britain, the country had at the same time, turned to countries beyond Britain for alternative models of eugenics with which to construct and develop a New Zealand eugenics relative to the geographical, racial, economic and political terrain of the country. Thus, eugenics is not an all-encompassing theory that was easily translated across international boundaries. In short, eugenics in Europe, the colonies, North America and Latin America were historically specific and geographically variant.

Importantly, it is now recognised that eugenics in the colonial setting had a particular character, rather than being an extension of eugenics in Britain or a direct model of that country's experiences. In New Zealand, research into the history of social engineering, and the role of eugenics, has not gained the coverage that eugenics has in settings outside of the British colonies. One of these cultural spaces include the 'white settler colonies' of New Zealand, Australia, and Canada, where as Ann Stoler has argued, "eugenics reverberated ... in predictable as well as unexpected forms".<sup>26</sup> Nancy Stepan explains the neglect of the history of eugenics in Latin America in terms that are of relevance to eugenics to the colonial setting, particularly New Zealand. She states that this neglect is "part of the larger neglect of the history of intellectual and cultural life in an area generally presented as being neither out of the mainstream or only dimly reflecting European thought."<sup>27</sup>

The study of eugenics in the colonial setting, and within the context of first wave feminism, as it was played out in the interwar period, provides a further addition to the growing literature on the history of eugenics. There is a

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<sup>26</sup> Ann Stoler, "Making empire respectable: the politics of race and sexual morality in 20<sup>th</sup> Century colonial cultures", *American Ethnologist*, 16, 1989, p. 664.

<sup>27</sup> Stepan, 1991, p.3.

“need to investigate international themes within feminism”<sup>28</sup> with eugenics constituting one of those issues that crossed international boundaries in terms of science, politics and feminism. As Stepan states, a study of eugenics in countries outside of Germany, Britain or the United States, reveals the chaotic nature of eugenics as expressed in different cultural settings, conveying the “contradictions in the movement and the diverse ways it could be taken up.”<sup>29</sup> Frank Dikotter, like Stepan, also suggests that the tendency of historians to explore eugenics only in its “most extreme expressions of race improvement in Germany, Britain, and the United States tended to perpetuate a one-sided representation, which ignored the multifarious dimensions and extraordinary appeal of eugenics to individuals of very different social backgrounds, political convictions, and national affiliations.”<sup>30</sup> As Fiona Paisley notes, this recognises that it is “through comparative work that common themes within imperial and national histories may begin to be engaged with”.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the shift away from generalising eugenics as a monolithic discourse, lacking in historical and geographical specificity, many histories of eugenics still marginalize, or neglect, the significance of narratives of gender and race. This is despite the fact that, according to Richard Soloway and Daniel Kelves, women constituted half the membership of the Eugenics Education Society in Britain in the early twentieth century and were largely active in local eugenic societies in the United States.<sup>32</sup> Arguments by Mark Adams that “by contemporary standards eugenics was one of the least sexist

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<sup>28</sup> Fiona Paisley “Citizens of the World: Australian Feminism and Indigenous Rights in the International Context, 1920s and 1930s”, *Feminist Review*, 58, 1998, p.66.

<sup>29</sup> Stepan, 1991, p.4.

<sup>30</sup> Frank Dikotter, “Race Culture: Recent Perspectives on the History of Eugenics”, *American Historical Review*, 103(2), April 1998, p.467.

<sup>31</sup> Paisley, p.67.

<sup>32</sup> Daniel Kelves, 1995, Richard Soloway, “‘The Perfect Contraceptive’: Eugenics and Birth Control Research in Britain and America in the Interwar Years”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 30, 1995, 637-664.

fields of the day in a number of countries”, acknowledges only that women were participators in eugenics at a biological level, need to be challenged.<sup>33</sup> Instead, women are viewed, in the words of Yuval-Davis, as “not just the passive victims, or even objects, of the ideologies and policies aimed at controlling their reproduction”, but as often the “cultural reproducers of the nation and are empowered to exert control over other women who may be constructed as ‘deviants’. As this is the main source of social power allowed to women, they can become fully engaged in it”.<sup>34</sup> Yuval-Davis articulates one of the core aims of feminist history. That is, to understand the ways in which white women were complicit in the construction of ‘other’. Moreover, feminist history seeks to articulate the racial aspects of first-wave feminism, arguing that women were not only beneficiaries of colonial conquest but were themselves agents of colonisation. It is to feminist history one must turn to find a less cursory glance at the interaction of gender, race and class within eugenics and find women’s agency in the rhetoric of social engineering.

Initial research into the relationship between women, feminism and eugenics was produced in the 1980s. This work built upon, and is an extension of, the work by female historians in the early years of second wave feminism in the 1970s. Eugenics has been an enduring focus of women’s and gender history, however, feminist research and writing has recast previous work to include a dialogue between gender, race, class and identity. The framework of separate spheres, that men and women occupied different worlds, the men public and women private, and that these worlds were complementary, was applied to the recovery of the woman subject in history in the early phase of

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<sup>33</sup> Mark B. Adams, “Toward a Comparative History of Eugenics”, in Mark B. Adams (ed), *The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil and Russia*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1990), p.220.

<sup>34</sup> Nira Yuval-Davis, “Women and the Biological Reproduction of “The Nation”, *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 19(1-2), 1996, p.23.

women's history in the 1970s. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's "Female World of Love and Ritual" exemplifies the recovery phase of women's history with an emphasis on the positive world of kinship, friendship and love within a separate woman's sphere; a world defined by its association with biology and nature.<sup>35</sup> Historical specificity was obscured by a universalist, essentialist framework of evolutionary rhetoric.

In New Zealand, colonial feminism was argued by Raewyn Dalziel and Patricia Grimshaw to be located in an emphasis on women's inherently superior nature. They argued that suffragists accepted the ideology of separate spheres when campaigning for equal rights and enfranchisement.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the spheres were used as a basis to make claims of moral superiority based on women's 'nature'.<sup>37</sup> To generalise, it was a type of history that approached the woman subject in a way that was positive, unitary and celebratory. The ideology of domesticity was re-valued as a source of strength and a site of positive ideals, where women's history had the opportunity to recover its heroines. However, the construction of a separate female world, defined by caring activities, concealed a new biological determinism. The utopian qualities of early women's history and its aim to depict an alternate model of culture were not sufficient enough to challenge the male-based views of female roles. At times, women's history reified traditional and conservative gender ideologies, reinforced and confirmed stereotypes and evoked a new biological determinism.

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<sup>35</sup> Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth Century America", *Signs*, 1(1), 1975, 1-29.

<sup>36</sup> Raewyn Dalziel, "The colonial helpmeet: women's role and the vote in nineteenth-century New Zealand", *New Zealand Journal of History*, 11(2), 1977, 112-123. Patricia Grimshaw, *Women's Suffrage in New Zealand*, (Auckland, Auckland University Press, 1972 and 1987).

<sup>37</sup> Gisela Bock, "Challenging Dichotomies: Perspectives on Women's History", in K Offen, R Roach Pierson, J Rendall, *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives*, (Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1991), p.5.

Drawing on the insights of post-structural analysis, where language and history itself are seen as constructed, eugenics can be viewed as not only a theory of social engineering but also one that constructs gender and race identities. Such work builds upon the writings of Joan Wallach Scott and Denise Riley who amongst others, influenced by post-structuralism, critiqued the notion of separate spheres, and argued that women's history had been plagued by dichotomies, such as man/woman, nature/nurture and public/private, that gave little recognition to them as interconnected and overlapping concepts.<sup>38</sup> The approach of women's history, one that emphasised the common experiences of all women in the form of private and inherently biological activities, as part of its attempt to render visible women and women's activities as a legitimate subject of history, was challenged by the shift towards gender history.<sup>39</sup> The documentation of a separate female culture was viewed as a sufficient challenge to mainstream history, in terms of its content rather than its structure.<sup>40</sup> The work by Wallach Scott and Riley, on the importance of meaning and language, has influenced work by historians such as Nancy Leys Stepan,<sup>41</sup> who take a social constructionist approach to exploring the importance of the ways gendered and raced identities are constructed through meaning in eugenic rhetoric.

So, what are the links between women and eugenics? Many policies informed by eugenics centred upon women and their capacity to reproduce, and at the same time women themselves, as members of voluntary groups, women's organisations, and as health and education professionals, produced a

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<sup>38</sup> Denise Riley, *"Am I that Name?": feminism and the category of "women" in history*, (Hampshire, Macmillan University Press, 1988). Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1988).

<sup>39</sup> Bock, p.1.

<sup>40</sup> Wallach Scott, p.195.

<sup>41</sup> Stepan, 1991.

eugenics for women commonly labelled as “feebleminded”. According to Stepan: “Gender was important to eugenics because it was through sexual reproduction that the modification and transmission of the hereditary makeup of future generations occurred. Control of that reproduction, by direct or indirect means, therefore became an important aspect of all eugenics movements.”<sup>42</sup> In short, women were often constructed or perceived as the subjects of eugenics but rarely acknowledged as its authors – a central theme of this thesis. Agency, an important aspect of feminist history, is used in this thesis as an avenue towards analysing the relationship between women and eugenics in the interwar years. It is an approach that enables one to give attention to the gender metaphors so central to eugenic discourse. Therefore, a challenge can be issued to Mark B. Adams’ suggestion that there are seven major areas of research within the field of eugenics consisting of its scientific dimensions; disciplinary approaches; professional aspects; institutional analysis; its popular and pedagogical dimensions; ideological and political aspects; and its regional, national or cultural styles.<sup>43</sup> Adams neglects to mention women’s and gender history, feminist studies, cultural studies or colonial and post-colonial studies, which signifies a resistance to “drawing on insights from feminist historians concerning issues of gender and power”.<sup>44</sup> Thus, gender has not always been viewed as a central tool of analysis in eugenic history. As Stepan writes:

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.103.

<sup>43</sup> Adams, pp.222-224.

<sup>44</sup> Clare Midgley, “Introduction: Gender and imperialism: mapping the connections”, in Clare Midgley (ed), *Gender and imperialism*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1998), p.2.



Histories often mention that eugenics was related to women, but usually more in passing than a central theme. This omission is surprising, since the novelty of eugenics as a scientific-social movement lay in its concentrated focus on human reproduction as the arena for the play of science and social policies. It aimed to identify the supposedly “dysgenic” features of the body or behaviour caused by heredity in individuals and groups and to find social means to prevent bad heredity from continuing. Eugenists were especially concerned with women because they took reproduction to define women’s social role for more than it did that of men; . . . Eugenic prescriptions and proscriptions therefore fell differentially on men and women.<sup>45</sup>

As seen through the participation of very different types of women and groups, the gendered rhetoric of eugenics is problematised. As Stepan states: “Women were therefore not only the objects of eugenics, they were at time its authors, producing eugenics for other women.”<sup>46</sup>

One must turn to recent developments in feminist history to find more developed arguments concerning the race and gender aspects of eugenics and colonial feminism and the gendered dynamics of eugenic discourse and practise. The celebration of first-wave colonial feminists has been replaced by forms of history that are critical of those early attempts at women’s history, one that stresses the social construction rather biological determinism, of distinctions based on sex.<sup>47</sup> Importantly, deconstructionist approaches to writing women’s history have built upon this earlier work. It is an approach that is informed by a belief that women’s history neglected to consider the class and race dimensions of feminism, thereby perpetuating an analysis that essentialised women, and universalised feminism. The burgeoning literature in the field of white women and imperialism, including Vron Ware, Anne McClintock and Antoinette Burton, is representative of a shift beyond the celebration of women to one that assesses, explores and problematises

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<sup>45</sup> Stepan, 1991, p.12.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.109.

<sup>47</sup> Midgley, p.2.

women's role as agents of imperialism.<sup>48</sup> Here, suggests Catherine Hall, the differences and power relations between women, based upon class and ethnicity, is critical to the formulation of a feminist approach to historical analysis.<sup>49</sup> Thus argues Alison Blunt: "Gender should not be seen in essentialist terms but rather as constructed and contested in many different ways over space and time".<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the concept of sisterhood is challenged, with the notion of 'difference' central to undermining the assumption that one group of women could speak for another.<sup>51</sup> The politics of difference, argues Catherine Hall, has become central to feminist history; it has de-centred categories and definitions of the periphery and centre, and sought awareness of the constructed nature of 'race'.<sup>52</sup>

The focus of this thesis is on a number of white women's organisations interaction with eugenics. A process designed to fragment the notion of a united sisterhood amongst women. Here the stated goal of colonial feminism consisting of a platform of equal rights for all women, whether political, social or economic, is understood as problematic when analysed for these women's role in a language of racial and biological determinism. In short, colonial feminism is viewed as being concerned with not only class, but also definitions and constructions of race. The concerns of New Zealand women's organisations in fighting for the acceptance of women on juries, as

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<sup>48</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, (Routledge, New York, 1995). Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History*, (London, Verso, 1992). See Antoinette Burton "Some Trajectories of 'Feminism' and 'Imperialism'", *Gender and History*, 10(3), November 1998, 558-568 for an excellent overview of the literature.

<sup>49</sup> Catherine Hall, *White, Male Middle-class: Explorations in Feminism and History*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992), p.14.

<sup>50</sup> Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose, "Introduction: Women's Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies", in Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose (eds), *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies*, (London, Guilford Press, 1994), p.8.

<sup>51</sup> Catherine Hall, p.25.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p.26.

policewomen, and Justice's of the Peace, was designed to promote the welfare of women and children. In doing so, they accepted that some women had to be surveilled and/or segregated to achieve their aims. Thus, by highlighting women's agency one is able to convey the complexity of interwar feminism, and complicate the gendered dimensions of eugenic discourse, by negotiating between women as subjects and as authors. White, middle-class women, had the capacity to be eugenicists, as it enabled them to participate in the construction and reproduction of a healthy race, and thus, position themselves as empire builders, both as individual and symbolic 'mothers of the race'.

It is the interwar years that form the boundaries of the time period for this thesis. These were years where a number of welfare-orientated women's organisations were established with concerns about the health of women and children. These years also cover a period of 'firsts' for white women. Women were moving into occupations previously closed to them, such as medical practice and academia.<sup>53</sup> Leila Rupp argues that the interwar years represented "the high tide of internationalism".<sup>54</sup> In short, the movement of colonial feminism in the interwar period away from one subject – suffrage – towards a more widespread interest in the health of women and children, coincides with the height of the eugenics movement in New Zealand. Thus, gender and eugenics, two seemingly different and incompatible topics of research can be explored for what they reveal about each other in the interwar period. This was a time period where women's health and welfare groups were among the leaders in eugenic attempts at race betterment. However, it was not just women involved in voluntary organisations who recognised the need for race

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<sup>53</sup> See Katie Pickles (ed), *Hall of Fame: Life Stories of New Zealand Women*, (Christchurch, Clerestory Press, 1998), p.xii.

<sup>54</sup> Leila Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement*, (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1997), p.34.

improvement. Many 'femocrats', or women within the professions and government bureaucracy, also aligned themselves with eugenic ideas. That these women believed eugenics could bring forward a better society implicated them in a discourse of race and gendered power relations. It was a discourse that was also at times anti-feminist.

Constantly argued in the historiography of eugenics is the popularity of a theory of race betterment among a disparate set of social groups who would otherwise have held little or nothing in common. Stephen Garton suggests eugenics should be seen as a continuum where people positioned themselves depending upon to whom they were speaking.<sup>55</sup> This is an approach that is useful when analysing the feminist involvement with eugenics, one where reform discourse played an integral part in the alliance between women and eugenics. Carol Lee Bacchi has explored the centrality of reform discourse to the role women played in accepting and adapting a biological discourse, such as eugenics, to the suffrage cause.<sup>56</sup> Likewise, Michael Freedon also locates eugenics within a progressive social reform discourse, because of its idealistic, utopian and future looking rhetoric. Freedon claims it was the similarity of ideas and issues between eugenicists, and women's groups, that allowed groups not directly associated with eugenics to form alliances that otherwise would seem unusual.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, Lesley Hall locates the alliance of these groups upon platforms of similar issues and campaigns. Hall has pointed out there are numerous areas of overlap that established a relationship between women's organisations and eugenics, highlighted by the numerous organisations developed in the interwar period

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<sup>55</sup> Garton, 1994, 163-181.

<sup>56</sup> Bacchi, 1983.

<sup>57</sup> Michael Freedon, "Eugenics and Progressive Thought: A Study in Ideological Affinity", *The Historical Journal*, 22(3), 1979, p.661.

around welfare and health issues.<sup>58</sup> Abortion, mental deficiency, and venereal disease were three of the major areas of concern for women and eugenics. Contraception, immigration, sanitation, and even unemployment came under the eugenic explanation of social change. Further areas of interest included intelligence testing, use of artificial insemination, family allowances and the taxation system, sex education, genetics, the compiling of pedigrees, pre-marital health exams, statistics, marriage guidance, special education, kindergartens and urban reform.<sup>59</sup>

For white, middle-class women, the majority membership of New Zealand's women's organisations, and eugenicists, "while their points of view may sometimes have overlapped, they have seldom been exactly the same."<sup>60</sup> New Zealand women's organisations were among the most vocal supporters of eugenic attempts at race betterment. They petitioned parliament on eugenically relevant issues concerning the health of women and children, sat on inquiries on Venereal Disease in 1922, and Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders in 1924, and published on the topic. Likewise, many women within the helping professions of health and education also aligned themselves with eugenics, foreseeing that a theory of race improvement could allow women to participate in constructing a healthy and racially pure nation. To achieve this, women modified the biological determinist aspects of eugenics to suit their cause of emphasising an environmental eugenics. Here, women's work in institutions, and in the 'helping' professions as teachers, doctors and nurses could be positioned as work for the empire and an extension of their role as 'mothers of the race'.

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<sup>58</sup> Hall, 1998, p.42.

<sup>59</sup> Lesley Hall, "The Eugenics Society Archives in the Contemporary Medical Archives Centre", *Medical History*, 34, 1990, p.329, and Watts, 1994, p.319.

<sup>60</sup> Hall, 1998, p.49.

The participation of women's organisations, and professional women, in New Zealand eugenics, reveals tensions in feminism and undermines the concept of colonial feminism as a united sisterhood. 'Sisterhood' was a concept of female solidarity that was claimed on the basis of being of the female sex. It rested, claims Leila Rupp, on the "assumption that all women shared certain characteristics and thus naturally would flock together in women's organisations".<sup>61</sup> However, in reality, distinctions based on morality suggest the concept of sisterhood was problematic and could be divisive. Women's groups' participation in eugenics, and willingness to demarcate between fit, and unfit, women based on differences of class and morality, suggests that a sisterhood was in fact limited to those white women taking up the eugenic cause. It is in this vein that this thesis begins to chart the relationship between colonial feminism and eugenics in New Zealand as an "uncharted aspect of women's history".<sup>62</sup>

### **Structure**

Eugenics provided the 'white settler colonies' an opportunity to display, celebrate and construct their identities within the boundaries of racial health. Here, racialised bodies, and gendered eugenic discourse, are central to the display of the ideal colonial body, with whiteness and progress at its core. This focus on bodily display, and representation is reflected in the chapter structure of this thesis, which takes a lifecycle approach, exploring the gendered and raced bodily centred narrative of eugenics. Chapter One examines how eugenics was created and modified in the colonial setting. It analyses the evidence of witnesses to the 1924 Inquiry into Mental Defectives

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<sup>61</sup> Rupp, p.83.

<sup>62</sup> Dalley, 1993, p.38.

and Sexual Offenders as exemplary of the way white women participated, not only in eugenics, but also in the construction of a colonial eugenics.

Chapter Two explores the eugenic emphasis on reproduction and breeding. Women's ability to act as breeders for the nation and empire, signifies them as colonial actors, with active parts in the formation of colonial identity. Abortion, contraception and sterilisation are analysed as eugenic tools and the Sex Hygiene and Birth Regulation Society (SHBRS), the FPA, the NCW, the WCTU and the WDFU are symbolic of white women as actors in the formation of women's eugenic identity in a colonial and imperial context.

Eugenics identified children as the key to the future of the nation and empire. Chapter Three explores the strategies, at government and voluntary level, to create ideal healthy citizens. Central were women's organisations such as the WDFU, the YWCA, the Sunlight League, the Girl Guides and Peace Scout Movements. The rise of youth groups in the interwar period, often centred upon, or motivated by, war and military rhetoric, signified a desire to control the leisure hours of children beyond school. Healthy, white children, had become central to the future direction of the nation and empire. Their control was necessary for a healthy future based around an emphasis on physicality and visible fitness.

Chapter Four identifies how colonial feminism constructed contradictory gendered eugenic identities for women of different 'races' and classes. Eugenics suggested women were both the 'mothers of the race' and the perpetrators and defenders of 'race suicide'. What these identities represent is the way in which eugenics necessitated the racialisation of bodies. Those women who did not fit the required concept of morality were the targets of negative eugenic strategies. These girls were identified as

feeble-minded or as hypersexual and made targets of institutional control. The focus on the gendered dimension of eugenics necessarily involves the representation of the eugenically ideal man. While this chapter focuses on the representation of women in their maternal role, given its importance to the empire, the control of men's behaviour and sexuality was an equally important and enduring concern of colonial feminism. In the male sexual offender, women and women's groups used eugenic language to further their need to protect the home and family. As active agents of eugenics, these middle-class women were identifying groups who threatened their standards of morality, necessitating the exclusion of some women and men from citizenship.

Finally, Chapter Five discusses the centrality of institutionalisation to eugenics in New Zealand, in comparison to the importance of sterilisation and immigration restriction in North America. The institution most favoured by women's groups, and women within the 'helping' professions, was the farm colony, because of its promise of a 'good home life'. A racialised domesticity was central to these women's, in particular the NCW, conception of the farm colony as an ideal substitute for the family. Templeton Farm School is used as a case study, highlighting the importance of familial ideology to the construction of the 'right type' of institution in New Zealand.



## CHAPTER ONE

### RACE, PLACE AND IDENTITY: THE MAKING OF A COLONIAL EUGENICS

... Australian and New Zealanders still have it in their power, by excluding colour, limiting entry to the best whites, and preventing the unfit from breeding, to become and remain, about the finest white strains in the world.<sup>1</sup>

- Dr. Theodore Gray, 1927

#### **Introduction**

As a science of 'race improvement', eugenics and eugenicists were intimately concerned with the concept of 'race'. This concern resonated in over thirty countries where eugenics and eugenic societies developed. While an international one, the 'race' aspect of eugenics needs to be understood as a category constructed locally rather than one based only in biology. Taking place and location as important variables in the construction of both definitions of race and eugenics, this chapter explores the importance of gender, race and place in the construction of national identity. An integral part of this analysis is the recognition that eugenics in the colonies was not a direct replica of that in Britain. Rather, it is argued that eugenics in New Zealand owed a great deal to already present ideals about a racial national identity, formed around the ideal of 'Better British'. Such ideals were reinforced, and further defined, through the re-representation of a colonial eugenics in the imperial centre.

Starting with the 1924 Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, this chapter argues that a distinctive colonial eugenics, that drew upon both the hereditary and environment strains of eugenics, emerged in New Zealand, as is clearly articulated within this Inquiry. While colonial eugenics

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore Gray, 'Mental Deficiency in New Zealand', *AJHR*, H-7A 1927, p.20.

worked within traditional eugenic boundaries of subject matter and solutions to the problem of 'race suicide' - that the better classes were being outbred by the less fit classes - the 1924 Inquiry, and its subsequent 1925 Report, articulated a eugenics that emphasised the environment and humanitarianism, key areas of New Zealand national identity. This section is followed by an analysis of the eugenic discourse surrounding immigration, highlighting the importance of gender and place in the population politics surrounding single female emigration. Here, the social significance of a native born population, against one that was imported, is examined, along with a discussion of what theories of inheritance and population politics reveal about national identity. Lastly, Ettie Rout's writings on, and performances of, Native Dance are analysed as specific colonial New Zealand eugenic texts. The writings are used to convey the importance of localised constructions of 'race' in the making of a gendered and racialised colonial eugenics that was re-presented back to the Empire.

### **Colonial Eugenics: The 1924 Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders**

The politics of place and location are central in defining the construction of a New Zealand eugenics. By acknowledging that eugenics reverberated in different forms over different places, spaces, locations and time one can suggest a process whereby "the margin is not simply valorized but its fundamental relationship to the centre is emphasized".<sup>2</sup> The deconstruction of the geographical variations in eugenics is essential to an analysis of location-specific theories of gender, race and identity. The process of deconstruction or fragmentation of space, suggest Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose, is the key to the

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<sup>2</sup> Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose, "Introduction: Women's Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies", in Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose (eds), *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies*, (London, Guildford Press, 1994), p.16.

critique of essentialism; a process that enables one to suggest the importance of positionality, the politics of location and situatedness of knowledges to the development of ideas.<sup>3</sup> An essentialised, generalised and monolithic eugenics has been the result of a past concentration on the history of eugenics in Britain, Germany and North America. The importance of place in the writing of histories concerning race and identity is now being recognised. Acknowledgement of the place specific aspects of race, identity, and eugenics reveals that these concepts are not monolithic, historically singular and geographically invariant, but are differently constructed over time and place.<sup>4</sup> The comparative approach is an essential aspect of assessing and recognising that eugenics is a form of knowledge that is subject to the politics of location, and allows one to highlight the strain of environmental emphasis within New Zealand eugenics, while conveying the importance of international trends and patterns within eugenics.

During the first three decades of the twentieth century, New Zealand saw a number of health related inquiries and legislation undertaken while eugenics was at its height. The most eugenically tainted was the 1924 Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders. Appointed by the Government in 1923, the Inquiry was chaired by member of parliament W.H Triggs, and included Sir Donald McGavin, Director-General of Medical Services, Defence Department; Sir Frederic Truby King, Director Division of Child Welfare; James Sands

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.19.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Jackson and Jan Penrose, "Introduction: placing "race" and nation", in Peter Jackson and Jan Penrose (eds), *Constructions of Race, Place and Nation*, (London, UCL Press, 1993), p.13. Examples of this approach include, Mark B. Adams (ed), *The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil and Russia*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1990); Robert A. Peel (ed), *Essays on the History of Eugenics*, (London, The Galton Institute, 1998); Stephen Garton, "Sound minds and healthy bodies: re-considering eugenics in Australia, 1914-1940", *Australian Historical Studies*, 26(103), October 1994, 163-181, and Greta Jones, "Eugenics in Ireland: the Belfast Eugenics Society, 1911-15", *Irish Historical Studies*, 28(109), May 1992, 81-95. An excellent summary of the historiography is provided by Frank Dikotter, "Race Culture: Recent Perspectives on the History of Eugenics", *American Historical Review*, 103(2), April 1998, 467-478.

Elliott, Chairman of the New Zealand Branch of the British Medical Association (NZBMA); Ada Paterson, Director Division of School Hygiene; Charles Matthews, Under-Secretary for Justice and Controller-General of Prisons, and John Beck, Officer in Charge Special Schools Branch, Education Department.<sup>5</sup> This panel of experts was to inquire into, and report upon, the necessity for special care and treatment of mental defectives and sexual offenders in New Zealand.<sup>6</sup>

The Inquiry was of the opinion that the multiplication of the unfit constituted a menace to the future welfare of New Zealand, but more serious was the restriction of the birth rate among the more intellectual classes.<sup>7</sup> The differential birth rate cited by the Inquiry amounted to 'race suicide', or the belief that the most fit 'stock', was being outbred by the least fit, and thus the 'race' was under threat of 'degeneration'. The need to prevent the reproduction of the unfit saw the Committee influenced by hereditarian aspects of the eugenic argument. As the 1925 Report reveals, the hereditarian argument combined with the environmental strain of eugenics, to produce a less emphatic acceptance of genetic eugenic theory that was dominant in Europe and America.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the Committee could in one sentence emphasise both the environmental and genetic aspects of eugenics in their statement that, "we must promote and encourage parenthood on the part of the best and stablest stock, and do everything in our power to discourage, or in some cases to prevent proliferation of unfit and degenerate strains".<sup>9</sup> It is this blend of eugenic reasoning that enables one to

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<sup>5</sup> Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders in New Zealand, *AJHR*, H-31A 1925, p.1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>8</sup> Philippa Mein Smith, *Maternity in Dispute: New Zealand, 1920-1939*, (Wellington, Historical Branch, 1986), pp.24-25.

<sup>9</sup> *AJHR*, H-31A, 1925., p.6.

suggest a remodeling of eugenics to fit the vagaries of 'place', with the concept of race at its core.

The members of the Inquiry heard from ninety-two witnesses throughout 1924, of whom 31 were from the medical profession and 22 were either female professionals or representatives of women's organisations.<sup>10</sup> Women's groups represented included the NCW, the SPWC, and the WCTU, while a large number of professional women, representatives of the Education Department, School Medical Service, and the New Zealand Branch of the British Medical Association (NZBMA), presented testimony. The high participation of professional women and women's groups in a eugenically inspired inquiry reveals a willingness to accept eugenic theories and language of racial purity, racial hierarchies and racial destiny, and thus, to participate in the making and creating of eugenic national identity as 'Better British'.

Women's groups' testimonies to the 1924 Inquiry reinforced the argument that an increasing population of mental defectives was a danger to the race, with many, especially female professionals, suggesting that a poor environment had a part to play in physical, mental and moral degeneration. Teacher, Winnifred Valentine, emphasised to the Committee the importance of a good environment to garnering progress in the education of the feeble-minded and, as a trained educator, she foresaw the need for special schools to provide the right type of atmosphere for learning and physical growth.<sup>11</sup> Fanny McHugh, social worker and Health Patrol Officer, put forward the case for voluntary work by women's organisations, arguing that the presence of such groups and clubs could provide a 'good home life', after care, and the production of respectable

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>11</sup> Transcript of Evidence of the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders in New Zealand, 1924, evidence of Winnifred A. Valentine, Teacher, p.66, H 3/13, (NA).

citizens.<sup>12</sup> Miss Ralston, Matron of Caversham Industrial School for Girls, viewed feeble-mindedness as hereditary but argued forcefully for the state control of these children in institutions believing that, “from a social and economic point of view the stamina and purity of the race would be protected from the deterioration that is in progress at present”.<sup>13</sup> By emphasising the environment as both a modifier and nurturer of degeneration, women marked a place for themselves as central participants in the battle for racial fitness. As nurses, doctors, teachers, social workers, and in the arena of welfare, women could actively involve themselves as builders of empire and reinforce their role as ‘mothers of the race’. Similarly, an emphasis on protection provided by institutions staffed by women and by organisations involved in moral, social and physical reform reinforced the importance of women’s work, constructed as maternal, to the maintenance of a racially pure society.

Despite this participation, there were some public and private reservations concerning the role of professional women and women’s organisations in taking up eugenics in interwar New Zealand. Theodore Gray’s 1927 Report, ‘Mental Deficiency and its Treatment’, based on an tour of 13 countries in North America, Great Britain and Europe, found the increased popularity of eugenics in these countries was accompanied by much ‘uninformed enthusiasm’.<sup>14</sup> This popularity of eugenics, suggested Gray, signified it as a new ‘fad’ or ‘fashion’ among certain groups in public; one that gave them a “diversion from usual gossip”.<sup>15</sup> In Gray’s view, the interest of ‘uninformed’ women smothered the real

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<sup>12</sup> Evidence of Fanny McHugh, Health Patrol Officer and Social Worker, p.89, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>13</sup> Evidence of Miss Ralston, Matron of Caversham Industrial School, p.468, H 3/13, (NA). The importance of supervision was also testified to by Miss Gardner, Superintendent St Mary’s Home, pp.256-259, Julia Cardale, pp.530-536, Annie Herbert, social worker, pp.551-556, Ellen Hunt, Matron of Addington Reformatory, pp.560-561, Isabel Howlett, WCTU and NCW, pp.625-631, and Jean Begg, p.767, H 3/13 (NA).

<sup>14</sup> *AJHR*, H-7A, 1927, p.2.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

value of the theory amongst emotional faith, thus, denying its scientific importance amongst the public.<sup>16</sup> This view was reinforced by a Dr. Jamieson in correspondence to Theodore Gray during 1934:

I should be very pleased to assist in getting a Eugenics Socy [sic] afoot; but I don't want to get caught up with any of those eccentric reformers who start things that fizzle out, or associations of maiden aunts, & such like. If the thing is to be done, it requires solid people and the inclusion of some real scientific elements as well.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, female professionals and women's groups often came upon significant opposition when attempting to position themselves as central participants in the construction of New Zealand's racial identity through a dialogue with eugenics.

The construction of 'race' in the 1924 Inquiry was intimately associated not only with gender, but also with the notion of New Zealand's national myth of highly selected stock. This myth of identity, centred on the labeling of the country as "Better Britons" or the "Britain of the South", was officially adhered to, and could be found in New Zealand medical journals. A *New Zealand Medical Journal* (NZMJ) editorial of 1922, drew upon the notion of highly selected pioneer settlers, to argue that the current generation were comparatively less than racially suitable, with the consequence that, if "countries suitable for the white races are not to be fully populated, it means one of two results, either these countries will be over-run by coloured races, or there will be the most bloody and horrible wars for racial supremacy".<sup>18</sup> Such views asserted the perception of New Zealand as a desired colonial space ripe for settlement, and in need the right type of people to populate it.

Additionally, the language of race employed by the medical profession and in testimonies to the 1924 Inquiry, reveal a combination of genetic arguments of racial supremacy, and the more traditional definition of race

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Letter to Dr. Gray from Dr. Jamieson, 5/1/1934, H-MHD 1 4/5/1 (NA).

<sup>18</sup> Editorial, 'Birth Control', *NZMJ*, Vol. 21, 1922, p.342.

associated with colour, with those of class racism, or the notion of class difference associated with a language of racial inferiority. This version of race is most clearly articulated in the notion of a differential birth rate, or the suggestion that the country was committing 'race suicide', by allowing the better classes (the fit) to limit family size, while the worst classes (unfit) were breeding with impunity. Eugenics constructed the poor, prostitutes, criminals, and the insane as "races apart", and thus, contributed to a process of marking not only the interior of Britain, but also the margins of the 'white settler colonies', with degenerate spaces.<sup>19</sup> In short, the transfer of what was perceived to be, the best of the white population from Britain to the outer reaches of empire, had not ensured that the British were free from fears of degeneration.

Within these local constructions of 'race', the 1924 Inquiry, and the 1925 Report, were standard examples of eugenics at the official and public level. A similar inquiry held in Britain in 1908, was the model for legislative suggestions by the 1924 Committee, while information was supplied by Sir George Newman, Chief Medical Officer, England; Edwin Gunsaulas, American Consul-General; Dr. E.S. Morris, Director of Health, Tasmania; Dr. Helen MacMurchy, Department of Health, Ottawa; and Dr. Eric Clarke, Assistant Medical Director of the Canadian National Conference for Mental Hygiene. The names listed above is illustrative of, not only the international aspect of eugenics, but the Committee's reference to an overseas model of eugenics.<sup>20</sup> However, it is important to note that the imperial model was not the only one followed, again, as the names listed imply. The experiences and policies of the United States,

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<sup>19</sup> Nancy Stepan, "Biological Degeneration: Races and Proper Places", in J. Edward Chamberlin and Sander L. Gilman (eds), *Degeneration: The Dark Side of Progress*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1985), p.98.

<sup>20</sup> *AJHR*, H-31A, 1925, p.5.



Europe, and the 'white settler colonies' of Canada and Australia, were just as important to the construction of a New Zealand eugenics.

Following international trends, the testimony to the 1924 Inquiry displayed common eugenic anxieties, centering on a fear of being 'swamped' by the perceived high population of mental defectives in the country; conveyed displeasure and concern over the differential birth rate; that sexual offences were on the rise; and the belief that crime and mental defect were intimately connected. This was subject matter prevalent in eugenics in Europe and North America. Just as the subject matter was standard fare, the solutions proposed differed little in theory from the overseas models on which they were modelled. Standard eugenic practices were suggested in recommending institutionalisation and sterilisation as avenues to the betterment of the race. One of the recommendations of the 1924 Inquiry was the formation of a Eugenics Board to judge cases for segregation or sterilisation. This proposal was influenced by the experience of similar boards in some states in America.<sup>21</sup> According to the 1924 Inquiry Committee members, segregation was considered more drastic than sterilisation, as it removed a person from liberty for an indefinite period, robbed the community of their economic value, and offended the cherished notion of New Zealand as humanitarian in its social legislation.<sup>22</sup> Thus, in some instances popular eugenic solutions to halting the degeneration of the race were not accepted as central components of a New Zealand eugenics. However, as Chapter Five reveals, institutionalisation became the central aspect of eugenics in New Zealand.

However, the suggestion by Philip Fleming that eugenists in New Zealand were prepared to model their arguments on overseas literature were

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20.

evident, particularly in the case of the 'feebleminded', a constructed category of mental defect that was defined within legislation.<sup>23</sup> A common strategy used to identify and prove the degeneracy of a family was to collect family histories. This practice of charting family history became an important evidentiary document for the discussion of race and racial hierarchies in eugenic circles.<sup>24</sup> The first such cases, and the most famous, involved the Kallikak and Juke families in the United States. Five generations of Juke family descendants were traced by American eugenicist Richard Dugdale, who discovered that the majority were "paupers, criminals or prostitutes".<sup>25</sup> The Kallikak family research was more emphatic in conveying the significance of heredity to mental defect. Henry Goddard traced the two families of Martin Kallikak, one where he fathered a son by a 'feebleminded' girl, and the other of his marriage to a "respectable girl of good family".<sup>26</sup> Goddard found the first family was almost entirely immoral while the second family was free of mental defect or immorality. The family history approach gave credence to the importance of heredity to mental defect, justified anxiety about national health, and reinforced sterilisation or segregation as the preferred solution by highlighting the cost to the state of their proliferation.

This was complemented by a brief New Zealand based family history version of this overseas model. The 1924 Inquiry utilised such a scientific endeavour to provide their fears of degeneration with some semblance of statistical proof. A return of sexual offenders in New Zealand was provided along with illustrative case histories as proof of the recidivism of these offenders.<sup>27</sup> In the report, a large chart of family histories served to illustrate the hereditary

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<sup>23</sup> Philip Fleming, "Eugenics in New Zealand, 1900-1940", (MA, Massey University, 1981), p.1

<sup>24</sup> Shawn Michelle Smith, "Baby's Picture is Always Treasured": Eugenics and the Reproduction of Whiteness in the Family Photograph Album", *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 11(1), Spring 1998, p.198.

<sup>25</sup> *AJHR*, H-31A, 1925, p.7.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

<sup>27</sup> See *AJHR*, H-31A, 1925, pp.31-33.

aspects of degeneracy, thereby supporting the case for segregation and sterilisation. Statements to the inquiry during 1924 were given by some witnesses with illustrative histories attesting to family degeneracy, the hereditary aspect of feeble-mindedness and the misery of family life of the degenerate.<sup>28</sup> Similar arguments about the need to know family histories of patients, as proof of their potential for degeneracy, was instituted in other forms of eugenic control, such as marriage health certificates and immigration restriction.

However, as well as emphasising the importance of heredity status in eugenics, the 1924 Inquiry and the 1925 Report also conveyed an attempt to redefine eugenics to fit the New Zealand environment. There was less emphasis on strict hereditary definitions of defect, despite the reliance on the family history method, combined with an explicit preference for environmental factors in the amelioration of defect. New Zealand eugenics, like Latin America, was defined more by its preference for environmental solutions along the lines of child and maternal health campaigns and institutionalisation rather than strict adherence to heredity arguments.<sup>29</sup> A similar emphasis on what Carol Lee Bacchi terms nurture is evident within Australian eugenics, which suggested race suicide could be ameliorated by the Australian environment.<sup>30</sup> Canada was similarly afflicted by an adherence for the environmental strain of eugenics. Highlighting the connections between gender, place and race, Katie Pickles examines the significance of rhetoric positioning the Canadian environment as a healthy place suitable for British immigrants and thus for race revival.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> See the statements of Julia Cardale, pp.531-535 and J.S. Cupit, pp.194-199, H3 13 (NA).

<sup>29</sup> Nancy Leys Stepan, "Race, Gender and Nation in Argentina: The Influence of Italian Eugenics", *History of European Ideas*, 15(4-6), 1992, p.750.

<sup>30</sup> Carol Lee Bacchi, "The Nature-Nuture Debate in Australia, 1900-1914", *Historical Studies*, 19(75), 1980, p.200.

<sup>31</sup> Katie Pickles, "Exhibiting Canada: empire migration and the 1928 English schoolgirl tour", *Gender, Place and Culture*, 7(1), 2000, p.89.

Like Canada and Australia, New Zealand eugenics emphasised the racial benefits of the environment and harnessed it to the racial mythology of national identity. The protection of the 'stock' was a national question. It was, stated the Committee, "important for our stock to be kept as sound as possible, [and] where a process of deterioration has been detected, every attempt made to halt it".<sup>32</sup> This hint of the significance attached to national origins supported the idealisation or imagining of New Zealand to be worthy of protection while negotiating a definition of 'race' that emphasised the myth of 'Better British'. M.P. and Chairman of the 1924 Inquiry, W.H. Triggs, made such an argument to the House in 1927.

Fortunately, in the early days in New Zealand there was in operation a process of selection which was very much to the benefit of the country. These men and women who faced the terrible voyage out here and the hardships incidental to settling a new country were men and women of a virile, thrifty, hardworking type. They were good stock; and I think it most fortunate that birth-restriction was not so fashionable in those days as it has since become. The result of having good stock to start with is that the people of New Zealand to-day are, speaking generally, of a high order of intelligence and possess many of the good moral qualities which tend to make a nation great.<sup>33</sup>

In short, the choice of theory used to support the presence or non-presence of the degenerate in New Zealand was bound up with national identity and the belief in progressive social legislation.<sup>34</sup> The 1925 Report suggested that, "all evolution and all heredity are the outcome, summation, and expressions of the effects of environmental influences".<sup>35</sup> James Belich states that, between the period 1880-1920, Pakeha collective identity was "affected through the refurbishing of older

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<sup>32</sup> *AJHR*, H-31A, 1925, p.21.

<sup>33</sup> *NZPD*, Vol. 212, 1927, p.143.

<sup>34</sup> See Linda Bryder, "'A Social Laboratory': New Zealand and Social Welfare, 1840-1990", *British Review of New Zealand Studies*, 4, November 1991, 37-48, where she charts the gap between myth and reality concerning the perception of New Zealand's welfare system as progressive, humanitarian and a model for the world.

<sup>35</sup> *AJHR*, H-31A, 1925, p.6.

axioms and the addition of new ones, and many of both were race-related”.<sup>36</sup> Eugenics merged with what Belich sees as key variables of Pakeha collective identity, in the period 1880-1920, in a renewed emphasis on the ‘myth of better stock’, and a cult of climatic determinism where the New Zealand environment acted as a tool of natural selection for racial improvement.<sup>37</sup> By emphasising the environment, it was possible to suggest that the stock was not biologically degenerate, and thus, reinforce the myth of a selected pioneer stock. Instead, a poor environment was to blame for the source of poverty, disease and degeneracy. By recognising that the environment was both the modifier and nurturer of degeneracy, the state, like women’s groups, could play an indirect role in securing a more healthy citizenship.

In its language and recommendations the 1925 Report of the Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders displayed many of the characteristics of eugenic thought on ‘race’ and a sense of place. The eugenics prevalent in the Inquiry was a combination of hereditarian and environmental approaches. In the concluding remarks of the 1925 Report, a colonial eugenics was in evidence.

New Zealand is a young country already exhibiting some of the weaknesses of much older nations, but it is now at the stage where, if its people are wise, they may escape the worst evils of the Old World. It has rightly been decided that this should not only be a ‘white man’s country’, but as completely British as possible. We ought to make every effort to keep the stock for a new offshoot of the Mother Country. The Great War revealed that from their loins have sprung some of the finest men the world has ever seen, not only in physical strength, but in character and spirit. It also revealed that an inferior strain had crept in and that New Zealand was already getting its fair share of weaklings. Surely our aim should be to prevent, as far as possible, the multiplication of the latter type, and to increase the elements of the mental, moral, and physical strength of the nation”.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> James Belich, “Myth, Race, and Identity in New Zealand”, *New Zealand Journal of History*, 31(1), April 1997, p.13.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.13-14.

<sup>38</sup> *AJHR*, H-31A, 1925, p.28.

The reference to the Great War played a central role in proving the country's degeneracy and provided the rhetoric of a national agenda for the improvement of the quality of the population. It supported national identity based on race in reference to British stock, and notions of nationhood based on biology. It also highlights the importance of place and situated knowledge to the international development of eugenics.

In the words of Theodore Gray, New Zealand "must evolve its own method, guided and restricted by its own peculiar racial, geographic, and economic situation".<sup>39</sup> Gray was contributing to a making of a colonial eugenics where a distinctive New Zealand voice and anxieties were present. Those anxieties centred upon the threat the unfit posed to the construction of a eugenic paradise with the fear of old world problems surfacing in a new colony. A colonial eugenics was also marked by the insistence upon the importance of the environment to making a fit race. Making its race aspects was a concern for creating and maintaining a fit 'stock'. The scheme for eugenics in New Zealand was 'production not reproduction', necessitating that the defective "should not be allowed to reproduce their kind, thus further enfeebling the national stock".<sup>40</sup> Thus, signifying the notion of a pioneering 'stock', so central to framing New Zealand's national identity, as a common motif within eugenic discourse on race and identity in New Zealand.

### **Selection, Direction and Protection: The Case of Immigration**

Construction of a colonial eugenics was not only centred upon the way eugenic theory could be harnessed to the New Zealand landscape, but was complemented by a debate over the origins of the country's mental defectives

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<sup>39</sup> *AJHR*, H-7A, 1927, p.3.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p.19.

and sexual offenders. At its centre was the question of whether the degenerative stock was imported or colonial-born. Fears of a degenerating pioneer stock, evidence of which was located in annual returns of asylum populations, was accompanied by the celebration of the New Zealand landscape and environment as a potential saviour to racial health. The role of the environment in reform stemmed from the belief that New Zealand had the perfect physical surroundings in which the race could grow strong. Such rhetoric infused a New Zealand eugenics, which constructed the suitable immigrant as white and British, and the place of destination as healthful. Miles Fairburn, Keith Sinclair, Jock Phillips and Claudia Bell have all suggested the importance of the environment to New Zealand's national identity, noting that the motif of environment is infused with racial rhetoric.<sup>41</sup> Applications to migrate to New Zealand conveyed a perception of the country as healthy and naturally improving of physical well being. In one case, a man "not too sound in his lungs" believed migrating to New Zealand "would benefit him very considerably and be greatly to his advantage".<sup>42</sup> Historian Giselle Byrnes, addressing the issue of identity through a discussion of the idea of space in relation to landscape, argues that the "New Zealand landscape has been repeatedly invoked as a central motif signifying our cultural distinctiveness and imparting a sense of national identity".<sup>43</sup> Thus, ideals and myths about the New Zealand landscape enabled the imagining of a sense of place, that has been harnessed to the myth of a superior environment. It was in

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<sup>41</sup> Miles Fairburn, *The Ideal Society and its Enemies: The Foundations of Modern New Zealand Society*, (Auckland, Auckland University Press, 1989). Claudia Bell, *Inventing New Zealand: everyday myths of pakeha identity*, (Auckland, Penguin, 1996). Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country*, (Auckland, Penguin, 1996 edition). Keith Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart: New Zealand's Search for National Identity*, (Wellington, Allen and Unwin/Port Nicolson Press, 1986).

<sup>42</sup> Letter to Messrs Shaw Savill & Albion Co. Ltd from A.G. Cross, 7/2/1919, H1 11287 165, (NA).

<sup>43</sup> Giselle Byrnes, "Surveying Space: Constructing the Colonial Landscape", in Bronwyn Dalley and Bronwyn Labrum (eds), *Fragments: New Zealand social and cultural history*, (Auckland, Auckland University Press, 2000), p.55.

this context that single female domestic immigration, ironic considering the emphasis on the need for native-born children, as a form of gendered social engineering, offered a solution to fears of a lowered pioneer vitality and the desire for racial purity.

Nation-building, and the maintenance of racial purity, was centered upon population control through immigration restriction. In evidence to the 1924 Inquiry, Robert Stout, New Zealand Chief Justice, was of the opinion that “the State should see that no person is allowed to land in New Zealand who is mentally defective”.<sup>44</sup> Theodore Gray was another State official who argued for immigration restriction, suggesting that the 1920 Immigration Act should be amended to allow the deportation of immigrants who became insane within five years of arrival in the country, which had been provided under section 14 of the 1908 Immigration Restriction Act.<sup>45</sup> This suggestion that immigration restriction could act as a eugenic tool of race restoration, echoes the experiences of Canada and the United States, who both emphasised immigration restriction as a major tool of eugenic race restoration.<sup>46</sup>

The 1925 Inquiry Report, utilising eugenicist and Director-General of Hospitals and Charitable Institutions, Duncan MacGregor’s 1888 Annual Report, implied that there was a New Zealand type who was being swamped by the degenerate from offshore. MacGregor suggested the increased prevalence of the degenerate in the population in the 1880s was due to the Vogel immigration schemes of the 1870s. Thus, outside forces, it was perceived, contributed to the presence of ‘idle and useless persons’ who were ‘pauperizing the people’ in the

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<sup>44</sup> Evidence of Sir Robert Stout, p.1, H 3/13 (NA).

<sup>45</sup> Memo to Minister of Health, Young from Theodore Gray, 28/10/1932, H-MHD 1 25/7, (NA).

<sup>46</sup> On the United States, see Daniel Kelves, *In the Name of Eugenics*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1995) and “Eugenics in North America”, Robert A. Peel (ed), *Essays in the History of Eugenics*, (London, The Galton Institute, 1998), 208-226. On Canada, see Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945*, (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1990).



manner of a 'swarm of parasitical organisms'.<sup>47</sup> The Prisons Board and the Mental Hospitals Department made similar arguments concerning the origins of mental defectives in New Zealand. The Prisons Board insisted that degeneracy was imported and not a natural occurrence in New Zealand. Evidence, it argued, came from the statistics of habitual criminals released during 1923. From the statistics, the Board "assumed that the number of habituals will diminish as the native-born population of the Dominion increases and the importation of criminals from overseas becomes less".<sup>48</sup> Like the Prisons Board, the Mental Hospitals Department utilised statistics on the national origins of patients to support immigration restriction. Dr. Theodore Gray suggested in his 1929 Annual Report, that the present overcrowding in New Zealand mental hospitals could be traced to, "the large number of patients of non-British races who are permanently mentally defective and likely to remain in our institutions for the rest of their lives".<sup>49</sup> Gray, like MacGregor and the Prisons Board, was reluctant to accept that mental deficiency could occur naturally in the New Zealand population, one that was blessed by a finely selected stock and whose environmental conditions were superior to the home country.

Thus, the question of mental defect in New Zealand was closely associated with the question of immigration where notions of gender, place and national identity were at the forefront of constructions of eugenic-inspired racial identity. The NCW, like government officials, were also reluctant to accept the idea of mental defect and general unfitness occurring naturally in the country's population. Their 1924 Annual Conference Report, coinciding with the 1924 Inquiry, reveals an insistence on the importance of immigration restriction to racial survival, and a belief that importation of the unfit was a contributing factor

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<sup>47</sup> *AJHR*, H-31A, 1925, p.29.

<sup>48</sup> Annual Report of the Prisons Board, *AJHR*, H-20A, 1924, p.4.

<sup>49</sup> *AJHR*, H-7, 1929, p.4.

to the perceived increasing population of mental defectives. Annie Fraer resolved that, “a strict oversight should be kept of all immigrants to New Zealand, so that mental, moral, and physical defectives should not be allowed to land in the Dominion”, a resolution repeated in 1925.<sup>50</sup> Amy Kane, reinforcing the need to restrict immigration, proffered statistics from 1921, 1922 and 1923 revealing the high number of immigrants arrested for criminal offences. In 1922, stated Kane, 13,845 immigrants arrived in New Zealand; in that same year, 138 New Zealanders and 118 immigrants were arrested for offences against the person, 710 New Zealanders and 397 immigrants for offences against property and 2193 New Zealanders versus 2232 immigrants for offences against good order.<sup>51</sup> The statistics clearly revealed, “that we were not getting the right class of immigrant” necessary to ensure racial survival.<sup>52</sup>

Emily Siedeberg, New Zealand’s first woman medical graduate and practitioner, concerned over the physical and mental quality of immigrants, suggested immigration restriction was, “necessary for the health and morals of the New Zealand population. At present New Zealand had a fairly pure population, the criminal element being small and the general health excellent. If such a large proportion of the immigrants were criminals it looked as if our population would soon become distinctly deteriorated”.<sup>53</sup> Siedeberg outlined a plan of immigration control, which included British officials using a form to gather complete information regarding an immigrants previous health, criminal record, their heredity, age at which parents died, cause of death and their nationality,<sup>54</sup> and utilising eugenic language of racial purity. She was

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<sup>50</sup> NCW Annual Conference Report, 1924, p.10, and Annual Conference, 1925, p.8, MS-Papers-1371-126 (ATL).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.12

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. The necessity of inquiring into the family history of immigrants “in order to select the proper type of immigrant on whom the future of our Dominion so depends” was repeated by

constructing the ideal immigrant, protesting against government inaction on the subject of racial improvement, and reinforcing the colonial myth of a racially selected New Zealand population of fine British stock. The NCW's interest in immigration was eventually channeled into being one of 37 societies involved in the establishment of the Dominion Settlement Association (DSA), a group formed for the purpose of encouraging immigration in order to populate and protect New Zealand's empty spaces.

Increased British immigration as a defence strategy, a stance central to the charter of the DSA, was not always deemed acceptable by some Health Department officials. If the 'better class' of women refrained from birth control and abortion, it was claimed, such organisations would be irrelevant, because to "rely on other countries so large an extent to keep up our population is deplorable. Our best arrival is the infant born in a New Zealand home to be brought up with a love of his country and of the British Empire."<sup>55</sup> The WDFU also suggested that the DSA become active not only in stressing the need for greater population but to explicitly insist it be native-born rather than imported. They suggested that targeting greater population through immigration was masking the real cause of a declining population size. What needed to be addressed were not only the need for greater population but also the increased use of birth control among New Zealand women:

Everyone knows we need more population, but the finest population that a country can yield is the native born. What New Zealand needs is New Zealand children with the blood of New Zealand pioneers in its veins. . . As always reformers must start at the root of things – not at the top. If the Dominion Settlement Association would direct its energies to the abolition of birth control, contraceptives and the like, there would be no such talk of empty spaces. The outstanding shame of New Zealand is its empty cradle and while that position obtains all the Dominion

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Helena Sidey in her Immigration Report of 1929, Report of the Ninth Conference, 1929, p.34, MS-Papers-1376-03 (ATL).

<sup>55</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1930, p.2.

Settlement Associations in the world will not fill its empty spaces.<sup>56</sup>

By the 1940s the DSA, while still very racist with the statement, “we must populate or be overrun”, had also added the need to “increase by every means in our power native born children”, to their policy of large-scale immigration.<sup>57</sup> The NCW also made the distinction between the need for a healthy native-born population and one engineered from immigration, when they suggested, “that while increased population of a healthy a suitable type is necessary for the advancement of New Zealand, the Government should not urge increased immigration without making provision to absorb the immigrants by adequate housing and suitable employment”.<sup>58</sup> In a similar vein, the WDFU passed without discussion, a remit urging the government to “exercise more careful scrutiny of migrants, particularly from the point of view of public health”.<sup>59</sup> The need for white New Zealand babies was a reference to the importance of healthy mothers to the reproduction of a New Zealand national type, with its requisite characteristics of racial superiority, healthfulness, robustness, humanitarianism and progress.

However, while there were arguments for natural increase as one solution to the problem of race deterioration, women’s groups and the government were calling for increased female emigration to the colonies in the form of single women domestics as a solution to perceived racial degeneration.<sup>60</sup> At the same NCW Annual Conference that bemoaned the quality of immigrants to New Zealand, Lady Luke stated that similar complaints could not be leveled against

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<sup>56</sup> ‘The Talk of Migration’, *Point Blank*, Vol. 4, No. 3. 1936, p.71, 88-175-41 (ATL).

<sup>57</sup> Dominion Settlement and Population Association, *New Zealand Must Populate or Perish*, (Wellington, Dominion Settlement and Population Association, 1947), p.17.

<sup>58</sup> NCW Branch Meeting, 30 September 1926, MB 126 NCW Collection, 5c NCW (Christchurch Branch) Minute Book, 1925-1930, (MBL).

<sup>59</sup> WDFU Annual Conference Report, 1927, p.26, 88-175-18/1, (ATL).

<sup>60</sup> See Katie Pickles, “Empire Settlement and Single British Women as New Zealand Domestic Servants during the 1920s”, forthcoming *NZJH*, April 2001.

those who coming out for domestic service.<sup>61</sup> The Victoria League (VL), a patriotic society formed in London in 1901, in a 1922 remit also emphasised the unsuitability of emigrants arriving in the country, stressing that only domestic workers were required.<sup>62</sup> Immigration of single female domestics was a minor issue in women's organisations such as the NCW and the VL, but the central focus of the work of the YWCA. The working-class immigrant girl in the form of the factory and domestic worker, were the traditional focus of the YWCA, rather than the 'definitely delinquent' and 'unprivileged and unstable type'.<sup>63</sup> The Victoria League limited their involvement to only "the encouragement of Immigration of educated and suitable women as domestic helpers to New Zealand".<sup>64</sup> The VL's New Settlers Committee worked to arrange the migration of a specific type of woman. They had to be thoroughly healthy, "between the ages of 18 and 35 who had received secondary school education, and who had sufficient courage, adaptability, and spirit of adventure to try their fortunes in a new land" as either governess', nurses or domestic servants.<sup>65</sup> Under the VL's Settlers Welcome Scheme, and the YWCA's Flock House scheme, protection was provided for female immigrants, with hostels to protect their morality and six months training in domestic work.<sup>66</sup> The girls were 'housed' on arrival in a hostel, providing them with a "home, comfort and companionship of youth, [and] a safe haven to city life".<sup>67</sup> The protection and guidance offered by hostel

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<sup>61</sup> NCW Annual Conference Report, 1924, p.13, MS-Papers-1371-126 (ATL).

<sup>62</sup> Victoria League monthly meeting, 17 Aug 1922, MB 367 Victoria League Collection, A(1) Victoria League of Canterbury Minute Book, 1919-1926, (MBL).

<sup>63</sup> Sandra Coney, *Every Girl: A social history of the Auckland YWCA*, (Auckland, YWCA, 1986), p.45 and YWCA Fourth National Convention Report, 1932, p.3, MS-Papers-1536-2/8/20, (ATL).

<sup>64</sup> Victoria League monthly meeting, 14 June 1923, MB 367 Victoria League Collection, A(1) Victoria League of Canterbury Minute Book, 1919-1926, (MBL).

<sup>65</sup> 'Victoria League', clipping 28/9/1926, MB 367 Victoria League Collection, A(2) Victoria League of Canterbury Minute Book, 1926-1930, (MBL).

<sup>66</sup> NCW Branch Meeting, 1 April 1926, MB 126 NCW Collection, 5c NCW (Christchurch Branch) Minute Book, 1925-1930, (MBL).

<sup>67</sup> Christchurch YWCA Annual Report 1924, Z Arch 112, Box 11, Christchurch YWCA Annual Reports c.1887-1980, (CPL).

accommodation allowed the morals, health and skills of the girls to be monitored. At the same time hostel life reinforced women's maternal work for empire by positioning them as the protector's of racial purity. Guidance and protection provided by these women and institutions were essential in keeping the 'stock' pure.

In short, female emigration to the colonies was undertaken through a process of selection, direction and protection. The Empire Settlement Act of 1922 established the importance of empire migration to the 'white settler colonies' for demographic, economic and ideological reasons, associated with eugenic ideology. Under the supervision of the Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women (SOSBW), a branch of the Overseas Settlement Committee established in 1919, female emigration was to provide for the perceived shortage of domestics in the colonies, relieve Britain of a 'surplus' female population and to increase the population of the dominions not only through immigration but through future procreation.<sup>68</sup> The ability of the Empire to reproduce itself and thus maintain its strength depended "upon the [presence of a] number of women of reproductive age".<sup>69</sup> In an address to the Empire Migration and Development Conference, Lord Bledisloe, governor general of New Zealand from 1930-1935, emphasised the need for increased immigration to New Zealand comprising of a scheme of migration involving, "definite steps be taken to put an obvious and attractive premium upon human fertility among mentally and physically sound Britishers. ... and without such vision and prompt action inspired by it not merely our nation but the British Empire will assuredly

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<sup>68</sup> Joanna Malcolm-Black, "'Suitable for New Zealand': the impact of interwar migration on an emergent nationalism", (MA(Hons), University of Canterbury, 1997), p.139 and Stephen Constantine, "Introduction: Empire migration and imperial harmony", in Stephen Constantine (ed), *Emigrants and Empire: British Settlement in the Dominions Between the Wars*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1990), p.4.

<sup>69</sup> Editorial, 'British Depopulation', *New Zealand Medical Journal*, Vol.36, August 1937, p.215.

perish”.<sup>70</sup> Female emigration, in the form of domestic servants, acted to reproduce British values, and with reference to eugenics, the British ‘race’. Thus, white women of the ‘right type’ were essential to the reproduction of not only the race, but the extension and reinforcement of the colonial project of inhabiting empty lands.

In short, race was central to the imperialist functions of female emigration to the colonies. Eugenics, which was so central to child and maternal health campaigns was, states Julia Bush, closely allied to the cause of emigrating ‘the right sort of women’ to populate the colonies.<sup>71</sup> It was intended, considering the nature of domestic service, that it would be the ideal training ground for future maternal duties when they married. The white babies they would produce were symbolic of the promise and potential of a eugenic nation and single female domestics of the ‘right type’ were key to the development of a racially strong and virile population. Domestic servants, upon marriage, would reproduce and rear New Zealand born babies and thus reinforce the work of Truby King and the Plunket Society, who in promoting his brand of child rearing and feeding practices in countries such as Australia, South Africa and Britain, was promoting New Zealand’s ability to produce superior and healthy children.

### **Native Dance: Ettie Rout and the Appropriation of ‘Maoriness’.**

Ettie Rout provides a more historically specific enunciation of eugenics in her role as a colonial advocate within the empire. Ettie had a great interest in women’s fitness, which she combined with the goals of eugenics. She herself swam, cycled, attended fitness classes and was a free and advanced thinker in her

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<sup>70</sup> Charles Bledisloe, *Migration: New Zealand’s necessity is Britain’s opportunity*, (London, George Barber & Son, 1937), p.16.

<sup>71</sup> Julia Bush, *Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power*, (London, Leicester University Press, 2000), p.106.



**Illustration 1: Ettie Rout, 1925**

**Source: *Sex and Exercise*, London, Heinemann, 1925**



refusal to wear corsets and her adoption of short skirts, while her political interests concerned equal opportunities for women in the workforce, equality for women within marriage and birth control.<sup>72</sup> As a eugenic sympathiser, with interests in fitness, feminism, socialism and Maori culture, Ettie Rout was not only an agent of 'feminized eugenics', but was also an agent of colonial identity between the wars, an identity intricately bound with eugenic fantasies of colonial promises of social betterment.

Rout's views on her wide ranging interests can be easily dismissed as eccentric but by placing her within international and national contexts her views are less so when compared to Stella Browne in England and Australia's Marion Piddington. Like Rout, Piddington was an avid supporter of sex education, birth control and eugenics.<sup>73</sup> Both Stella Browne, who advocated free love marriages as eugenically desirable, and Rout suggested that marriage was not the only union in which racially desirable children could be produced.<sup>74</sup> At the inaugural meeting of the New Zealand Eugenics Education Society (NZEES) Emily Siedeberg, like Ettie Rout, also saw the advantages of eugenics for women. Siedeberg predicted that eugenics allowed greater avenues for women in work and greater economic independence within marriage. Economic independence provided by eugenics meant that women could now exercise their intelligence in the marriage stakes. They were now "free to make their choice [of mate] in accordance with their inherent instincts, which would usually be found on the side of health, strength, and capability in the struggle for existence".<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Patricia Sargison, *Notable Women in New Zealand Health*, (Auckland, Longman Paul, 1993), p.34.

<sup>73</sup> See Ann Curthoys, "Eugenics, Feminism and Birth Control: The case of Marion Piddington", *Hecate*, 15(1), 1989, 73-89.

<sup>74</sup> Greta Jones, "Women and Eugenics in Britain: the case of Mary Scharlieb, Elizabeth Sloan Chesser, and Stella Browne", *Annals of Science*, 51, 1995, pp.481-502.

<sup>75</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 23 August 1910, p.4, cited in Fleming, p.17. The WCTU also advocated 'better matings', see *WR*, August 1912, p.10.

Emancipated and well-educated women, therefore, were central to the maintenance of racial purity. Siedeberg's views on eugenic marriage were reinforced by Ettie Rout, whose utopian eugenicist views were translated into books on sex, fitness, birth control, marriage, venereal disease and Maori culture.

Rout's writings and activities in England represent a process of re-representing eugenics to the imperial centre. A colonial eugenics was not only evident in the colonies, but was actively promoted within Britain. Both Rout and her physiotherapist and physical culturalist husband, Fred Hornibrook, regularly contributed articles on colonial eugenics to British health and physical culture magazines.<sup>76</sup> Often their articles centred on the promotion of the colonial body as healthier and fitter, of the New Zealand environment as a eugenic utopia and of the colonies as more progressive in respect of eugenic legislation. A 1921 issue of *Health and Efficiency*, a British physical culture magazine, had a "group of well-developed New Zealand girls" on its cover accompanied by an article by Hornibrook on the superior physicality of the colonial subject and environment (Illustration 2).<sup>77</sup> More sunshine, better food, the absence of slums, shorter working hours, and greater leisure hours, Hornibrook argued, contributed to the superior physique of the colonial man compared to the average Englishman and "similarly the colonial girls are more sturdy and robust than the English girls".<sup>78</sup> Both the cover, and the article, contributed to a process of inscribing New Zealand with superior eugenic possibilities, and brought a colonial eugenics to the imperial centre. Further, the cover group illustrates the importance of 'race' and gender to both physical culture and colonial eugenics. The colonial girl was

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<sup>76</sup> See Caroline Daley, "Selling Sandow: Modernity and Leisure in Early Twentieth-Century New Zealand", *NZJH*, 34(2), October 2000, pp.241-261.

<sup>77</sup> F.A. Hornibrook, 'Physical Culture for Women', *Health and Efficiency*, MSZ-0594 (ATL).

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*



**HEALTHY PHYSICAL CULTURE LADIES OF  
NEW ZEALAND.**



**Illustration 2: The cover of *Health and Efficiency* magazine,  
February, 1921.**

**Source: Hornibrook Scrapbook, MSZ-0594, ATL.**

not only physically superior to her English counterpart; she was healthier and thus had more potential to breed a healthy white race.<sup>79</sup>

The most unusual aspect of their programme of physical reform was an exercise system called Native Dance. Rout and Hornibrook were hailed in the British periodical, *The Journal of the Chartered Society of Massage and Medical Gymnastics*, for introducing the principles of Native Dance as a solution to racial survival among the white races.<sup>80</sup> Rout and Hornibrook were joined in their beliefs about native dance by Cambridge University anthropologist Dr. A.C. Haddon, and social anthropologist Dr. Malowinski of the London School of Economics.<sup>81</sup> It was believed that primitive forms of dance had a very different function to modern dance. Instead of being a form of entertainment, native dance originated, they believed, as a means of keeping fit and ensuring racial survival.<sup>82</sup> The key to Native Dance was the exercise of the abdominal muscles that ensured the efficiency and correct functioning of internal organs. In their respective books *Sex and Exercise* and *The Culture of the Abdomen*,<sup>83</sup> Ettie Rout and Fred Hornibrook introduced a system of exercise for modern men and women, centered in abdominal movements based on the principles of native dance, and adapted to modern times and needs. Native Dance was constructed as, the “starting point of a great popular revival in physical fitness and a consequent racial revolt against the diseases of civilisation”.<sup>84</sup> The survival value of the dances was unquestionable suggested Ettie Rout, as evidenced by the physical state of those who practiced them. Participators of Native Dance are, she stated,

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<sup>79</sup> For further examples of Ettie's role as colonial advocate see Jane Tolerton, *Ettie*, (Auckland, Penguin, 1992), p.237.

<sup>80</sup> V.C.C. Collum, 'The Survival Value of Primitive Dancing', *The Journal of the Chartered Society of Massage and Medical Gymnastics*, May 1926, p.267, MS-Coll-20-2758, (ATL).

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Ettie Rout, *Sex and Exercise*, (London, Heineman, 1925), p.vii and 20-29, and Fred Hornibrook, *The Culture of the Abdomen*, (London, Heineman, 1925).

<sup>84</sup> V.C.C. Collum, p.269, MS-Coll-20-2758, (ATL).

“the most beautiful, the most numerous, and the most healthy . . . members of the brown race”.<sup>85</sup> The utilitarian aspect of Native Dance was clear. As a romanticised and naturalised version of ‘primitive peoples’, it was required to combat the evils of modernity and ensure race immortality. Thus, physical action in the form of Native Dance is what Anne Bloomfield describes as embodiment, the process of inscribing action, text, and objects with ideological beliefs.<sup>86</sup> In short, Native Dance acted as a visual symbol of racial identity and colonial eugenics.

Rout’s appropriation of Maori motifs in the form of Native Dance was entwined with her interests within the arena of Physical Culture. Fred Hornibrook, New Zealand’s leading physical culture expert in the interwar years was celebrated as a perfect example of the colonial physique. Physical culture was central to the realm of the symbolic reproduction and display of eugenically desirable colonial bodies. These bodies, focusing on physicality, were often framed by rhetoric that placed them in a position of superiority to those residing in England. For Ettie Rout and Fred Hornibrook, exhibitions extended to their private display of Native Dance for society elite in England. Within these forms of exhibitions, are the appropriation of ‘Maoriness’, in order to display a unique localised identity; one that was also a display of New Zealand’s eugenic potential.

Exhibitions were essential sites for the re-representation of colonial eugenics or the possibilities of colonial society to regenerate, even save, a degenerating British race. They also acted as markers of colonial identity, utilising eugenic frames of reference, to carve a distinctive colonial nationalism.

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<sup>85</sup> ‘Native Dances Give Health’, *The Star*, 18/12/26, MSZ-0594, (ATL).

<sup>86</sup> Anne Bloomfield, “Drill and dance as symbols of imperialism”, in J.A. Mangan (ed), *Making Imperial Mentalities: Socialisation and British Imperialism*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1990), p.74.

Thus, Rout and Hornibrook's public displays of Native Dance symbolise preoccupations with 'race' and whiteness, as well as a eugenically framed national identity. Wendy Webster suggests this emphasis on the natural, which extended to physical public display, meant that the "primitive woman" was offered as a role model, to teach the "civilized" woman how to revert to her natural state and thus, ensure her health and racial survival.<sup>87</sup> In this context, race survival among Maori women, suggested Ettie, was secured through women's Native Dance, which functioned to secure early miscarriage, while others led to increased menstrual flow.<sup>88</sup> With the public display of Native Dance positioned as essential to race survival, concepts of the natural were racialised. Eugenics built upon, and was often central, in the form these displays of health, fitness, identity, were presented.

Of central importance to their theories on Native Dance were public and private displays of their physical and racial possibilities.

In order to prove the soundness of their theory they have been demonstrating to selected audiences of educationalists and social workers exactly what these dances consist in among peoples where they are still consciously performed as physical training. A Maori aristocrat in the prime of life and a youthful West Indian, each of them athletic champions in the sphere of his own physical culture, co-operate in Mr. And Mrs. Hornibrook's good work by performing their native dance movements.<sup>89</sup>

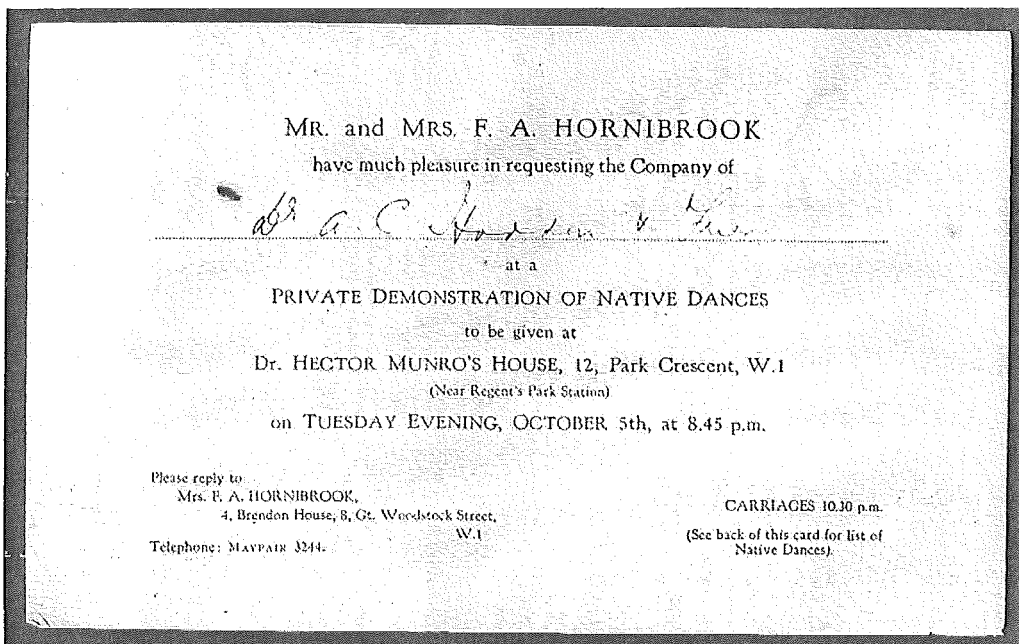
A private demonstration by Rout, Hornibrook and Hohepa Te Rake, who collaborated with Rout on her book *Maori Symbolism*, in October 1926, took place in the house of a London physician in the presence of 200 guests of which were estimated to include 50 doctors.<sup>90</sup> The programme proceeded with a lecture followed by a demonstration of a number of examples of Native Dance from

<sup>87</sup> Wendy Webster, *Imagining Home: Gender, 'Race' and National Identity, 1945-64*, (London, UCL Press, 1998), p.93.

<sup>88</sup> Letters to Dr. A.C. Haddon from Ettie Rout dated 17/1/1926 and 9/11/1926, MS-Coll-20-2758, (ATL).

<sup>89</sup> V.C.C. Collum, p.268, MS-Coll-20-2758, (ATL).

<sup>90</sup> 'Native Dances Give Health', *The Star*, 18/12/1926, MSZ-0594, (ATL).



**Illustration 3: Invitation to a Private Demonstration of Native Dance.**

**Source: Hornibrook Scrapbook, MSZ-0594, ATL.**

New Zealand, the Middle East and Africa. On the card of this demonstration were a Maori Hula Dance, the Maori Canoe Dance, a Maori Dance and Breathing Exercise, the Maori Fish Dance and a Maori War dance performed by Hohepa Te Rake, an Egyptian Exercise dance, Arab Dance, Hawaiian Hula dance, a Negro Dance, Moroccan Dance and Maori Love Dance performed by Fred Hornibrook.<sup>91</sup> Taking a wide definition of exhibitions, to include personal displays, Rout and Hornibrook's introduction of Maori culture, in the form of private exhibitions of Native Dance in England, was as a eugenic tool of racial restoration and revival. Native Dance linked the colonial to 'home', and embodied conventional racialised discourse in New Zealand that elevated the Maori to 'almost white', signified by attempts from both Pakeha officials, academics and their Maori counterparts to find for them an Aryan heritage.<sup>92</sup>

This attitude was reinforced by government investigations in 1922, which concluded that while the Maori birth rate was increasing "it does not follow that the Maori will continue to exist as a distinct full-blooded race."<sup>93</sup> Education, changing health practices, and the individualisation of land, was believed to be improving the lot of the Maori, and as such, was upheld as a sign of European progressiveness in the colonies. The movement toward the production of 'white' Maori was displayed in the results of a statistical investigation into the Maori Battalion. In 1916, the total population of 'half-castes' in the Maori population was 12.7 percent.<sup>94</sup> That 48 percent of the Maori Battalion had European blood, especially as the Battalion was celebrated as the perfect example of the Maori warrior, was interpreted as proving that Maori were becoming 'whiter'.<sup>95</sup> The move to a whitened native race was taken as proof of a successful assimilation

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> See Ettie Rout, *Maori Symbolism* (London, Kegan Paul, 1926).

<sup>93</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1923, p.45.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.



policy and as providing evidence of the harmonious race relations in the Dominion.

Rout and Hornibrook's use of Maori dance elevated them beyond the curious and allowed them to bring the display of the colonial physique from the periphery to the centre of empire. Their ideas were not always greeted with seriousness. Rout and Hornibrook were described by *The People* as "a lady and gentleman from the Antipodes, who have an unusual gospel to preach", a gospel that promises good health for "a wriggle a day".<sup>96</sup> Their cure for the ills of modernity centred on the adoption of the Native Dance of "New Zealand, the Congo and the South Sea Islands."<sup>97</sup> The response by *The People* was to place these ideas within conventional stereotypes of race. The ideas of the 'lady and gentleman from the Antipodes' were described as thus:

. . . we ought to devote our spare hours to the weird contortions which are performed by our coloured brothers to the accompaniment of the tom-tom, or as preliminary to missionary en casserole.<sup>98</sup>

It was common for Rout and Hornibrook to display the dances themselves, highlighting the benefits of native dance practices for the white race. At other times, these unusual presentations included the 'natives' themselves. At one presentation, Hohepa Te Rake "gave an astonishing intestinal and muscular agility in a kilt of coloured beads."<sup>99</sup> His presence at an invitation only display for notables of the empire, lent authenticity to the claims of Rout and Hornibrook that, Native Dance was a primitive exercise system that could counteract the evils of modernity. *The People* described the scene of one private presentation in the following terms:

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<sup>96</sup> *The People*, 31/5/1925, MSZ-0594, (ATL).

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

A White man, a Maori and a negro, all stripped to the waist, writhing and twisting through native dance movements to rag-time tunes on a gramophone, was one of the amazing spectacles witnessed by a select audience of prominent people in the medical and social world.<sup>100</sup>

Such images juxtapose the barbarism of the native dance with modern conventions of European/Western dance. The creation of these opposing images serve to signify the absurdity of the scene. It is thus, heavily impregnated with Western views of progress and civilisation. Not only are the 'natives' and their dances less progressive, so are the colonials who attempt to present such dances as of racial benefit to the white race. The desire for colonial respectability and conventional images of racialised bodies converged in the eugenic ideals of Ettie Rout and Fred Hornibrook.

The display of Native Dance within the imperial centre, can be seen as an attempt to exhibit a particularly colonial reproductive eugenics within the empire. It is often too easy to look at eugenics as a one-way discourse when, in fact, it was introduced into New Zealand and reintroduced to the imperial centre, with a colonial flavour. Rout, Hornibrook and Native Dance were at the centre of its display in the Empire. Rout and Hornibrook's representation of colonial eugenics to the imperial centre was infused with arguments concerning the quality and progressiveness of the Maori race, articulated in the *New Zealand Medical Journal*, in which the author suggested "this country of ours had the distinction of being inhabited by the most highly developed athletic and intellectual dark native race amongst all mankind".<sup>101</sup> Their use of Maori dance can also be seen as an attempt to preserve, in romanticised form, what was believed to be an increasingly dying culture.

Historicization of indigenous groups in exhibitions necessitated a racialised whiteness to be displayed to the imperial authorities. The 1924

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> George Home, 'Health of the Ancient Maori', *NZMJ*, Vol. 32, October 1933, p.253.

International Exhibition at Wembley included a programme entitled the Pageant of Empire that illustrates the importance of Maori to the historicization of national identity. Here, in contrast to Aborigines in the Australian section, Maori are at the centre of history and are present in all five scenes of New Zealand history, as either the receivers of British innovation or as warrior.<sup>102</sup> Thus, setting the scene of nationhood has involved elements of indigenising. Ben Dibley sees indigenisation as central to nationhood in settler societies, with the appropriation of indigenous elements serving as a source and expression of this process.<sup>103</sup> Like Ettie Rout's Native Dance, colonial New Zealanders attempted to illustrate a claim to be more modern and progressive than the imperial centre. In eugenic terms, the white settler colony was a 'saviour'. Not only had the Maori, popularly believed to be near extinction, been 'preserved', New Zealand's rich land sources, natural beauty and healthy climate had the potential to 'save' the degenerating imperial centre. As a eugenicist, Ettie Rout hoped to preserve the Maori culture through Native Dance. While the presentation of Native Dance by white colonials made Maoriness more respectable, it also made it 'more white'. The construction of Maori mythology in these terms is a colonial product, functioning to demarcate New Zealand from Britain and other white settler societies.<sup>104</sup>

## Conclusion

Informed by a belief in a superior population achieved through selective immigration, the quality of the environment and the presence of a progressive native race, New Zealand eugenicists moved a distinctive colonial eugenics from

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<sup>102</sup> British Empire Exhibition, *The pageant of Empire programme – Part III*, (London, Fleetway Press, 1924).

<sup>103</sup> Ben Dibley, "Telling Times: Narration at the New Zealand International Exhibition 1906-7", *Sites*, 34, 1997, p.3.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

the edges of Empire to its centre. In the context of a white settler colony searching for a unique identity within the British Empire, 'race' moved to include Maori in a distinctive eugenic ideal. However, an analysis of the 1924 Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, and the subsequent 1925 Report, suggests that an overseas model was the basis for eugenics in New Zealand. By emphasising the unique environment of the country, witnesses and the committee intertwined myths of a superior selected racial stock with eugenic ideology to reinforce a racialised national identity.

The preference for environmental explanations of racial degeneration did not mean that eugenics was absent from New Zealand. Fears concerning the quality of the population were present within immigration. While immigration restriction was not as important to a programme of eugenic reform compared to North America it was nonetheless present. Within this context, gender had an important role in the construction of the 'right type' of immigrant, with the single female domestic the preferred immigrant, in an era where 'stock' was important, and an emphasis on a native-born population was increasing. These British women migrants symbolised racial commodities of reproduction – culturally, ideologically and demographically. Gender was also an important variable in women's organisations support for, and use of, racially derived language and theory. In supporting the environmental strain of eugenics, female professionals and women's organisations acted to reinforce the importance of women's work in the building of a better race and society.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE REPRODUCTIVE BODY: BREEDING COLONIAL IDENTITIES IN THE EMPIRE

Man cannot advance till Woman is allowed free selection of fathers for her children – naturally she will select the best only.<sup>1</sup>  
- Ettie Rout, 1922

#### **Introduction**

Reproduction and its control are central to the population policies of eugenics. In the thirty western countries in which eugenics was established, including Europe, Britain, Germany, North America, Latin America, and the ‘white settler colonies’ of New Zealand, Australia and Canada, strategies to prevent and encourage reproduction were present in varying forms and intensity. Encouragement of procreation was related to the fear of ‘race suicide’ or, the perception that the working-class were out-breeding the ‘better classes’, or the unfit, were swamping the fit through high fertility. Through sterilisation, birth control, segregation and/or marriage certificates of health, the declining birth rate of the ‘better classes’, and the increasing differential birth rate between the classes were debated. These negative strategies of eugenic population control were complemented by strategies of positive eugenics where ‘fit’ individuals were encouraged to have larger families.

That reproduction was at the centre of eugenics suggests that supporters of this theory were concerned with the gendered control of those deemed fit to reproduce for empire. In New Zealand, like elsewhere, eugenic breeding coalesced around issues concerning the falling birth rate amongst the ‘fit’, abortion rates, contraception and the prevention of pregnancy of those least

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<sup>1</sup> Letter to H.G. Wells from Ettie Rout, 25/12/1922, MS-Papers-1690-1 (ATL).

eugenically desirable through strategies of sterilisation and segregation. This chapter begins with an analysis of the reform ideology that united women's organisations with eugenic ideology, arguing that these women modified eugenic arguments to suit their approach for the social betterment of society. This is followed by a specific example of the increasing interest in women's reproduction by not only the state, but also women's organisations, such as the WCTU, the NCW and the FPA. Lastly, taking specific note of the articulation of this strategy by the WDFU, the negative eugenic strategy of sterilisation is analysed

### **Women and Eugenics: An Alliance of Reform**

During the interwar period, new women's organisations devoted to securing good health for white women and children were established in New Zealand and around the world. Their establishment coincided with the increased emphasis placed on national health in the same period, one that was framed by eugenic rhetoric of national deterioration. As Carol Lee Bacchi notes, campaigns and reform issues, including moral reform, social purity, temperance, maternal and child health, and mental health, frequently attracted the same people in their membership and the same kind of people in their characteristics – educated, Anglo-Saxon, and protestant.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, the aims of these groups were similar, that of restoring control over society and its deviant groups/individuals, thereby constituting an alliance between seemingly disparate groups.<sup>3</sup> The aim of this section is to identify the reasons for the alliance between of feminism and eugenics in interwar New Zealand and to identify the ways in which white

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<sup>2</sup> Carol Lee Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred?: The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1983), p.8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

women both created and modified eugenics to suit their political claims of moral superiority.

A wide range of professional women were active agents of eugenic ideals, often giving their support, both implicit and explicit, to eugenic proposals of race betterment. As professional women, they took their place, along with society women, as members of eugenic societies. The London Eugenic Society Annual Report of 1937-38 lists the organisations lectured to for the year. Those addressed were overwhelmingly women's organisations and included the NCW, Co-operative Society Guilds, Federation of Townswomen Guilds, Women's Citizens' Association, Fellowship of Youth, Women's Conservative Association and the Women's Section of the Labour Party.<sup>4</sup> Of the seven lecturers listed, four were women. Miss Pocock lectured 45 times during the year, Mrs. Chrichton 23 times, Mrs. Claire Tamplin 27 times, Miss Moore 12, while the three male lecturers gave 8 lectures for the year between them.<sup>5</sup> The overwhelming presence of women in the position of lecturer, and audience, indicates not only professional and society women's interest in eugenics as a promise of reform, but indicates the agency of a class based women's movement, and of individual women, in the articulation of an eugenic ideal.

Support for the work of the NZEES, whose aim was to "further Eugenic teaching at home, in the schools, and elsewhere",<sup>6</sup> came from the well-educated of New Zealand society. Like its parent, the NZEES found that women were particularly suited to their aim of educating the public in eugenic principles. The secretary of the Dunedin Branch, Lilian MacGeorge, often acted as a lecturer for the Society with her audience often women's groups. For example, MacGeorge

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<sup>4</sup> Eugenics Society Annual Report, 1937-38, p.11, MS-Papers-1388-08 (ATL).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., the male lecturers were Charles Blackler (6), Mr. B.S. Bramwell (1) and Mr. S. Wormald (1).

<sup>6</sup> 'The Eugenic Education Society of New Zealand', n.d., E 19, Eugenic Society Records, 1907-1967, MS-Coll-20-2565, (ATL).

gave lectures to the Te Oranga Girls Reformatory in Burwood, Christchurch, the North Canterbury Educational Institute and the Canterbury Women's Institute.<sup>7</sup> Interviewed in her capacity as the organising secretary of the Eugenics Education Society, Lilian MacGeorge suggested the eugenic cause in New Zealand was looking 'hopeful', underlined by the membership increase of the Eugenic Education Society branches. Dunedin had a full membership of 200, and Timaru 40 subscribers to the 'Eugenic Review', with a membership of 60.<sup>8</sup> Established in Dunedin in 1910, the membership of the NZEES included prominent members of New Zealand academia, politics and medicine. Three ministers, seven doctors and two university professors were notable members of the society.<sup>9</sup> Other members included the Prime Minister, Bill Massey, Minister of Education and Immigration, George Fowlds, Inspector-General of Mental Hospitals and Charitable Institutions, Thomas Valintine, and Inspector-General of Prisons, Mental Hospitals and Mental Defectives, Frank Hay.<sup>10</sup> Eugenic supporters, however, were not only confined to the NZEES branches.

Support for the work of the NZEES came not only from government bureaucrats, it also extended to women's organizations, like the WCTU, who included articles on its activities in its monthly periodical the *White Ribbon*. The WCTU described eugenics in 1911 as, "well worthy the study of our unions, because it is a philanthropic science, and on its platform may meet not only scientists, but all those who have at heart the good of mankind."<sup>11</sup> The activities of the newly formed Eugenics Education Society in Dunedin were outlined with implicit support from the WCTU, who stated: "For Humanity" is part of our

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<sup>7</sup> Phillip Fleming, "Eugenics in New Zealand, 1900-1940", (MA, Massey University, 1981), p.21.

<sup>8</sup> *The Press*, 1/8/1912, p.2.

<sup>9</sup> Fleming, p.17.

<sup>10</sup> *WR*, 18 September 1912, p.8.

<sup>11</sup> *WR*, 17 August 1911, p.9; see also *WR* 19 April 1911, p.7; *WR*, 18 September 1912, p.8; *WR*, 18 April 1914, pp.1-3.



motto, hence eugenics is part of the work we aim at doing.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, it was the ideal of social betterment, with its emphasis on humanitarianism, which saw women’s groups such as the WCTU, who when established in New Zealand in 1885 had a Heredity Department among its 21 offices, implicitly support eugenics.<sup>13</sup> The NCW and the WDFU also sympathized with the eugenic ideal of social justice and ultimately racial betterment.

Bacchi identifies what she terms the “reform ideology” as the thread that bound women’s reform groups with eugenics and eugenicists. The reform ethic espoused a rhetoric of female moral superiority. Here, women constructed themselves as mothers, emphasising the importance of this position in society and demanding political recognition and participation on this basis.<sup>14</sup> The WCTU argued that, women’s moral superiority was integral to the process of enacting social reform and racial purity in New Zealand. It argued that it was due to the political influence of women that, “the many humanitarian Acts passed by Parliament of this country since women’s enfranchisement”, were directly traceable.<sup>15</sup> Dr P.C. Fenwick of the North Canterbury Hospital Board, arguing for sterilisation, stated: “Doctors could do nothing unless the women of New Zealand voted them the power. The men had not taken the trouble.”<sup>16</sup> Politically active women were appealed to direct their interests in social reform, social betterment, and public health towards to implementation of eugenic practices. Women, therefore, were a useful political tool, and were encouraged by individuals such as Dr. Fenwick, to use their political agency to the advantage of national welfare.

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<sup>12</sup> *WR*, 17 August 1911, p.9.

<sup>13</sup> J. Wood, *A Challenge not a Truce: A History of the New Zealand Women’s Christian Temperance Union, 1885-1985*, (Nelson, WCTU, 1985), p.27 and *WR*, 18 February 1934, p.4.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

<sup>15</sup> *WR*, 19 April 1911, p.7.

<sup>16</sup> *The Press*, 26/10/1926, H 1 16273 65/46 (NA).

The alliance between women's groups and eugenics, while built upon similar concerns for social reform, was also an alliance built upon the belief in racial purity. Argued the WCTU in 1930: "Nations desire racial purity, and this desire is to be commended".<sup>17</sup> Social, moral and racial reform were thus, constructed as a women's issue. Thus, the reform ideology of New Zealand is similar to what Bacchi has outlined for Canada. Comprised of two interacting and unifying themes, the ideology of reform in both 'white settler colonies' exhibited a concern for the future of the white race, with most reforms aimed at strengthening this group against internal weaknesses and external threats; while the second area of concern focused on the pollution of 'race' by diseases such as alcoholism.<sup>18</sup>

Both the WCTU and eugenicists shared temperance as a concern. Both argued that alcohol was a 'racial poison', or a 'racial menace', that was contributing to the degeneration of the race. In 1938, the WCTU remained influenced by the hereditary arguments of eugenics, when arguing that the children of habitual drunkards were, in a larger proportion, more idiotic than children free of alcoholic parentage.<sup>19</sup> The WCTU made clear the links between alcohol, mental illness and racial and national degeneration stating:

Is it not a sad commentary upon these expert opinions to reflect that New Zealand, with its beautiful climate and its easy conditions of living, yet has one of the highest lunacy rates in the world? ... Does it not cause one to wonder what will happen if this is allowed to go on? When there will not be enough physically fit folk to pay the taxes to keep the large proportion of physically and mentally unfit, and provide nurses to care for them. Surely it behoves us to stop the cause of this increasing menace".<sup>20</sup>

Eugenic arguments concerning the inheritability of alcoholism bore out the social purity beliefs of the WCTU, and therefore, constituted an important reason for

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<sup>17</sup> *WR*, 18 December 1930, p.1.

<sup>18</sup> Bacchi, 1983, p.104.

<sup>19</sup> *WR*, January-February 1938, p.2.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

their active participation in eugenic discourse during the interwar years. Not only did eugenics provide the proof to support the WCTU's arguments concerning the need for temperance as a way to improve the race, as "the deterioration of the race is largely due to the drinking habits of a section of the people",<sup>21</sup> but eugenics also supported women's pedagogical role as the educators of other women on the evils of alcohol.

Thus, as the educators of other women, white women's organisations were supporters of an environmental eugenics, or the belief that a modification of environment could produce physical and mental changes in a person.<sup>22</sup> As supporters of a self-modified eugenics, Bacchi labels female reformers as 'euthenist', reflecting the environmental style of racial and social reform that these women advocated.<sup>23</sup> Environmental eugenic reform allowed women to participate in eugenics as 'moral teachers' – asserting a social construction of women that relied on a perception of them in their maternal and familial roles, and was thereby restrictive.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, women's organisations were inhabited by a membership that held widely differing views on the importance of the environment or biology on the race. Hence, that one organisation could elaborate a number of different positions on eugenics, serves to highlight the different and varied experiences and participation of white women in eugenics.

Women's involvement in eugenics and their emphasis, on environmental reform or hereditarianism, depended upon their social and economic position. In reference to Great Britain, Claire Williams states that two groups of women were attracted to eugenic promises of reform. One group was comprised of aristocratic

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<sup>21</sup> *WR*, 19 April 1911, p.7. See also *WR*, 18 March 1926, p.14.

<sup>22</sup> Bacchi, 1983, p.105.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.106.

<sup>24</sup> Mariana Valverde, "'When the Mother of the Race is Free': Race, Reproduction, and Sexuality in First-Wave Feminism", Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde (ed) *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History*, (Toronto, Toronto University Press, 1992), p. 16.

and middle-class women who tended to emphasise negative eugenics, while the other group was concentrated in professions such as medicine, science and education.<sup>25</sup> In their role as social workers, doctors and welfare workers, these women, emphasised reform eugenics focusing on the potential the unfit had to be 'saved'. Examples of prominent reform eugenisists in England were female doctors such as Dr. Mary Scharlieb, Dr. Alice Vickery and Dr. Elizabeth Sloan Chesser.<sup>26</sup>

These professional women had their counterparts in New Zealand, including Dr. Doris Gordon, Dr. Elizabeth Gunn, School Medical Officer, Dr. Ada Paterson, Director of the School Hygiene Division of the Health Department and Dr. Emily Siedeberg. Emily Siedeberg was prominent within a number of women's organisations, in particular the NCW and the SPWC, as well as being the founder of the New Zealand Medical Women's Association (NZMWA) and a founder member of the New Zealand Federation of University Women (NZFUW). Siedeberg was also New Zealand's delegate to the First International Eugenics Congress held in London in 1912. Reporting on the people attending, the clothes worn, the social gatherings attended and jewels displayed Siedeberg also hoped that the Congress would:

have the effect of placing Eugenics upon a scientific basis, and removing that frivolous idea of it which permeates the press in which eugenisists are represented as forcibly mating two individuals who have nothing in common but good health, and no affection or respect for one another, the one thing which alone raises the mating of human beings above that of brute creation.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Claire Williams, "The Destiny of the Race: Women and Eugenics in the Edwardian Era", (MA, University of Essex, 1980), pp.42-43.

<sup>26</sup> Williams, p.43. For further reading on the careers of Mary Scharlieb and Elizabeth Sloan Chesser and their professional relationship with eugenics see Greta Jones, "Women and Eugenics in Britain: the case of Mary Scharlieb, Elizabeth Sloan Chesser, and Stella Browne", *Annals of Science*, 51, 1995, 481-502.

<sup>27</sup> Emily H. Siedeberg, 'First International Eugenic Congress', *KT*, Vol. 5, No. 4, October 1912, p.130.

The better mating of man and woman, or 'good breeding', was deemed essential to reproducing a healthy race. This emphasis recognises the class-based ideals of middle-class white women's organisations of the interwar period. A similar statement was made by the WCTU: "when it comes to the question of breeding sound, healthy men and women, it seems that all wholesome and reasonable questions as to proper and suitable mating of the husband and wife are thrown to the winds".<sup>28</sup> There is a hint of a class-based concern with keeping the bloodlines pure and in essence to prevent the pollution of the race.

Eugenics and eugenicists used the family, lineage, bloodlines, and genealogy as "scientific evidence".<sup>29</sup> The 1925 Report of the Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders in New Zealand provides an illustration of the eugenic preoccupation with charting heredity and inheritance as a "visual family archive".<sup>30</sup> Family, which eugenicists believed could be used to trace genetic worth, "became central to the discursive production of race and of racial hierarchies".<sup>31</sup> In reproductive terms, the charting of inheritance strongly reinforced the eugenic argument that white women were central to the rebuilding of the race. Thus, strong racial notions, argues Mariana Valverde, underlaid the politics of interwar feminism.<sup>32</sup> White women were reproducers for empire. The politics of white women's organisations of the interwar period implicated "racist assumptions and strategies ... in the reproductive politics of the movement".<sup>33</sup> In short, interwar feminism was a politics of rights that was restricted to the racially acceptable.

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<sup>28</sup> *WR*, 18 May 1910, p.2.

<sup>29</sup> Shawn Michelle Smith, "'Baby's Picture is Always Treasured': Eugenics and the Reproduction of Whiteness in the Family Photograph Album", *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 11(1), Spring, 1998, p.198.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.204.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.198

<sup>32</sup> Valverde, 1992, 3-26.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

However, this subject positioning as reproducers, highlights Smith, was accompanied by the presence of women as gatherers of data, who acted to reinforce their “positions as guardians of good blood”.<sup>34</sup> Women occupied central position as eugenic field workers in the American context where, for example, Gertrude Davenport’s report “Hereditary Crime” and Elizabeth Kite’s report’s “Two Brothers” and “The Pineys”, promoted the idea that mothers were more responsible for generating bad offspring.<sup>35</sup> A similar role was fulfilled by the Eugenics Board in New Zealand, created under the 1928 Mental Defectives Amendment Act, which Dr. Theodore Gray described as, “a valuable means of acquiring accurate information which will be of definite scientific value”, primarily by female social workers who, “will undertake an exhaustive investigation into the family, economic and personal history of each defective person who comes before them”.<sup>36</sup> The Eugenics Board consisted of a selected panel of experts established for the purposes of psychological testing and to decide who and when to sterilise and/or segregate. Two places on the Board were reserved for women, with competition for these positions hotly contested. Applications to be on the Board or work for it in some capacity came from S. Catherine Turner, Mrs Dorothy Corby, Sarah R. Dash, Muriel Kent-Johnson, and Dr. Elizabeth Buckley-Turkington.<sup>37</sup> Eventually appointed to the Eugenics Board were Dr. Theodore Gray, Director-General of Mental Hospital; Dr. Russell, Gray’s Deputy; Mr T.B. Strong, Director of Education; Mr B.L. Dallard,

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<sup>34</sup> Smith, p.204.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p.204. See Amy Bix, “Experiences and Voices of Eugenics Field-Workers – Women’s Work in Biology”, *Social Studies of Science*, 27(4), 625-668, which states that between 1919 and 1924 the US Eugenic Review Office trained 258 students to collect data on individuals, families and communities, of which 85 percent were women. Also see Rosaleen Love, “‘Alice in Eugenics-Land’: Feminism and Eugenics in the Scientific Careers of Alice Lee and Ethel Elderton”, *Annals of Science*, 36, 1979, 145-158 for a British example.

<sup>36</sup> Memorandum to the Minister of Health from Dr. Theodore Gray, 28/1/1929, H-MHD1 25/15, (NA).

<sup>37</sup> All letters to Dr. Gray applying for information or positions in relation to the Eugenics Board are contained in the file Mental Defectives Board, 1929-1957, H-MHD 1 25/15 (NA).

Controller-General of Prisons; Jean Begg, General Secretary of the YWCA and Janet Fraser, official mental hospital visitor and wife of future Prime Minister Peter Fraser.<sup>38</sup> Women's role on the board, outlined Jean Begg, included bringing to the scientific investigations "the influence of the home", expressing a belief in the reformatory influence of this environment and of women.<sup>39</sup>

### **The Birth Rate, Contraception and Abortion**

As part of a general discourse on the state of the country's national health, eugenics provided an explanation for what represented healthy masculinity and ideal femininity, with implications for those who did not fit into required standards of normality.<sup>40</sup> Women came to be subjected to two eugenic strategies, which represented the inherent class bias of eugenics and symbolised by an emphasis on 'good breeding'. Greta Jones has articulated the ironies of the way degeneration in middle-class women was indicated by decline in the birth rate, confirming their selfishness, while degeneration in working-class women was indicated by their high fertility, which served to confirm their unrestrained sexuality.<sup>41</sup> Such class based concerns were representative of the membership of both eugenic societies and socially organised women's organisations and displays the role of such women as the authors of eugenics for less socially and politically engaged women.

That white women were reproductively important to national health is related to demographic changes of the early twentieth century, especially in New Zealand. The non-Maori population increased from 626,658 in 1891 to 1,491,484

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<sup>38</sup> *The Dominion*, 11/2/1929, Mental Defectives Board, 1929-57, H-MHD 1 25/15 (NA).

<sup>39</sup> *Bulletin*, vol. 1, no. 1, February 1929, p.2, MS-Papers-1376-05 (ATL).

<sup>40</sup> Jones, 1995, p.497.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p.497. See also Richard Soloway, "Feminism, Fertility and Eugenics in Victorian and Edwardian England", S. Drescher, D. Sabean, A. Sharlin (eds), *Political Symbolism in Modern Europe*, (New Jersey, Transaction Books, 1982), p.124.

in 1936 and aged from an average of 25 in 1896 to 32 in 1936.<sup>42</sup> As a result of declining mortality, and reduced immigration between 1881 and 1911, the age structure matured.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, a fall in infant mortality and declining fertility affected the shape of the population. In the 1890s, 80 infants per 1000 live births died within 12 months of birth, but by the 1930s, only 32 out of 1000 died.<sup>44</sup> These demographic changes influenced the debate concerning family size. Families became smaller. Women who married in 1880 averaged 6.5 live births but by 1923, they averaged only 2.4 live births, which gave rise to an increasing need by politicians and those sympathetic to eugenics, to encourage white women to reproduce.<sup>45</sup> While the birth rate among white women was decreasing, the marriage rate was not declining, leading to an interpretation by contemporaries that women were purposefully limiting their fertility.<sup>46</sup> Control over women's bodies was directly debated in the interwar period, with the need to reproduce for empire framing the boundaries of the discussion.

The issue of reproduction, described by the 1925 Report into of the Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders in New Zealand as, "an exuberant phase of nutrition",<sup>47</sup> was the central feature of eugenic fears and propaganda. Throughout the interwar period, eugenic anxieties about the deterioration of the 'white race' coalesced around issues of the differential birth rate, the differential use of contraceptives and the issue of abortion. A survey of the Annual Report of the Health Department in the 1920s and 1930s reveals the degree of eugenic anxiety that was centred on the birth rate. Every year the birth

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<sup>42</sup> Erik Olssen, "Towards a New Society", in G.W Rice (ed), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, (Auckland, Oxford University Press, 1995 edition), p.255

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p.257.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p.258.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p., 263.

<sup>46</sup> Sue Kedgley, *Mum's the Word: The Untold Story of Motherhood in New Zealand*, (Auckland, Random House, 1996), p.36.

<sup>47</sup> *AJHR*, H-31A, 1925, p.7.



rate was judged with a favourable or negative comment. In the 1924 Annual Report of the Health Department it was described as 'exceedingly low', in 1928 as 'not satisfactory', in 1930 as a 'matter of grave concern', while in 1934 it was described as the 'lowest on record' at 16.47.<sup>48</sup> The statistics looked especially threatening when Great Britain's birth rate was also revealed to be exceedingly low, at 16.32 in 1932.<sup>49</sup> At the same time, the Maori birth rate was increasingly rapidly. In 1929, the Maori birth rate was 33.58 per 1000 births, and by 1937, this had increased to 46.64, compared to the Pakeha birth rate statistics at 19.02 and 17.29 respectively.<sup>50</sup> The more the Pakeha birth rate fell, the more negative the comments made in Annual Reports of the Health Department became.

Accompanying these judgements on the birth rate were comments on who or what was to blame for the increasingly threatening prospect of 'race suicide'. In 1930, the "evil of birth control" was identified and often women were scapegoated for their increased 'selfishness'. The *NZMJ* suggested in 1922 that, while birth control was commendable among the poorer classes, its practice among the well-educated classes was due to selfishness "in its most revolting form on the part usually of the mother."<sup>51</sup> In fact, it was stated that the "sooner that the lazy, idle, drunken and incompetents of all sorts learn and practise how to avoid having large families the better" because "indiscriminate breeding from good, bad and indifferent stock is almost certain to end in disaster if the inferior stock breed more freely."<sup>52</sup> The author claimed that the use of birth control was justified amongst the poor, as it would lead to a population of quality rather than quantity.

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<sup>48</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1924, p.9; *AJHR*, H-31, 1928, p.1; *AJHR*, H-31, 1930, p.1; *AJHR*, H-31, 1935, p.1.

<sup>49</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1932, p.1.

<sup>50</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1930, p.4 and *AJHR*, H-31, 1938, p.2.

<sup>51</sup> Editorial, 'Birth Control', *New Zealand Medical Journal*, Vol. 21, 1922, p.342.

<sup>52</sup> H.E.A. Washbourn, 'The Ethics of Birth Control', *NZMJ*, Vol. 31, December 1932, pp.417-18.

Thus, reproduction was integral to the future prosperity of the nation and the empire. Women's groups, such as the WCTU, added their voice to the chorus of eugenic sympathisers, promulgating a raft of anxieties centred on reproduction, and arguing that women were central to empire. The *White Ribbon* article entitled 'National Decay' from 1930 portrayed women's, and the government's, duty to 'better the breed of men'.

You talk of your breed of cattle.  
 And plan for a higher strain;  
 You double the food of the pasture,  
 And heap up the measure of grain.

You draw on the wits of the nation  
 To improve the barn and the pen;  
 But what are you doing, my sister,  
 To better the breed of men?<sup>53</sup>

The WCTU defined motherhood as the essential and important role for women. Through producing healthy children, women could participate to some extent, in the imperial endeavour. Thus, the WCTU poem supports Lesley Hall's claim that some women were ardent eugenicists, and saw themselves as the educators of their own sex on a thoroughly "them and us" model.<sup>54</sup> It was through a dialogue with eugenic constructions of 'race' that women's organisations could participate in the politics of race betterment. However, not before men's behaviour and responsibilities were outlined.

The same poem, but with two added verses (in bold), by the WCTU serves to fragment the seemingly simplistic concept that, in the case of the WCTU, social purity feminists were the architects of eugenic discourse aimed at other women. The following poem is a longer version of the first, and it can be seen that the language, while it is eugenic, is aimed squarely at men.

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<sup>53</sup> *WR*, 18 December 1930, p.1

<sup>54</sup> Lesley Hall, "Women, Feminism and Eugenics", R.A. Peel (ed), *Essays in the History of Eugenics*, (London, Galton Institute, 1998), p.37.

Reproductive capacity was not just women's responsibility; men were equally at fault for the current decline in the quality of the population and the decreasing birth rate.

You talk of your breed of cattle,  
And plan for a higher strain;  
You double the food of the pasture,  
And heap up the measure of grain.

You draw on the wits of the nation  
To improve the barn and the pen;  
But what are you doing my brother,  
To better the breed of men?

**And what of your boy have you measured  
His needs for a growing year?  
Does your mark, as his sire, in his features  
Mean as much as your brand on a steer?**

**Thoroughbred – that is your watchword  
For stable and pasture and pen;  
What is your word for the homestead?  
Answer you breeders of men.<sup>55</sup>**

What is clear is that reproduction was a central concern of eugenicists and feminists. Lesley Hall states that eugenics tended to place women in a passive position, as either good, fit stock, who were supposed to have as many children as they could to replenish the nation, or if of unsound stock, to refrain from breeding.<sup>56</sup> The WCTU negated the passive nature of eugenics by adopting its discourse with male behaviour as its target.

As mentioned before and in Chapter One, the problem was not just that the birth rate was declining, but that the quality of those breeding future citizens was considered to not be up to the required standards set by the pioneer stock of the country.<sup>57</sup> The differential aspect of the birth rate issue meant policies of eugenic control were differentially aimed at two classes of women, the middle

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<sup>55</sup> *WR*, 18 August 1929, pp.1-2.

<sup>56</sup> Hall, 1998, p.37.

<sup>57</sup> See Editorial, 'Birth Control', *NZMJ*, Vol. 21, 1922, pp.341-342.

class and the working class.<sup>58</sup> Concern also focused upon the differential birth rate between different countries and 'races'. According to the NCW, the tendency towards a declining birth rate was a worldwide trend among Western nations, while the "German and Russian birthrate far exceeds that of peoples whom we believe to be flowers of modern civilization."<sup>59</sup> Consideration of the probable causes of the falling birth rate brought forward a number of suggestions by the NCW, including the "purely selfish, such as desire for undue gaiety, or luxury, or leisured ease."<sup>60</sup> However, the problems of large families were also cited, in an effort to point out the need for financial support for families, and in effect, to promote quality rather than quantity. White women shared the imperial concern of being outbred by 'lesser' nations, with male politicians and eugenis.

Debate about the birth rate, contraceptives and abortion was institutionalised at the government level in the 1936 Committee of Inquiry into Abortion in New Zealand. Before the Inquiry was established, concern was displayed over the death rate by septic abortion in Annual Reports of the Health Department. In 1931, septic abortion deaths were described as a 'great anxiety', noting 30 women had died during the year and of those, 26 were married.<sup>61</sup> Welfare organisations were appealed to, to play an integral role in "decreasing this dangerous method of limiting families", by educating women in the believed risk to life and empire caused by criminal abortion.<sup>62</sup> As in the NZEES, women's work as 'mothers of the race', was constructed as essential to nation and empire.

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<sup>58</sup> *The Press*, 3/1/1931, p.15, this article describes the differential birth rate as one where the best and most intellectual classes are multiplying far less rapidly than the feeble-minded and illiterate classes. A trend that is evident in all 'civilised communities'. The emphasis placed upon the wrong type of people breeding is what differentiates eugenics from Darwinism, which equated success in the competitive struggle with quantity rather than quality of offspring (Jones, 1992, p.89).

<sup>59</sup> NCW Annual Conference, 1919, p.8, MS-Papers 1371-107 (ATL).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*; concerns about New Zealand's BR were repeated by the NCW in 1937, see Report of 14<sup>th</sup> Conference, 1937, p.37, MS-Papers-1371-111 (ATL).

<sup>61</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1931, p.34.

<sup>62</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1932, p.43.

A number of women's groups, as well as individual women in their professional, roles made submissions to the Inquiry on the damage of contraception and abortion to the quality of the population. Birth control clinics were supported by 8 out of 18 women's organizations,<sup>63</sup> but while an inquiry concerning women's control over their fertility would assume concentration on reproductive issues, many organisations also brought in arguments about the home environment. Motherhood as unattractive, pain relief during childbirth, the declining birth rate, women's financial in/dependence and training for motherhood were issues addressed by witnesses to the Inquiry.<sup>64</sup> At the level of government, policies that promoted a scientific approach to childbearing and motherhood made women the subject of 'expert' or medical surveillance. Domestic science in schools, pain relief in childbirth, Plunket Society pamphlets which were distributed to newly married women, and motherhood endowment, were policies, and departmental activities, supported by socially organised women to centre women's work and women's bodies in social life.<sup>65</sup> King's, *The Expectant Mother, and Baby's First Month*, was supplied by the state in 1921 to half of the 92,000 married women in the country, and explained to the reader the best ways to safeguard the health of mother and child.<sup>66</sup> While the intention of a scientific approach to motherhood and domesticity was to ease the burden of

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<sup>63</sup> Barbara Brookes, "Reproductive Rights: The Debate over Abortion and Birth Control in the 1930s", B. Brookes, C. Macdonald, M. Tennant (ed), *Women in History*, (Wellington, Port Nicholson Press/Allen and Unwin, 1986), p.20.

<sup>64</sup> See Barbara Brookes, 1986, pp120-127. The Maternity Protection Society promoted the need for the training of girls in mothercraft (ibid., p.127); the Women's Service Guild highlighted the unattractiveness of motherhood to modern women as an explanation for the declining birth rate and the rising abortion rate. To encourage motherhood they promoted pain free childbirth and independence from unreliable husbands (ibid., p.127). Also represented at the inquiry were the Dominion Federation of Women's Institutes, Mothers Union, NCW, Auckland Women's Branch of the New Zealand Labour Party, New Zealand Registered Nurses Association, WDFU, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Working Women's Movement, *AJHR*, H-31A, 1937, p.3.

<sup>65</sup> Sandra Coney (ed), *Standing in the Sunshine*, (Auckland, Viking, 1993), pp.60, 65-67, 200-202.

<sup>66</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1922, p.21.

childbirth and motherhood, state policies and departments contributed to the building of a eugenically desirable population through policies that socially engineered women into domesticity, thus exacting greater control over their fertility and home life.

In 1937, Dr. Doris Gordon and Dr. Francis Bennett responded to the 1936 Inquiry with a book, *Gentlemen of the Jury*, where abortion and abortionists were vilified for their roles in negating the production of healthy children for the nation and putting women's health, as mothers, at risk. It was claimed that, the country was, "losing by illegal abortion twice as many potential citizens annually as were killed yearly during the Great War."<sup>67</sup> Birth control, while justified for some, was cited as a tool of escape from 'duty' used by women, and in effect, hastening the best elements of society to 'exterminate themselves'.<sup>68</sup> Its abuse by the best and most capable class of women reinforced and mirrored the views of doctors and the Health Department, with Gordon and Bennett laying the blame for such offences at the feet of the English birth control pioneer Marie Stopes. However, the authors also criticised those who blamed only women for the falling birth rate, contending that it was a problem that concerned "men and women equally."<sup>69</sup> Despite this assertion, they still identified emancipated women as the architects of the falling birth rate in their statement that 'Franchise, Freedom and Babies do not harmonize'.<sup>70</sup>

Gordon and Bennett's tirade against abortion, contraception and birth control was followed by an argument on the benefits of maternity and motherhood to women. In an effort to decry the fashion of smaller families, they stated motherhood would give women greater beauty and youthfulness, and

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<sup>67</sup> Doris Gordon and Agnes Bennett, *Gentlemen of the Jury*, (New Plymouth, Thomas Avery and Sons, 1937), p.1.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p.19.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p.39.

ideally, such benefits would accrue from a family of three or four children.<sup>71</sup> Women's essential duty was to be a mother, to keep the cradles full, replenish the stock, and not fight her biological destiny because: "Woman can never outwit her destiny".<sup>72</sup> Civilisation depended upon fit, white, middle-class women to breed for the empire, if not, they were subjected to claims of their culpability in racial deterioration.

Utilising the language of war, the differential birth rate became a catch cry of eugenic alarmists and conservatives alike, represented in the slogans 'slaughter', 'wastage of life' and 'ante-natal suicide'.<sup>73</sup> Truby King played on these when establishing the Plunket Society, while the Sex, Hygiene and Birth Regulation Society (SHBRS), later the FPA, displayed the characteristic combination of reproductive concerns with a reformist outlook of New Zealand feminists and eugenicists. That the SHBRS was both feminist and eugenicist is illustrated in the report of their first meeting. Held on 28 April 1936 in Wellington, the meeting was attended by 30 women from a number of women's groups and addressed by a Dr. Welton-Hogg, a member of the recently re-formed New Zealand Eugenics Society.<sup>74</sup> In his address, Welton-Hogg argued that the eugenic idea of birth control clinics "had been included in the aims of the Eugenics and Race Improvement Society of which he was chairman", and fitted comfortably with the feminist aims of the SHBRS – giving women some sense of reproductive control over their fertility and family size.<sup>75</sup> Family planning and eugenics were thus suitably able to co-exist in order to "provide the best type of offspring for society."<sup>76</sup> The meeting concluded with vocal support for the

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p.37.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p.41.

<sup>73</sup> Gordon and Bennett, pp. 43 and 46.

<sup>74</sup> 'Report of the First Meeting of Women to Discuss Birth Control Clinics', April 1936, p.1, 97-035-09/5 (ATL).

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, the prospectus of the Eugenics and Race Improvement Society was read to the meeting.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

establishment of birth control clinics, and in doing so, gave implicit support to selective breeding for both eugenic and feminist purposes. In short, the breeding of a better race, it was suggested, could be achieved through white women's greater control over their fertility. Such control, it was argued, was essential to an independent womanhood who could then choose the fittest man with which to 'reproduce the race'. In short, contraception became a focal point for eugenicists and feminists in constructing and producing a healthy race.

It was advanced that birth control was acceptable, because it allowed for the planning of healthier children, by promoting better spacing between births. Taking its lead from Marie Stopes, and Margaret Sanger, the SHBRS advocated birth control as a way of decreasing the size of families. In doing so, it argued that family planning, through better spacing, could potentially increase the quality of children produced and thus, contribute to the eugenic ideal of peopling the empire with the right type of citizen before conception. However, family planning was criticised by Ettie Rout. Rout maintained that family planning contributed to maintaining the quality of children born in terms of physicality and intelligence, but it did not achieve the eugenic objective of race improvement. According to Rout, family planning was merely the prevention of the nation deteriorating.<sup>77</sup> Race improvement, she argued, relied upon women being economically independent and selecting the father of their children. Ettie argued that through, "the exercise of the fastidiously selective passionate love of a free womanhood", women would not be reduced to marrying the men who could 'provide' for her thus, contributing to a form of positive eugenics.<sup>78</sup> In short, the objectives of feminism and eugenics was not so much an unusual

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<sup>77</sup> Ettie Rout, *The Morality of Birth Control*, (London, Bodley Head, 1925), p.22.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29.



alliance but one that was complementary, based as it was on similar issues, campaigns and racial desires.

***The Problem of Mental Deficiency in New Zealand: The Women's Division of the Farmers' Union and Sterilisation***

The ideal that social betterment could be achieved through eugenics was the link that saw women in their role as doctors, academics and as leaders of women's groups, despite their being the firsts in their professions, become immersed in the language of social and sexual control. Both addressed similar concerns and saw themselves as having a role to play in bringing about the required reform. While the intention was social betterment through behavioural reform and bodily control, it was expressed in darker terms in the form of sterilisation, which necessitated the denial of citizenship rights and, more directly, the denial of the freedom to reproduce and have a family.

Internationally, sterilisation has had a mixed reception. However, it is with Nazi Germany that this tool of control and coercion is most associated. In this context, sterilisation and eugenics is viewed in its exaggerated form but in the 'white settler colonies', Scandinavia and other parts of Europe and the United States sterilisation was promoted as a tool of social betterment, framed in utopian rhetoric and imbued with the promise of a better life for its subjects. What work has been written on sterilisation still reflects an emphasis on the Big Three of the United States, Britain and Germany, with little analysis of the historical specificity and raced and gendered nature of sterilisation. Allison Carey's account of sterilisation laws and rhetoric in the United States between 1907 and 1950 is a recent explanation of the gendered nature of that country's sterilisation programme.<sup>79</sup> Likewise, John Macnicol has analysed the importance of women's

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<sup>79</sup> Allison C. Carey, "Gender and Compulsory Sterilization Programs in America, 1907-1950", *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 11(1), March 1998, 74-105.

support for voluntary sterilisation in Britain.<sup>80</sup> Daniel Kelves, as part of his general history of eugenics, has also explored the history of sterilisation outside of Nazi Germany, with the acknowledgement that the United States had the most comprehensive sterilisation programme beyond Germany, and that it was a precursor to Nazi Germany's excesses.<sup>81</sup> The promise of a better life gave sterilisation an appeal beyond its eugenic supporters to include female professionals and women's welfare groups, including the WDFU.

The first compulsory sterilisation law in the United States was passed in 1907, and eventually permitted the compulsory sterilisation of more than 60,000 people classed as mentally deficient, insane or epileptic.<sup>82</sup> From 1907 to the 1960s, two-thirds of these operations were performed on women.<sup>83</sup> Carey notes that before 1928, men were the most likely 'targets' of sterilisation programmes, but after 1929, women were more likely to be sterilised, locating this shift in a rationalisation of an imagining by bureaucrats and institutional officials as to the advantages of sterilisation for society and for women.<sup>84</sup> The gendered nature of sterilisation laws in the United States point to the different effect eugenics had on men and women. Men were the targets of sterilisation to control their individual behaviour, but women emerged as the preferred target to control societal behaviour.

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<sup>80</sup> John Macnicol, "Eugenics and the Campaign for Voluntary Sterilization in Britain Between the Wars", *Social History of Medicine*, 2, 1989, 147-169 and John Macnicol, "The Voluntary Sterilization Campaign in Britain, 1918-1939", in J. Fout (ed), *Forbidden History: The State, Society and the Regulation of Sexuality in Modern Europe: Essays from The Journal of the History of Sexuality*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992), 317-333.

<sup>81</sup> Daniel Kelves, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Use of Human Heredity*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1995).

<sup>82</sup> Carey, p.74.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Carey argues that, "female sterilization was a means to regulate the sexual relationships and reproduction of the poor, disabled, and non-Anglo women, targeting particularly young promiscuous women and poor single mothers." Ibid.

In New Zealand, sterilisation was never given expression in law. However, it was considered in the 1928 Mental Defectives Amendment Act, which saw New Zealand hailed as “the first Dominion seriously to consider sterilization”.<sup>85</sup> The 1928 Mental Defectives Amendment Act was not the first piece of legislation in New Zealand that proposed the legalisation of sterilisation. The 1906 Habitual Criminals Act introduced, at the time, new provisions for the detention of convicted sex offenders, and also suggested surgery as means of curing these men, but failed to get the required support, and was rescinded on its second reading.<sup>86</sup> The London Eugenic Society displayed great interest in the 1928 Act, requesting information on the “Eugenic Bill” in 1930, which suggests that New Zealand saw itself as a leader in socially progressive legislation and as a eugenic model to the imperial centre.<sup>87</sup> This is confirmed by the assertion of Major Dagers of the Nelson Hospital Board in 1934, who stated, had the 1928 Act been passed in its original form “it would probably have placed this country in the forefront in measures dealing with the problem of mental defectives”.<sup>88</sup> However, Canada was the only country in the British Empire that legalised sterilisation, and only in the province of Alberta. The colonial position on sterilisation was made clear when the London Eugenics Society undertook a survey of its Dominions in 1932, at a time when Britain was considering its own laws on voluntary sterilisation.<sup>89</sup> The survey found that Alberta, Canada, was the only region in the British Empire to have legalised sterilisation of the ‘mentally defective’. New Zealand government officials were well aware of the Canadian

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<sup>85</sup> *Eugenics Review*, Vol. 10, No. 3, October 1928, p.156, cited in Fleming, p.11.

<sup>86</sup> Tracey Tulloch, ‘State Regulation of Sexuality in New Zealand, 1880-1925’, (PhD, University of Canterbury, 1997), pp.315-316.

<sup>87</sup> Letter to the New Zealand High Commissioner from the London Eugenic Society dated 25/7/1930, D 207, Eugenic Society Records, 1907-1962, MS-Coll-20-2656 (ATL).

<sup>88</sup> *The Dominion*, 26/11/1934, H 1 54/79 (NA).

<sup>89</sup> Memoranda Concerning Various Laws Compiled by Dr J. Crowley, Board of Control 111 British Empire, 1932, D 228 Eugenic Society Records, 1907-1962, MS-Coll-20-2656 (ATL).

position regarding sterilization, with copies of their laws and relevant speeches of Canadian officials in departmental files.<sup>90</sup> These documents were useful in considering the advantages and disadvantages of the operation, assess the Canadian situation, and to ensure New Zealand remained at the forefront of humanitarian legislation.

The 1928 Mental Defectives Amendment Act included two controversial clauses that were dropped after a night of debate in parliament. Clause 21 referred to the prohibition of marriage of those on the Eugenic Board register, the other, Clause 25, attempted to legislate for the sterilisation of the defective. Both Clause 21 and 25 were negative eugenic strategies focusing on the prevention of reproduction of the 'unfit'. The rescinding of these clauses caused a flurry of political activity among women's organisations in New Zealand. At the fore of the attack on the exclusion of the sterilisation clause from the 1928 Act was the WDFU, lead by Nina Barrer.

Barrer was a trained teacher, born in Picton, educated in Wellington, who spent her married life in Wairarapa, where she became involved in many organisations and often held local or national positions.<sup>91</sup> Barrer was involved in the, the Red Cross, the League of Nations of New Zealand, the United Nations Association of New Zealand, was president of the Masterton Branch of the WDFU from 1927 to 1930, served as a dominion vice-president of the WDFU from 1925-1947, and edited the WDFU publication, *New Zealand Countrywoman*, from 1933 to 1935.<sup>92</sup> As editor, she used her position and the

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<sup>90</sup> A copy of a speech given by Dr C.M. Hincks, Medical Director of the Canadian National Committee on Mental Hygiene, at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Council on Child Welfare, Vancouver, 23 May 1927 is contained in the file H-MHD 1 4/5/1 (NA). The subject of the address is the fight for sterilisation in Canada. See Angus McLaren for a discussion of the sterilisation law in Alberta, Canada.

<sup>91</sup> Christopher Van Der Krogt, "Barrer, Nina Agatha Rosamond", *DNZB Volume Four, 1921-1940*, p.32.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

publication as a platform to campaign for her personal goal, which became national WDFU policy, that of social and race betterment.

Sterilisation formed one of the major issues of contention within the membership of the WDFU in the interwar years, with the 1937 Annual Conference the scene of a special session on sterilization, based on a remit from the Wairarapa Branch that had been on the agenda for several years.<sup>93</sup> The discussion of sterilisation at the 1937 WDFU conference took the form of an arranged public debate. Doris Gordon and Nina Barrer led the argument for voluntary sterilisation of the unfit and Dr. O'Brien of Christchurch, and Mrs. M. Goulter of Fairlie, were speakers against the proposal.<sup>94</sup> The debate, won by the speakers against sterilisation, was the culmination of nearly a decade of lobbying by the WDFU and Nina Barrer, whose greatest contribution to the debate over the 1928 Act was the publication, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency in New Zealand*, released under the auspices of the WDFU. Its release coincided with the WDFU's national resolutions in 1931 and 1932 supporting sterilisation and the 1928 Act, resulting in deputations to the Minister of Health petitioning for reinstatement of the clauses 21 and 25.<sup>95</sup>

Barrer's pamphlet also appealed for the dropped clauses to be reinstated and attempted to keep alive a eugenic conscience among women and the public utilising ideas and quotes that had been popular twenty years earlier. In its subject, the pamphlet was unoriginal. The unfit were described as constituting a 'grave national danger', costing the state hundreds of thousands of pounds, while the unfit, which included the unemployed, threatened the purity of the national stock.<sup>96</sup> The gendered nature of the argument is made clear in her illustration of a

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<sup>93</sup> WDFU Annual Conference, 1937, p.11 H-MHD 1 25/4 (NA).

<sup>94</sup> *The Evening Post*, 14/8/1937 H-MHD 1 25/4 (NA).

<sup>95</sup> Nina Barrer, *Mental Deficiency and its Treatment*, (Wellington, WDFU, 1934), p.i.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

suitable candidate for sterilisation. The candidate was a feeble-minded woman in receipt of relief from the Charitable Aid Board, and the mother of nine children whose paternity was uncertain.<sup>97</sup> Her cost to the state, the number of her children and their state of illegitimacy was proof of her degeneracy and thus, confirmation of her immorality. The candidate's degeneracy fell outside the terms for institutionalisation within a mental hospital nor had she committed a crime for her to be placed in a prison, thus, sterilisation served the interests of the state and empire in reproductive terms by allowing her to remain in the community, without being a long-term cost to the state. This narrative on the immorality and high fertility of the 'defective' woman was a staple part of the eugenic platform, and is confirmed by the remarks of Taranaki doctor, Doris Gordon, regarding the disuse of the 1928 Act: "in the ten years that have practically elapsed since that Bill was enacted, only ONE defective has been listed and she was not put on until she had five illegitimate children to presumably five different men!"<sup>98</sup>

In evidence to the 1924 Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, witnesses made clear the racial benefits of sterilising perceived defective women. Comparing women to animals, Dr. Crosbie, Medical Superintendent of Sunnyside Mental Hospital in Christchurch, stated that sterilisation "might make them, as it makes the lower animals, better, more docile and sleepier".<sup>99</sup> The defective women, positioned as lower race, was seen as a threat to the survival of the race if left unsterilised. Alternatively, if sterilised, these women were again constructed as a threat to the race, through the receptacle of unrestrained male sexuality. Dr. George Thomson stated in a written reply to a circular from the 1924 Committee, that if sterilised, defective

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p.17.

<sup>98</sup> Letter to Theodore Gray from Doris Gordon, 27/7/1937, H-MHD1 25/4, (NA).

<sup>99</sup> *The Press*, 11/7/1924, p.6. Crosbie also stated that sterilisation was beneficial for female moral imbeciles as it "might make them fatter and more docile and sleepier", cited in Fleming, p.44.

women would, “become uncontrollable, and even eager prostitutes”, for “the sterilized woman of that type allowed the liberties of marriage in a community would be forced into prostitution by men other than her similarly conditioned husband; as naturally young men would welcome such a state of affairs with no fear of maintenance orders in the background”.<sup>100</sup> A similar argument was proffered to the Committee when they heard evidence in Christchurch from Dr. Crosbie: “If women who are moral imbeciles were sterilised, they would still be able to spread sexual diseases around the country. They are not like ordinary unfortunate women who have sufficient providence to keep themselves clean”.<sup>101</sup> Here, defective women remained racialised as unclean and unhygienic; perceptions that were commonly associated with the ‘darker races’. Meanwhile the 1924 Inquiry was not a complete whitewash in favour of sterilisation. A number of individuals opposed sterilisation because, “although it will prevent these people propagating, it will not make a mental defective competent, a pauper independent, an inebriate sober, or a criminal moral”.<sup>102</sup> A more moral society would not be the result by the dehumanisation of groups in society. Nevertheless, sterilisation had a groundswell of support among witnesses to the Inquiry, while a survey of the nation’s doctors, for the purposes of the Inquiry, indicated that sterilisation ran second only to segregation as a solution to halting the slide of New Zealand’s stock into degeneration.

The WDFU, not established until after the 1924 Inquiry, and therefore unable to present witness statements, was left to articulate the concerns of rural women on race betterment in public debates, their own publications and at national conferences. It was in this arena that complaints about Barrer’s role in

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<sup>100</sup> Letter to the 1924 Committee from George Thomson, 13 June 1924, H1 54/79 11305, (NA).

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Statement of Dr. Phillips, School Medical Officer, Canterbury District, p.664, H3 13 (NA); Kevin McGrath, a Catholic Priest, believed sterilisation to be a ‘valueless reform’ and a ‘debasing system of punishment’ but did support the segregation of defectives (ibid., pp.96 and 102).

advocating the reinstatement of clause 21 and 25 of the 1928 Act was articulated by women within the organisation.<sup>103</sup> Meanwhile, Dr. MacGregor Walmsley, an avid eugenicist from Dunedin who attempted to re-establish a Eugenics Society in New Zealand during the 1930s, was one who had his doubts about the appropriateness of women's participation in the sterilisation debate.

As you must be aware, there is a considerable agitation among some of the principal women's organizations, for restoring the "teeth" to the legislation which you helped promote in 1928 for a measure of control of the grossly defective in the interests of race improvement, or, as it seems to me, arrest of further degeneration. Some highly capable women are behind the movement, for whom personal contact and correspondence arouse in me great respect. But their direct assaults and uncompromizing propaganda are stirring up bitter antagonism among many worthy people who cannot be pushed on one side as mere fossilized relics of a pre-scientific age.<sup>104</sup>

Elizabeth Bulkley also voiced her opposition to the Bill in two nursery rhymes centering on Dr. Theodore Gray as a motif of fear and derision.<sup>105</sup> Protests against the Act were also lodged by the Edendale Branch of the New Zealand Labour Party, who described the legislation as 'hasty', and the Auckland Fabian Club who deplored the state of the Act in its amended form.<sup>106</sup>

Greta Jones suggests that the character of eugenics would be given depth through research on women who were adamantly opposed to eugenics, noting that such an idea "does not preclude the possibility that, just as there was a 'feminine' aspect to a pro-eugenics position, there might be a typically feminine anti-eugenics position".<sup>107</sup> In 1934 the Waitemata and North Auckland branches of the WDFU proposed remits urging that the *NZ Countrywoman*, then under the

<sup>103</sup> See letter from Mrs Gaulter, n.d, and letter to Barrer from Ethel South, dated 2/7/1939 and letter to Barrer from Jean Nutt dated December 11 on the Roman Catholic 'protest', MS-Papers-0182-038, Barrer Collection, (ATL).

<sup>104</sup> Letter to Dr. Gray from MacGregor Walmsley dated 20/4/1934, M-MHD 1 4/5/1 (NA).

<sup>105</sup> The rhyme 'Bogey Man' by Elizabeth Bulkley can be found in Fleming, p.57 and 'The Sad Story of Little Richard' can be found in Tulloch, p.344.

<sup>106</sup> Letter from the New Zealand Labour Party, Edendale Branch to the Hon. Mr. Young, Minister of Health, dated 1/10/1928 and Letter from Auckland Fabian Club to G. Coates dated 22/9/1928, H-MHD 1 8/854 (NA).

<sup>107</sup> Jones, 1995, p.501, n.74.



editorship of Barrer, refrain from publishing photographs of ‘imbecile’ children.<sup>108</sup> It was among the women of the WDFU that the debate over sterilisation was most animated. A Barrer article in the *N.Z. Countrywoman* prompted a public discussion among WDFU branches when extracts from an address by Mrs A. Donovan of the Ngarua Branch were published.<sup>109</sup> While Donovan critiqued eugenics, she did not suggest that race improvement was an impossibility, but that the science of eugenics needed to take into account the moral qualities of race improvement, rather than confining itself to policies on breeding:

Mrs. Barrer mentions the science of eugenics. The difference between animal and man breeding is that the animal breeder aims at prominence in one or two respects. In man, who can say what to aim at? Who has the ability to say what is good stock? Who can enforce rules of this kind? Some say the State, but what of people? They must support it, and nobody knows where breeding and selection leads to, there being much more in life than physical and mental fitness. We must educate for high ideals in marriage, which will be least an indirect means of race improvement.<sup>110</sup>

A conservative emphasis on marriage and family as a bulwark to racial degeneration was emphasised. Likewise, the NCW supported the WDFU’s attempts to reinstate Clause 21, the prohibition of marriage of persons whose name is on the register, and 25, the sterilisation of mental defectives, to the 1928 Act.<sup>111</sup> Support was also forthcoming from the Howard League for Penal Reform, and from the Nelson Townswomen’s Guild, who appealed to other branches to arrange meetings, lectures and discussions on the subject and to pressure the government to take action, because “if a united appeal were made by the women of the Dominion no Government could turn a deaf ear to their

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<sup>108</sup> cited in Fleming, p.66. The remits were eventually withdrawn.

<sup>109</sup> *NZ Countrywoman*, 20 September 1933, p.11.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Minutes of Annual Conference, 1934, p.3, MS-Papers-1371-126 (ATL). This remit was reaffirmed in 1935. The NCW also outlined their support for the 1928 Act in the *Bulletin*, vol. 1, no. 1, July 1928, p.4 and vol. 1, no.1, February 1929, p.2, MS-Papers-1376-05 (ATL).

demand”.<sup>112</sup> Women’s organisations saw themselves as the architects of race revival, despite holding a variety of positions on the subject. It was through their membership, petitioning, campaigning, and political pressure that the country’s racial future was to be ensured. White, middle-class, women were, therefore, constructing themselves as the country’s moral and social guardians.

Women’s organisations such as the NCW repeatedly sent resolutions and deputations to Parliament expressing their dissatisfaction at the lack of progress made on the subject of mental defectives and sexual offenders. The NCW headed a ‘large’ deputation of affiliated societies “to urge the Minister of Health to give effect to the findings of the Commission on Mental Defectives, held two years ago.”<sup>113</sup> The only resolutions passed at national level by the WCTU which advocated sterilisation were related to sexual offenders, with the first resolution that promoted sterilisation of sex offenders passed 21 March 1912 in direct response to a eugenic address by Dr Mills on the previous evening.<sup>114</sup> By 1924, the WCTU had expunged sterilisation from their agenda and were instead supporting medical arguments that sex offence cases “were largely mental and a surgical operation would have little or no effect on these offences”.<sup>115</sup> In short, discussion of the merits of sterilisation was not solely confined to the 1924 Inquiry, and responses to the 1928 Act.

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<sup>112</sup> Christchurch Branch, Letter to the Minister of Health dated 25/11/1933, H-MHD 1 4/4/0 (NA). ‘Nelson Townswomen’s Guild’, n.d., 88-175-18/1, WDFU Collection, (ATL).

<sup>113</sup> *The Mirror*, 1 October 1926, MS-Papers-1371-659 (ATL). The concerns were repeated again in *The Mirror*, 1 November 1926, p.26; 1 April 1927, p.56; 1 May 1927, p.54; (Ibid); Also in regard to the NCW see Minutes of the Annual Conference, 1925, p.6, and the Report of the Seventh Annual Meeting, 1927, p.13 and 15, MS-Papers-1371-126 (ATL).

<sup>114</sup> Sarah Dalton, “The Pure in Heart: The Women’s Christian Temperance Union and Social Purity, 1885-1930”, (MA, Victoria University, 1993), p.123.

<sup>115</sup> Cited in Dalton, p.127; The 1924 WCTU Conference passed the following resolution urging segregation rather than sterilisation of sexual offenders: “In accordance with the unanimous opinion of the medical conference, . . . this convention urges that, for the better protection of children, men convicted of sexual offences should be permanently segregated in some suitable institution”, *Taranaki News*, 27/3/1924, H 1 54/79 (NA) and *WR*, September 1928, p.7.

**Conclusion**

Animated discussion of eugenic reformative ideology and practices illustrates the agency of socially organised women within a political debate of perceived racial importance. Significantly, the opinions of these women were joined by those of politicians, and medical professionals, in condemning the inability of the government to implement eugenic legislation. Such political activism, in the form of public debates, petitions and deputations to parliament, was characteristic of socially organised women's groups interested in the social reform of society. Eugenics offered these women another tool to reform and mould society in their image. Sterilisation came close to being legislated for in New Zealand, with crucial support from a number of women's welfare organisations. The most extreme views came from Nina Barrer and the WDFU, but without the wholesale support of the medical profession, academia and politicians, sterilisation was left to be imagined by the very few as a eugenic tool of social betterment. Instead, direct government intervention into reproduction, a softer form of eugenics, was preferred.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 'EMPIRE BUILDERS OF THE FUTURE': CHILDREN AND EUGENICS

The loss of so many valuable lives in the recent war and the disablement of many returned men, taken in conjunction with the returns of unfitness as shown by the medical examinations of recruits, point strongly to the need for giving full attention to the care of the health of our children from baby-hood upwards.<sup>1</sup>

- Influenza Commission Report, 1919

#### **Introduction**

Variouly described as a 'valuable national asset', 'the capital of the country', 'the future of the country and the Empire', 'Empire builders of the future' and 'citizens of tomorrow', white children were celebrated as the stabilising force of the future.<sup>2</sup> It thus followed that the training of the youthful body in infancy, childhood and adolescence gained emphasis in the interwar years. Many women's organisations made youthful training a special interest. The NCW, WCTU, YWCA and Sunlight League interested themselves in state reforms aimed at the physical education of children. At the bureaucratic level, the Health and Education Departments, in the form of the School Medical Service, were central in the monitoring of children's health. The School Hygiene Division of the Health Department, under the leadership of Ada Paterson, and the employer of female medical professionals in the School Medical Service and dental nurses, promoted the production of healthy children for the empire through Health Camps. In Christchurch, in the 1930s, Cora Wilding formed the Sunlight League, a particularly regional variant of the national health camp

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Influenza Epidemic Commission, *AJHR*, H-31, 1919, p.33.

<sup>2</sup> Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood", *History Workshop Journal*, 5, 1978, p.10; *AJHR*, E-1, 1918, p.8; *WR*, 18 September 1939, p.5.

movement launched by School Medical Officer Dr. Elizabeth Gunn. Many of the activities of these groups revolved around the production of a disciplined, moral character, the inculcation of citizenship and civic responsibilities. This chapter explores these activities, highlighting 'fitness' as a eugenic motif of the interwar period engaged in by female government officials and women's organisations.

During the interwar period, the "healthy dynamic body exhibited in energetic service to the nation and people was a pervasive emblem of the times".<sup>3</sup> Eugenics allowed for the celebration of the body and bodies, which at the same time also became a symbol of national weakness, and hence, in need of surveillance. World War One promoted eugenic anxiety about the fitness of the nation's manhood, with the collection of statistics from medical examinations of recruits promoting eugenic focus upon national, maternal and child health. Additionally, the poor statistics generated from these examinations undermined the image of a healthy, virile New Zealand manhood, and necessitated an emphasis on training up fit and healthy citizens from childhood. In short, the eugenic images that surrounded children's bodies in the interwar years influenced the building of a body-centred narrative of raced, gendered and national identities.

### **World War One, 1914-1918: the fragmentation of masculinity**

The impact of the Great War on men's, women's and children's bodies took place in a context of imperialist rhetoric and eugenic anxieties concerning degeneration of the populace. World War One, argues Joanna Bourke, brought a greater level of surveillance upon the bodies of men and women, but particularly children; however, she argues, it is an overstatement to attribute to World War

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Anton Budd, *The Sculpture Machine: Physical Culture and Body Politics in the Age of Empire*, (New York, New York University Press, 1997), p.97

One, the sole contribution of a perceived increase in the medical and professional gaze on bodies.<sup>4</sup> Rather, World War One “did not create the impetus for state surveillance and discipline of the body, it intensified that surveillance, encouraged proliferation of regulatory institutions, and left a legacy that persisted throughout the inter-war years.”<sup>5</sup> That legacy can be viewed through the lens of youth centred movements, health and fitness groups, as well as the introduction of the medical gaze into schools and homes.

Eugenics embodied a celebration of youthfulness. In World War One, youthful nations such as the ‘white settler colonies’, were celebrated not only for their youth but their loyalty.<sup>6</sup> Such imperialist ideas fed war-centred mythology, initially generated by the Boer War, concerning the physique of New Zealand’s fighting forces. Noted for their fitness, height, robustness and health, the troops epitomized the eugenically healthy population and nation. Such self-imagining, argues Keith Sinclair, involved an implicit criticism of the British physique.<sup>7</sup> Similar ideas were generated by the conduct of New Zealand troops in World War One. The education system was to be congratulated, argued the Education Department, for teaching the values of “courage, patriotism and loyalty” displayed by the troops.<sup>8</sup>

By World War One, eugenic anxieties concerning the falling birth rate, and the increasing ‘unfit’ elements in the population, were symbolised by the ‘rejects’ from military conscription. Between November 1916 and November 1918, a total of 135,282 men were examined, of whom 77,900 were rejected, and

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<sup>4</sup> Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men’s Bodies, Britain, and the Great War*, (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1996), p.171.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.171.

<sup>6</sup> See Keith Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart: New Zealand’s Search for National Identity*, (Wellington, Allen and Unwin/Port Nicholson Press, 1986) on the contribution of war to the creation of a national mythology centred initially on the physicality of the troops.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.107.

<sup>8</sup> *AJHR*, E-1, 1918, p.5.

57,382 were accepted, for military service.<sup>9</sup> The editorial of the 1922 *NZMJ* implored the government to address the insufficient funding given to the training of Territorials in the country, arguing that physical training of these men was a national duty, and in the light of exposure of the C2 status of the Dominion's manhood by the medical examination of troops, should not be hindered by finances.<sup>10</sup> Through physical training C1 men, the least fit, could re-emerge as A1, or fit for overseas service, and thus sacrifice for the nation. A *NZMJ* editorial outlined evidence of men sent to a C1 camp; 55 percent of unfit men emerged fit, 43 percent remained unfit and 2 percent were unclassified.<sup>11</sup> In short, physical training offered an avenue for male bodily improvement and thus, if implemented in schools, as suggested in the *NZMJ* editorial, the physical condition of future generations could be controlled.

While the military, in Bourke's terms, classified and ultimately dismembered bodies, physically and symbolically, the military life was also advocated as a crucial site of body reform and physical improvement, where men could be 'made masculine'.<sup>12</sup> Physical drill was made compulsory for children over eight in all New Zealand schools in 1901, followed by the establishment of a Physical Education section of the Education Department in 1913.<sup>13</sup> Preceding this, military drill was made compulsory for all boys aged 12 and over by legislation in 1900, while in 1909 Junior and Senior Cadets were introduced at primary and secondary school level.<sup>14</sup> The extent to which military methods could regenerate the male body is illustrated in the Annual Reports of the Health Department. The 'weak-chested', and 'physically defective', could be improved

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<sup>9</sup> Editorial, 'Territorial Military Training and Physical Efficiency', *NZMJ*, December 1920, p.245.

<sup>10</sup> Editorial, 'Physical Training of Territorials and Senior Cadets', *NZMJ*, June 1922, p.173.

<sup>11</sup> *NZMJ*, December 1929, p.246.

<sup>12</sup> Bourke, p.174.

<sup>13</sup> Sinclair, p.228.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.229.

bodily, it was suggested, through a “course of physical training either by means of classes or by camps.”<sup>15</sup> Educationalists argued that the right type of schooling/training could overcome the poor heredity dealt out to unfortunate and innocent children. Environmental reform, they argued, took into account the “vital relation between education and national strength.”<sup>16</sup>

The preparation of youthful bodies for citizenship within the empire, linked the masculine body with the military body through drill in schools. Physical drill, argues Bourke, was crucial to the reform of juveniles, and allowed for the inculcation of self-control, promoted strength of character and ultimately contributed to wider societal harmony, especially in lessening the numbers of potential degenerates in the school population.<sup>17</sup> Drill, as a reform activity, is illustrated by its use in borstals. A site for the containment and restoration to fitness of youth offenders, physical education in borstals was viewed as integral to these ideals as well as a sign of New Zealand’s humanitarian and progressive policies towards the unfortunate. The Prisons Board stated in 1919 that, “this exercise of consideration and kinder treatment of young offenders will have a very marked and beneficial effect, and that the labour in the open-air, drill, education, music, and gymnastics will very materially assist in the onerous task of uplifting those who have been antisocial”.<sup>18</sup> New Zealand’s version of physical training emphasised children’s need for enjoyment within its practical aims of fitness. The aim of the physical training system was “to secure the careful and well-balanced cultivation of the physical powers of each individual child, and special emphasis is given to the essential importance of a spirit of recreation and enjoyment”.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1919, p.2.

<sup>16</sup> Annual Report of the Education Department, *AJHR*, E-1, 1918, p.3.

<sup>17</sup> Bourke, p.179.

<sup>18</sup> Annual Report of the Prisons Board, *AJHR*, H-20A, 1919, p.4.

<sup>19</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1921, p.30.



The type of physical drill prevalent in New Zealand schools highlights the shifting ideals of fitness in the interwar period, and point to a changing attitude towards war, and the path most conducive to producing healthy citizens. German drill dominated from the late nineteenth century to World War One, and consisted of exercises that utilised dumb-bells, horizontal and parallel bars, rings and the vaulting horse, focusing on the biceps and shoulders of the body.<sup>20</sup> Swedish drill offered an alternative to the more physical centred German drill. The Swedish variety of fitness was characterised by freestanding exercises performed on verbal command in formation, shifting focus to the stomach and to body toning rather than muscle building.<sup>21</sup> In New Zealand, Maori leader Francis Bennett argued for the inclusion of a more indigenous version of drill within schools. Bennett argued the haka could create "physical giants" more effectively than Swedish drill while also producing a physically fit school population.<sup>22</sup> Drawing upon the romanticised Maori warrior image, Bennett cited the regenerative benefits of the haka for children. Like Ettie Rout, Bennett suggested that Native Dance was a pre-European form of eugenics.

The advent of physical culture provided an alternative forum for the interpretation of physical and symbolic masculinity and femininity. The first Physical Culture School in Christchurch was established in a Sydenham gymnasium on the corner of Brougham and Antigua Streets, under the instruction of Charles J. Ward.<sup>23</sup> Tuition was offered in boxing, fencing, Indian Club swinging and gymnastics, utilising the vault, ropes, bars, rings, mats and

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.180.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> 'Hakas for Health', *New Zealand Life*, 1 October 1926, MSZ-0594 (ATL).

<sup>23</sup> Joan Woodward, 'Gymnasium craze 80 years ago had allies in dress reformers', *The Press*, 18/5/1989, p.13. See also Jane Tolerton, *Ettie: A Life of Ettie Rout*, (Auckland, Penguin, 1992). See also Caroline Daley, "Selling Sandow: Modernity and Leisure in Early Twentieth-Century New Zealand", *NZJH*, 34(2), October 2000, pp.241-261.

medicine balls.<sup>24</sup> Physical culturalists were also eugenists, with their columns in *The Press* expressing eugenic paranoia that often quoted the threat of mental degenerates to the race.<sup>25</sup> Internationally, Anna Carden-Coyne places the physical culture movement firmly within the cult of classical heroism inspired by the bodily perfection represented by Greek art and sculpture.<sup>26</sup> Drawing upon the popularity of war generated interest in colonial adventurers, and the hero figure, physical culturalists advocated a heroic figure that was anti-war. This ideology was located within the shape, and physicality, of the body sculptured by the activities of physical culture. A masculinity cultivated towards attractiveness, toning rather than muscularity, and beauty was not fit for the battlefield nor could it compete with modern warfare; instead argues Anna Carden-Coyne, it “formed part of a wider demand for a much bolder masculinity”.<sup>27</sup>

While Carden-Coyne emphasises the appeal of physical culture to men as an avenue to the reconstruction of masculinity, physical culture was also extremely popular among young women. Fred Hornibrook, and his wife Ettie Rout, outlined the benefits of exercise for the potential mother. “Such exercise will not only increase the vitality and develop the muscles of the body, but it will give women a clear skin, bright eyes, a good chest, and a fine carriage”.<sup>28</sup> Hornibrook and Rout were not alone in viewing physical culture as integral to the development of the physically perfect mother. The Sunlight League developed physical culture classes for unemployed girls in the form of Keep Fit Clubs,

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> See *The Press*, 1/3/1923, p.5; *The Press*, 1/6/1905, p.10; *The Press*, 18/5/1905, p.8.

<sup>26</sup> Anna Alexandra Carden-Coyne, “Classical Heroism and Modern Life: Bodybuilding and Masculinity in the Early Twentieth Century”, *Journal of Australian Studies*, 63, 1999, 138-149.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.146.

<sup>28</sup> MSZ-0594 p.47 (ATL).

which consisted of exercises and folk dancing, performed “scantily clad and out in the sunlight and fresh air”.<sup>29</sup>

Likewise, the YWCA also saw the advantages of physical culture classes for young women, emphasising its mental, physical and spiritual benefits. By 1921, the Christchurch branch of the YWCA had engaged Ruth Jarvis as their physical instructor, following a visit by Miss Fisher at the beginning of the year designed to “arouse interest in physical culture”.<sup>30</sup> In 1922, the YWCA’s physical culture clubs had expanded to the extent that, Ruth Jarvis, with the addition of Miss McFarlane and Miss Gray, was one of three instructors.<sup>31</sup> At the Lyttelton YWCA, 100 girls attended clubs each week during 1923, where a programme of physical exercise, “designed to develop strong and healthy and happy girlhood”, included games, dance, drill occupied a prominent place on the YWCA calendar.<sup>32</sup> By 1928, of 9 clubs listed in the Annual Report, five had physical culture as a dominant activity, while another three had physical exercise in the form of tramping, tennis and excursions as their club activity, with physical culture expanding to include not only dance but Swedish drill, folk dancing, ballroom dancing, Greek frieze and posture work.<sup>33</sup> In 1924, the physical culture finishing class of the Christchurch YWCA put on a public display, to “prove to the public that the way to keep strong and healthy can be

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<sup>29</sup> Sunlight League of New Zealand, Annual Report, 1933, p.1, MB 51, Baverstock Papers, 5a, Sunlight League Papers, Correspondence etc., 1935-1945, (MBL).

<sup>30</sup> YWCA, Christchurch Branch Annual Report 1921, p.9, Z Arch 112, Series 3, Box 12, YWCA Annual Reports, c.1887-1980, (CPL).

<sup>31</sup> YWCA, Christchurch Branch Annual Report 1922, p.4, Z Arch 112, Series 3, Box 12, YWCA Annual Reports c.1887-1980, (CPL).

<sup>32</sup> YWCA, Christchurch Branch Annual Report 1923, Z Arch 112, Series 3, Box 11, YWCA Annual Reports c.1887-1980, (CPL).

<sup>33</sup> YWCA, Christchurch Branch Annual Report 1928, pp.1-3, Z Arch 112, Series 3, Box 11, YWCA Annual Reports c.1887-1980, (CPL). Those clubs with physical culture dominating included the Merry’uns, Haeremai Club, Pollyanna Club, Sunshine Club and the Physical Culture class.

delightful and interesting".<sup>34</sup> Here military regimented physical exercise was combined with the aesthetics of physical culture – dance and graceful movement - to reinforce idealised conceptions of femininity, while at the same time addressing the need for girls to participate in the right forms of leisure, with character-building providing the most important element to defining such activity.

### **Plunket and Truby King: 'saving' the 'failing babies'**

While the YWCA trained pre-pubescent and adolescent bodies, the Plunket Society trained children for citizenship from infancy. The Plunket Society, established in 1907, guided by the ideology of Sir Truby King, established itself as the expert infant training institution during the interwar period. King's ideology of a healthy mind and healthy body, was established in 1889 while in charge of the Seacliff Mental Asylum in Dunedin. His experiments on plants and animals confirmed his view that infants needed regularity in their lives. As a eugenicist, Truby King straddled both the environmental and hereditarian aspects of eugenic theory, depending on the group targeted. King supported the sterilisation of the 'unfit' and at the same time advocated domestic science education for girls, and the training of young women in the skills of fit motherhood, to promote a healthier race. Those who were targets of King's environment eugenics were the 'unfit' that had the potential to be 'made fit'. King frequently argued that the cause of national inefficiency, a burning issue of eugenicists, was located in faults of "mothering, rearing, nutrition, and upbringing of children at home and at school", which, argued King, "revealed itself most strikingly in the rejection of 50 per cent and upwards of the young men of all

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<sup>34</sup> YWCA, Christchurch Branch Annual Report 1924, p.8, Z Arch 112, Series 3, Box 11, YWCA Annual Reports c.1887-1980, (CPL).

countries for military service".<sup>35</sup> Associated with the concern over maternal in/efficiency, was a belief in the potential to 'save' babies, seen in the concern over New Zealand's infant mortality rate. In 1921, it was estimated of the 30,000 babies born annually, 5 percent died in the first year and of those who died (1500), nearly 1000 perished in the first month of life.<sup>36</sup> These 'failed babies' served as a symbol of the inadequate training of mothers in the skills of motherhood, thus associating racial survival with homemaking, and served to reinforce King's arguments against the higher education of girls and women.

As director of the Child Welfare Division of the Health Department, King's 'prescriptive ideology'<sup>37</sup> was given institutionalised support. Women's groups also lent their support to an ideology centred on children, and consequently on motherhood, as women's essential vocation. The eugenic needs of the infant, argued the WCTU, included natural feeding, fresh air, suitable clothing, sufficient exercise, quietness, and freedom from excitement, while "there is no age too early to teach the child obedience and self-control".<sup>38</sup> Miss Inglis, Matron of the Wellington St Helen's Hospital, in an address during Baby Week in 1917, drew upon the familiar arguments of war wastage and the subsequent need to rear healthy children, arguing that St Helen's Hospital, trained midwives, and Truby King and the Plunket Society, gave New Zealand an advantage in rearing healthy children, who possessed good manners, good behaviour, good temper, self-control and obedience across all classes.<sup>39</sup>

The 1919 influenza epidemic followed the despair of World War One, and the war's requisite crisis of masculinity. A 1919 Commission of Inquiry into

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<sup>35</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1925, p.30.

<sup>36</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1922, p.23.

<sup>37</sup> Eric Olssen, "Truby King and Plunket Ideology: An Analysis of Prescriptive Ideology", *NZJH*, 15(1), April 1981, 3-23.

<sup>38</sup> *WR*, 18 April 1914, p.3.

<sup>39</sup> Miss Inglis, 'Well Born, Well Bred, Well Fed', *KT*, vol. 11, no. 1, January 1918, p.25.

the response to the crisis found that reaction to it had been slow and disordered, born of an ignorance considered astonishing "in the consideration of the general adaptability and efficiency in domestic work of the colonial woman".<sup>40</sup> The 1919 Influenza Epidemic Commission further expanded on the ways in which feminine ignorance of their hygienic duties were allegedly responsible for the inability of the country's health officials to contain the disease.

It would appear that a large proportion of girls are not receiving in their homes that teaching which would enable them to maintain a well-directed healthy home life. . . . As the nation is built upon the homes of its people, this neglect of teaching both boys and girls the rules necessary for living clean healthy domestic lives must seriously affect our standard of public health.<sup>41</sup>

The education of girls was brought further into the centre of concern about imperial degeneration among the colonies. Recommendations by the Influenza Commission dwelt upon the need for educating girls in domestic science in schools. They urged that,

the educational section of the Health Department should directly concern itself with the education of the public – girls and women particularly – in the principles of hygiene, first aid and home nursing . . .<sup>42</sup>

The views of the Commission, on attempting to educate girls along the same lines as boys, neatly fit into the Truby King ideology. In an address on eugenics to the 1914 Australasian Medical Congress, King argued for a more rational and eugenically desirable system of girls' education. Noting that eugenics meant, not only strict hereditarian theory, but also included environmental reform, King went on to define the ideal education for girls as one that concentrated on training girls for motherhood.<sup>43</sup> The need for maternal efficiency was related to

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<sup>40</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1919, p.10. See also *AJHR*, E-1, 1918, p.6 on the education on girls in domestic science.

<sup>41</sup> *AJHR*, H-31A, 1919, p.32.

<sup>42</sup> *AJHR*, H-31A, 1919, p.33.

<sup>43</sup> *The Press*, 13/2/1914, p.3; the Conference made a resolution following Dr King's address, to appoint a committee to present their opinion to the Minister of Education, stating that "it is in the highest interests of the community that the State should inculcate and bring about as far as feasible an ideal of education for girls which shall invert the present maxim that girls should be

concern over the falling birth rate of the most intellectual classes, or 'fittest' class in society. It was commonly argued that university-educated women were more likely to have small families, or none at all. Nina Barrer's, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency in New Zealand*, included quotes by American eugenicist Charles Davenport, from twenty years earlier, who noted women graduates averaged less than half a daughter each.<sup>44</sup> This argument lent credence to the claim that education for girls should concentrate on domesticity.

In 1929, a correspondent to *The Press* made a forceful argument for eugenic-based education, arguing that "domesticity is becoming hateful to our over-educated females", resulting in, "a vicious curtailment of what should be the finest stock in the world".<sup>45</sup> Women, employed in shops, were straining their "weaker brain power and producing nerves", a situation produced by "too much education of the wrong kind", thus, causing the "depopulation of the land".<sup>46</sup> Inspired by eugenic ideals, the writer argued modernity and education were colliding to produce a society populated with individuals that "Dr. Nature would eradicate", arguing:

Mankind requires a more settled life if he, and more especially "she", is to propagate a healthy race. We have enough sense to practise that rule with our animal stock, and ought to practise the same rule with ourselves. A hectic life is not for animal mothers, nor is it good for our human mothers, and as the nation requires all sorts of people to run it satisfactorily, therefore we should not be foolish as to educate the masses out of their proper sphere.<sup>47</sup>

This emphasis on the need for girls to be properly trained in the domestic needs of the home, and the nation, was not uncritically accepted by women.<sup>48</sup> Domestic

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primarily trained to independence and self-support and that matrimony and motherhood will take care of itself'.

<sup>44</sup> *The Press*, 10/9/1914, p.10 and Nina Barrer, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency in New Zealand*, (Wellington, WDFU, 1934), p.7.

<sup>45</sup> Letter to the Editor, 'Modern Degeneracy', *The Press*, 13/3/1929, p.15.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*; See also *The Press*, 24 January 1914, p.10.

<sup>48</sup> See Erik Olssen "Women, Work and Family: 1880-1926", in Phillida Bunkle and Beryl Hughes (eds), *Women in New Zealand Society*, (Auckland, Allen & Unwin, 1980), 159-183 on

Science had been introduced into secondary schools for girls in 1917. In 1919, the NCW of Christchurch, registered their objections to the introduction of compulsory domestic training for girls in secondary schools, on the grounds that it handicapped girls in vocational opportunities.<sup>49</sup> The attempts at social engineering within girls' education, for eugenic purposes, was not critiqued for its eugenic undertones, but its potential to cement women as financially dependent upon men. At times, health and education issues, when concerning girls, were thus subject to the political agendas of organised women, such as the NCW, illustrated by the remits at the 1919 NCW conference: widows' pensions, women Justices of the Peace, self-supporting farm colonies, old age pensions, women's property rights within marriage and the economic position of women.<sup>50</sup> In combination with a desire to create a eugenic utopia, these remits represented added wishes for a more woman-centred ideal society, or what Mary Louise Pratt terms a 'feminotopia'; episodes that represent idealised worlds of female autonomy and empowerment.<sup>51</sup> After all, it was believed that educated women made better mothers.

### **Recreation and Re-creation: The Education and Health Departments**

The 1920 Health Act followed the 1919 Influenza Report, in reaction to pressure for a more professional and tightly managed response to health crises. Described as "the best Act of its kind in the English language", the new Act divided the Health Department into seven divisions: public hygiene, hospitals,

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protests by women doctors Emily Siedeberg and Agnes Bennett against King's 1914 lecture at the Medical Congress.

<sup>49</sup> NCW Christchurch Branch Meeting, July 29 1919, MB 126, National Council of Women Collection, 5a, Minute Book, NCW (Christchurch Branch), 1917-1922, (MBL).

<sup>50</sup> NCW Christchurch Branch Meeting, 1 October 1919, MB 126, National Council of Women Collection, Minute Book, NCW (Christchurch Branch), 1917-1922, (MBL).

<sup>51</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (London, Routledge, 1992), p.164 and 167.



nursing, school hygiene, dental hygiene, child welfare and Maori hygiene.<sup>52</sup> The Act epitomised the slogan “national health is national wealth”, with children positioned as the symbol of future race regeneration, implying eugenic ideals in the “rearing of children, and the proper development of the young at all ages” at the state level.<sup>53</sup> The 1920 Health Act also arose out of a concern for public health. The re-arrangement of the Department of Health, brought about by the Act, into specialist departments, marked a shift from environmental health protection to an era of emphasis on personal health, which brought with it a heightened interest in maternal and child welfare.<sup>54</sup>

The activities of the Education and Health Department, central sites of the employment of female government officials in the ‘helping services’, were also, through their Annual Reports and educational propaganda, central repositories for the dissemination of eugenic ideology. In 1921, the Annual Report of the Health Department listed the lectures administered for the year, with all concerning some aspect of health and fitness. Fresh air, sunlight, bathing, swimming, rest, sleep, nutrition, regular habits and a concern with recreation amounted to eugenic concern with the birth rate and military unfitness.<sup>55</sup> This association was further strengthened when the term recreation was reinterpreted as “re-creation”, signifying the wider concern with reproduction and associating it with the health of children.<sup>56</sup>

The School Medical Service, established in 1912 under the Education Department and transferred to the School Hygiene Division of the Health Department in 1921, held concerns for physicality, or the ‘right body shape’,

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<sup>52</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1921, p.2.

<sup>53</sup> William Young, ‘The State and Public Health’, *NZMJ*, April 1922, pp.76 and 93

<sup>54</sup> Philippa Mein Smith, *Maternity in Dispute: New Zealand, 1920-1939*, (Wellington, Historical Branch, 1986), p.1.

<sup>55</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1922, p.21.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

expressed within the examinations they instituted upon the bodies of children. Bourke notes that such examinations, undertaken by school medical officers, were an extension of the concerns from World War One, where the shape of the body was crucial to medical examination of recruits, and their subsequent classification into classes of military ideals/rejects, as mentioned in Chapter Two.<sup>57</sup> The statistics generated by the medical inspection of military recruits between 1916-1918, revealed not only the state of unfitness amongst men, but generated widespread eugenic anxieties amongst politicians, academics, the military and socially organised women. Commenting on the work of the School Medical Service, the 1931 editorial of the *NZMJ*, argued that the early detection of physical defect would assist in laying “the foundation for a higher standard of national health”, because children “are the best insurance against old age, their voices help to renew our youth”.<sup>58</sup>

An inspection of school children in 1920 found a level of defect and physical unfitness that reinforced the eugenic fears of current and impending race deterioration. Of the 78,980 children examined, by “those lady members of our profession who were the pioneers of this country in the medical inspection of schools”, 79 percent were found to have a physical or mental defect.<sup>59</sup> The results of the medical inspection generated statements that drew a focus on the body, appealed to the natural advantages of the country, and conveyed an obsession with teeth. The measurement of the body – in height, chest width, and weight – was central to how recruits were classified.<sup>60</sup> A 1911 proposed ‘Eugenic’ survey of New Zealand children, sent to the Eugenics Society of London for comment,

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<sup>57</sup> Bourke, p.172.

<sup>58</sup> Editorial, ‘The Health Department’, *NZMJ*, October 1931, pp.316-317; Dr. Collins suggested, in a speech to the New Zealand Legislative Council, a scheme where every person up to the age of 21 should be medically examined once every year, preferably on their birthday, thus preventing future disease. ‘Welfare of the People’, *NZMJ*, December 1920, pp.205-206.

<sup>59</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1921, pp.5 and 25.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p.172.

falls into this pattern of bodily measurement. The impetus for the survey came from Thomas Valentine, the Director-General of Public Health, at the Hospitals Conference in June 1911.<sup>61</sup> Such inspections, suggested the Eugenics Society, could illuminate social problems with a eugenic basis including the fertility of immigrants, racial elements of the immigrant population, infant mortality, the changing body shape of immigrants and their descendants, and the relationship between hair colour and susceptibility to certain diseases.<sup>62</sup> Measurement of the body included head length and breadth, the cranial index, body height and weight, all of which indicated that physicality and measurement were viewed as indicators of bodily health.<sup>63</sup>

Such concerns with measuring the physical body and using the results as an index of racial health were of equal concern to militarists and the School Medical Service. By the release of a 1926 investigation into the physical growth and mental attainment of New Zealand school children, the improved racial index of health, as indicated by the weight, height and mental capacity of children, was acclaimed by Ada Paterson. New Zealand children were on average, superior in height and weight to those in Britain, while New Zealand born children of New Zealand born parents also claimed superiority.<sup>64</sup> Such results were argued to be influenced by past selective immigration policies, New Zealand's basis in British stock, or in more nationalist terms, the "rapid

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<sup>61</sup> Recommendations of the Research Committee of the Eugenics Education Society Concerning the Proposed 'Eugenic' Survey of New Zealand School Children, p.1, Eugenics Society Records, 1907-1962, MS-Coll-20-2565, (ATL).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, pp.1-4.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p.3, hair colour, hair quality, eye colour, birthplace, family size with spaces "left sufficient for a family of sixteen children", nationality by which meant the "stock from which he comes" and skin colour were also measured. Ibid, pp.5-9.

<sup>64</sup> A.G. Paterson, 'Physical Growth and Mental Attainment: New Zealand School-Children', *AJHR*, H-31, 1927, pp.61 and 63.

approximation to the New Zealand type on the part of their children”, advanced as confirming the resilience and adaptability of the British Race.<sup>65</sup>

Imagining the nation in eugenic terms required a way to influence and mould the minds of children towards empire and patriotism. We have seen the centrality of drill in contributing to ideals of eugenic masculinity and femininity in military terms, but imperial social engineering was also located within school texts. Colin McGeorge’s investigation into the New Zealand *School Journal*, the standard primary school text in New Zealand from 1907, found that the school text employed the concept of race to explain the growth of the empire and New Zealand’s place within it.<sup>66</sup> James Ryan defines this process as ‘imaginative geography’, or the way the British Empire was constructed within the European imagination through a range of cultural texts that include, along with photography, school text books, and wall maps.<sup>67</sup> The Health Department utilised the *School Journal* to educate school children in the virtues of health and fitness, with particular emphasis on the care of teeth. Clean, strong teeth were associated with fit, strong bodies and the *School Journal* articles along with photographs of ‘A fine set of Teeth’ and ‘Holes in the Teeth’ provided evidence of the need for ‘mouth hygiene’.<sup>68</sup> The ‘lady doctors’ of the School Medical Service also distributed departmental pamphlets to parents, instructing them in the need of the state for healthy children. The 1920 Health Department pamphlet, *Suggestions to Parents*, emphasised that, “The Health of Children is of the Greatest National

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p.61; In 1930 a further report on the physical condition and deformities of children was published in the Annual Report of the Health Department. Children were classified as either Slight Deviation; Definite Deviation; Marked Deviation; or Very Marked Deviation. See *AJHR*, H-31, 1930, Part V.

<sup>66</sup> Colin McGeorge, “Race, empire and the Maori in the New Zealand primary school curriculum, 1880-1940”, in J.A. Mangan, (ed), *The imperial curriculum: Racial images and education in the British colonial experience*, (London, Routledge, 1993), p.64.

<sup>67</sup> James Ryan, *Picturing empire: photography and the visualization of the British Empire*, (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1997), p.20.

<sup>68</sup> *School Journal*, September 1920, pp.138-145 and October 1920, pp.154-159.

Importance, and the Parent who brings up a Child Healthy and Virile performs the Greatest Service to the Empire."<sup>69</sup>

Such adulation of the benefits of militarism, was extended to the body politic through a language, including eugenics, informed by military rhetoric and sentiment, supplemented by the adulation of military heroes. Essential to education of children in New Zealand, argued T.B. Strong, were "great stories, the singing of noble songs, and the crowning of heroes", as methods of inculcating the values of Empire and a symbol of racial virtue.<sup>70</sup> Juvenile literature, argues MacKenzie, can be read within the framework of the colonial adventure, making the appeal to masculinity.<sup>71</sup> The *School Journal* included articles on Lord Kitchener, the classical military hero, adventure stories such as Robinson Crusoe, Empire Day and imagined conversations between mother and child on soldiers and war.<sup>72</sup> Edith Hart's 1934 investigation into youth club membership in Christchurch included clubs attached to a theatre. She was surprised at the popularity of the Pop-Eye Club, to which 1500 children belonged.<sup>73</sup> Pop-Eye, a children's character in juvenile and the popular media, while he does not fit into the classical hero mould, is a character who explores hyper-masculinity, healthy physicality and nutrition; concerns popular among educationalists, militarists and eugenisists. Bourke also argues that military bodies were acclaimed within the civilian context as classical heroes, especially in the way the military system of fitness and healthy masculinity was adopted within

<sup>69</sup> New Zealand Health Department, *Suggestions to Parents*, MB 183, Cora Wilding Papers, 1.20, Nutrition, 1930s-1940s, (MBL).

<sup>70</sup> T.B. Strong, 'The Inculcation of Patriotism', *New Zealand Education Gazette*, November 1921, p.3.

<sup>71</sup> John Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The manipulation of British public opinion, 1880-1960*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1984).

<sup>72</sup> 'The Child's Question', *School Journal*, June 1918, pp.65-66; ' Empire Day', *School Journal*, June 1918, pp.67-70; 'Kitchener', *School Journal*, June 1918, pp.79-80; 'Robinson Crusoe', *School Journal*, April 1919, pp.21-26.

<sup>73</sup> Edith Hart, "The organised activities of Christchurch children outside the school", (MA, University of New Zealand, 1934), p.70.

the circles of the medical profession, politicians and academics.<sup>74</sup> In terms of children's bodies, the need to ensure a healthful future generation centred upon the schools, the institution where children were more easily classified and examined.

Physical training was complemented by other school activities designed to inculcate citizenship, cleanliness and eugenic awareness. Tooth-brush drill, where classes of children were required to clean their teeth in regimented fashion, the organised school lunch, "an excellent opportunity for training in citizenship", and intended to promote the surveillance of eating habits; along with school cleaning, intended to cultivate "communal service and responsibility", promoted environmental hygiene rules among children, hoping to transplant these virtues into the home.<sup>75</sup> In short, the need for an organised school lunch contributed to a wider commentary on the vices of modernity. The modern fashion for sensation-seeking and hurriedness was viewed as incapable of contributing to a eugenic utopia; thus healthiness was associated not with modernity, but a nostalgic past. This is a contradictory position, since eugenics and eugenicists perceived themselves to be progressive reformers.

Thus, eugenic concerns were extended beyond improving the bodies of children, to the creation of hygienic environments in which children were contained. Health officials argued:

When providing school-buildings much more consideration should be given to correct lighting and better ventilation, and to the "open-air principle", for which the climate of the Dominion is so admirably adapted.<sup>76</sup>

Official concerns with the environment of children were matched by those of the National Council of Women. In an address on 'The School and the Home' to the Christchurch Branch of the NCW, a Miss Inkpen laid emphasis on the need for

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<sup>74</sup> Bourke, p.175.

<sup>75</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1921, p.30.

<sup>76</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1922, p.24.

clean, hygienic conditions in schools.<sup>77</sup> Likewise, the WCTU defined eugenic concerns to include provision of playgrounds in the cities, cleanliness and sanitation, artistic and healthful buildings, education of the young, open-air buildings, hygienic surroundings, bathing facilities, and efficient teaching.<sup>78</sup> Such activities were intended as forms of treatment, contributing to the eugenic solution of physically, morally and mentally defective bodies, and were supported by the NCW because, it was believed that only through the presence of women members in parliament would better provision be made for the health and cleanliness of school children.<sup>79</sup> Thus, the feminist objective of women's political presence at the highest echelons was harnessed to a eugenic purpose. In short, the racial dimensions of hygiene were monitored by the School Medical Service, dental nurses, and the national health camp movement at a personal level, while the school environment itself came under scrutiny for its architectural cleanliness.

In 1924, Dr. Ada Paterson penned her first report as the Director of the Division of School Hygiene. Her report reiterated her investigation into child welfare in Britain and America of the year before where she warned of the effects of allowing the state to take over the responsibilities of parents. Self-responsibility rather than welfare dependency was required for the nation to prosper.<sup>80</sup> Children required, argued Ada Paterson, "education that will fit them to be self-supporting in later life".<sup>81</sup> The intention of Physical Fitness Weeks,<sup>82</sup>

<sup>77</sup> NCW Christchurch Branch Meeting, February 24 1919, MB 126, National Council of Women Collection, 5a, Minute Book, NCW (Christchurch Branch), 1917-May 1922, (MBL).

<sup>78</sup> *WR*, 18 April 1914, p.2.

<sup>79</sup> NCW Annual Conference, 1919, NCW Collection, MS-Papers-1371-07, (ATL).

<sup>80</sup> Dr. A.G. Paterson, 'Aspects of Child-Welfare Work in Britain and America', Appendix B, *AJHR*, H-31, 1923, p.50.

<sup>81</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1924, p.36.

<sup>82</sup> A Physical Fitness Week was held throughout the country in 1938 to encourage children to participate in healthy outdoor activity, *AJHR*, H-31, 1939, p.45; Sponsored by the National Council of Physical Welfare and Recreation, Physical Fitness Week included Health Parades, Clothing for Health Demonstrations, Modern Cooking Demonstrations, Food for Health

the creation of the National Council of Physical Welfare and Recreation in 1937,<sup>83</sup> physical drill in schools, and the promotion of school hygiene, was an investment in children as the eugenic future, in the form of self-controlled, responsible and self-sufficient citizens, and to implement a view of childhood as a period of leisure. However, it was a controlled leisure, as reflected in the activities and growth of youth based groups in the interwar period.

### **Race, Gender and Nature: Cora Wilding and the Sunlight League**

The conjunction of imperialism and feminism brought forward new definitions of masculinity and femininity. Vron Ware argues that, the "Empire provided both a physical and ideological space in which the different meanings of femininity could be explored or contested."<sup>84</sup> The colonising process, so integral to imperial expansion, involved implicit ideas about race and racial superiority and a movement towards inculcating the ideals of empire among youth centred groups. The imperialist framework generally encompassed eugenics in the argument that both races and classes could be viewed in evolutionary terms. Moreover, issues of patriotism, nation and race were transplanted to the youth groups of the interwar years, with imperialist ideology and evolutionary eugenic theory, providing the context for girls to be viewed as potential mothers and saviours of the race. The 1936 Annual Report of the Health Department signaled that official hope for future regeneration centred upon the youth movement. It was suggested that modernity, in the form of the car, cinema and urbanisation was undermining racial survival, but the youth movement, "now

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Demonstrations and a Swimming Carnival, as well as having its own fitness theme song, *New Zealand Education Gazette*, 1 February 1939, p.6. For an article that addresses the difference between responsible, productive leisure and leisure that leads to degeneration see Editorial, 'The Consequences of Leisure', *NZMJ*, June 1936, pp.143-144.

<sup>83</sup> See *AJHR*, H-31, 1938, p.27.

<sup>84</sup> Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History*, (London, Verso, 1992), p.120.



manifesting itself with enthusiasm for tramping, mountaineering, & c., is a hopeful sign, and merits generous encouragement."<sup>85</sup>

The Sunlight League was one of many youth centred groups established within the interwar year period. Other youth groups designed for young girls and women developed during the period of this thesis include the Brownies, Girl Guides, Ranger Guides and the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts in 1923 along with The Girls' Brigade in 1928.<sup>86</sup> The YWCA established the Girl Citizen Movement and Baden-Powell's Girl Peace Scouts were formed in 1908. Sandra Coney argues that within a period of increasing change such youth groups functioned as model communities, promoting ideals of citizenship, co-operation and social responsibility.<sup>87</sup>

The Sunlight League was formed in Christchurch in 1931 by Cora Wilding, the sister of tennis player Anthony Wilding, who was "known for his magnificent physique", and thus, was deemed the perfect example of colonial manhood.<sup>88</sup> In a letter to Ada Paterson, Cora described the aims of the League as "to try & assist in the building of a stronger & healthier race", an aim that was incorporated into the League's publications.<sup>89</sup> The League explicitly endorsed the eugenic ideal, including in its objectives the need to educate people "in the knowledge of the laws of heredity, the importance of civic worth and racial value, and by the study of eugenics to exchange racial deterioration for racial improvement".<sup>90</sup> Christchurch notables, including Dr. Mary Barkas, Dr. Bevan-

<sup>85</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1936, p.28.

<sup>86</sup> Anne Else, *Women Together: A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand*, (Wellington, Historical Branch/Daphne Brassell Associates, 1993), p.573.

<sup>87</sup> Sandra Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine*, (Auckland, Viking, 1993), p.136.

<sup>88</sup> Helen Walter, "Wilding, Anthony Frederick 1883-1915", *DNZB*, Volume Three, 1901-1920, p.566.

<sup>89</sup> Letter to Ada Paterson from Cora Wilding, 8 February 1931, Sunlight Society, Christchurch, 1931-36, H 1 B.11 35/95, (NA).

<sup>90</sup> 'Sunlight League of New Zealand', n.d., ARC1989.124, Wilding Family Papers, Sunlight League Correspondence, 1930s-1947, Box 39, Folder 182, Items 155-173, (CM).

Brown, Dr. Elizabeth Fitzgerald, and Professor Shelley acted as technical advisors, while Lord and Lady Bledisloe acted as patron and patroness.<sup>91</sup> With such prominent citizens involved, the League emerged within the boundaries of the classic pattern of harnessing status and patronage of prominent individuals to an organisation. Membership, which in its makeup was similar to those attracted to the NZEES, reveals a sanctioning from Christchurch's elite academics and doctors, in particular female medical professionals, of the eugenic aims of the organisation.

Taking its lead from School Medical Officer Dr. Elizabeth Gunn's health camps, the League drew upon a variety of international influences.<sup>92</sup> Cora's travels in Switzerland and England allowed her to be exposed to the establishment of health based societies and practices in these centres. Most important to the history of the Sunlight League is the work of Dr. Rollier in Switzerland on heliotherapy and eugenicist, educationalist and dress reformer, Caleb Saleeby in England who believed, states Bourke, that: "Sunbathing would regenerate the 'white' race".<sup>93</sup> Cora's version of the Sunlight League drew upon the parent organisation in England, established by Dr. Caleb Saleeby, as well as the New Health Society in England founded by Sir Arbuthnot Lane, an organisation which drew a link between poor diet and ill health.<sup>94</sup> The activities of the Sunlight League also drew upon local concerns in New Zealand such as teeth, posture, and diet.

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<sup>91</sup> 'Sunlight League of New Zealand', n.d., Z Arch 23, Sunlight League Papers, Talks, Statements, etc., c.1935, Folder 2, (CPL).

<sup>92</sup> On the national health camp movement see Margaret Tennant, *Children's health, the nation's wealth: a history of children's health camps*, (Wellington, Historical Branch, 1991).

<sup>93</sup> Bourke, p.204.

<sup>94</sup> S.K. Wilson, "The aims and ideology of Cora Wilding and the Sunlight League, 1930-36", (MA long essay, University of Canterbury, 1980), p.5.

The health camp, run exclusively for girls, were a central aspect of the Sunlight League's activities. However, these camps did not pass without comment. I.C. MacIntyre, an official of the Cashmere Sanatorium, argued that the exclusion of boys from League health camps was detrimental to them, particularly as boys were a more 'delicate sex', were just as important to the future of the nation, while it was 'nonsense' to view girls as more deserving simply because "they are going to be mothers of the future".<sup>95</sup> Cora, however, was adamant that it was the fitness of girls that was central for race improvement, as they would marry, have children and pass on the habits they had acquired at camp onto future generations, thus ensuring racial survival. The camping ideal "increased health, mental and moral, as well as physical" and was an ideal method of 'building body and character'.<sup>96</sup> This was emphasised when it was stated that, only those children "capable of becoming future good citizens" were selected to attend Sunlight League health camps.<sup>97</sup>

Camping and nature study were central activities of urban-based youth groups such as the Sunlight League, YWCA, Peace Scouts and Girl Guides. Each camp elected a best citizen, held a League of Nations birthday party, held picnics, encouraged outdoors life, knowledge of the environment and appreciation of beauty.<sup>98</sup> The activities of the League Camps provided for healthy exercise in the outdoors. Even the plays and songs illustrated eugenic prescriptive ideology. A play, called an exercise game, acted out by children in

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<sup>95</sup> Letter to the editor, 'Health Camps for Boys', 25/10/1935, MB 51, Baverstock Papers, 5a, Sunlight League Papers, Correspondence etc., 1935-1945, (MBL).

<sup>96</sup> 'Camps for Children', *The Press*, 9/5/1931, ARC1989.124, Wilding Family Papers, Press Cuttings, Folder 183, Item 174, (CM).

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, p.3; no mentally deficient children were admitted to attend the camps. The League was assisted by the School Medical Service in selecting the most worthy for the camps, W.S. Baverstock Manuscript, 'General Notes on Sunlight League Camps', MB 51, Baverstock Papers, 5a, Sunlight League Papers, Correspondence etc., 1935-1945, (MBL).

<sup>98</sup> Sunlight League of New Zealand, Annual Report, 1936, p.3, MB 51, Baverstock Papers, 5a, Sunlight League Papers, Correspondence etc., 1935-1945, (MBL).

the 1933-34 Health Camps is illustrative. Centred on a toyshop, the children acted out the parts of toys, each having their own benefits for health and promoting exercise. Characters included Bouncing Balls which promoted posture and corrective for flat-foot; Rabbits, Puppy Dogs, Kangaroo, Teddy Bear and Jack Rabbit were characters whose antics in the drama promoted a 'flexible spine, and strengthens abdominal muscles'.<sup>99</sup> The stretching of all joints in the body was promoted in the character of Jack-in-the-Boxes while the Dolls corrected poor posture and doubled as an important flat-foot exercise.<sup>100</sup> James Ryan argues that the colonial hunter was a popular icon of imperial propaganda. The pioneering expeditions of this 'hero of Empire', states Ryan, are mimicked by the above youth groups, contributing to a process of reinforcement of desired qualities within children and the empire.<sup>101</sup> These girls became symbolic imperial travellers, exploring the social spaces within the colonial landscape, with a focus on being in the outdoors as a form of contribution to the regeneration of the race. Girl-centred youth groups, with their emphasis on domesticity, were designed, through their outdoor activities, to create the ideal female citizens.<sup>102</sup> Activities in the outdoors were couched in a frontier ideology, which included an idealisation of pioneering life, hatred of industrialisation, and lauded the pioneering woman as a symbol of ideal womanhood.<sup>103</sup>

The representative move towards camping by youth groups illustrates, argues Vron Ware, an attempt not only to 'save' the race but also to 'save nature' for 'our children'.<sup>104</sup> The NCW's support of the Christchurch City Council's drive to provide playgrounds for children "in the more thickly populated areas"

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<sup>99</sup> MB183, Cora Wilding Papers, 1.15, Play and verses for camps, (MBL).

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ryan, p.100.

<sup>102</sup> Diana McCurdy, "Feminine Identity in New Zealand: The Girl Peace Scout Movement, 1908-1925", (MA, University of Canterbury, 2000), p.73.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., pp.81-82

<sup>104</sup> Ware, p.xi.

of the city attempted to naturalise an environment seen as unhealthy and artificial.<sup>105</sup> Similarly, Cora's involvement in establishing the Youth Hostel Association network in New Zealand was, "all part of the one great essential movement to find a means of counteracting the devitalising effect of our modern urbanisation".<sup>106</sup> This movement towards the 'natural' was taking place in a period of rapid social change. In New Zealand, towns were slowly turning into cities as more of the population moved from the country to the urban areas. Urbanisation, argues Olssen, was the most striking demographic change to take place in early twentieth century New Zealand.<sup>107</sup> In 1896, over one quarter of the population lived in the four main cities, and by 1926, the proportion living in cities had increased to a third of the population.<sup>108</sup> Voluntary organisations, such as the Sunlight League, stepped in and took over organising for national health under rapidly changing social conditions. New Zealand's youthfulness, rural nature of settlement and climate negated the emergence of these problems. Nevertheless, youth groups, modeled on a philosophy not indigenous to this country, utilised the concerns of industrial growth and its consequent fears of racial degeneration, to build up a membership base.

Many of the recruits of the Sunlight League were urban centred. At the 1936 Kaikoura Sunlight League Health Camp, all 32 girls lived in suburban Christchurch.<sup>109</sup> The recruitment of these girls and boys was related to the move against urbanisation as well as the need to control their leisure hours outside of

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<sup>105</sup> NCW Christchurch Branch Meeting, 26 March 1923, MB 126, National Council of Women Collection, 5a, NCW (Christchurch Branch) Minute Book, 1917-1922, (MBL).

<sup>106</sup> 'Tramping for Health', *The Press*, 17/5/1934, MB 51, Baverstock Papers, 5a, Sunlight League Papers, Correspondence etc., 1935-1945, (MBL).

<sup>107</sup> Erik Olssen, "Towards a New Society", in G.W.Rice (ed), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, (Auckland, Oxford University Press, 1995 edition), p.258.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> 'Kaikoura Health Camp Log Book', MB 183, Cora Wilding Papers, 1.13, Health Camp log books, 1930s, (MBL), the girls were from the following suburbs: Sydenham (7), Waltham (4), Woolston (4), Phillipstown (4), Linwood (2), St Albans (2), Richmond (1), Beckenham (1), North Brighton (1), Hornby (1), Spreydon (1), Tuam Street (1) and Somerfield (1). (Ibid).

the school. A 1934 thesis by Edith Hart that surveyed by questionnaire 450 Christchurch primary school children on their membership of youth clubs in the city, found on investigation of the clubs that they claimed to be members who mostly “concern themselves with teaching the wide use of leisure”.<sup>110</sup> Hart made it clear that all the youth based groups explored in her thesis were linked by their own ideas of what constituted a good citizen. All clubs displayed similar characteristics, those of adult leadership and the ideal of “developing the child into a good citizen both of his own community and the world”.<sup>111</sup>

The appeal to nature, seen in children’s health camps, included arguments about clothing and nudity. Clothes, argues Bourke, were necessary to hide physical defects, making them invisible and less open to scrutiny and assisted in the attempt to “improve imaginings of the body”.<sup>112</sup> Truby King, quoting John Locke, in his 1925 Child Welfare report, placed emphasis on the need for girls to obtain the desired insignia of a brown body. John Locke, and therefore Truby King, argued

schoolgirls needed to have their skins browned and their bodies hardened by exposure, outing, and exercise as much as their brothers, and that if this were so we should have far less of “pale faces and stinking breath” among our women.<sup>113</sup>

The naked body signified the attempt to return to nature and to reverse the trappings of civilisation, while styles of clothing were considered to represent the dysgenic effects of civilisation upon the body politic. Similarly, the Education and Health Department suggested that sunbathing, without the restriction of clothing, would provide children with the tanned bodies that could ensure their eugenic future. The emphasis on the eugenic benefits of the sun led to a focus on sunbathing and a promotion of childhood leisure. The tanned body was a

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<sup>110</sup> Hart, p.10.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>112</sup> Bourke, p.206.

<sup>113</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1925, p.30.

'desirable insignia'<sup>114</sup>, illustrating a shift from the pale to brown body as healthy, and invested with the status of leisure, social desirability, attractiveness, beauty, and glamour, signifying it as a eugenic fantasy of imperial desire. The utilisation of 'native' models for race revival contradicts the eugenicist claim of modernity in their rhetoric. Nowhere is this more apparent in Cora Wilding's borrowings from Maori tradition and culture.

The Sunlight League health camps were important for their promotion of eugenic racial health, and were influenced by Maori custom and tradition. The Sunlight League's emblem was the Maui myth centred on the capture of the sun. In the Maori version of, what is a popular children's story, the sun revolved too quickly around the earth, leaving very little time to invest in work and leisure. The sun had to be captured to slow it down, creating the 24-hour day. Cora's version, like Ettie Rout's, was an appropriation of the idea of capturing the sun for a health-giving purpose. This version had the sun becoming lazy, hiding underground, thus negating the health-giving qualities of sunlight, causing the health of the people to suffer in the form of a decreased food supply and physical deterioration.<sup>115</sup> Maui's capture of the sun subsequently brought the sun out of the dark and restored the health of the people. In a lecture to the Parents' National Education Union, Cora Wilding spoke of the value of Greek and Maori legends, "with their racial ideals of fine physique and health", as tools for instilling in children ideals of health and fitness.<sup>116</sup> Like the Education Department's use of the *School Journal* to inculcate civic and imperial responsibility, Cora utilised Maori heroes, rather than military men, in her own construction of Maori myth, to assert a uniquely colonial avenue to racial revival.

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<sup>114</sup> Bourke, p.208.

<sup>115</sup> 'The Story of the Emblem of the Sunlight League', ARC1989.124, Wilding Family Papers, Press Cuttings, Folder 183, Item 174, (CM).

<sup>116</sup> 'Sunlight as a Vital Factor in the Prevention and Cure of Disease', ARC1989.124, Wilding Family Papers, Press Cuttings, Folder 183, Item 174, (CM).

At the level of health camp activities, Maoriness was included in the naming of groups. The naming took the form of the most simplistic and easily appropriated Maori words such as *kia ora*, names of trees, such as *kowhai*, and the characters in Maori tradition, usually Maui. Maori traditions were also appropriated and melded with bible stories. A play, *Maui and the Wave Children*, written by Cora Wilding, drew upon conventional Maori emblems and the story of Moses. Maui, portrayed by the smallest child in the camp, washes up on the shore after a storm.<sup>117</sup> Old Tamati and Tamara, his wife, ponder over what to do with the child. The wave children, who had been his guardians, explain his early history: "His mother had abandoned him. She was ashamed of having such a weakling, for she only wished to have strong, healthy children".<sup>118</sup> However, the wave children explained, that such a child need never have been abandoned, he had the potential to be saved (made fit) through good motherhood: "we determined to make him strong. We carried him off to our home in the sea. We made a beautiful little cradle of seaweed, which we bound with strong ropes of kelp to the rocks of our submarine island. And we fed him with pipis, oysters and seafood, containing iodine and phosphorus. Each day he grew stronger and stronger".<sup>119</sup> Like *Ettie Rout*, embellishment of Maori traditions and legends served the empire by outlining the eugenic potential of the white race.

The process of indigenising eugenic identities is also visible in children's dramatics. In 1934, Edith Hart produced a master's thesis on the organised activities of Christchurch children outside the school. Hart deplored the small number of groups who enabled their members to put on theatrics and dramas. The costuming of children, or encouragement of "Make-believe", was at the root of Cub and Brownie technique; used as a way of imagining the nation in racial

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<sup>117</sup> MB183, Cora Wilding Papers, 1.15, Plays, verses etc for camp, (MBL).

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*



terms.<sup>120</sup> Sunlight League camp activities, especially plays, contribute to this process of self-imagining. Through the use of Maori motifs, within a eugenic-inspired youth group, Cora Wilding was attempting to sympathise with Maori, and to engage with her colonial identity, in way that allowed her to produce a colonial eugenics distinctive from the model of an overseas movement.

The display of Maori culture and motifs by Cora Wilding are what Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin refer to as a process of not only naturalising the indigenous but also placing Maori at the centre of a European process of nostalgia.<sup>121</sup> They argue that the process of nostalgia equates to a desire for a more "simple, pure, idyllic state of the natural", that was juxtaposed against the degeneracy of an increasingly urban society, subsequently generating images of other cultures, such as the romanticised Maori and Polynesian native, as a failure of European society to retain their natural innocence.<sup>122</sup> Imagining other cultures in these terms, were usually reserved for those groups characterised by their subordinate status. For the Sunlight League, the Spartans were imagined in terms of eugenic perfection that failed because of their high civilisation, and as such, served as the model for what would happen if white societies failed to retain their natural innocence. Ultimately, the idealised stereotypes of both native and Spartan cultures created images "that serve primarily to re-define the European."<sup>123</sup>

Every year, the Sunlight League held a Garden Party for its members, doubling as a social occasion and an extension of Sunlight League activities. Invitations were sent, with the party often being held at the estate of Cora's parents or in the grounds of a wealthy League member. Often attended by the

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<sup>120</sup> Hart, p.36.

<sup>121</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, (London, Routledge, 1998), p.210.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

elite of Christchurch, they also afforded an opportunity to represent Cora's colonial eugenics to those imperial 'notables' who also attended. The 1936 Annual Garden Party was held at "Thorrington", and was attended by Lady Victoria Braithwaite, formerly Lady Plunket, who was the guest of honour and the audience to the League's version of eugenic health, which "aimed at raising the standard of health in the Dominion and at making the New Zealanders a strong and virile race."<sup>124</sup> The investing of nature with health saving benefits was not exclusive to children. In the form of garden parties, League members were subject to Cora's ideals of eugenic health along with the presence of the League's version of Native Dance – the Maori poi dance performed by 'native women' in 'native dress' (Illustration 4). These garden parties can be viewed as a drama with bodily display at its centre, and contributed, like other Sunlight League activities, to a colonial eugenics in Christchurch.

Another popular aspect of the promotion of Sunlight League ideals, were the talks on 3YA every third Monday. The Health Department appropriated the League's use of radio as a tool of health promotion, deciding to give a series of weekly health talks, subjects including, 'Building Strong Children', 'The Correct Diet', 'The Pre-School Child', 'Nervous Children', 'Sunlight' and 'Health Camps'.<sup>125</sup> Other activities embodying League propaganda included, the Annual Garden Party, Tennis Tournament, Keep Fit Club, speeches to the Plunket Society, the Women's Institute, the Women's Division of the Farmers Union and the Girl Guides, and publications on sunbathing, smoke abatement, Dental A1 certificates, and cards containing the radio programme on one side and rules of

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<sup>124</sup> Newspaper clipping, 'A Great Success', MB 51, Baverstock Papers, 5a, Cuttings, Box 1, (MBL).

<sup>125</sup> Letter to Cora Wilding from Ada Paterson dated 27/6/1931, Sunlight Society, Christchurch, 1931-36, H I B.11 35/95 (NA).



Illustration 4. 'Maori girls' demonstrating a poi dance at Sunlight League Garden Party, 1936.

Source: *The Press*, 2 March 1936, p.20.

mental health on the other.<sup>126</sup> Also central to the dispersal of League propaganda was the assistance of agencies such as the School Medical Service, who selected children for League camps, and the Education Department who advertised the League's Dental A1 Plans in the *Education Gazette*.<sup>127</sup> The Youth Hostel Association, the Plunket Society, and the Open-Air Schools League were agencies with similar ideals and aims. The League was also affiliated with the NCW, the London Eugenics Education Society, the National Smoke Abatement Society and the People's League of Health, receiving its literature, and contributing articles to health society journals in England.<sup>128</sup>

Unlike many of the mass youth movements of the interwar period, the Sunlight League was not uniformed or overtly militaristic in tone. Instead, fitness and racial health was associated with peace, as "members realised that only if children were strong and healthy would they be able to take their part in the world as good citizens".<sup>129</sup> The yearly anniversary of the formation of the League of Nations was celebrated by children attending the Sunlight League health camps.<sup>130</sup> Just as physical culture and the Health and Beauty Movement promoted new styles of femininity outside the military framework, youth groups like the Sunlight League moved beyond associating health, fitness and femininity with war.<sup>131</sup> The focus on the League of Nations illustrated the Sunlight League's

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<sup>126</sup> Sunlight League of New Zealand, Third Annual Report, 1934, p.3, MB 51, Baverstock Papers, 5a, Sunlight League, 1935-1945, (MBL); the League were also requested to speak at Selwyn House School, Home Economics Annual Meeting, League of Women, Business and Professional Women's Club, YWCA and the Home Service Association, Sunlight League of New Zealand, Annual Report, 1936, MB 51, Baverstock Papers, 5a, Sunlight League Papers, Correspondence etc., 1935-1945, (MBL).

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, p.1.

<sup>128</sup> Sunlight League of New Zealand, Annual Report, 1936, p.5, MB 51, Baverstock Papers, 5a, Sunlight League Papers, Correspondence etc., 1935-1945, (MBL).

<sup>129</sup> 'League of Nations Union', *The Press*, 12/1/1939, MB 51, Baverstock Papers, 5a, Cuttings, (MBL).

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Jill Julius Matthews argues for this shift within the Health and Beauty Movement in "They had Such a Lot of Fun: The Women's League of Health and Beauty Between the Wars", *History Workshop Journal*, 30, 1990, pp.22-54.

symbolic movement towards peace as eugenic and war as dysgenic. Whole, fit, tanned and healthy female bodies were the concern of the Sunlight League; something war did not do, in fact it dis-membered them.

### **Conclusion**

The writings and activities of Cora Wilding, Ettie Rout, and female professionals such as Ada Paterson on the health of children stand as embodied representations of eugenic concerns. These women can be viewed as 'social explorers', epitomising the role of the colonial adventurer, who 'constructed fictitious narratives' through the medium of school texts, camping, and the appropriation of Maori motifs and language.<sup>132</sup> Cora Wilding's use of pageant's and plays with children as its central actors constitutes an embodiment of eugenic, race and gender ideology. As social explorers, women positioned themselves within the imperial, racial, and gendered rhetoric of eugenics, one that focused on the need for healthy children to protect the empire.

Youth groups such as the Sunlight League were important tools of imperial nationalism and health practices. Not only did such groups represent the style of colonial eugenics in New Zealand, with the emphasis on engaging with their own versions of Maoriness, they also acted as models for state based health practices. The Sunlight League provided the lead in the use of radio health talks on the benefits of sunlight while also appropriating official concerns, such as teeth, into its distinctive style of colonial eugenics. The styles of femininity evoked, the emphasis on domesticity, duty and sacrifice and the evocation of peace as an essential element of girls and women's biological makeup, were

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<sup>132</sup> The idea of 'social explorers' as constructors of fictitious narratives derives from James Ryan, *Picturing Empire*, pp.175-177, who views photography and photographers of the imperial era in these terms.

further outlined in the imperial need of women who were financially dependent upon men. Eugenic images of motherhood took on this requirement.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### VISIONS OF THE 'WHITE' OTHER: THE CONSTRUCTION OF SEXUAL THREATS

Women from the very fact of their maternal functions may either themselves become the resuscitating and repairing element in the race, or else may provide many of the elements of deterioration which are so greatly to be dreaded.<sup>1</sup>

- Isabel Howlett, NCW and WCTU, 1924 Inquiry.

#### **Introduction**

Literature by scholars of white women and imperialism has introduced women as agents of an imperial ideal. Arguments suggest that as maternal citizens, women were able to position themselves as the caretakers of social purity.<sup>2</sup> However, such positioning was tempered by the recognition of the ambiguous place of women in the empire, as seen in the above quote from Isabel Howlett to the 1924 Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders in New Zealand. While women represented the eugenic ideal of womanhood as 'mothers of the race' and 'breeders for the empire', the failure to epitomise these ideals resulted in their blame for racial deterioration. Upon motherhood rested the future of the empire and the construction of sexual deviancy.

Mentally deficient mothers and the sexually prominent girl became the target of socially organised women, while the claims of women to political citizenship rested upon maternalism in the form of physical motherhood in the

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<sup>1</sup> Evidence of Miss Howlett, representing the NCW and WCTU, to the 1924 Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, 1924, p.629, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>2</sup> See Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood", *History Workshop Journal*, 5, 1978, 9-65; Margaret Jolly, "Colonizing women: The maternal body and empire", in S. Curnow (ed), *Feminism and the Politics of Difference*, (New South Wales, Allen and Unwin, 1993), 103-127; Margaret Strobel, "Gender and Race in the Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century British Empire", in Renate Bridenthal, Claudia Koonz, Susan Stuard (eds), *Women in European History*, (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 375-394.

individual white woman, and symbolically, in claims to racial and social motherhood. This chapter explores the participation of women as agents of eugenic discourse, not only for other women, but also for men. Women viewed as neither healthy, nor eugenically desirable, were commonly labelled as feeble-minded or hypersexual, introducing a discourse on what Ruth Frankenburg calls the 'white Other'; the demonstration of normality by portraying the white Other as different.<sup>3</sup> Concern over the sexual activities of 'mentally defective' and 'feeble-minded' women included anxiety over the stresses of adolescence, as well as the popular image that feeble-minded women were the progenitors of feeble-minded children. In view of the concern over the differential birth rate and venereal disease, feeble-minded women were constructed as targets of eugenic policies of control and containment.

Feeble-minded women, and the male sexual offender, serve to highlight the contradictory position of women in eugenics. Colonial feminism had an enduring concern with male sexual behaviour. Male sexual offenders embodied a threat to the eugenically desirable family. Women's groups and professional women used eugenics to highlight, not only the threat of hypersexual male sexuality to children, but imposed negative eugenic identities upon women of a different social standing. Thus, the statement of the NCW in 1931 that, "women themselves are taking a more tolerant view of their sisters", is regarded as problematic.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Nicole Hahn Rafter, *Creating Born Criminals*, (Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1997), p.50; Ruth Frankenburg, *White women, race matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> President's Address, Report of the Tenth Conference of the NCW, 1931, p.10, MS-Papers-1376-03 (ATL).



### Eugenic Motherhood and the Cult of Domesticity

Women were, argued the NCW, “the builders of a nation”, they set “the standard of the race”, stated the WCTU and were the “state’s greatest asset” suggested Nina Barrer.<sup>5</sup> The moral index of the nation could be measured by the position of mothers and the home in society. The “tone of its women” made a country “great and stable”, and good mothers were considered to be a necessary element of this process of nation-building.<sup>6</sup> A cluster of women’s organisations established in the interwar years had motherhood as their organising principle. For example, the League of Mothers, established in 1926, “aims at doing for the lives and characters of the children what the Plunket Society does for its bodies”, remembering that “the foundations of national glory are laid in the homes of the people”.<sup>7</sup> The Mothers’ Help Scheme (1919), the Home Service Association (1920), the Association of Home Science Alumnae of New Zealand (1921), the Country Women’s Institutes (1921), the NZMWA (1921), the WDFU (1925), along with the League of Mothers in 1926, were women’s organisations formed in a period of increased focus on the importance of motherhood to the racial, and imperial future, of the country, and that had motherhood and domesticity as key organising principles of their social activities.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Clipping, MB 126, NCW (Christchurch Branch), 5a, Minute Book, 1917-1922, (MBL); *WR*, 18 June 1914, p.14; Evidence of Nina Barrer to the 1936 Abortion Inquiry, p.7, H 1 B.100 131/139/12, (NA). See Mariana Valverde, “‘When the Mother of the Race is Free’: Race, Reproduction, and Sexuality in First-Wave Feminism”, in Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde (eds), *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women’s History*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1992) and Lucy Bland, “‘Guardians of the race’ or ‘Vampires upon the nation’s health?’: Female sexuality and its regulation in early twentieth-century Britain”, in Elizabeth Whitelegg (ed), *The Changing Experience of Women*, (Oxford, Open University Press, 1982), 373-388, for discussion of these representations, in particular, their racial specificity.

<sup>6</sup> ‘League of Mothers’, *New Zealand Herald*, 22/10/1926, fMS-131, (ATL).

<sup>7</sup> ‘Society for Mothers’, *New Zealand Herald*, 4/4/1926, fMS-131, (ATL).

<sup>8</sup> Anne Else, (ed), *Women Together: A History of Women’s Organisations in New Zealand*, (Wellington, Daphne Brassell Associates/Historical Branch, 1993), p.573.

In an address to the Putaruru Branch of the WDFU in 1934, Mrs. R. Donovan argued for women's moral superiority as the revitaliser of imperial goals: "A nation rises or falls on its moral fibre, and let us mothers of the British nation get to our work with endurance and hope and prayer in our hearts, and row back to our moorings".<sup>9</sup> Imperial and national concern over the increase in immorality, national decay and national inefficiency, was attributed to the presence of mental defectives in the population, and Mrs Donovan called for "a big loving united band of mothers" to raise the moral tone of the nation.<sup>10</sup> Women who were mothers, both physical and symbolic, were positioned as central to the aims of eugenic racial fitness. Their presence in society and in its institutions, acting as an index of morality, would prevent racial decay and ensure nation-building. Through the melding of science, eugenics and feminism, a conservative gender ideology positioned women as the bulwark of the nation.

The cult of domesticity, the positioning of motherhood and domestic household activities as the essential duties of women, necessitated the engineering of women into traditional spheres of work. Thus, training in domestic science was constructed as an important and necessary precursor to happy marriage. Useless learning, argued a correspondent to *The Press*, was contributing to the lessened importance of domesticity in regard to the future welfare of the country. Such education was

hurting the country both ways, damaging the constitution of the young, and raising false hopes in many and leaving them unfitted for a domestic life, which in its turn wrecks the nation's stamina, chiefly through the woman.<sup>11</sup>

Education in efficient home management was considered to be the only way to secure a good home, and thus, a healthy nation. Scientific motherhood, another variation of the cult of domesticity, involved the elevation of domesticity to the

<sup>9</sup> 'Influence of Women', *N.Z. Countrywoman*, 20 February 1934, p.2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *The Press*, 13/3/1929, p.15.

level of science. Motherhood was celebrated in order to entice young women into its ranks, thus, providing increased breeding capacity for the empire. Resurrecting a statement used twenty years earlier, Truby King argued the need for women to return to their traditional duties, presenting the eugenic vision of social betterment by appealing to the essential nurturing qualities of women and emphasising the central role of women in not only nation building, but as agents of building a eugenic society. King stated:

If women in general were rendered more fit for maternity, if instrumental deliveries were obviated as far as possible, if infants were nourished by their mothers, and boys and girls given a rational education, the main supplies of population for our asylums, hospitals, benevolent institutions, gaols and slums would be cut off at the sources.<sup>12</sup>

Scientific motherhood, or the education of women in domestic science was not restricted to Pakeha women. A great deal of effort was directed toward the domestic training of Maori women, through organisations such as the Maori Women's Institute, who were described in 1935 as, "rendering an excellent service in instructing young women in all branches of homecraft", and as a "potent force in bettering Maori home life".<sup>13</sup> The work of Maori women in improving the hygienic environment of the Maori home was considered to be an important investment in their 'improvement'.

The NCW was not adverse to arguing for the return of women to traditional duties, but framed their response with a note of caution. Motherhood was politically expedient to their aims of a more stable society only if the government supported financial independence for women within marriage. Thus, a tempering of the eugenic pro-natalist position on motherhood as essential to empire-building, was advocated by the NCW, with regard to Motherhood Endowment and Domestic Training. In an address to the Christchurch Branch of

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<sup>12</sup> *AJHR*, H-7, 1926, p.8.

<sup>13</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1935, p.9.

the NCW on, "The Endowment of Motherhood", Mrs Elizabeth Taylor, wife of M.P. Tommy Taylor, outlined the reasons for and against girls' education and financial independence. Taylor outlined the popular arguments, that the falling birth rate could be attributed to a "love of ease & luxury; pursuit of excitement & worship of wealth & all it brings in the way of maternal comforts", and the suggestion that "the evolution of women was also a factor in the lowered birthrate".<sup>14</sup> The education of girls, beyond domestic training, could "enable them to become economically free and independent", and,

as such time might come when women could refuse to marry until she was assured that in marriage her economic value to the State as Mother & the trainer of the young of the nation would be recognised: when the way to National Endowment of Motherhood might be open.<sup>15</sup>

Policies that advocated the rewarding of motherhood with financial bonuses were regarded as a way of highlighting the importance of maternal duties to the nation. Of particular concern was the maternal welfare of the nation's mothers. Philippa Mein Smith has highlighted the role of the State in medicalising childbirth between the wars, and suggests that public interest in women's health can be aligned with eugenic anxieties and imperial concerns.<sup>16</sup> Maternal mortality statistics of 1920, at 6.48 deaths per 1000 live births, revealed the necessity of making the health of the mother central to state plans for empire-building.<sup>17</sup> The campaign for 'safe maternity', launched in 1924, was aligned with the slogan 'Perfect motherhood is perfect patriotism', signifying the eugenic and imperial importance of not only healthy mothers, but healthy children for the maintenance of imperial superiority.<sup>18</sup> The healthy white mother was essential to imperial and

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<sup>14</sup> NCW Branch Meeting, 31 July 1922, MB 126, NCW (Christchurch Branch), 5a, Minute Book, 1917-1922, (MBL).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Philippa Mein Smith, *Maternity in Dispute: New Zealand, 1920-1939*, (Wellington, Historical Branch, 1986), p.1.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.23.

national progress. To ensure this position, improving conditions of motherhood were central to an improved national health. In 1921, on the tabling of the report into Maternal Mortality in New Zealand, M.P. Dr. Thacker spoke on the necessity of women in imperial and eugenic rhetoric. He argued that, it “is of vital importance to the nation that our women should be protected and have the fears that are natural to them in regard to maternity removed as far as possible”.<sup>19</sup> Thacker went on to argue for policies of a weekly maternity and baby bonus, where the more babies born in a family would be regarded as a financial asset, as a way of “protecting and assisting the mothers”.<sup>20</sup>

Femocrats employed by the Health Department also participated in a discourse that prioritised and elevated the role of women’s work within the empire. In 1921, the Health Department organised meetings for mothers and young women, “concerning the needs of home and family”, and urged those attending to ask those question that could not be addressed in a more public forum.<sup>21</sup> Thus, parental ignorance was overcome. The Registrar was exhorted to supply information to Plunket nurses, under the control of Truby King and the Child Welfare Division of the Health Department, of new births in order, “to bring a very much larger number of young mothers with their first babies under care before serious mistakes are made”.<sup>22</sup> Visits by school medical officers to schools, addressing the importance of hygiene, cleanliness and personal health, were important in stressing the racial qualities of health and fitness. In their roles as nurse, doctor, teacher and leading positions in the bureaucracy women were positioned as central agents of empire-building and the agents of medical surveillance.

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<sup>19</sup> *NZPD*, Vol,191, 1921, p.400.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.401.

<sup>21</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1922, p.21.

<sup>22</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1923, p.24.

Randi Davenport's exploration of the link between state policy and maternal representations/metaphors of the State, identifies a narrative that "exalted the body of the mother ... [and] the state", a linkage that "brought together troublesome conceptions of both race and gender to make a case for imperial progress and expansion".<sup>23</sup> Davenport highlights how two seemingly unrelated narratives, the public world of nationalism and the private world of reproduction, were linked by maternal images within the body politic, linking the health of the individual body with that of the social body.<sup>24</sup> The welfare state system, introduced by the 1935 Labour Government, continued policies of pro-natalism that constituted a link between the eugenic concerns of individual motherhood/maternity, and that of the nation and empire. Motherhood was viewed as an imperial duty, and those unwilling to bear the requisite amount of children, or refrain from breeding, were claimed by Truby King, to be neglecting their national duty by individual selfishness.<sup>25</sup> Through state policies and discourse, argues Davenport, the mother was written into a nationalist narrative in multiple forms, including the "fertile, celebrated, diseased, exalted and asexual".<sup>26</sup> Therefore, it was in reference of the construction of motherhood as central to imperial survival that the feebleminded girl, hypersexual woman and amateur prostitute were defined as sexual threats.

### **The Abuse of the Pregnant Body: The Mentally Defective Mother**

Concern over potential mothers was framed within eugenic arguments surrounding female deviancy, where biology and science were used to support feminist constructed boundaries of morality. For example, the closure of Te

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<sup>23</sup> Randi Davenport, "Thomas Malthus and Maternal Bodies Politics: gender, race and empire", *Women's History Review*, 4(4), 1995, p.415.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.415-416.

<sup>25</sup> Truby King, *Feeding and Care of Baby*, (Christchurch, Whitcombe and Tombs, 1937), p.224

<sup>26</sup> Davenport, p.425.

Oranga Girls Reformatory, located in Burwood, Christchurch, in 1918, ten years after an official investigation into the management practices and claims of abuse, saw women's groups protest against closure, citing the invaluable work such institutions were doing in the reform of deviant girls.<sup>27</sup> In 1919, the Christchurch Branch of the NCW, prompted by remits from the SPWC and the WCTU, strongly protested against the policy of the Education Department in regard to the closure of Te Oranga.<sup>28</sup>

Concern over female deviancy centred on the potential these adolescent girls had to get pregnant, particularly, stated the NCW, as these girls were "utterly unfitted to take their place as responsible members of society".<sup>29</sup> The WDFU stated that it was a well-known fact that "Every feeble-minded woman is a potential mother".<sup>30</sup> Thus, the healthy maternal body metamorphosed into the abnormal, "when mismanaged by the woman who occupies it".<sup>31</sup> The promiscuous activities of these girls constituted a threat to the race. Their promiscuity saw them labelled as feeble-minded or over-sexed, their subsequent children, born out of wedlock, were considered sub-normal and thus, confirmation of the hereditary characteristics of mental defect, serving to confirm not only the labelling of their mother as deviant but as also mentally defective. Thus, their actions were in fact an abuse of pregnancy, with contradictory rhetoric used to label them as both deviant and inherently defective.

The closure of Te Oranga Girls Reformatory prompted remits from women's organisations on the urgent need for a home or institution for young female offenders. The Auckland Branch of the NCW urged such a proposal in

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<sup>27</sup> See *AJHR*, H-21, 1908, and Beryl Hughes, 'The Enquiry into the Te Oranga Girls Home, 1908', *Women's Studies Journal*, September 1988, pp.27-38, for an account of the Inquiry.

<sup>28</sup> NCW Branch Meeting, May 26 1919, MB 126, NCW (Christchurch Branch), 5a, Minute Book, 1917-1922, (MBL).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> no title, c.1927, MS-Papers-0182-043, (ATL).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.428.

August 1919, emphasising the urgent need to contain the potential danger of these girls within an environment that safeguarded them, and the public, from their offences.<sup>32</sup> The Official Visitors to Addington Reformatory urged the reopening of Te Oranga, to deal with youthful female offenders as a preventive measure, primarily to divert them from a life of crime that would see them end up in prison.<sup>33</sup> The belief that immoral women were feeble-minded and prolific breeders of defective children constituted this group as a threat to the race. Thus, argued Dr. Hilda Northcroft in 1923:

The fit who could really produce healthy offspring and bring them up as good citizens were deliberately limiting their families, but the unfit were going on increasing without limit. Take the case of the unmarried mother, although efforts were made to alter their views yet, in spite of good conditions, training and fresh chances they have returned to the Homes a second and third time to bring another sub-normal child into the world.<sup>34</sup>

The conflation of deviancy, immorality and mental defect was a strong reason for women's groups to argue for the maintenance of an institution that promised to prevent illegitimacy. Jean Begg, of the YWCA, considered unmarried mothers to be the single largest group of sexual offenders in the country.<sup>35</sup> Prison reformer Blanche Baughan argued that, an institution such as Te Oranga should be reopened for those girls of the uncontrollable type, as "nearly all women delinquents were over-sexed".<sup>36</sup> Their inability to control their sexuality, or control 'normal' men, contributed to an abuse of pregnancy and social standards that an institution could prevent.

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<sup>32</sup> NCW Branch Meeting, August 29 1919, MB 126, NCW (Christchurch Branch), 5a, Minute Book, 1917-1922, (MBL).

<sup>33</sup> Letter from Official Visitors to Addington Reformatory, n.d. H 1 54/79, (NA).

<sup>34</sup> NCW Annual Conference, 1923, p.20, MS-Papers-1371-126, (ATL).

<sup>35</sup> Shelley Griffiths, 'Feminism and the Ideology of Motherhood in New Zealand 1890-1930', (MA, University of Otago, 1984), p.114 and Evidence of Jean Begg, p.769, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>36</sup> 'Mental Degenerates', *The Press*, 1/3/1923, p.5



Those girls who had committed a moral (illegitimacy), rather than criminal offence, against society, were regarded as suitable candidates for institutionalisation. In 1919, the NCW argued that, "every mother of more than two illegitimate children by different fathers which become a charge on the state, [should] be regarded as a moral degenerate and detained in a farm colony for an indeterminate sentence".<sup>37</sup> The case of a young girl in a Salvation Army Home was brought to the attention of Dr. Theodore Gray in 1929. A daughter of cousins, it was believed she was a 'sexual maniac'. Her family feared "as soon as she gets out of the Home, where she can no longer be forced to remain, (of age) she will commence having a crop of illegitimate and degenerate children".<sup>38</sup> Thus, female offending and sexual immorality was viewed by many eugenicists and women as, not only associated with each other, but inextricably linked to the character of the individual, and located in poor heredity. It was in this context that the NCW argued that the best interests of mother and child would be served if those girls under 21, who had committed a criminal offence, and were pregnant, be placed in a Home, not a 'gaol'.<sup>39</sup> The placement of these young women in a 'Home' would prevent not only further unlawful offending, but the reformatory eugenic space provided by the home, would negate any further sexual offending. The Canterbury Branch of the Mothers' Union argued along similar lines. Te Oranga, argued the Union, was needed to uplift the moral status of these girls which, "is so low that they are totally unable to protect themselves and so become a menace to society".<sup>40</sup> The prime objective, while reformatory, of receiving homes, was simply to protect the public from the sexual offending of

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<sup>37</sup> NCW Minutes Annual Conference, 8 September 1919, p.4, MS-Papers-1371-126, (ATL).

<sup>38</sup> Letter to Dr. Gray from Dr. S.A. Lucas, 15/1/1929, H-MHD 1 4/5/1, (NA).

<sup>39</sup> NCW, Branch Meeting, September 27 1920, MB 126, NCW (Christchurch Branch), 5a, Minute Book, 1917-1922, (MBL).

<sup>40</sup> Letter to Prime Minister William Massey from the Council of the Canterbury Mothers' Union dated 3/3/1923, H 1 54/79, (NA).

young unmarried women, labelled as either amateurs, feeble-minded or hypersexual. These 'second falls', suggests Margaret Tennant, destabilised the maternal ideal, and their labelling as oversexed, lacking in self-control and as simple-minded, justified their institutionalisation.<sup>41</sup>

### **Visions of the 'White Other': The Amateur Prostitute, Feeble-minded Girl and Hypersexual Woman.**

Women's organisations' contribution to the construction of unfit motherhood was defined in conjunction with their views of morality. As Philippa Wilson has argued, when analysing the construction of whiteness in nineteenth century New Zealand, the multiple representations of women as Britannia's daughters, mothers of the Empire or colonial helpmeets, all celebratory and powerful images in their longevity and resonance, were assumed by women and "allowed them to exert different kinds of power over others".<sup>42</sup> The complicity of professional women and women's groups in the construction of the feeble-minded girl, hypersexual woman, and amateur prostitute, allowed them to exert a eugenic discourse of constructed female deviancy, where some women were culpable for the production of racially unfit children and thus, the racial deterioration of the empire.

Post World War One, anxiety about New Zealand's national health promoted an inquiry into the prevalence of venereal disease among the country's population. Preceding the 1924 Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, the Venereal Disease Inquiry, which reported in 1922, foreshadowed anxieties and representations of the defective that were to be built upon in the 1924 Inquiry. A number of members of the Venereal Disease Committee were to

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<sup>41</sup> Margaret Tennant, *Paupers and Providers: Charitable Aid in New Zealand*, (Wellington, Allen and Unwin/Historical Branch, 1989), p.119.

<sup>42</sup> Philippa J. Wilson, "'We Are Still English At Heart': Constructions of Englishness by Englishwomen in nineteenth-century New Zealand", (MA, University of Auckland, 1997), p.16.

later appear on the 1924 Inquiry committee. They included W.H Triggs, who chaired both inquiries, J.S Elliott, member of the NZMBA and Sir Donald McGavin, the Director-General of Medical Services.<sup>43</sup> The committee was completed by Murdoch Fraser, representing the Hospital Boards, J.P Frengley, the Deputy Director-General of Health, while the lay view was represented by Lady Luke, a member of the VL.<sup>44</sup> Seventy four witnesses gave evidence, and like the 1924 Inquiry, a high proportion were women's organisations or their representatives.<sup>45</sup> The medical profession was also heavily represented, with forty doctors giving statements to the committee. The official report singled out not the professional prostitute, for which they found little evidence to support their presence in the country, but the amateur, who acted as a 'foci of infection' and the principle cause for the prevalence of the disease in New Zealand.<sup>46</sup>

The 1922 Venereal Disease Inquiry introduced the term 'amateur' in reference to the uncontrolled sexuality of mentally defective girls. Lucy Bland argues that the term 'amateur prostitute', "reflects a difficulty in understanding active female sexuality outside the institution of prostitution".<sup>47</sup> Barbara Brookes suggests that the term 'amateur', blurs the distinction between public and private,

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<sup>43</sup> Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Venereal Disease in New Zealand, *AJHR*, H-31 A, 1922, p.1. For a discussion of legislation and government policies concerning venereal disease in New Zealand between 1910 and 1922, see chapter one in Phillip Fleming, "Shadow Over New Zealand: The Response to Venereal Disease in New Zealand, 1910-1945", (PhD, Massey University, 1989).

<sup>44</sup> *AJHR*, H-31 A, 1922, p.1.

<sup>45</sup> *AJHR*, H-31A, 1922, p.3. Witnesses included Dr. Hilda Northcroft; Miss Patrick the Director of Plunket Nursing; Mrs. De Treeby representing the Women's International and Political League; Mrs. Harrison Lee Cowie; Mrs. E.B. Miller; Mrs. Elizabeth Roberts the President of the Women's Branch of the Social Hygiene Society; Nurse E.M. Stringer of the Health Patrol; Dr. Emily Siedeberg, Medical Officer, St Helen's Hospital; Mrs. Henderson representing the Women Prisoners' Welfare Society and the Wellington Branch of the NCW; Mrs. F. McHugh of the Health Patrol; Mrs. A.E. Herbert; Dr. Agnes Bennett, Medical Officer, St Helens Hospital; Dr. Daisy Platt-Mills, Mrs. Morpeth and Miss Dunlop of the Young Women's Christian Association; Mrs Glover of the Salvation Army. The Society for the Protection of Women and Children were represented by Mr. J.M. Galloway.

<sup>46</sup> *AJHR*, H-31A, 1922, p.11

<sup>47</sup> Lucy Bland, 1982, p.381.

opening up the possibility of examining sexuality in the private sphere.<sup>48</sup> As the group constructed as responsible for the illegitimacy rate in New Zealand, the 'amateur' was defined as dangerous to the future empire. An analysis of the illegitimate birth rate between 1913-1921, showing that 10,841 illegitimate births had occurred within one year of marriage during the stated period, served to confirm the anxiety inducing statement that promiscuity was not only prevalent, but was not confined to any social class.<sup>49</sup> That the amateur, suggests Bland, was thought to be drawn from all social classes made them more difficult to identify, and thus, more dangerous than the professional prostitute.<sup>50</sup>

Anxiety over the emergence of an 'amateur' prostitute, signifies a growing anxiety over youthful female sexuality or adolescence. The youthfulness of the mentally defective population was a concern, with the Director of Education, John Caughley, estimating that between 600-700 mental defectives in New Zealand were under the age of 21, stating: "In particular, the girls are a source of danger to themselves and to the community, since they have little or no will power or sense of restraint".<sup>51</sup> Philippe Aries argues that the twentieth century was "the century of adolescence", a period where awareness of youth became a subject of moralistic and political concern.<sup>52</sup> This concern is most prevalent in evidence to the 1924 Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, where mentally defective girls were identified by particular characteristics and behaviour.

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<sup>48</sup> Barbara Brookes, "A Weakness for Strong Subjects: The Women's Movement and Sexuality", *NZJH*, 27(2), October 1993, p.148.

<sup>49</sup> *AJHR*, H-31A, 1922, p.11.

<sup>50</sup> Bland, 1982, p.381.

<sup>51</sup> *AJHR*, H-31A, 1922, p.20; See also the comments of Charles Aschman, President of the New Zealand Educational Institute to the 1924 Inquiry, p.61, H 3/13 (NA).

<sup>52</sup> Philippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood*, (Middlesex, Penguin, 1986), pp.27-28.

The tendency to lead dissolute lives is especially noticeable in the females. A feeble-minded girl is exposed as no other girl in the world is exposed. She has not sense enough to protect herself from the perils to which women are subjected. Often amiable in disposition and physically attractive, they either marry and bring forth a new generation of defectives, or they become irresponsible sources of corruption and debauchery in the communities where they live. There is every reason in the interests of morality, humanity, and public policy that feeble-minded women should be under permanent and watchful guardianship, especially during the child-bearing age.<sup>53</sup>

Beck identified, what was to become the common characterisation of the feebleminded girl, as over-sexed, lacking in self-control and vulnerable to the lust of 'normal' men. Furthermore, a 1930 *Kai Tiaki (KT)* article, devoted to the feebleminded girl, noted the distinctive characteristics of this group, qualities that were marked by their non-femininity. The feebleminded girl at school, it was argued, could be distinguished by her peculiarities of posture and gesture, her destructive or cruel demeanour, violent outbursts of temper, lack of respect or boldness, sullenness, quietness and fearfulness.<sup>54</sup> The solution to the prevention of their kind was either segregation or sterilisation, and ended with the warning that, in the interests of public health, such strategies of eugenic control should be assumed by the State.<sup>55</sup> Charles Aschmann, headmaster of the Christchurch Normal School, described the 'adolescent feebleminded girl' as the "greatest danger from a national point of view".<sup>56</sup> However, Theodore Gray's 1927 Report, 'Mental Deficiency and its Treatment', acknowledged the shifting nature of the term 'feebleminded', noting that those classified as such could include problem children, the less seriously scholastically retarded truant, the persistently mischievous boy and the sexually prominent girl.<sup>57</sup> The wide-ranging

<sup>53</sup> *AJHR*, E-4, 1920, p.17. A similar statement was made to the 1922 Venereal Disease Inquiry by John Beck, Officer in Charge, Industrial and Special Schools, Education Department, pp.2-3, H 1 B.83 130/1/2, (NA).

<sup>54</sup> 'The Feeble-minded Girl: Her Treatment', *KT*, Vol. 23, No. 4, 15 July 1930, p.190.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p.91.

<sup>56</sup> *The Press*, 11/7/1924, p.6.

<sup>57</sup> *AJHR*, H-7A, 1927, p.3.

characteristics of the definition of feeble-mindedness, contributed to the increased institutionalisation of groups whose behaviour could be identified as morally degenerate, and a threat to the race.

The official focus on the amateur and feeble-minded girl signifies the association made between the emergence of youthful sexuality and the unstable period of life termed adolescence. Adolescence was described by Frank Hay in 1920 as a period of "intellectual, moral, and emotional instability", but for girls it was regarded as particularly dangerous.<sup>58</sup> The importance of adolescence as a turbulent and potentially dysgenic period, is revealed in a 1930 Health Department report by Dr. Grace Stevenson, on the menstrual cycle among high school girls. Grace Stevenson, a School Medical Officer in Otago, surveyed by questionnaire 103 senior high school students, and 187 training college students, with an average age of 18, and an age range from 14 to 24 years.<sup>59</sup> Stevenson investigated the ages at which menstruation commenced, its regularity, duration and quantity of flow.<sup>60</sup> Designed to consider the influences of games, exercises, bathing and general hygienic influences upon adolescent girls, along with sleep patterns, and study patterns upon adolescent girls, the results lent credence to arguments by eugenicists such as Truby King regarding the negative influence of higher education upon girls' vital energy, with Stevenson recommending:

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<sup>58</sup> *AJHR*, H-7, 1920, p.3, and Evidence of John Caughley, Director of Education, p.16, H 3/13, (NA). On adolescence see Lucy Bland, 1982, p.374.

<sup>59</sup> Grace Stevenson, 'Survey of Menstrual Function of Training-College Students and Senior High-School Girls', Appendix, Part IV, *AJHR*, H-31, 1930, p.90. See Barbara Brookes and Margaret Tennant, "Making Girls Modern: Pakeha women and menstruation in New Zealand, 1930-70", *Women's History Review*, 7(4), 1998, 565-582, for a discussion of the importance of menstruation in the construction of twentieth century womanhood. Brookes and Tennant suggest that menstruation sheds light on ideals of hygiene and modernity and positions women as consumers while the experience of it constitutes women as 'the other'. *Ibid.*, pp. 565-566.

<sup>60</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1930, p.90.

There is need for the care and supervision of the young girl through puberty, adolescence, to young womanhood. Overtaxing the bodily strength with study, too great mental strain, too little sleep, lack of practice of the laws of general hygiene, may produce irreparable injury affecting both body and mind.<sup>61</sup>

Adolescence, as a 'critical period' in the lives of young women between 14 to 18 years of age, was most clearly articulated with regard to the education of girls. *The Press* quoted in a 1914 editorial on education, the words of English eugenicist and doctor, Dr. Mary Scharlieb, that motherhood was "more important than mathematics", in arguing for a new system of education for girls based on their physiological differences during puberty.<sup>62</sup> The higher education of girls was believed to negatively influence the normal physical growth of young women, particularly as the failure to engineer girls toward domesticity resulted in a further increase to the membership of the categories of amateur, feebleminded, and hypersexual. Domestic science training and marriage were viewed as a bulwark to immorality in girls and a cure for all social ills.<sup>63</sup>

In contrast, hypersexual women were constructed as older, their sexual behaviour regarded as less delinquent and more criminal, viewed as wilfully passionate, and constructed as the seducer of men rather than the seduced. Elizabeth Lunbeck locates the rise of the hypersexual woman with a concern over working-class women's sexuality, where the medical profession attempted to replace the prostitute with, what Elizabeth Lunbeck defines as, the "wilfully passionate woman who could not control her desires for sexual pleasure".<sup>64</sup> Of the evidence presented to the 1924 Inquiry, mentally defective women were identified by particular characteristics and behaviour. The image of the oversexed woman constituted the greatest danger to society due to her "sexual prominence

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p.91.

<sup>62</sup> *The Press*, 24/1/1914, p.10.

<sup>63</sup> Sandra Coney (ed) *Standing in the Sunshine*, (Auckland, Viking, 1993), p.202.

<sup>64</sup> Elizabeth Lunbeck, "A New Generation of Women": Progressive Psychiatrists and the Hypersexual Female", *Feminist Studies*, 13(31), Fall 1987, pp.513-514.

due to a lack of self-control and an acceptance of a lower standard of morality” originating in poor home influence.<sup>65</sup> Annie Herbert, a social worker, provided details of a number of cases of mentally deficient and oversexed girls regarding them as “a menace to public morals and public health” who were “producing large families and living in frightful conditions”.<sup>66</sup> Julia Cardale produced six cases as evidence to the 1924 Inquiry that over-sexed women were not only of attractive appearance but constituted a “danger to men of a better type than those who will consort with women of undoubted feeble minds”.<sup>67</sup>

In the figure of the hypersexual woman, the body itself was criminalised, resulting, argue Rafter, Jill Julius Matthews and Elizabeth Lunbeck, in a new iconography centred on the Bad Woman.<sup>68</sup> Presented as uncontrollable and sexually abnormal the only option was to supplement the institution for self-control. It was argued by the organisation, Official Visitors to the Addington Reformatory, that “in women, hypersexualism plays a very large part in delinquency”, while Blanche Baughan, commenting on the hypersexualism of women offenders, regarded that a more appropriate form of treatment for these ‘over-equipped’ girls was not institutional control, but medical and psychological intervention.<sup>69</sup> In contrast, the NCW believed the temptations offered by these women to men could be negated by the education of youths toward self-control, in strong ideals, one standard of morality, and a respect of all womanhood.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *AJHR*, H-7A 1927, p.15.

<sup>66</sup> Evidence of Annie Herbert, Social Worker, p.551, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>67</sup> Evidence of Julia Cardale, p.533, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>68</sup> Rafter, 1997, p.47; Jill Julius Matthews, *Good and Mad Women: the historical construction of femininity in twentieth century Australia*, (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1984); Elizabeth Lunbeck, 1987, pp.513-541.

<sup>69</sup> Letter from the Official Visitors to Addington Reformatory, n.d. H 1 54/79 (NA) and evidence of Blanche Baughan, Social Worker and Official Visitor to Addington Reformatory, p.572, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>70</sup> Evidence of Miss Howlett, representing the NCW and WCTU, p.628, H 3/13, (NA).



The construction of the amateur, feeble-minded girl and hypersexual woman eventually melded to form a more generic female deviant – the feeble-minded woman. Evidence to the 1924 Inquiry identified some general characteristics similar to all three 'classes' of sexual deviant. They were a source of danger to themselves and the community, lacking in self-control, and physically attractive. Some individual women and women's groups avoided the victim strategy, preferring to highlight the agency of the feeble-minded woman. Miss Cardale, on behalf of the NCW, submitted evidence covering five classes of mental deficiency and sexual perversion, which included those not responsible for their own behaviour; those who were immoral; those oversexed and attractive; those mothers of low mental and moral character, unable to provide the right environment in which to develop true citizenship; and women of immoral character handicapped by growing up in a bad atmosphere.<sup>71</sup> The NCW viewed women not only as sexual offenders, but implicit within these classifications was an attack on ignorant and inefficient mothers as the cause of degeneracy.

A further narrative of the feeble-minded woman centred upon her vulnerability to the lusts of normal men. This is a narrative that Rafter has identified as a rhetorical strategy of eugenicists, in regard to the feeble-minded woman, the 'rhetoric of rectitude', which argued that the feeble-minded woman, the victim of male lust, must be protected against wickedness.<sup>72</sup> An article in the *NZMJ* of 1922 offered a study of housing conditions as proof of the proliferation of the unfit, and acts as an illustration of Rafter's rhetorical styles. From examination of the statistics, the medical profession claimed that there could be discerned a close association between mental defect, physical unfitness, poverty

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<sup>71</sup> *The Press*, 10/7/1924, p.12 and Evidence of Julia Cardale, pp.531-535, H 3/13, (NA). See Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast*, (London, Penguin, 1995), pp.239-242 on the feeble-minded woman.

<sup>72</sup> Rafter, 1997, p.41.

and crime.<sup>73</sup> The study graded homes into good (23%), fair (69%) and bad (8%), with the 8% of bad homes producing 58.33% of cases with mental defect.<sup>74</sup> The author concluded, "bad homes are the homes of the mentally defective parents in the vast majority of the cases for all heredity conditions none probably is constantly and inevitably heredity as mental defect".<sup>75</sup> However, there was a positive side to these statistics. If treated early enough by being removed from 'bad' homes, the majority of these children could, if placed in a suitable environment with specialised schooling, become useful citizens rather than a "menace to our society".<sup>76</sup> Of these children, the female defective was singled out as a class different from other 'defectives'. The first step should be the segregation of "female defectives who constitute a greater menace to the future than the males, for, whilst the defective female is, sexually, an easy victim to any errant male, the normal female repels the advances of the defective male".<sup>77</sup> This was a characterisation that the NCW supported in evidence to the 1924 Inquiry, when their representative Isabel Howlett, suggested that: "Normal women so rarely consort with a man of undoubted low mentality therefore feeble-minded men are protected in the community by women, but unfortunately feeble-minded women are not similarly protected their low mentality being often the reason why they are molested".<sup>78</sup> Female defectives were perceived as a threat to the country as well as potential victims of aggressive male sexuality. 'Normal' women were seen to be able to control the sexuality of men; if not they could be labelled as

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<sup>73</sup> Alfred Clark, 'Mental Defects Among School Children', *NZMJ*, vol. 21, August 1922, p.217.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p.218.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p.219. The construction of the 'defective' male is less than fully sketched in this thesis. Notions of homosexuality were barely mentioned in the 1924 Inquiry and its subsequent report in 1925. Most attention on the 'defective' male was concentrated on the construction of the male sex offender as a sexual threat to women rather than boys and other men.

<sup>78</sup> Evidence of Miss Howlett, representing the NCW and WCTU, p.628, H 3/13, (NA).

defective. As such, they were a menace to society due to their lack of self-control and inability to control male behaviour.

Nicole Hahn Rafter suggests that, the stereotype of the feeble-minded woman as inherently promiscuous, and the progenitor of defective children, stood as the centre-piece of eugenic campaigns against crime and immorality.<sup>79</sup> Essential to placing the feeble-minded woman at the centre of eugenic campaigns, argues Rafter, was the narration of dramas and horror stories to galvanise the audience.<sup>80</sup> Nina Barrer's booklet, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency and Its Treatment*, drew upon such narratives. Gilbert Beckett, after reading her manuscript suggested, "it should be opened with a story of the suffering of one particular offspring of mentally deficient parents. There is no doubt that when a person's sympathies are touched in that way, she will read an article which otherwise might be considered 'dry'".<sup>81</sup> The assumption that the reader was a woman resulted in a writing style, and narrative examples that were designed to appeal to a woman's emotions. These narratives focused on the misery brought society through the fecundity of the feeble-minded and their position as doubly deviant.<sup>82</sup>

A narrative that was designed to present the misery associated with the life of a feeble-minded girl, was read into evidence to the 1924 Inquiry by Ellen Hunt, Matron of the Addington Reformatory.

As things are at present, a feeble-minded girl is left until she comes before the court, which is about the age of sixteen years. She has neither education or training, and, being of weak mind, has already formed evil habits, and, being lazy, is prey to evil influences. This type passes a short period in an institution or a home, is placed out in a situation, just drifts back into sin then finds herself in the maternity home, and after she becomes

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<sup>79</sup> Rafter, 1997, p.36.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p.40.

<sup>81</sup> Letter to Nina Barrer from Eva Cowan dated 28/2/1933, MS-Papers-0182-39, (ATL).

<sup>82</sup> Rafter, 1997, p.40.

useless on the streets is just a vagrant, takes to drink, and is sent to prison.<sup>83</sup>

Hunt presents the lifecycle of a feeble-minded woman, starting in girlhood at 16 years and her first experience of institutionalisation, moves to young womanhood and eventual pregnancy, again institutionalisation, progresses to the realities of prostitution and vagrancy, resulting in inebriety and again institutionalisation. Hunt's vignette can be read as a commentary on the failure of the Education, Health and Justice systems to provide adequate protection for the type of case she has presented.

Defective women were alleged to be the cause of numerous social problems, but if sterilised, they were considered to be more likely to increase their illegal activities. It was suggested by Ellen Hunt, that since they already led an immoral life, took part in illicit intercourse, had adapted to a lifestyle of prostitution and spread venereal disease that sterilisation would enable them to be free from pregnancy and remain a social problem.<sup>84</sup> Allison Carey, in an examination of the shifting gendered nature of sterilisation practices in the United States, argues women with illegitimate children were, in the majority, potential targets of sterilisation practice, to control their fertility, sexuality and the production of the unfit.<sup>85</sup> In a statement to the 1922 Venereal Disease Inquiry, a case history of families committed to the state for care was analysed for the causes of their committal. Invariably it was the woman to whom mental defect was attributed. Of 329 New Zealand families, 172 cases were either drunkards, prostitutes, feeble-minded or of questionable character, in 28 cases the mothers were drunkards, and in 30 cases the mothers were feeble-minded.<sup>86</sup> The statistics

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<sup>83</sup> Evidence of Ellen Hunt, Matron of Addington Reformatory, p.560, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20.

<sup>85</sup> Allison C. Carey, "Gender and Compulsory Sterilization Programs in America, 1907-1950", *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 11(1), March 1998, p.86.

<sup>86</sup> Evidence of John Beck, Officer in Charge, Industrial and Special Schools Branch, Education Department, p.1, H 1 B.23 130/1/2, (NA).

were, it was believed, revealed that the source of immorality and 'degeneracy' lay at the feet of 'defective' women, and hence, these women were considered to be better candidates for segregation, where behavioural reform could be instituted. Those considered hopeless cases, usually 'oversexed' or 'hypersexual' girls, were considered better off as custodial cases where individual rights as citizens were subsumed to those of the State and the community.<sup>87</sup> The second image of the passive, vulnerable feeble-minded woman did not seduce men, but was seduced by them instead. It was implied in the 1925 Report, that due to her inability to enforce boundaries around herself and her body, the feeble-minded woman needed to be protected from aggressive male sexuality, whose control was designated to the 'normal' woman'.<sup>88</sup> Their lack of self-regulation was substituted with institutional control where their abnormal behaviour could be reformed because, argued prison reformer Blanche Baughan, "the female degenerate was as great a danger as the male".<sup>89</sup>

### Male Sexual Offenders

The reports of the 1922 Venereal Disease Inquiry, and the 1925 Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, convey the anxiety over reproduction of the unfit, focused mainly on the multiple representations of the morally, socially and bodily unfit woman. While women could be the subjects of sexual and bodily control, so could men. Suggestions by Blanche Baughan to the WCTU on practical policies for prison reform saw her announce the male deviant as an equally important subject of moral reform. Baughan suggested these men were, "quite as much our human concern as women, and with whose conduct

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p.15.

<sup>88</sup> S. Robertson, "'Production not Reproduction': The Problem of Mental Defect in New Zealand 1900-1939", (MA, University of Otago, 1989), p.27.

<sup>89</sup> 'Mental Degenerates', *The Press*, 1/3/1923, p.5.

women's happiness is bound up".<sup>90</sup> However, women and children, in discussion of male sexual offenders by feminists and government officials, constructed woman as the victim of the lusts of these men. As innocents, women and children signified the purity of society currently being fragmented by the presence of male sexual offenders in the community.

Male sexual offenders were the focus of feminist debate during the 1920s, illustrating the enduring concern of colonial feminism with the control of male sexual behaviour. At the 1920 Annual Conference of the NCW, "the unrestricted presence of moral perverts and sexually uncontrolled persons in the community", was described as, the "greatest menace to personal liberty and free social intercourse".<sup>91</sup> The Christchurch Branch of the NCW emphasised the need to segregate men "found guilty of sexual offences against children and defective girls" for life, while in 1924, the WCTU urged that "men convicted of sexual offences should be permanently segregated in some suitable institution".<sup>92</sup> Such concern was initiated by the rejection of the Prisons Board's 1920 resolution on sexual offenders. The Board recommended an amendment to the Crimes Act, allowing for the medical examination of sexual offenders before sentencing, thus, allowing for correct classification, segregation and/or surgical treatment and their stricter control under an indeterminate sentence.<sup>93</sup> The WDFU's definition of the proper use of the indeterminate sentence included the 'sexual addict', a man who was not a criminal but afflicted with an incurable disease, for whom the indeterminate sentence meant residence in an institution for the remainder of his life.<sup>94</sup> Bronwyn Dalley suggests that feminist support for the indeterminate

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<sup>90</sup> *WR*, 18 October 1927, p.18.

<sup>91</sup> NCW Annual Conference, 1920, p3, MS-Papers-1371-126 (ATL).

<sup>92</sup> NCW Branch Meeting, May 31 1929, MB 126, NCW (Christchurch Branch), 5a, Minute Book, 1917-1922, (MBL); 'Sexual Offenders', *Taranaki News*, 27/3/1924, H 1 54/79 (NA).

<sup>93</sup> *AJHR*, H-20A, 1921, p.4. These recommendations were reaffirmed in 1922 and 1923.

<sup>94</sup> No title, no date, Nina Barrer Papers, MS-Papers-0182-043, (ATL).

sentence was based on its perceived utilitarianism: it cleared the streets of the undesirable for an indefinite period and confined them for the purpose of character and behavioural reform.<sup>95</sup> Broad support for the indeterminate sentence, suggests Dalley, by the NCW, the SPWC and the WCTU, represents not just an intellectual engagement with the reformative aims of prison reform, but a concern with the moral state of the wider society.<sup>96</sup> A preference among women's organisations for the indeterminate sentence represents a construction of the male sex offender, not as a criminal, but as suffering from a disease. Thus, sentencing, classification and segregation dominated discussion of the male sex offender among the NCW, WCTU and the SPWC.

Support for the resolution was strong among the WCTU, SPWC and the NCW, all women's organisations supportive of the social and moral reform of society, and equally active in pressing for political action. In 1923, the NCW supported the Gisbourne Branches' protest against the flogging of sex offenders, regarding the act as punitive and dehumanising, and supported a call by Gisbourne to put into effect the recommendations of the Prisons Board for the medical examination of male sexual offenders.<sup>97</sup> Further support for the recommendations of the Prisons Board was forthcoming from the Auckland, Wellington, and Hamilton Branches of the NCW in 1923, and the WCTU in 1922.<sup>98</sup> Dalley argues, in regard to feminist support for prison reform, that their support for reformative institutions was only engaged in at an intellectual level.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Bronwyn Dalley, " 'Making Bricks Without Straw': Feminism and Prison Reform in New Zealand, 1896-1925", *Women's Studies Journal*, 9(2), 1993, p.39.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> NCW Branch Meeting, 30 July 1923, MB 126, NCW (Christchurch Branch), 5b, Minute Book, 1917-1922, (MBL) and NCW Annual Conference, 1923, p.23, MS-Papers-1371-126, (ATL).

<sup>98</sup> NCW Branch Meeting, 27 August 1923, MB 126, NCW (Christchurch Branch), 5b, Minute Book, 1917-1922, (MBL); WCTU National Convention Minutes, 1922, 79-057-09/14, (ATL). See also the Evidence of Dr. Hilda Northcroft, p.124, Dr. Mildred Staley, p.136, and the Auckland Branch of the NCW, p.145, H 3/13, (NA); *WR*, 18 April 1922, p.6 and *WR*, 18 October 1923, p.8.

<sup>99</sup> Dalley, 1993, p.40.

The demand for flogging of sex offenders by the public was strongly protested by the NCW in 1927 and represented their aim for reformatory institutions: "Punishment should be reformatory not vindictive. It should be remembered that criminals are abnormal people. The best expert opinion is in favour of long sentence on farming colonies or some Institution".<sup>100</sup> Thus, support for reform was an intellectual endeavour. The NCW argued for reform rather than punishment, but were vague about further details on sentencing, and institutional provision.

Invariably, sterilisation was proposed for the sexual offenders, whose behaviour was defined as unnatural and a target for control, by a number of medical men and socially organised women. Fanny McHugh, in evidence to the 1924 Inquiry, aligned herself with the views of the North Canterbury Hospital Board, whose report initiated the Inquiry, calling for the sterilisation of the unfit. McHugh went further, and suggested the male sexual offender as a target, particularly as the sentences passed were inadequate.<sup>101</sup> Conflating sexual offending and feeble-mindedness, prison reformer Blanche Baughan argued that the mentally deficient should not be punished but cared for; but that the option of sterilisation should remain open to them.<sup>102</sup> She agreed with medical arguments that "many of these men cannot help themselves, and would welcome an operation, rather than long prison sentences".<sup>103</sup> Baughan's idealisation of the reformatory potential of the prison system echoed pre-war statements by prison reformer Eveline Cunnington, who saw imprisonment as a way to cure disease, describing prisons and reformatories as 'moral hospitals'.<sup>104</sup> Dr. Mildred Staley

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<sup>100</sup> Report of Seventh Annual Meeting, 1927, p.15, MS-Papers-1371-126, and *National Council of Women of New Zealand, Auckland Branch History, Twenty Years 1918 to 1938*, p.9, MS-Papers-1376-07, (ATL).

<sup>101</sup> Evidence of Fanny McHugh, p.87, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>102</sup> *The Press*, 10/7/1924, p.12.

<sup>103</sup> *The Press*, 1/1/1923, p.9.

<sup>104</sup> Dalley, 1993, pp.36-37.



advanced the view that male sexual offenders were offending against their will, and the only way to strengthen will power and a weak mind was treatment under the supervision of an indeterminate sentence.<sup>105</sup> Thus, the sex offender suffered from a disease, and the perceived increase in sex attacks could be attributed to a lack of control among these men. Confirmation of this view comes from the evidence of Mrs. Watson, who urged the committee to, “look upon these sexual prisoners as sick people, and educate them into the right way of living, and assist in the direction of placing them in society as good and useful citizens”.<sup>106</sup>

In the form of the sexual offender, men were found to transgress what was eugenically ideal. The WCTU voiced their disappointment that no single suggestion was offered as to the cause of mental defect by the Inquiry, or what might be done to safeguard the unborn generation.<sup>107</sup> However, they offered their own cause for immorality and mental defect. In arguing that immorality was at the root of mental defect, the WCTU stated that, “either men must come up to the standard they set themselves for women, or women will come down to man’s level, and there will be racial suicide and death”.<sup>108</sup> Sexual offenders were a constant source of concern throughout the pages of the *White Ribbon*. Cases of sexual attack against women and children were frequently reported. A case in Wanganui, where a jury stated it ought to be impossible for a man convicted of sexual offences to repeat the crime, was agreed to by the WCTU, indicating their willingness for legislation to be used as a form of control over male sexuality.<sup>109</sup> They added that, “many of them, perchance, ought never to have been born, and the sin lies with the parents who brought such subnormal types into the

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<sup>105</sup> Evidence of Dr. Mildred Staley, p.136, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>106</sup> Evidence of Mrs. Watson, Prison Visitor, pp.148-149, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>107</sup> *WR*, 18 April 1925, p.4.

<sup>108</sup> *WR*, 18 May 1925, p.1 and *WR*, 18 November 1930, p.1.

<sup>109</sup> *WR*, 18 February 1924, p.2. Further cases are outlined in *WR*, 18 June 1919, p.1, *WR*, 18 February 1922, p.9, and *WR*, 18 August 1923, p.8.

world".<sup>110</sup> While ineffective parenting was a source of blame for the presence of sexual offenders in the community, according to the WCTU, the double moral standard was equally culpable. Women put their faith in legislative and social reform, in order to maintain the sanctity of the family in the face of what was viewed as a social menace.

### Conclusion

Eugenic representations of women as 'mothers of the race' and 'breeders for the empire', were intended to support the return of women to domestic duties, at a time when more women than ever were entering the paid workforce.<sup>111</sup> Many socially organised women supported these representations as they gave support to feminist assertions of the moral superiority of women. The WCTU, the NCW and the SPWC argued for the positioning of women as the moral arbiters of national morality, utilising eugenic ideas and ideology to support their claims of political agency through maternal citizenship. However, eugenic representations of motherhood, images that were celebratory and utopic, necessitated a focus upon those women and men who transgressed the moral boundaries of society. Interest in eugenics by feminists, argues Rafter, served multiple purposes including, the exaltation of women, and arguments for the emancipation of 'worthy' women.<sup>112</sup> Lastly, women used eugenics to incapacitate the 'unfit', often women of a lower social class and not members of the women's organisations in which social value, in the form of physical and symbolic fitness, was equated with 'true' womanhood.<sup>113</sup> Thus, eugenics, and the involvement of socially organised women within this ideology, highlights the class basis of the

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<sup>110</sup> WR, 18 August 1923, p.1.

<sup>111</sup> See Katie Pickles (ed), *Hall of Fame: Life Stories of New Zealand Women*, (Christchurch, Clerestory Press, 1998), pp.xi-xviii.

<sup>112</sup> Rafter, 1997, pp.48-49.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.48-49.

terms 'mother of the race' and 'breeders for the empire'. In eugenic rhetoric, and equally in feminist discourse, white women were upheld as the 'mothers of the race'. Deviation from this ideal crystallised in the constructions of deviant women, centred particularly on the pregnant body.

The focus on feeble-minded women, the hypersexual and the amateur, convey the ways in which women of the working class were subjected to eugenic prescriptive ideology. The construction of these terms was enthusiastically endorsed by socially organised women. The amateur prostitute was constructed as a moral degenerate, the feeble-minded woman as the witless victim of male lust, the hypersexual woman represented a female sex offender, and the male sexual offender was cast as a victim of disease. All four constructions represent attempts to understand and control male and female sexuality. In doing so, each 'type' was cast as a danger to the race and thus issues of control, segregation or sterilisation, were debated. It was the institution, the subject of the next chapter, that became the site of control for the sentencing, classification and treatment of the mentally defective.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THOSE 'UNFORTUNATE FOLK': INSTITUTIONAL PROVISION OF A 'GOOD HOME LIFE'

Let us remember that any rascals of men and any wasters of women can ruin a home, but that it takes a decent, healthy man and woman to make one. Let us get right behind those who are trying to build up happy homes in this community, founded on the only sure and lasting foundations – honour among men, virtue among women, and health – mental, moral and physical – among all the members of the family.<sup>1</sup>

- Ettie Rout, 1921

#### **Introduction**

Segregation and institutionalisation were typical aspects of the eugenic programme of reform, both internationally, and in New Zealand. Women's organisation's such as the NCW, the WCTU and the SPWC were advocates of environmental eugenic reform, believing controlled domestic environments, such as special schools and farm colonies, could have positive reformatory effects on the vagaries of bad birth and bad homes. Starting with an examination of institutionalisation in New Zealand, followed by an examination of the relationship between the NCW and farm colonies, moving to the specific, with a case study of Templeton Farm School, and a brief account of special schools for the 'subnormal', this chapter explores the importance of familial ideology and 'home' to feminist, eugenicist and state support for the provision of segregation as a tool of race betterment.

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<sup>1</sup> Ettie Rout speaking at a Kennington display of Physical Culture, *Health and Strength*, 29 October 1921, MSZ-0594 (ATL).

### **The Institution in New Zealand**

Three important events, the 1924 Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders; Dr. Theodore Gray's 1927 report 'Mental Deficiency and its Treatment'; and the 1928 Mental Defectives Amendment Act, reflect eugenic panic about the quality of the population, and increased government intervention as a strategy to curtail defect and hence, the decline of the race. The 1924 Inquiry illustrates the paranoia that surrounded mental deficiency at the time, particularly in the way it linked mental defect with sexual offending.<sup>2</sup> The 1925 Report of the Inquiry recommended conservative reform through segregation, and the establishment of a Eugenics Board for the compulsory registration of defectives, which allowed for their continued monitoring and supervision when not in an institution.<sup>3</sup> This included cases of boarding out, placement into service as domestics or farm hands, and total release into the community with the supervision of an after care association. "Multiplication of the unfit" was cited as a serious menace to the future welfare of the dominion, while the promotion of healthy diet and nutrition, encouragement of parenthood by the best stock and segregation were put forward as solutions to current social problems.<sup>4</sup>

It was the institution, rather than sterilisation, that was to dominate in New Zealand. Evidence to the 1924 Inquiry supported the institution as a eugenic tool. Robert Stout, member of the Prisons Board and the Chief Justice, in his opening address suggested that "those who are mentally deficient should be kept at some State institution and not allowed to breed".<sup>5</sup> The 1925 Annual Report of

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<sup>2</sup> Philip Fleming, "Eugenics in New Zealand, 1900-1940", (MA, Massey University, 1981), p.13.

<sup>3</sup> Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, *AJHR*, H-31A, 1925, p.23.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.5-6.

<sup>5</sup> Evidence of Robert Stout to the 1924 Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, p.1, H 3/13, (NA).

the Mental Hospitals Department restated the aims and objectives of the 1925 Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives, and similarly promoted the ideal use of the institution in New Zealand.

Institutional care is necessary for mentally defective persons whose helplessness or anti-social traits would render them either the victims of the unscrupulous or a menace to society. Such individuals should be segregated into farm and industrial colonies, so that not only is the community freed from the responsibility of their presence, but they themselves are afforded the opportunity of leading much happier and more useful lives, and of becoming, to some extent, self-supporting.<sup>6</sup>

At this time, Truby King was head of the Mental Hospitals Department, and with his reputation as a maternal and baby care expert, symbolised the emphasis on familial ideology and 'home'.

The rhetoric of humanitarian concern was further expanded upon by Theodore Gray's 1927 report. Recommendations were along similar lines to the 1924 Inquiry, with a Eugenics Board recommended to take over responsibility for the care of the feeble-minded. The objectives were to discourage and prevent procreation of the unfit, and to render defectives as socially adequate as possible, thereby lessening their burden on society.<sup>7</sup> Institutions where inmates were to be trained were identified as preventive rather than custodial.<sup>8</sup> The ultimate aim was a patient's return to the community. Distinction was made between the roles, principles and goals of institutional care. Segregation for custodial and preventive purposes was regarded as very different from the roles of residential institutions, whose purpose was the training of residents, and possible return to the community.<sup>9</sup> It was envisaged that Templeton Farm Colony was to be modelled on the ideals of the residential institution.

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<sup>6</sup> *AJHR*, H-7, 1925, p.11.

<sup>7</sup> Theodore Gray, 'Mental Deficiency and its Treatment', *AJHR*, H-7A, 1927, p.7.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

Segregation allowed for the environment, as well as heredity to be acknowledged as the cause of degeneracy. The 1920s were the height of preoccupation with racial decline, and implicated were those who were degenerates – morally, physically and intellectually - as central agents of imperial and racial degeneration. Aligned with eugenic focus on racial fitness, was the development of strategies to identify defect among the young, such as the School Medical Service, as well as legislative provision in favour of institutional care, with an emphasis on education and training.<sup>10</sup> By controlling the fertility of the ‘unfit’, eugenicists believed that the current state of racial degeneration would be arrested. As a result, the 1920s and 1930s were home to a proliferation of institutional environments designed either to be custodial or sites of social reform. Institutions of the time, outside of prisons and asylums, included Industrial Schools for boys and girls; Probation Homes; Training Farms; Residential Special Schools and Borstal Training Institutions.<sup>11</sup> The majority of these institutions were aimed at the training of children or adolescents where the “maximum of production and a minimum of reproduction” was the underlying philosophy in producing the reformed citizen.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout the 1920s, the Annual Report of the Mental Hospitals Department, Education Department and *Parliamentary Debates* highlighted the need for reform in each department that was aligned with humanity, economics and racial fitness. Segregation was justified on three grounds of national efficiency. First, the cost would be greater to society if nothing was done, since as a source of crime and immorality defectives constituted a burden on society and the taxpayer; second, on humanitarian grounds, the need to protect society

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<sup>10</sup> Margaret Tennant, “Disability in New Zealand: An Historical Survey”, *New Zealand Journal of Disability Studies*, 2, 1996, p.12.

<sup>11</sup> *AJHR*, H-7A 1927, p.14.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

from those deemed 'unfit' and to protect the 'unfit' from society; and third on eugenic grounds, as a strategy to preserve the quality of the race.<sup>13</sup> Women's groups used similar reasoning to justify the institutionalisation of selected social groups. Fanny McHugh's evidence to the 1924 Inquiry epitomised the three goals of race betterment, humanity and social justice.

They should be kept, as much as possible, out in the open, say in farm colonies, where, under wise and kindly treatment, and training, they may be in the majority of cases at least, become self-supporting, and lead comparatively happy lives, and, by being segregated, prevented from reproducing their kind. If this could be done, I see no reason why this awful menace could not be eliminated, the betterment of the race secured, and the State relieved of a very heavy burden.<sup>14</sup>

It was better to place the unfit on self-sufficient farm colonies, than in barrack-like institutions, where they could be trained to be useful citizens and therefore no longer be a burden on society.

In 1920s New Zealand, the villa system was considered the ideal substitute for the barrack-like institution, which was perceived as a product of a less enlightened age.

. . . instead of placing the unfortunate people under great restraint, in buildings which resemble barracks or prisons, we have modified our views both as to the architecture of the required institutions and the treatment of mental diseases, and are developing along the line of villa residence or small neuropathic hospitals. We have the patients classified into various phases of mental disability, and they are being housed in accordance with modern ideas on the humane treatment of the mentally afflicted.<sup>15</sup>

By the 1960s the farm colony, or villa system was being described as the typical expression of the mental hospital in New Zealand. It was stated that:

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<sup>13</sup> S. Robertson, "'Production not Reproduction': The Problem of Mental Defect in New Zealand, 1900-1939" (MA, University of Otago, 1989), p.95.

<sup>14</sup> Evidence of Mrs Fanny McHugh, Health Patrol Officer and Wellington Social Worker, p.85, H 3/13, (NA). See the evidence of Sister Hannah of the NCW, p.144 and Miss Isabel Howlett, NCW and WCTU, pp.625-630 for similar sentiments, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>15</sup> *NZPD*, Vol.217, 1928, p.897.



The typical New Zealand mental hospital is of a villa design with a community centre, small in size and open in policy with a minimal number of closed villas. It is set in well laid out grounds, with a sports area, overlooked by the library, canteen and a recreation hall in which there are activities five or six times a week. This is an architectural expression of the concept of a therapeutic community – far removed from the “monumental” character of so many overseas mental hospitals.<sup>16</sup>

The ideology for the farm colony and villa system derived from two sources. First, Theodore Gray, Director of Mental Hospitals from 1927-1948, spent his early years as a doctor in Scotland working on farm colonies built along the lines of the villa system. The advantages of the villa system, suggested Theodore Gray, included an absence of gloom associated with institutional buildings; lack of stigma of the asylum; better classification according to mental state; open and closed villas for the maximum of liberty and an absence of enclosed yards.<sup>17</sup> Second, Gray’s 1927 Report supported the establishment of the farm colony and villa system in New Zealand. The report was based on a tour of mental institutions in Britain, Europe and North America. After visiting the Letchworth, Waverly, Wrentham and Vineland residential and training schools in America; the Manor, Moneyhill, Darenth Colony, Calderstones institutions in England; Kirkintilloch, Baldoven and Stoneyettes in Scotland; and Wittennau in Germany, Gray found that the villa and colony system utilised in America and Britain afforded the best method of classification and treatment of the ‘mentally defective’.<sup>18</sup>

The classification of mental defects into a number of classes had a role in deciding what types of institutions were needed, and who were to be placed in them. The correct treatment and adequate housing of delinquents and mental defectives, stated Dr. Mildred Staley in evidence to the 1924 Inquiry, was a

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<sup>16</sup> *AJHR* H-31, 1961, p.58.

<sup>17</sup> Theodore Gray, *The Very Error of the Moon*, (Ilfracombe, A.H Stockwell, 1959), pp.64-65.

<sup>18</sup> *AJHR*, H-7A, 1927, p.12.

matter that “depends on proper classification”.<sup>19</sup> The NCW and WCTU considered correct classification particularly essential within the institution, as a measure to prevent the moral corruption of the feeble-minded, who were “morally sound, sweet in disposition, and with no unhealthy sex instincts”, by those with a less savoury disposition.<sup>20</sup> In New Zealand, ‘mental defectives’ was the umbrella term under which six classes of defect were defined along axes of physical, moral and intellectual abnormality. The 1911 Mental Defectives Act classification of defectives included “Idiots; Imbeciles; Persons of Unsound Mind; Feeble-minded; Epileptics and Persons Mentally Infirm”.<sup>21</sup> However, there was a belief that some groups of defectives, labelled the social or moral defective, were being overlooked due to inadequate classification under the law.

The 1928 Mental Defectives Amendment Act attempted, but failed to, legislate for sterilisation. It did, however, succeed in introducing a new classification of defect, tentatively termed the “social defective”, not dissimilar to the recommendation of moral defective by the 1924 Inquiry. The origins of this term can be traced to the 1913 Mental Deficiency Bill in England, where moral imbecile was the preferred term.<sup>22</sup> A contentious category, it was nonetheless passed in parliament. Considered to be a well-known source of danger to the community, the social defective included categories of people who did not fit into the classes of mental defect outlined under the 1911 Act.<sup>23</sup> Regarded as anti-social, “often their delinquencies take the form of sneak thieving; purposeless mischief for instance, silly practical jokes involving danger to life; incendiarism;

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<sup>19</sup> Evidence of Dr. Mildred Staley, p.136, H 3/13, (NA). The importance of correct classification was also emphasised by John Caughley, Director of Education, pp.16-17, 19-20, Miss Ralston, Matron of Caversham Industrial School for Girls, p.465, and Julia Cardale, pp.530-536, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>20</sup> Evidence of Miss Isabel Howlett to the 1924 Inquiry, representing the NCW and WCTU, p.627, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>21</sup> *AJHR* H-7A, 1927, p.1.

<sup>22</sup> *AJHR*, H-31A, 1925, p.17.

<sup>23</sup> *NZPD*, Vol.219, 1928, p.635.

interference with the safety of railways; and an utter absence of responsibility towards society".<sup>24</sup> As in the 1924 Inquiry, case histories were cited as proof of their cost to the state and their burden on society.<sup>25</sup> Debate over the term was marked by the implications it was seen to have. The term 'social defective' was considered more appropriate than 'moral defective', as the latter term implied sexual abnormality, and it was stated, "we do not like to label and treat these people as though they were sexual cases, because the sexual feature may be merely an incident in their general lack of self-control".<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, sexuality played a significant role in defining those appropriate for segregation and institutionalisation.

The 'classes', or 'types', recommended for institutional control, were wide-ranging, and demarcated by gender, age and reason for committal. Linda Mahood and Barbara Littlewood suggest that institutionalisation, and its requisite conceptions of delinquency, rested upon gendered and sexualised identities that were subject to conflict and reinterpretation.<sup>27</sup> Bronwyn Dalley suggests that, in reference to Te Oranga, reformatories must be seen in their historical context, noting that Te Oranga's establishment coincided with public concern over the role of women in society and eugenic ideas of racial fitness and supremacy.<sup>28</sup> Like Jill Julius Matthews and Nicole Hahn Rafter, Dalley asserts that the eugenic institution, in its management and social role (protection and/or punishment), was closely allied to ideals of femininity and true womanhood.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *NZPD*, Vol.217, 1928, p.608.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.605-611.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.608.

<sup>27</sup> Linda Mahood and Barbara Littlewood, "The "Vicious" Girl and the "Street-Corner" Boy: Sexuality and the Gendered Delinquent in the Scottish Child-saving Movement, 1850-1940", *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 4(4), 1994, p.551.

<sup>28</sup> Bronwyn Dalley, "From Demi-Mondes to Slaveys: A Study of the Te Oranga Reformatory for Delinquent Women, 1900-1918", (MA, Massey University, 1987), p.9.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11; Jill Julius Matthews, *Good and Mad Women: the historical construction of femininity in twentieth century Australia*, (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1984); Nicole Hahn Rafter, "Chastizing the Unchaste: Social Control Functions of a Woman's Reformatory, 1894-1931", in

Bronwyn Dalley's analysis of committals to Te Oranga between 1900 and 1918, suggests a legitimisation of the double moral standard, with an emphasis on morality in the institutionalisation of young women and, criminal behaviour for young men. Of 202 girls admitted between this time period, 32.1% were committed for criminal offences, 60.3% for moral offences such as destitution, vagrancy, begging, being uncontrollable and associating with disreputable persons, while 1.4% were admitted by agreement between the parents and the Education Department.<sup>30</sup> Women were more likely to be admitted to reformatories and institutions for reasons of promiscuity, while men were admitted more often for socially dangerous and criminal behaviour.<sup>31</sup>

Youthful female sexual delinquency was associated in 1924 with the dangers of puberty, with John Caughley, Director of Education, stating that, "after the age of puberty there is a very great danger, especially to the girls, even in the very best of homes".<sup>32</sup> Caughley provided the reasoning for women's institutionalisation based on moral rather than criminal offences. Feeble-minded girls needed protection from society, and society needed protection from their sexual conduct. John Beck emphasised the dangers of the over-sexed feeble-minded girl when he suggested in 1918 that feeble-minded girls were unable to be educated, were uncontrollable, produced large families of defective children, were increasing the population pool of defectives in the country, and thus threatened the survival of the 'race'.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, the 1922 Venereal Disease Inquiry singled out the amateur prostitute for eugenic control, while the feeble-minded girl was identified as a sexual threat to the nation in the 1924 Inquiry.

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Stanley Cohen and Andrew Scull (eds), *Social Control and the State: Historical and Comparative Essays*, (Oxford, Martin Robertson, 1983), pp.288-311 and Rafter, *Creating Born Criminals*, (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1997).

<sup>30</sup> Dalley, 1987, p.111.

<sup>31</sup> Rafter, 1983, p.291.

<sup>32</sup> Evidence of John Caughley to the 1924 Committee of Inquiry, p.16, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>33</sup> *AJHR*, E-1, 1918, p.71.

Thus, female adolescent sexuality came to be seen as a problem needing containment and control. The institution, especially the reformatory, functioned to suppress undesirable sexual behaviour, and at the same time, recast the girls in the mould of ideal womanhood.<sup>34</sup> Environmental eugenics operated to produce a gendered and sexualised delinquent, one where the ideology of separate spheres, separate but complementary roles for men and women, were evident.<sup>35</sup>

Along with women, children and adolescents were also targets of institutional provision in the form of farm colonies, residential special schools and reformatories. Mentally defective adolescents were of particular concern to the 1922 Inquiry, and Section 9 of the report was devoted to suggestions of their threat to the country, and made recommendations for their classification and segregation. In particular, women were singled out for control as “a tendency to lead dissolute lives is especially noticeable in the females belonging to this unfortunate class”.<sup>36</sup> WDFU member Nina Barrer suggested that the benefits of environmental reform provided by institutions were at their height during childhood. Taking a lifecycle approach to her argument, Barrer suggested that environmental reform decreased in its effectiveness as one aged, arguing the “simpler types are most effected” by the provision of environmental eugenic reform.<sup>37</sup> Childhood, she reasoned, provided the earliest and thus, the best opportunity for intervention and reform. The site for this reform was centred upon farm colonies, with evidence to the 1924 Inquiry emphasising the healthy outdoor occupation and happiness they could provide for children. Dr. Clark, School Medical Officer, supported the provision of farm colonies for defective

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<sup>34</sup> Michelle Cale, ‘Girls and the Perceptions of Sexual Danger in the Victorian Reformatory System’, *History*, 78(253), 1993, p.202.

<sup>35</sup> Mahood and Littlewood, pp.555-557.

<sup>36</sup> *AJHR*, H-31A, 1922, p.22.

<sup>37</sup> Nina Barrer, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency in New Zealand*, (Wellington, WDFU, 1934), p.21.

children. In evidence to the 1924 Inquiry, he suggested a new society could be provided for them in a farm colony, one that they could adjust to and where “they can be made bright and happy”.<sup>38</sup> Each institutional environment, especially the farm colony, targeted children because of the belief in the ability to re/produce within them the ideal child.

Classification, for segregation and treatment, was crucial to successful institutionalisation. Success was regarded as control, containment, prevention of reproduction, and the possibility of education and reform. The 1922 Venereal Disease Inquiry included in its conclusion a recommendation that:

supervision of mentally defective children and adolescents is an important factor in lessening venereal disease, and urge the government as soon as possible to adopt a system of registration and classification of mental defectives, and of segregation where necessary, either in mental hospitals or in special institutions where these defectives may be suitably taught, and, where possible, usefully employed to defray the cost of their maintenance.<sup>39</sup>

Six years later, the 1928 Mental Defectives Amendment Act, replicating the recommendations of Theodore Gray’s 1927 Report, represented the practical application of the suggestions by the Education, Health, Justice and Mental Health Department’s and women’s organisations for increased classification and control. Minister of Health, William Young, suggested the principle of the 1928 Act was to bring under control those outside the traditional definition of mental defect, thus implying the significance of adequate classification for treatment and reform.<sup>40</sup> The 1928 Mental Defectives Amendment Act also reorganised the Mental Hospitals Department, amending the process of admission and designating the head of the department as Director-General of Mental Hospitals.<sup>41</sup> Changes to admission were intended to remove the public stigma

<sup>38</sup> Evidence of Dr. Clark, p.9, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>39</sup> *AJHR*, H-31A, 1922, p.21.

<sup>40</sup> Mr. W.A. Young, ‘Mental Defectives Amendment Act, 1928’, H-MHD 1 4/4/0, (NA).

<sup>41</sup> *NZPD*, vol. 217, 1928, p.606.

associated with mental disability. No longer did an individual have to be brought before a Magistrate for admission, instead two certificates from independent doctors could accompany an application to the Medical Superintendent, making not only the process of committal easier but less public.<sup>42</sup> The Act also allowed for the creation of new institutions designed for the care, treatment and training of those classified as defective. These new institutions, which could take the form of farm colonies, based on either a cottage or villa system, were associated with the changing aims of treatment contained in the 1928 Act, ones that centred on treatment and cure: “comfort and reasonable occupation and care, if curable, are the aims”.<sup>43</sup>

The 1928 Act was the culmination of a decade of lobbying by officials of the Education and Mental Hospital Departments. Recommendations of both the 1922 Venereal Disease Inquiry, and the 1924 Mental Defectives Inquiry, called for increased state intervention in people’s lives, resulting in legislation that would introduce mechanisms for the better identification and classification of the unfit. In institutions, women’s groups, the medical profession and politicians found that mental defect could be controlled, while at the same time decreasing her or his economic burden on the community, through the therapeutic value of work and environment.<sup>44</sup> It was within this atmosphere that the NCW gave support to the farm colony as a model of environmental eugenic reform. This was the era in which Templeton Farm School was established.

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.608.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p.606. See speech notes of Mr. W.A. Young, ‘Mental Defectives Amendment Act, 1928’, H-MHD 1 4/4/0, (ATL), where he suggests that the Act is the epitome of a new attitude towards the mentally ill. In particular, he suggests that the feeble-minded are ‘curable not sick’ and capable of being trained which assures them of some happiness and self-sufficiency.

<sup>44</sup> *The Press*, 18/11/1927, p.14.

### The National Council of Women and the Farm Colony

Increasing interest in the potential for 'saving' children and women from a life of crime, ill-health and poverty, through institutionalisation, in the interwar period, was not new. Pre-World War One and into the interwar period, women's organisations, in particular the NCW (who went into recess in 1906) and the WCTU promoted the farm colony as the ideal restricted environment. It was not only the Education, Health and Child Welfare Departments and their 'experts'<sup>45</sup> who saw the need to construct within the institutional setting the 'model' home environment. The NCW, the WCTU and the SPWC had, from the late nineteenth century, considered the farm colony as an ideal domestic setting for reform.<sup>46</sup> Segregation on farm colonies was the option supported in the main by women's organisations, and was predicated upon the ideal that, "every effort should be made to create around the child the real home atmosphere and the real spirit of happy childhood".<sup>47</sup> These ideals introduce not only a narrative concerning the ideal home, but one centred upon shifting definitions of childhood. Childhood was meant to be happy and innocent, and in institutions this was exaggerated, at least in the rhetoric. Those who transgressed the boundaries of innocent childhood by their knowledge of sex and visible sexuality, usually the mentally defective adolescent girl, were generally institutionalised, where an attempt was made to transform them into 'reborn' children.<sup>48</sup> Farm colonies offered potential reformative qualities, and laid emphasis on the promotion of happiness and the potential for constructing the reformed citizen from the unfit body.

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<sup>45</sup> See Bronwyn Dalley, *Family Matters: Child Welfare in Twentieth-Century New Zealand*, (Wellington, Historical Branch with Auckland University Press, 1998), for the Child Welfare Department's 'expert' discourse on institutionalisation.

<sup>46</sup> On the early history of NCW see Roberta Nicholls, *The Women's Parliament: The National Council of Women of New Zealand, 1896-1920*, (Wellington, Victoria University Press, 1996).

<sup>47</sup> Evidence of Miss Isabel Howlett, p.630, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>48</sup> On the importance of childhood to the gendered institutionalisation of children and adolescents see Michelle Cale, 1993, 201-217, Linda Mahood and Barbara Littlewood, 1994, 549-578, and Bronwyn Dalley, 1998.



It was not simply segregation and institutionalisation that was supported by women's groups. It was the institution that promised the most homelike qualities, and thus, was perceived by the NCW, the SPWC and the WCTU as having the greatest potential to reform the 'unfit'. These women's groups supported the segregation of a variety of social groups, including mentally defective girls, moral degenerates, sexual offenders and feeble-minded children. In 1923, remits were received from the Auckland, Wellington, Hamilton and Gisbourne branches of the NCW supporting the segregation of women offenders, epileptics, degenerates and the feeble-minded on farm colonies, along with the segregation of sexual degenerates and perverts.<sup>49</sup> The SPWC supported the need "of better methods of control of the feeble-minded", suggesting the provision of farm colonies "for lazy heads of families", and the segregation of mentally deficient girls in a home.<sup>50</sup> Statements to the 1924 Inquiry by women urged the segregation of feeble-minded children, delinquents, mental defectives and sex offenders, epileptics and imbeciles, over-sexed adolescent girls, and the feeble-minded mother.<sup>51</sup> All groups targeted for segregation would improve, it was suggested, in a farm colony.

The NCW provided their own environmental eugenics to support the institutionalisation of the unfit. At the first Annual Conference of the NCW in 1919, delegates urged the government to establish separate farm colonies for the detention of male and female degenerates, who the NCW classified in 1921 as defective girls with illegitimate children, male sex offenders, and men guilty of

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<sup>49</sup> NCW Branch Meeting, 30 July 1923, MB 126, NCW (Christchurch Branch), 5a, Minute Book, 1917-1922, (MBL).

<sup>50</sup> 'To Protect the Weak', and 'SPWC Annual Meeting', MB 309, Home and Family Society, Series B1, Minutes of AGM, 1923-1947, (MBL).

<sup>51</sup> Evidence of Winnifred Valentine, teacher, p.66, and Miss Barlow, Teacher of Special Classes, p.74, Dr. Mildred Staley, p.136 and Ellen Hunt, Matron of Addington Reformatory, p.561, Sister Hannah, NCW, p.144, Miss Ralston, Matron Caversham Industrial School for Girls, p.466, Alice Edwards, Manager of the Christchurch Receiving Home, p.632, H 3/13, (NA).

underage sexual intercourse.<sup>52</sup> The WCTU suggested farm colonies were the most appropriate site for the segregation of the feebleminded. Here they could be “cared for, and their lives surrounded with wholesome comfort and pleasure”; they could find employment enabling them to earn part of their maintenance; they could carry out the pursuits of gardening, farming, fruit growing, poultry raising, beekeeping under supervision; and women could be trained in laundry work and other indoor occupations such as the preserving and bottling of fruit grown on the colony by male inmates, providing the residents with an imagined domestic life.<sup>53</sup> Thus, farm homes, provided by the state and graded to suit, were perceived by the WCTU to provide the perfect environment for domestic reform and the perfect cause to which the domestic virtues of women could be lent.

The farm colony derived the greatest support from women because of the qualities and characteristics seen in the case study of Templeton Farm School; those of happiness, self-sufficiency and ‘good service’.<sup>54</sup> Dividing the feebleminded into three grades, consisting of the idiot, the imbecile and the moron, *Kai Tiaki* considered the farm colony to be the most appropriate site where “education and environment can often keep morons from going wrong and make them into useful citizens”.<sup>55</sup> Institutionalisation, it was suggested, was the only option if upon investigation of the home, such an environment was found wanting. The institution provided the only hope for future improvement: “Segregation means the formation of colonies or institutions where the children can be trained in domestic and industrial and manual work, and where the harder problems of life will not come to them, but where they can work and do as much

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<sup>52</sup> cited in Shelley Griffiths, “Feminism and the Ideology of Motherhood in New Zealand, 1896-1930”, (MA, University of Otago, 1984), p.246.

<sup>53</sup> *WR*, 18 January 1918, p.9.

<sup>54</sup> The benefits of institutional care are outlined in an interview with Jean Begg concerning her appointment to the Eugenics Board in *Bulletin*, v.1, n.1, February 1929, p.2, MS-Papers-1376-05, (ATL).

<sup>55</sup> *KT*, 15 July 1930, p.190.

as they are capable of doing and so live comfortably and happily”.<sup>56</sup> A narrative on ‘good home life’ was central to women’s support for the detention of a number of social groups on farm colonies.

In response to pressure placed on them by women’s groups, the Education Department reopened Te Oranga reformatory in 1927 for girls with anti-social tendencies.<sup>57</sup> In an attempt to make it more home-like, members of the NCW organised and attended dances, parties and musical evenings at the institution, as well as giving gifts, and reporting on its design and landscaping.<sup>58</sup> In an effort to bring happiness and homelife to the girls at Te Oranga, the YWCA’s Sunshine Club visited the Home in 1935, and entertained them with a social evening.<sup>59</sup> Further qualities needed in the construction of the model institution included outdoor work and domestic activities. Gardening, orchard work, recreation, dancing and singing in institutions such as Te Oranga, were designed “to make their lives sweet, orderly and useful”.<sup>60</sup> The belief in the advantage of domestication for anti-social, feeble-minded and defective women, argues Bronwyn Dalley, is contradictory, considering that the models and virtues of domesticity they were to emulate were isolated from them.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, ideals of reform were built upon middle-class imaginings of a ‘good home life’.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p.191. The emphasis on happiness is an important part of the rhetoric of segregation on farm colonies and can be seen in the evidence of Fanny McHugh, Health Patrol Officer, to the 1924 Inquiry, p.85, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>57</sup> Tracey Tulloch, “State Regulation of Sexuality in New Zealand, 1880-1925”, (PhD, University of Canterbury, 1997), p.342.

<sup>58</sup> See NCW Minutes, Christchurch Branch, 10 February 1927, 24 February 1927, 1 December 1927, MB 126, NCW (Christchurch Branch), 5c, Minute Book 1925-1930, (MBL).

<sup>59</sup> *The Blue Triangle*, Vol. 1, No. 6, 1 October 1935, p.7, Z Arch 112, Series 3, Box 12, YWCA Annual Reports c.1887-1980, (CPL).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p.25.

<sup>61</sup> Bronwyn Dalley, “Prisons without Men: The Development of a Separate Women’s Prison in New Zealand”, *NZJH*, 27(1), April 1993, p.48.

Margaret Tennant states that because the home is an ideological construct, its definition and terms of reference were ones that shifted, allowing the home to be perceived as both a source of reform and a site of degeneracy.<sup>62</sup> It was reference to these shifting connotations of home that arguments concerning the bad home were made by a number of witnesses to the 1924 Inquiry. Winifred Valentine, a teacher, suggested that a child with a feebleminded parent meant “a sordid home, ill-prepared meals, and an uncertain atmosphere”.<sup>63</sup> Annie Herbert, Christchurch social worker, went further, describing the home life of children with a feebleminded mother as “nothing but poverty, filth and neglected children. The children suffer terribly. They never know what it is like to have a proper meal, are never bathed, are generally lying on filthy beds and covered with old dirty coats and sacks”.<sup>64</sup> Supervision over leisure time was offered as a solution to troublesome and delinquent children. Clubs, evening classes and “a good home life”, were considered to be the greatest needs of the feebleminded girl.<sup>65</sup> The care and supervision that the mentally defective were perceived to need, was to be supplied by substituting ideal home life, in the boundaries of the institution.

Defining the good and bad home took into account where it was situated geographically, its inhabitants, its architectural encasing and the tone of its atmosphere. Concern with overcrowded homes is evident in both the Reports of the 1922 Venereal Disease and 1924 Mental Defectives Inquiries. The 1922 Venereal Disease Committee suggested that bad housing or overcrowding in restricted accommodation, was a factor in increased immorality and, thus, the spread of venereal disease.<sup>66</sup> The solution was segregation, and the material

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<sup>62</sup> Tennant, 2000, p.24.

<sup>63</sup> Evidence of Winnifred Valentine, Teacher, p.66; Similar sentiments are made by Alice Edwards, Manager of the Christchurch Receiving Home to the 1924 Inquiry, p.632, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>64</sup> Evidence of Annie Elizabeth Herbert, Social Worker, p.552, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>65</sup> Evidence of Fanny McHugh, Health Patrol Officer, p.89, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>66</sup> *AJHR*, H-31A, 1922, p.12.

improvement of surroundings, particularly within the city. With this in mind, town planning had at its core the principle of moral and racial betterment. Discussion of the 1926 Town Planning Act in Parliament emphasised the physical and moral improvement engendered by “an environment of beauty and comfort”.<sup>67</sup> Like the farm colony, which was situated away from the degenerative effects of the city, the rhetoric of town planning emphasised the importance of the right environment “for the rearing of a generation of worthy men and women”.<sup>68</sup> The farm colony introduced a narrative on the ‘bad’ home, while town planning was infused with, suggest Penny Isaac and Eric Olssen, a discourse on the slum.<sup>69</sup> Cleaning up cities and re/producing the ideal home were infused with ideals of cleanliness, whiteness, and moral purity, with the aim of generating a racially fine stock, free of disease and moral and social degeneration.

The environment, like Canada and Australia, as a place of reform and a place of degeneracy (the home), played a crucial role in eugenic thought in New Zealand. Supervision by Education and Health Departments in the form of the School Medical Service, School Dental Service, and the monitoring of home life by agents of the Child Welfare Department, consolidated the significance of the home, as both a place of reform and a breeder of degeneracy. In the rhetoric of state officials such as John Beck, Theodore Gray and Truby King, the home environment was cited as complicit in creating and preventing the rearing of degenerate children. Their support for environmental reform, at the same time as

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<sup>67</sup> *NZPD*, Vol.210, 1926, p.727.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p.728.

<sup>69</sup> Penny Isaac and Erik Olssen, “The Justification for Labour’s Housing Scheme: The Discourse of ‘the Slum’”, in Barbara Brookes (ed), *At Home in New Zealand: History, Houses, People*, (Wellington, Bridget Williams Books, 2000), pp.107-124. Mariana Valverde also addresses the emphasis of reformers on the need to morally reform the city, Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*, (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1991).

proposing the benefits of sterilisation, attests to the need to see eugenics as a spectrum, where people placed themselves and views according to the situation.<sup>70</sup> According to King, a number of environmental possibilities lay behind social, physical, mental and national decay. Among those cited included poor nutrition, bad home management, inappropriate education for girls, lessened exercise, lessened contact with the open air, the growing cost in the standard of living, as well as a perceived increased selfishness in women expressed in a disinclination for marriage and motherhood.<sup>71</sup> Truby King suggested that it was the responsibility of the State to provide for the well-being of the race because, “the stability, health, and sanity of the population of every country must always rest mainly with the people themselves – primarily with the home and parents, and the training, rearing and education of the children on sound lines, whatever part the State may play in school education”.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, an article in *Kai Tiaki* warned that in the interests of public health, strategies of eugenic control should be assumed by the State, because “every feeble-minded woman is a potential prostitute”.<sup>73</sup>

Very little in terms of explicit written eugenic policy, in its hereditarian form, such as sterilisation, was developed in New Zealand. The 1928 Mental Defectives Amendment Act, which attempted to legalise sterilisation of the unfit, did establish the institution as the most favoured form of eugenic policy among government officials and women’s groups. A wide range of institutions were established in the first three decades of the twentieth century, not only as forms of incarceration, but as tools of classification and treatment. In Christchurch, three institutions were designed for specific classes of youthful and adult deviant.

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<sup>70</sup> Stephen Garton, “Sound Minds and Healthy Bodies: Re-considering Eugenics in Australia, 1914-1940”, *Australian Historical Studies*, 26(103), October 1994.

<sup>71</sup> Truby King, *Feeding and Care of Baby* (Christchurch, Whitcombe and Tombs, 1937), p.224.

<sup>72</sup> *AJHR*, H-7, 1926, p.7.

<sup>73</sup> *KT*, 15 July 1930, p.191.

Te Oranga Girls Reformatory, built in 1900, closed in 1918 and reopened in 1927 as Te Oranga Home, was designed for delinquent girls with anti-social tendencies. Templeton Farm School, built in 1927 and opened in 1929, housed the “low grade feebleminded” and “high grade imbeciles”, and the Addington Women’s Reformatory, established in 1913, the first women’s prison in the country, remained for the more criminal and immoral women. Women’s groups put their faith in state provision of eugenic facilities, believing that institutions acted as tools of reform, generating in the female sexual deviant, a more moral character and higher evolved sense of citizenship.

#### **Templeton Farm School: the institutionalisation of the body**

Located south of Christchurch, Templeton Farm School was established as a training farm and was not intended, in official discourse, to be a custodial institution.<sup>74</sup> Templeton Farm School was considered a different kind of institution; based on the presence of the ideals of cleanliness, and the order and discipline of the good home environment. The suggestion that Templeton Farm was a ‘home’ and community founded upon the concept of family was an ideal that was reasserted 50 years later. The production of a booklet celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> year promoted those same ideals upon which it was perceived to have been founded. The author suggested that Templeton had become a ‘community’, and that from the beginning of the villa concept of residential accommodation there was present the ideal of the ‘extended family concept’.<sup>75</sup> Thus, within the support for institutionalisation, in particular for feeble-minded and subnormal children, a

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<sup>74</sup> The required function of Templeton Farm, as a training institution, was a short-lived one. See letter to Blanche Baughan from Theodore Gray dated 10/7/1929 where he states Templeton Farm is to be opened for feeble-minded people, “who in most cases to require detention for life”, H-MHD I 4/5/1, (NA).

<sup>75</sup> Brian Shepard, *Fifty Years of Templeton Hospital and Training School, 1929-1979*, (Templeton, Templeton Hospital and Training School, 1979), p.2.

narrative on the good home was established. Founded upon the ideals of the villa system, it was the first training institution of its type in New Zealand; one that was specifically established for handicapped children and known from the 1960s as psychopaedic hospitals. Under the 1928 Act, institutions could be set aside for the specialised care and treatment of the feeble-minded as it was believed that, “supervision under an organized system, will allow us to control the menace arising from the reproduction of the feeble-minded and lessen the incidence of mental deficiency”.<sup>76</sup> Such state schemes of social control were initially designed “to bring each defective to his maximal efficiency in the society in which he will live his life, whether in an institution or in the community under proper supervision”.<sup>77</sup>

The necessity for separate farm colonies for children was justified by state officials on a number of grounds. First, it was claimed there was a high proportion of children 20 years and under, taking up beds in mental hospitals designed for the mentally deficient. In 1920, the total population in New Zealand mental hospitals 20 years and under was 40.09 per cent; this was made up of 31.31 per cent aged under 15 years and 8.78 per cent aged 15 to 20 years of age.<sup>78</sup> The suggestion from the statistics of a highly youthful asylum population necessitated mental hospital reform that included special hospitals for the young defective. This was reinforced by the belief that mental hospitals were considered an inappropriate environment for the reform of the young. Thus, better classification was needed. Moreover, better treatment and better classification

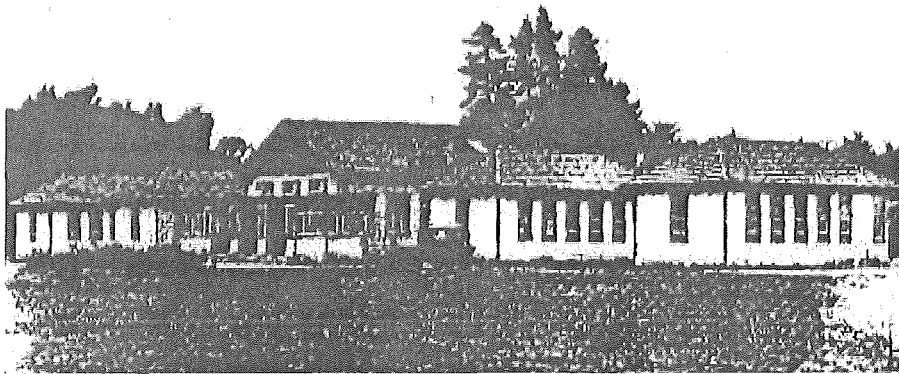
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<sup>76</sup> *NZPD* Vol 217, 1928, pp.608-609.

<sup>77</sup> *AJHR* H-7A, 1927, p.11.

<sup>78</sup> *AJHR* H-7, 1920, p.2.





**Illustration 5. A villa at Templeton Farm School, 1931.**

**Source: *The Press*, 10 January 1931.**

that separation onto special farm colonies could provide, was viewed as a more humane option than residence in mental hospitals.<sup>79</sup> A third justification, was the inability for special residential schools, under the Education Department, to function adequately while uneducable cases were taking up places that ought to be for those that were deemed to be able to profit from a special education programme.

More importantly, there was a perceived need to provide a 'good home' environment for those segregated. The right type of institutional care would not only provide training necessary to fit the young 'defective' for living in harmony with society, it would also domesticate them, training them in the virtues of the good home. The emphasis on domesticity and cleanliness was supported by the statement of Dr. Mildred Staley to the 1924 Inquiry, when she suggested that all institutions be equipped with gymnasias, baths, and schools for manual and trade instruction in order to remold the citizen status of the inmates.<sup>80</sup> Important in such a plan was the removal of children from the 'bad' home, with its "atmosphere of squalor, thriftlessness, alcoholism or vice".<sup>81</sup> The class and raced dimensions of eugenic rhetoric was made clear. The language of inferiority within eugenics is what Etienne Balibar refers to as 'class racism'; the ability for assumptions of race to float free of colour and to be located in language about class that is 'ethnicized'.<sup>82</sup> Class rhetoric is also clear in the juxtaposition of good and bad homes, which were centred in middle-class ideals of family values and domesticated life.

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<sup>79</sup> *AJHR* H-7, 1927, p.7.

<sup>80</sup> Evidence of Dr. Mildred Staley, p.136, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>81</sup> *AJHR*, H-7A, 1927, p.11.

<sup>82</sup> Etienne Balibar, "Class Racism", in Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, (London, Verso, 1991), p.207.

The philosophy behind the establishment of Templeton, in its architectural design and its form of care and treatment, centred on the villa system, and concepts of improvement and social betterment that institutions based on such a design promised society. In a survey of all institutions in New Zealand, Ralph Winterbourn described Templeton in 1944 as, “very attractively laid out, with the cream-red tiled villas set in lawns and gardens.”<sup>83</sup> An idyllic surrounding, combined with the villa system, was meant to reduce the worst aspects of institutionalisation associated with barracks-like accommodation. Winterbourn stated: “The central feature of every villa is a corridor running for the full length giving admission to four dormitories constructed towards the sun, each of which contain twelve beds”.<sup>84</sup> Such a design was considered advantageous, in terms of its environmental possibilities and architectural claims to better health.

The eugenic aspect was evident. One where a spacious, open-air lifestyle was emphasised as a treatment alternative, associated with the ideas of eugenic belief concerning the environmental aspects of racial fitness. It was its therapeutic qualities that made Templeton a different kind of institution. These ideals were closely modeled on the ‘good’ home environment. This is clear in the statement of the Minister of Health, William Young, when he argued, villas “are like well-ordered homes in every way”.<sup>85</sup> According to Young, the government’s duty to the mentally deficient was:

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<sup>83</sup> Ralph Winterbourn, *Educating Backward Children in New Zealand* (Christchurch, Whitcombe and Tombs, 1944), p.302.

<sup>84</sup> *The Press*, 10/1/1931, p.19.

<sup>85</sup> *NZPD*, Vol. 217, 1928, p.607.

... to place them in an environment where with their little comprehension they will not feel their disability; where they will be as happy as possible; where they will be trained for, and engage in, simple enjoyments according to their capacity; where, as children, they will not, by association, prejudice the outlook of their normal brothers and sisters; and where, as adults, they will not have the opportunity to come in conflict with the law or to reproduce their kind.<sup>86</sup>

Thus, the farm colony was an environment where a happy childhood could be maintained while producing self-sufficient citizens.

The villa system correlated with stated policy of the government, which was to abolish prison-like buildings, and to substitute them with small villas where classification could be carried out efficiently.<sup>87</sup> Villas also had the added advantage of allowing for social training in the outdoors. As mental disease was believed to be linked to physical health, Templeton Farm, located in a rural area, offered an ideal healthy lifestyle. To bring patients back to physical health by “ordinary rational living, simple food, exercise in the open air and the sunshine, and encouraging them to take an interest in their surroundings”, which were laid out in pleasant design, was believed to contribute towards the lessened incidence of mental disease.<sup>88</sup> An additional aspect of social training at Templeton Farm School was located within the gardens.

Katherine Raine, in an article on the relationship between colonialism, gender and gardening in New Zealand, suggests the taming of the indigenous landscape through gardening ultimately involved a domestication of space that was particularly associated with women.<sup>89</sup> Gardening was associated with “the role of women as the moral exemplars and guardians of the home”, and as a service to empire, an activity promoted as “physically invigorating, mentally

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<sup>86</sup> *AJHR*, H-7, 1922, p.2.

<sup>87</sup> *NZPD*, Vol.223, 1929, p.273.

<sup>88</sup> *NZPD*, Vol.213, 1927, p.836.

<sup>89</sup> Katherine Raine, ‘Domesticating the Land: Colonial Women’s Gardening’, in Bronwyn Dalley and Bronwyn Labrum (eds), *Fragments: New Zealand social and cultural history*, (Auckland, Auckland University Press, 2000), pp.76-78.

wholesome and even spiritually uplifting”.<sup>90</sup> The garden within the institution was fashioned upon middle-class values, firstly as a form of recreation, secondly as a form of self-sufficiency, and lastly as a means to build and transform character. The farm colony, its landscaping and gardens represent the eugenic preference for what Geoffrey Searle terms ‘rural idyllic’s’, a strain of eugenic thought that believed in the corruption of urbanisation.<sup>91</sup> The landscaped garden rendered a display of civilisation and progress,<sup>92</sup> impressing upon visitors to the institution the humanitarian and progressive aspects of institutional life, while also conveying a sense of home.

Wendy Hunter Williams, in her history of Porirua Hospital, suggests that the ‘hospital estate’, whose management she parallels with the gentleman farmer, had five functions.<sup>93</sup> Made up of the farm, orchard and vegetable garden, the hospital estate provided healthy occupation for the patients; second, it provided food for the hospital; third, it saved expenditure by the interchange of goods and stock with other mental hospitals in the country; fourth, it provided revenue through the sale of stock and goods and; fifth, it allowed the hospital to be self-sufficient and independent from the community, and thus isolated.<sup>94</sup> The farm had both a therapeutic value and was an important avenue of revenue for the hospital. These characteristics of a model farm colony are infused in the narrative of the NCW’s evidence to the 1924 Inquiry. While the NCW acknowledged the need for the commercial aspect, they emphasised the development of good moral character that healthy outdoor activity could generate, the importance of the farm

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p.78 and 80.

<sup>91</sup> Geoffrey Searle, “Eugenics: The Early Years”, R.A. Peel (ed) *Essays in the History of Eugenics*, (London, Galton Institute, 1998), p.32.

<sup>92</sup> Raine, p.87.

<sup>93</sup> Wendy Hunter Williams, *Out of Mind, Out of Sight: The Story of Porirua Hospital*, (Porirua, Porirua Hospital, 1987), p.125.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

colony to producing in the inmate greater self-control, and its guarantee of happiness.<sup>95</sup>

Integral to regaining physical health was gainful employment for inmates. Work provided for the establishment of proper discipline, normal daily habits, and the power of self-direction needed for the independent regulation of their own conduct when outside of an institution.<sup>96</sup> While working, inmates were getting physical exercise, reducing their burden on society through social training, and gaining a degree of independence that prepared them for release into the community as useful citizens.<sup>97</sup> At Templeton, this took the form of a gendered division of labour, with the boys working on the nursery garden, vegetable garden, farm, mowing lawns, in carpentry and the upholstery shop, boot repair shop or painting around the institution, while the girls were confined to cooking, cleaning, sewing, and working in the laundry.<sup>98</sup> Thus:

segregation will be an advantage from all points of view, and will enable these deficient to be trained according to their capacity for improvement. Some can merely be cared for, often by the exercise of infinite patience can be taught to dress and feed themselves, often will progress as far as to assist in the work of the ward, and those of higher grade can be taught to be farm and garden workers or domestics, while the best can be taught to pursue some trade.<sup>99</sup>

The ideals outlined above by Frank Hay, Director of Mental Hospitals, in 1919, project what Nicole Hahn Rafter terms the 'non-coercive institution', one that combined models of hospital and home, where the 'relatively able' would care for the 'less able', and in doing so, contribute to the upkeep of the institution and a recasting of the former's citizenship status from unfit to almost fit.<sup>100</sup> Preparation was for future employment based on their limited capacities. The

<sup>95</sup> Evidence of Sister Hannah, NCW, p.144, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>96</sup> *AJHR* H-7, 1925, p.3 and *AJHR*, H-7, 1922, p.4.

<sup>97</sup> Robertson, p.9.

<sup>98</sup> Winterbourn, p.313.

<sup>99</sup> *AJHR*, H-7, 1919, p.2.

<sup>100</sup> Rafter, 1997, p.42.

work completed by the inmates helped with the upkeep of the institution, making it largely self-sufficient. Work also fostered desirable work habits and independence among the children. In a period marked by concern over national in/efficiency, these ideals lent a veneer of humanitarianism and utilitarianism to eugenic containment.

With the first villa having been built in 1927 to accommodate patients from Sunnyside who were working on the farm, under the control of the newly formed Eugenics Board, Templeton Farm School was established for children unlikely to profit from education in special schools, but were capable of being trained to some degree in manual work.<sup>101</sup> On 19 August 1929, 8 boys aged between 5 and 15 were admitted, followed by 3 girls aged between 17 and 20 on 12 March 1930.<sup>102</sup> On the demise of the Eugenics Board in the early 1930s, control was transferred to the Mental Hospitals Department. Shortly after this transfer, adults were moved into a villa, opened in 1935, at neighbouring Jenkin's Farm, bought by the Mental Hospitals Department in 1929, in response to requests by the WCTU to establish Homes for feeble-minded adults and the recognition that: "Many of the original child inmates are growing into manhood".<sup>103</sup>

Templeton Farm School was one of many institutions established within the interwar years in response to eugenic panic about the reproduction of the feeble-minded. As a eugenic space, institutions like Templeton and its earlier incarnations – the Otekaike School for Feeble-minded Boys and the Richmond School for Feeble-minded Girls – linked domestic, geographic and reproductive images and imposed them upon dysgenic children and later adults. That a racialised domesticity was central to eugenics provided women's organisations

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<sup>101</sup> *AJHR* H-7, 1930, p.4.

<sup>102</sup> Shephard, p.3.

<sup>103</sup> *AJHR* H-7, 1934, p.1; *WR*, 18 February 1934, p.6.

with a means of reform that involved environmental rather than direct hereditary intervention.

### **Special Education, Eugenics and Professionalisation**

The classification of children and adults as feeble-minded conveys the importance of the alliance between eugenics and professionalisation, or the rise of the 'expert'. Through an understanding of the relationship between science, medical knowledge, and the professionalisation of that knowledge within the development of institutions, suggests Bill Luckin, the problematic nature of social reform can be analysed.<sup>104</sup> Angus McLaren suggests that the crystallisation of the category feeble-minded came with the advent of free education, where large numbers of children were subjected to tests, exams and medical inspections, to assess their normality.<sup>105</sup> Similarly, Rob Watts has outlined the sympathy between the ethos of professionalism and eugenics, both numbering in their ranks socially organised and professionally trained women teachers, doctors and nurses.<sup>106</sup> The alliance between eugenics and the rise of the expert is an important one, especially within the context of special education where women's organisations were particularly vocal.

In New Zealand, provision for special schools and classes were explicitly legislated for under the 1914 Education Act.<sup>107</sup> Interest in special education for the 'subnormal' and 'feeble-minded' child, manifested itself in the concerns of women's organisations, for institutions that were reformatory. The NCW spent a great deal of time advocating the correct classification of subnormal children and

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<sup>104</sup> Bill Luckin, 'Towards a social history of institutionalization', *Social History*, 8(1), 1983, p.87.

<sup>105</sup> Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1940*, (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1990), p.91.

<sup>106</sup> Rob Watts, 'Beyond Nature and Nurture: Eugenics in Twentieth Century Australian History', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 40(3), 1994, pp.324-325.

<sup>107</sup> Carol Vincent, "Special Education as Social Control: The historical development of industrial schools and special classes", (MA(Educ), Massey University, 1985), p.84.



the correct provision for them. At the 1919 Annual Conference, the NCW recommended an investigation into the provision of special education in the country, while at the same time suggesting the need for farm colonies for the detention of female and male degenerates.<sup>108</sup> A year later, the Christchurch Branch of the NCW issued their displeasure at the current state of special education, urged an investigation upon 'thorough' lines, and suggested the need for increased classification when stating that, "feeble-minded children should not be associated in institutions with children not similarly afflicted",<sup>109</sup> suggestions that were repeated in 1925, following the release of the Report into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders.

Interest in correct classification was further consolidated by an address explaining the methods of testing the 'backward' and 'mentally retarded' child to the Christchurch Branch of the NCW by Miss Jamieson.<sup>110</sup> Nina Barrer, alarmed at the suggestion of a remit protesting against the classification and segregation of backward children was:

of the opinion that nothing was more discouraging to a child than having to work in competition with a much brighter child. . . . Most educationists agreed that these segregated schools were one of the finest movements of the age, and gave retarded children their opportunity.<sup>111</sup>

Not all at the time considered that the remit was passed in the best interests of the children. In the same year, 1927, a thesis by Alice Avann on the educational

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<sup>108</sup> Dorothy Page, *The National Council of Women: A Centennial History*, (Auckland University Press/ Bridget Williams Books with the NCW, Auckland, 1996), p.60.

<sup>109</sup> NCW Branch Meeting, 27 September 1920, MB 126, 5a, NCW (Christchurch Branch) Minute Book, 1917-1922, and 24 September 1925, 5c, Minute Book, 1925-1930 (MBL). See also the evidence of NCW, Auckland Branch to the 1924 Inquiry, p.145, H 3/13, (NA). Displeasure at the 'half-hearted' approach of the Education Department with regards to special schools was made in 1924, NCW Annual Conference, 1924, p.9, MS-Papers-1371-126, (ATL), and again in 1929, NCW Annual Conference, 1929, p.10, MS-Papers-1376-03, (ATL).

<sup>110</sup> NCW Branch Meeting, 28 April 1924, MB 126, 5b, NCW (Christchurch Branch) Minute Book, 1923-1925. Examination of IQ by the Binet-Simon test was advocated by the NCW for all those committed to Industrial Schools at the 1924 Inquiry, p.144, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>111</sup> WDFU Annual Conference Report, 1927, p.12, 88-175-18/1, (ATL). Similar sentiments were expressed in the evidence of Miss Barlow, Teacher of Special Classes to the 1924 Inquiry, p.74, H 3/13, (NA).

provision for feeble-minded children suggested that the current system was inadequate, supporting women's groups fears concerning the state system of control.<sup>112</sup> Avann's arguments for special education reveal eugenic undertones. The suggestion that special education was a humanitarian exercise, provided for the children to develop their character and mind, was tempered by the suggestion that special classes and schools were essential tools of eugenic population control, acting to "check in some measure the prolific increase in the number of this type".<sup>113</sup> Avann's investigation into special classes and schools, led her to critique the state system of staffing, classification and selection and the inadequate environmental structure of special classes.<sup>114</sup> On these counts the special class was not justified. Avann believed the provision of a special school or colony was justified. It protected the community and produced an individual that "is well-organized, is happier and more useful than if he were left uncared for".<sup>115</sup> Citing five cases from the 1924 Inquiry, Avann suggested causes of 'subnormality' were derived from serious illness, physical infirmity, constant changing of abode and the presence of feeble-mindedness from birth.<sup>116</sup> There was an inference of blame attached to the parents for the presence of 'ineducable' children in the community.

The interest of the NCW in special education, was complemented by those of school doctors in the Annual Reports of the Health Department. The Director of School Hygiene suggested in the 1923 Annual Report that, mental deficiency among school children was rampant, and they would be better provided for in institutions with "simple pleasures and multiple tasks", rather

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<sup>112</sup> Alice Rona Avann, "An Investigation of the Public Provision made for Feeble-minded children in the Dominion of New Zealand", (MA(Educ), University of New Zealand, 1927), p.2.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2 and 18.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.22-31.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p.77. A similar argument is made by Miss Barlow, Teacher of Special Classes, p.74 in evidence to the 1924 Inquiry, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

than trying to compete with normal children.<sup>117</sup> Placement “in an environment less complex and exacting than outside, and in which he will never be made to realize his inferiority”,<sup>118</sup> signifies official support to the extension of segregation to the ‘backward’ or ‘subnormal’.

Further evidence of the alliance between eugenics, professionalism and feminism is supported by women’s advocacy for the formation of a Eugenics Board under the 1928 Mental Defectives Act, comprising of psychological experts for the testing of children for the purpose of classification. In 1934, the WCTU urged the establishment of psychological clinics under the 1928 Act for purposes of scientific treatment of defect.<sup>119</sup> Psychological investigation included an examination of the home environment, consisting of a home visit by a social worker who reported on domestic circumstances adverse to the child, and considered to be the cause of the child’s attendance at the clinic.<sup>120</sup> Social workers, Mrs. Mary Dick of Wellington, a qualified nurse and mother (emphasised by *Kai Tiaki*), and Miss Watkin of Auckland, paid 1021 visits to homes during 1930, under the auspices of the Eugenics Board.<sup>121</sup> Their work echoed that of school medical officers who, “get to know by sight almost every child in their schools, and to know a good deal of each one’s home circumstances and relationships”.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>117</sup> cited in Griffiths, p.247. See also *AJHR*, H-31, 1922, p.31.

<sup>118</sup> *AJHR*, H-7, 1926, p.5.

<sup>119</sup> *WR*, 18 February 1934, p.6. Dr. Mildred Staley listed 5 proposed measures to deal with the mentally defective and delinquent to the Committee Members at the 1924 Inquiry, including a research department and laboratory to diagnose and act as a ‘clearing house’, p.136, and the NCW recommended a register of all ‘feeble-minded’, ‘idiots’, ‘imbeciles’ and ‘epileptics’ not adequately cared for by their families, p.144, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>120</sup> *AJHR*, H-7, 1931, p.4.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, and ‘Mental Defectives Amendment Act, 1928’, *KT*, 2 July 1929, p.134.

<sup>122</sup> *AJHR*, H-31, 1921, p.26.

Likewise, women's organisations supported the recommendations of Gray's Report 'Mental Deficiency and its Treatment'. A discussion of Theodore Gray's 1927 Report at a monthly meeting of the Christchurch Branch of the NCW, resulted in resolutions urging the promotion of legislation along the lines of Gray's recommendations, and in particular, the registration of the feeble-minded, and the establishment of a Eugenics Board.<sup>123</sup> The WCTU stated:

Is it not reasonable to suppose that educated, capable mothers, who have brought up children of their own could give useful help on such a Board. We strongly object to feeble-minded children being handed over to a purely Medical Board. The care of children is women's work, and especially does she lavish love and care upon the feeble ones of the flock, whether mentally or physically feeble. If a Board is set up to deal with these cases we hope that there will be representation of Mothers upon it.<sup>124</sup>

Women advocated a maternalist ideal in their approach to the provision for the segregation of the 'subnormal' from the normal child within the school, and from their homes, in farm colonies and residential special schools. This approach is also prevalent in the staffing of institutions. The WCTU urged that a "villa or home" where "girls or women in mental hospitals could live, and go out to daily employment", needed "suitable women in charge".<sup>125</sup> Training for citizenship required proper management and the right staff. The WCTU and the NCW suggested that the need for correct training of the mentally defective child 'must be undertaken by the right people' who were "experienced in the particular needs of the defective children, sympathetic to their deficiencies, but before all hopeful and sure of the benefit education will bring them".<sup>126</sup> Those segregated spaces where the offender was a woman or child were generally staffed by women in the position of 'Matron'.

<sup>123</sup> NCW Branch Meeting, 5 July 1928, MB 126, 5c, NCW (Christchurch Branch) Minute Book, 1925-1930, (MBL).

<sup>124</sup> *WR*, 18 February 1925, p.10.

<sup>125</sup> *WR*, 18 December 1939, p.6.

<sup>126</sup> Evidence of Miss Isabel Howlett, representing the NCW and WCTU, p.627, H 3/13, (NA).

Officials supported the above arrangement, indicating that women's work in education, training and reform was suited to their superior moral nature and nurturing capacities. Women's voluntary work, suggested the Prisons Board would:

not only redeem many of our weaker sisters and brothers, but would aid in a fuller development of personality and of high aims in those who thus performed a great public service. The giving of such services do by such actions receive their reward, for they themselves are lifted to a higher sphere and become enobled. If our civilization is to be preserved and extended, the after-care and guidance of our offenders cannot be neglected.<sup>127</sup>

The 'mother-like' figure of the matron was considered to be the most appropriate manager of domestic and caring activities within the institution. Women's organisations campaigned for female management of institutions with female and child residents on the grounds that women were the most suitable candidates for working with their own sex and children.<sup>128</sup> This ideal was supported by Isabel Howlett and Fanny McHugh in evidence to the 1924 Inquiry, arguing for the moral force of women within the home and, in particular, the potential for domestic qualities to improve social life and produce the more moral and evolved citizen.<sup>129</sup> Thus, familial ideology, state Mahood and Littlewood, was directly or indirectly produced through the ritual and practices of social institutions, and consequently it could also be embedded within nonfamilial institutions such as reformatories and special schools, where the appropriate feminine and masculine values could be taught to girls and boys outside the structure of the nuclear family.<sup>130</sup> Teaching craft and trades along with the organisational structure of

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<sup>127</sup> *AJHR*, H-20A, 1926, p.4. Charles Matthews of the Prisons Board reiterated this view at the 1924 Inquiry, p.89, H 3/13, (NA).

<sup>128</sup> Dalley, 1987, p.99.

<sup>129</sup> Evidence of Miss Howlett, p.627, and Fanny McHugh, Health Patrol Officer p.89, H 3/13, (NA). See Dalley, 1993, 30-50, where she suggests that women acted as official prison visitors to both enhance the opportunities for work for women of their class, and as a tool of reform by bringing to female offenders the virtues of domesticity.

<sup>130</sup> Mahood and Littlewood, pp.558-559.

institutions centred on presenting the imaginary network of family to the residents, thus, suggesting an ideological centering of 'home' as important to nation building and national strength. Female welfare workers recognised the need for children to be raised in a proper environment, and articulated a role for women in the proper socialisation of the young, including the defective. In a letter to *The Press*, Isabel Howlett strongly advocated the segregation of the unfit in an environment that could give them, 'every chance of happiness in congenial surroundings'.<sup>131</sup> The familial ideology present in the rhetoric of eugenicists and feminists suggests the presence of maternalist politics and active participation in the politics of race betterment.

Metaphors of domesticity and maternity used by women, suggests Allison Carey, justified their involvement in politics and programmes designed to reform and uplift women.<sup>132</sup> In 1919, the NCW suggested that "the Home and the State are one. A very little consideration will show that, in its ultimate issue, all the work of the State is for the welfare and protection of the Home. It therefore follows that any community which deliberately excludes women from its government is lacking in a true perception of the functions of government".<sup>133</sup> Thus, by valorising women's traditional functions within political life, suggests Barbara Brookes, women looked to the state to provide the necessary forms of protection for women and children, but in doing so they were complicit in the use of state coercion against the most vulnerable in society.<sup>134</sup> Therefore, women's support for institutionalisation and educational programmes of segregation situated them as active participants in the politics of race betterment.

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<sup>131</sup> 'Segregation of Degenerates', *The Press*, 11/3/1921, p.7.

<sup>132</sup> Allison, C. Carey, "Gender and Compulsory Sterilization Programs in America: 1907-1950", *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 11(1), March 1998, p.88.

<sup>133</sup> NCW Annual Conference, 1919, p.2, MS-Papers-1371-107, (ATL).

<sup>134</sup> Barbara Brookes, "A Weakness for Strong Subjects: The Women's Movement and Sexuality", *NZJH*, 27(2), October 1993, p.154.

**Conclusion**

From the late nineteenth century up to the mid-1930s, the influence of eugenic theory and trends in the treatment of the criminal, insane and delinquent, saw the creation of new types of institutional control, focusing on the 'good home' environment, as the basis of eugenic reform of abnormal behaviour. Fears about racial decline manifested themselves in commissions of inquiry, government reports, and legislation. Of significance is the 1928 Mental Defectives Amendment Act. This Act promoted institutionalisation in the form of farm colonies, a form of segregation that women's organisations had advocated from the turn of the century. Institutions presented socially organised women and professional women with the opportunity to implement the reforming impulses of interwar feminism. The opportunity to do so was initiated by an alliance with eugenic ideology, and practical eugenic policy was eagerly supported by selected women's organisations. It was the promotion of their home-like atmosphere, and potential to create happiness, that made farm colonies so appealing for women. It was often these qualities that women emphasised, when justifying the segregation of children and women, and as potential staff. These eugenic spaces offered a 'good home life', that allowed the cultivation of civilised and moral behaviour, and thereby, a 'saving' of the least degenerate and the 'race'.

## CONCLUSION

Women occupied a complex and problematic position within eugenics; one that saw them based on differences of class act as the producers of a eugenics for women who were commonly labelled as 'feeble-minded'. Eugenic theory claimed that the degenerate classes were overpopulating the country and that the better classes were neglecting their duty to produce healthy babies. In short, nationalistic concerns about the quality of the population combined with the fear of national decline saw eugenics emerge, in the late nineteenth century, as a particular discourse that gave itself the task of defending society from the multiplication of the degenerate, by drawing a broad picture of the social consequences of unrestricted multiplication.<sup>1</sup> The general aim of eugenics was to bring about social betterment through the selective prevention or encouragement of births for social, racial and political ends. To achieve a healthier population and improved citizens, white women were placed at the centre of empire as either the 'mothers of the race' or the progenitors of 'race suicide'. In essence, class differences between white women acted to construct fears about the consequences of a differential birth rate. White, middle-class women, were constructed in eugenics as the protectors of racial purity, by both eugenicists and the white, middle-class membership of women's organisations in New Zealand. Additionally, these same women articulated a eugenic concern about the overt sexuality of the working-class woman. She was overwhelmingly constructed in eugenics and by white women's organisations, as 'feeble-minded', the mother of illegitimate children, and the progenitor of 'mentally defective' children. The control of white women's reproductive capacity, through segregation and sterilisation for those deemed 'unfit', was perceived as essential to the construction of a racially and morally pure eugenic society.

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<sup>1</sup> Greta Jones, "The Theoretical Foundations of Eugenics", R.A. Peel (ed), *Essays in the History of Eugenics*, (London, Galton Institute, 1998), p.16.



It is not difficult to find women as the target of eugenic rhetoric, when conducting a survey of health policy throughout the interwar period. In this period, maternal and child health campaigns alluded to the importance of women's health for the future of nation and empire. A reorganised Department of Health, the shift of the School Medical Service from the Education to the Health Department, inquiries into maternity services and abortion, along with the establishment of voluntary organisations committed to improving women's and children's health, illustrate the significance of white women's and children's bodily health in the interwar period. In essence, not only was reproduction a concern of eugenicists, homelife was also monitored for its negative effects on children's health, with mothering itself coming under increased state surveillance.

There is also evidence of women's, and women's groups, participation in eugenics at a practical and discursive level. At a practical level, women were involved in the day to day running of institutions for the 'mentally defective' and farm colonies, such as Templeton Farm School, for 'feebleminded' children. Women teachers supported and participated in the provision of special schools for the 'subnormal', and female school medical doctors investigated the physical condition of school children and their home life. The presence of single mothers, sex offenders, the 'feebleminded' and 'subnormal' children in the country generated the need to implement eugenic strategies of population control, such as sterilisation and segregation. As employees of the Health and Education Departments, and as staff within institutions under the control of the Education and Mental Health Departments, middle-class white women, those who also made up the membership of women's organisations, emphasised the reform possibilities of eugenics. An emphasis on reforming bodies did not challenge the usefulness of their activities, and at the same time, women's work in the helping professions gave them greater scope to contribute to the creation of an

improved, vigorous and physically ideal race. However, white women's organisations support for the incarceration of 'mental defectives' meant that a denial of citizenship or curtailment of liberty for some women was integrally involved in their desire to convey the importance of women's work for empire, that of producing a better race. As nurses, doctors, teachers, social workers and institution officers, women emphasised the environment as both a modifier and nurturer of degeneration, and in doing so, could actively participate as builders of empire by reinforcing white women's role as 'mothers of the race'.<sup>2</sup>

A historical analysis of the relationship between feminism and eugenics problematises the notion of interwar feminism as a united sisterhood. That is, colonial feminism was integrally involved with the marginalisation of women constructed as 'other'. Women's groups supported many aspects of practical policy and complemented this activity by petitioning the government for legislative provision of race betterment. The NCW, the WCTU and the WDFU campaigned vigorously for the maintenance of a sterilisation clause under the 1928 Mental Defectives Amendment Act, while women in their roles as social workers, teachers, school medical officers, nurses, doctors, and representatives of women's organisations, contributed one quarter of the testimonies to the 1924 Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders in New Zealand. This inquiry was considered the most eugenically tainted in New Zealand's history.<sup>3</sup> In its subject, that the belief that the white race was under threat of race suicide and thus, physical, social and moral degeneration, the 1924 Inquiry was committed to the exploration and analysis of eugenic theory

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<sup>2</sup> Carol Lee Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred?: The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1983) also emphasises the importance of environmental eugenics to the discourse of race and reform in the activities and language of the English-Canadian suffragists.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Tennant, "Disability in New Zealand: an historical survey", *New Zealand Journal of Disability Studies*, 2, 1996, 2-33.

in New Zealand. Women's organisations, and individual professional women's participation in the 1924 Inquiry, signals the willingness of the white, middle-class membership of women's groups in interwar New Zealand to articulate their goals of social reform in the language of racial determinism. At the same time, as Chapter Four as shown, the testimonies of professional women and women's welfare organisations convey a willingness to subscribe to the notion of 'feeble-minded' women as a sexual threat.

It is suggested in this thesis that, eugenics in New Zealand, as it was articulated by middle class, white, women, was characterised by a diversity of opinion regarding the best method to produce a racially pure population and thus, social betterment. A survey of a select group of women's organisations highlights the different positions these groups occupied in relation to eugenic tools of population control. The WDFU positioned themselves, in their support for sterilisation of the 'unfit' as national policy, as overtly hereditarian eugenicists. However, like the NCW, the membership of the WDFU differed not on its support for eugenics, but how racial purity could be achieved. Individual members and branches of the WDFU implicitly supported a more conservative emphasis on family, marriage, and morality as the more appropriate and feasible tools for racial restoration. Amongst women's groups, this support for family and marriage was a general characteristic of New Zealand eugenics. The NCW's, the WCTU's and the WDFU's, support for racial purity through marriage and family, overwhelms the less conservative opinions of Ettie Rout, who perceived marriage as an impediment to the production of an economically independent womanhood. Independent women, when trusted with their judgement, would reform society through 'better matings'. It was only through the independence of women within marriage, argued Rout, that an ideal eugenic society, populated by physically fit eugenic beings, was to be produced.

The NCW branches also present a diversity of opinion on eugenics and eugenic policy. Branches differed over whether to support flogging of sex offenders, and sterilisation of the 'unfit'. However, at national policy level, the NCW and the WCTU occupied the middle ground, preferring to support the segregation of the 'unfit' on farm colonies. The interwar eugenic policy of the NCW was characterised by consistent support for farm colonies and special schools, a shift from advocating sterilisation of the 'unfit' pre-1906. Nevertheless, despite this diversity of opinion the WDFU, the NCW and the WCTU, all supported national eugenic policy in the form of the 1928 Mental Defectives Amendment Act. This activity by women's organisations tends to present a simplistic view of their form of eugenics. It must be noted, however, that women's organisations and individual women, faced significant opposition to their participation in, and support for, eugenics in New Zealand, in a period that was only beginning to see women's movement into professions that were previously bastions of masculinity. The small number of women in the medical profession and academia, was outweighed by the numerous voluntary, social welfare and community organisations led by women, during the interwar years. It was in their roles as professionals and as members of organisations that white women were able to participate more fully in public debates concerning the quality of the population and fears of racial decline.

Individual and professional women were also characterised by a diverse set of opinions on eugenics. Some, like Dr. Emily Siedeberg, were both members of women's organisations and medical professionals, with their medical background influencing their opinions in the areas of social reform. Others worked within the government bureaucracy as dental nurses, school medical officers, and social workers. Following Dr. Ada Paterson, Dr. Agnes Bennett and Dr. Doris Gordon, these women, in their publications, annual reports and writings, were both modifiers and creators of eugenics in New

Zealand. In particular, the Sex, Hygiene and Birth Regulation Society utilised eugenics to make its concerns for family planning more acceptable. Others, like Ettie Rout and Cora Wilding, generated eugenic ideas, using native tradition and custom as the 'model' for white racial restoration.

It should not be surprising that women and eugenicists should form an alliance in the interwar years, centred upon utopian ideals of social and race betterment, as both shared concerns over similar issues, in particular those centring on the health of women and children. Both feminism and eugenics shared a belief in the need for reform of society and the eugenic promise of social betterment offered many individuals as well as professionals and voluntary groups the language and tools with which to achieve their vision. It was the similarity of ideas and issues between eugenicists and women's groups that allowed groups not directly associated with eugenics to form alliances that otherwise would seem unusual.<sup>4</sup> These alliances and mutual support with feminists on issues such as venereal disease, abortion and child health were important to eugenicists. Eugenics and its societies needed women's organisations to implement and voice eugenically inspired reform in an arena that was less insular than their own while being as respectable.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, white women's participation in eugenics, discursively and practically, places them as agents of not only a colonial eugenics but also contributors to the construction of colonial identity.

The environmental rhetoric of eugenics, infused with the rhetoric of gender and race, contributed to the modification of an imperial model of eugenics, and produced a colonial eugenics, which was harnessed to climatic determinism and myths of colonial identity. A constructed national identity of New Zealand as a "healthy country" reinforced the development of a New Zealand eugenics that emphasised environmental reform. The imperial model

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Freedon, 'Eugenics and Progressive Thought: A Study in Ideological Affinity', *The Historical Journal*, 22(3), 1979, p.661.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.661.

was seen as inappropriate to New Zealand conditions, where the environment was seen to determine those who were 'fit'. New Zealand eugenics, like the eugenics of the other 'white settler colonies' of Canada and Australia, remained diligent in its attention to familiar subjects and solutions to race regeneration. In New Zealand, segregation was favoured over sterilisation. This was built upon the work of New Zealand eugenicists and women's organisations, who looked beyond British eugenics towards developments in the United States, in the form of farm colonies and residential special schools. Moreover, in supporting environmental eugenics, women's organisations and eugenicists in New Zealand, reinforced a national identity of humanitarianism in social policy, and further, upheld the construction of New Zealand as a "healthy country". Importantly, women's organisations support for the need of eugenics in New Zealand was an argument that sought to entrench New Zealand's racial national identity as the 'Best of British'. In doing so, women's organisations and individual women were active participants in the modification of overseas eugenic models, the architects of a New Zealand eugenics, and thus national identity.

To generalise, a brief overview of women's organisations evidence to the 1922 Venereal Disease Inquiry and the 1924 Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders in New Zealand, highlights the ways white women integrated a discourse of race and biology into their platform of social and moral reform, thereby constituting themselves as having a role in the nationalist and imperialist discourse of the era. Their legislative campaigns and deputations, their national resolutions on health, and their presence as witnesses to the 1924 Inquiry, implies support for the provision of an environmental eugenics in New Zealand which acted to promote the importance of white middle-class women's work outside the home, and suggests that white, middle-class women were agents of a particularly local and colonial eugenic discourse. In short, the complicity of women's groups

such as the NCW, the WCTU and the WDFU, and female education, health and welfare professionals in the construction of health and ill-health suggests a more complex history of eugenics where women were not only its subjects but also its authors.

## APPENDICES

### **Timeline: Key Eugenic Events in New Zealand**

1910	New Zealand Eugenics Education Society established in Dunedin.
1911	Mental Defectives Act.
1922	Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Venereal Disease in New Zealand.
1924	Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders in New Zealand.
1925	Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders in New Zealand.
1928	Mental Defectives Amendment Act.
1929	Eugenics Board established under the 1928 Mental Defectives Amendment Act.
August 1929	Templeton Farm Colony opened.
c.1934	Eugenics and Race Improvement Society established in Wellington.



## Classifications under the 1911 Mental Defectives Act

- Class I**      Persons of Unsound Mind – persons, owing to the disorder of the mind, are incapable of managing themselves or their affairs.
- Class II**      Persons Mentally Infirm – persons, who through mental infirmity arising from age or the decay of their faculties, are incapable of managing themselves or their affairs.
- Class III**     Idiots – persons so deficient in mind from birth or an early age that they are unable to guard themselves against common physical dangers and therefore require the oversight, care, or control required to be exercised in the case of young children.
- Class IV**      Imbeciles – persons, who though capable of guarding themselves against common physical dangers are incapable, or if of school age will presumably when older be incapable, of earning their own living by reason of mental deficiency existing from birth or from and early age.
- Class V**      Feeble-minded – persons, who may be capable of earning a living under favourable circumstances, but are incapable from mental deficiency existing from birth or from an early age of competing on equal terms with their normal fellows, or of managing themselves and their affairs with ordinary prudence.
- Class VI**      Epileptics – persons suffering from epilepsy.

(AJHR, H-7A, 1927)

## **Classifications under the 1928 Mental Defectives Amendment Act**

- Class I**      Persons of Unsound Mind – persons, owing to the disorder of the mind, are incapable of managing themselves or their affairs.
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- Class III**      Idiots – persons so deficient in mind from birth or an early age that they are unable to guard themselves against common physical dangers and therefore require the oversight, care, or control required to be exercised in the case of young children.
- Class IV**      Imbeciles – persons, who though capable of guarding themselves against common physical dangers are incapable, or if of school age will presumably when older be incapable, of earning their own living by reason of mental deficiency existing from birth or from and early age.
- Class V**      Feeble-minded – persons, who may be capable of earning a living under favourable circumstances, but are incapable from mental deficiency existing from birth or from an early age of competing on equal terms with their normal fellows, or of managing themselves and their affairs with ordinary prudence.
- Class VI**      Epileptics – persons suffering from epilepsy.
- Class VII**      Persons socially defective – that is, persons who suffer from mental deficiency associated with anti-social conduct and who, by reason of such mental deficiency and conduct, require supervision for their own protection or in the public interest.

(NZPD, Vol. 219, 1928)

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