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Eugenics and public health in Britain, 1900–40: scenes from provincial life

JOHN WELSHMAN*

The importance of eugenics in shaping strategies of social reform in early twentieth-century Britain is a familiar theme in the history of public policy.¹ It was not only the role of the eugenicists of the social hygiene movement that has been recognized, but also the way that eugenic ideas shaped the outlook of a wide range of social reformers concerned in one way or another with the 'fitness' of the nation. Thus attention has been paid to the influence of eugenic solutions amongst those concerned with mental health, child care and the development of intelligence testing, various aspects of public health, town planning and the problems of the slums. However, much of this writing has concentrated on national movements and organizations, many of which were based in London. Much less is known about the extent to which eugenic beliefs penetrated intellectual life in provincial cities in early twentieth-century Britain.

The Eugenics Society, founded in 1907, had developed six branches by 1914, the largest of which was based in Birmingham. Analysis of membership suggests that representatives of the professional middle class, especially academics and members of the medical profession and women philanthropists, were the most numerous groups in these regional associations as in the parent body. It has been argued indeed that eugenics may have had a particular appeal to professionals seeking to assert the

* The research for this article was supported by the Wellcome Trust (project grant 038059/Z/93) and, while they bear no responsibility for its remaining faults, I would like to thank Patricia Garside and David Reeder for their helpful comments.

¹ D. Mackenzie, 'Eugenics in Britain', *Social Studies of Science*, 6 (1976), 499–532; M. Freeden, 'Eugenics and progressive thought', *Historical Journal*, XXII (1979), 645–71; G.R. Searle, 'Eugenics and politics in Britain in the 1930s', *Annals of Science*, 36 (1979), 159–69; idem, 'Eugenics and class', in C. Webster (ed.), *Biology, Medicine and Society, 1840–1940* (Cambridge, 1981), 217–42; G. Jones, 'Eugenics and social policy between the wars', *Historical Journal*, XXV (1982), 717–28; idem, *Social Hygiene in Twentieth Century Britain* (London, 1986); J. Macnicol, 'Eugenics and the campaign for voluntary sterilisation in Britain between the wars', *Social History of Medicine*, 2, 2 (1989), 147–70; R.A. Soloway, *Democracy and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth Century Britain* (Chapel Hill, 1990); G. Jones, 'Eugenics in Ireland: the Belfast Eugenics Society, 1911–15', *Irish Historical Studies*, XXVIII (1992), 81–95.

authority of expertise in their dealings with government. However, little attention has been paid to exploring the influence of eugenic beliefs amongst such local experts as Medical Officers of Health (MOsH) or to considering the implications for public health policy at the local level. This article sets out, therefore, to provide a case study based on the experience of Leicester between 1900 and 1940.

There is evidence that during the first decade of the twentieth century, medical professionals in Leicester were being influenced by the new science of eugenics and its emphasis on good breeding and restraints on the propagation of the unfit. This subject figured amongst the papers given to the Leicester Medical Society, as in the paper of 1905 entitled 'Are consumptives and their children unfit?', and in the presidential address in 1908 on 'Evolution and heredity'.² Moreover, city historians have claimed that the work of the MOH appointed in 1901, Dr Killick Millard, was 'informed by a coherent philosophy of health that . . . was underpinned by eugenic ideas about the importance of maintaining the calibre of the racial stock', and influenced by his links with C.J. Bond, a surgeon at Leicester Royal Infirmary prominent in the Eugenics Society.³ But there are questions that need to be asked about the extent of this influence, how far it shaped policy recommendations and whether professional experts were in advance of local political opinion in pressing for changes that reflected particular ideological concerns. To assess the role of these concerns at the local level it is necessary not only to establish a mindset of beliefs with reference to the kind of eugenic issues that were taken up and supported on the part of key professionals involved with local government, but to show also how far these beliefs resulted in specific actions. This entails looking in detail at the relations between expert recommendations based on eugenic considerations and the timing and nature of municipal activity over the period under consideration. In the following account, particular attention is paid to the development of policies in the fields of mental health, birth control clinics, and housing and slum clearance – the three areas of policy in which eugenic considerations were most in evidence in Leicester.

Eugenics and mental health

The development of mental health policies is of especial interest given the claims that have been made for the potency of eugenic considerations in shaping policy at the national level, and also because Leicester was exceptionally active in developing provision for backward and 'defective'

² Clinical Sciences Library, University of Leicester, Leicester Medical Society minutes, 6/12/05 and 7/10/08.

³ Jones, *Social Hygiene*, 55; D. Nash and D. Reeder (eds), *Leicester in the Twentieth Century* (Stroud, 1993), 126. See also E.E. Buchanan, 'Aspects of the life and times of Dr Charles Killick Millard, Medical Officer of Health for Leicester, 1901–1934' (unpublished University of Leicester MA thesis, 1995).

children. This provision dates from the 1890s when the Leicester School Board opened special classes, and in February 1903 a voluntary After-Care subcommittee was formed comprising local doctors and middle-class women active in a range of charitable societies.⁴ Under its secretary, Miss Annie Clephan, ten visitors were deployed to maintain contact with the 'defective' children who had passed through the special classes, and to monitor behaviour outside school through home visits two or three times a year. Reports on cases were read at quarterly meetings, and the subcommittee was particularly concerned that these children should not be 'lost sight of'. This committee went to some lengths to keep in touch with official opinion. It was in contact with important national figures such as Dr Alfred Eichholz at the Board of Education, and it monitored local and national debates relevant to its work – in January 1906, for example, Miss Clephan appeared as a witness before the Royal Commission on the Feeble-Minded.⁵

In the early years the subcommittee was chiefly concerned with monitoring 'defective' children, but Miss Clephan was keen to segregate 'morally irresponsible' girls in institutions, a concern which led in 1907 to the opening of 'Sunnyholme', a home for 'feeble-minded' girls that relied on fees from the Boards of Guardians and private subscriptions and donations, and was affiliated to the National Association for the Feeble-Minded. The sponsors stated that it provided 'a safe shelter from the dangers of the outside world, in a permanent Home, to girls whose mental infirmity prevents them from taking rational responsible care of their own lives', and a regime of manual work that included laundry, cooking, cleaning and gardening trained the girls for employment as domestic servants.⁶ While much of the work of the subcommittee was taken up with 'Sunnyholme', its members still visited 'defective' children, and its wider activities indicated that it was much influenced by eugenics. The subcommittee tried, for example, to stop children formerly in the special classes from marrying and having children, and attempted to get local MPs to support the Mental Deficiency Bill drafted by the Eugenics Education Society and the National Association for the Feeble-Minded. Although the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act's proposals to detain and segregate the 'feeble-minded' met eugenic demands to control the fertility of the unfit, the subcommittee lost impetus, and after its final meeting in March 1915 its work was taken over by the local authority.⁷

⁴ Leicestershire Record Office (hereafter LRO): DE 3107/140, After-Care subcommittee minutes, 2/4/03.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 10/3/04; PP 1908, XXVI (Cd. 4216), *Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded*, 423–30, questions 18442–18504.

⁶ LRO DE 3107/168: After-Care Committee, *Annual Report for 1908* (Leicester, 1909), 2–11.

⁷ LRO DE 3107/140: After-Care subcommittee minutes, 14/12/11, 26/11/12, 5/3/15. See also J. Woodhouse, 'Eugenics and the feeble-minded: the Parliamentary debates of 1912–14', *History of Education*, 11, 2 (1982), 127–37; J. Macnicol, 'Eugenics, medicine and mental deficiency: an introduction', *Oxford Review of Education*, 9, 3 (1983), 177–80; P. Potts, 'Medicine, morals, and mental deficiency: the contribution of doctors to the development

Nevertheless while the committee was disbanded, another After-Care subcommittee was subsumed by the local authority's new Mental Deficiency Committee.

Whilst eugenics formed an ideological backdrop to the work of voluntary organizations like the After-Care subcommittee, it can also be shown to have influenced the School Medical Service's provision for 'mentally defective' children which, in 1907, took over the special classes. Throughout the inter-war period Leicester continued to be in the forefront of provision for 'mentally defective' children, partly because of the interest of a local councillor, Emily Fortey, in this field. In May 1924, the Education Committee opened a school for 'feeble-minded' children, children certified as 'mentally defective' were transferred there from the special classes, and an After-Care Officer visited ex-pupils, estimated how many were able to earn a living, and ran an evening club and sewing class.⁸ Moreover in the late 1920s the School Medical Officer's comments on other areas of child health betrayed the influence of eugenics. In 1927, for example, Dr Allan Warner wrote that parents with tuberculosis should be prevented from having more children, and heredity should be included in nature study lessons in schools so that 'equipped with an elementary knowledge of heredity in plants and animals, the adult would be able to understand and be ready to receive personal advice'.⁹ Justifications of expenditure could also be expressed in eugenic terms; in 1932, he wrote of the cost of the School Medical Service that 'if we fail to pay attention to the rising generation we must increase immensely the cost of supporting the invalids and inefficient in the future'.¹⁰

Warner's use of eugenic rhetoric reflected the impact of the Wood Report on Mental Deficiency, published in 1929. In June 1924, the Board of Education's Chief Medical Officer, Sir George Newman, had appointed a committee to consider the issue of 'mentally defective' children, and its terms were subsequently widened to include adult 'defectives'. The committee included prominent eugenists such as Arthur Tredgold and the psychologist Cyril Burt, but it was composed primarily of Board of Education officials like Arthur Wood; it estimated that there were 105,000 'mentally defective' children aged 7–16 and 150,000 adult 'defectives' in England and Wales, recommended that services to detect and care for these children should be better organized, and promoted research on this issue.¹¹ In addition the committee claimed that 'feeble-mindedness' was more likely to occur in slum districts, or in poor rural areas, and was

of special education in England', *ibid.*, 181–96; and D. Barker, 'How to curb the fertility of the unfit: the feeble-minded in Edwardian Britain', *ibid.*, 197–211.

⁸ Leicester Education Committee, *Annual Report of the SMO, 1924* (Leicester, 1925), 6–7.

⁹ Leicester Education Committee, *Annual Report of the SMO, 1927* (Leicester, 1928), 52–5.

¹⁰ Leicester Education Committee, *Annual Report of the SMO, 1932* (Leicester, 1933), 10.

¹¹ Board of Education and Board of Control, *Report of the Mental Deficiency Committee* (London, 1929), part I, iii–iv, part III, 96–102.

more prevalent in a 'sub-normal group' in the population.¹² The committee argued that 'the overwhelming majority of the families thus collected will belong to that section of the community which we propose to term the "social problem" or "subnormal" group', and it estimated that these comprised the bottom 10 per cent in society. It suggested that the size of the group could be controlled through segregation and sterilization, and the committee concluded of eugenics that 'the prevention of mental deficiency is a problem whose solution depends largely upon the progress made by this science'.¹³

The publication of the Wood Report gave renewed impetus to the work of Leicester's Mental Deficiency Committee that was responsible for ascertainment, supervision and guardianship under the 1913 and 1927 Mental Deficiency Acts. In the late 1920s the committee was chaired by the councillor Ellen Swainston, and its members, who included the councillor Emily Fortey, Annie Clephan, the pioneer of the special classes, and C.J. Bond's wife, Edith, illustrated how councillors and middle-class women could have a number of overlapping roles. Dr Warner, who acted as the committee's medical adviser, estimated from the Wood Report that there were 60 'lower grade' children and 300 adult 'defectives' in Leicester and suggested that 'idiots' and 'imbeciles' should be put in an institution, 'low grade' children could be left with their parents, and the 'feeble-minded' segregated so that they could not reproduce.¹⁴ The Wood Report enhanced the importance of the Mental Deficiency Committee, and also propagated the theme of the 'social problem group' at the local level; C.J. Bond favoured sterilization for 'mental defectives', and noted the existence of the 'social problem group' in a radio broadcast in September 1933.¹⁵ And although Health Committees did not deal with mental health, these themes also influenced local MOsH. In 1931, Dr Killick Millard argued that the 'feeble-minded and mentally deficient' should be sterilized, and a paper on 'Feeble-mindedness and the social problem group' delivered to the East Midlands branch of the Society of Medical Officers of Health (SMOH) in 1933 indicated that these ideas were also influential at regional level.¹⁶

It is worth noting that the first of the Eugenics Society's Darwin Research Studentships was awarded to Dr Raymond Cattell, the director of Leicester's school psychological clinic, whose psychometric investigations were published in 1937 in *The Fight for Our National Intelligence*.

¹² *Ibid.*, part II, 83.

¹³ *Ibid.*, part III, 79–82.

¹⁴ Leicester Corporation, *Annual Report of the Mental Deficiency Committee, 1929–30* (Leicester, 1930), 19–20.

¹⁵ Contemporary Medical Archives Centre, The Wellcome Institute, London (hereafter CMAC), SA/EUG, C32, II, C.J. Bond, 'Are our children to-day as good as their grand-fathers?', 20/9/33, 2.

¹⁶ CMAC SA/EUG, N42, cutting from the *Journal of State Medicine*, 1/31; Society of Medical Officers of Health Association Archive, The Wellcome Unit, Oxford (hereafter SMOH), B2/1: minutes of meeting 9/3/33.

Cattell claimed that less intelligent children were more numerous in large families, while intelligent families were very small, and he wrote of the 'social problem group' that 'such sub-average types are often only fitfully employed, cannot co-operate in hygienic measures and in enlightened methods of bringing up children, and cannot comprehend political issues'. In the preface, F.P. Armitage, Leicester's Director of Education, echoed the Wood Report and argued that it was cheaper to educate backward and mentally deficient children than to incarcerate them in reformatories as adolescents and prisons as adults, while figures prominent in the Eugenics Society such as Leonard Darwin and Lord Horder agreed with Cattell's conclusions and claimed that medical services should be employed not just for preventive medicine, but for 'large scale efforts along eugenic lines'.¹⁷ In the field of mental health at least, therefore, the After-Care subcommittee's support for legislation embodying the principle of segregation, the influence of the Wood Report and concept of the 'social problem group' in local medical circles, and the support for Cattell's work, all indicated that eugenic ideas could have an important role in determining the timing and content of municipal activity.

Eugenics and birth control

It is not surprising that eugenics permeated policy in the field of mental health, but its influence on the development of other public health services, and on the work of the Sanitary and Health Committees, is more problematic. Millard's first annual report as MOH reflected the impact of the investigations of Rowntree and Booth, contrasted mortality rates in poorer and wealthier areas, and noted that 'poverty has a most patent influence for evil on the public health'. For Millard at this time poverty was the 'subject which the sanatarian cannot ignore, and all serious efforts to permanently lower the death-rate must aim also at reducing poverty', a theme he stressed in his presidential address at the Midland branch of the SMOH in October 1902.¹⁸ On tuberculosis, for example, he was sympathetic to the idea that the disease was linked to heredity, but argued that environmental factors were also significant so that 'the whole question of the prevention of consumption is largely bound up with the great social problem of poverty'.¹⁹ He was particularly aware of the striking differentials in the birth and death rates and infant mortality returns between the affluent and more deprived wards, writing of Newton and Wyggeston that 'both are entirely working-class districts in a

¹⁷ R.B. Cattell, *The Fight for Our National Intelligence* (London, 1937), vii-xvii, 108, 164.

¹⁸ Leicester Sanitary Committee, *Report of the MOH, 1902* (Leicester, 1903), 58; LRO, MS Millard, DE 3139/18, C.K. Millard, 'The role of the "anti": an apology and an appeal', 9/10/02, 10.

¹⁹ Leicester Sanitary Committee, *Report of the MOH, 1904* (Leicester, 1905), 84.

very old part near the centre of the town. There is much poverty, the bread-winners in very many cases being casual labourers'.²⁰ At this stage therefore, Millard was most particularly concerned about the effects of poverty on health, and seemed unconcerned about the continuing high fertility of the poor in a period of declining birth rates overall. In 1911 he noted that the greater fertility of 'slum dwellers' was cancelled out by high infant mortality and suggested that 'this consideration goes a long way towards allaying the fear that the falling birth-rate of the superior classes, and the comparatively high birth-rate of the very lowest class, threatens the quality of the race'.²¹

This was not the view of C.J. Bond who wrote in the *Eugenics Review* the following year that 'the problem of the renewal or the removal of the decadent nation is as important to the human race as the problem of the removal or the renewal of the decadent citizen is to the nation'.²² In 1914 Bond retired from his post as surgeon at the Royal Infirmary, and the expansion of local authority public health services and of associated voluntary organizations during the First World War provided him with opportunities to link his interest in eugenics with practical policy-making. In the case of venereal disease, for example, the Sanitary Committee set up a clinic in 1916 following the report of the Royal Commission, and delegated responsibility for health education to the local branch of the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease; Bond was its president and the materials it distributed included his pamphlet *Sex Hygiene and Race Culture*. Bond was already a close friend of Millard and as the elder of the two, at 58 to Millard's 44, undoubtedly had a great influence on the MOH; by 1918 Millard was referring to venereal disease as the 'great racial poison', and argued that 'it is useless for more babies to be born unless they are born healthy, and likely to grow up into healthy men and women'.²³ Similarly Millard's approach to the issues of birth control and overcrowding came to be largely dictated by eugenic concepts and language.

Lectures and articles given by Millard during the First World War indicated that his approach to birth control had come to be influenced by eugenic concerns. In his presidential address to the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society, for example, Millard noted that the differentials in the birth rate in London boroughs like Hampstead and Shoreditch held true for Leicester wards like Knighton and Newton, and argued that 'those who constitute such a large proportion of the "submerged tenth", the denizens of the slums, are without doubt at the present day the most

²⁰ Leicester Sanitary Committee, *Report of the MOH, 1909* (Leicester, 1910), 24–5.

²¹ Leicester Sanitary Committee, *Report of the MOH, 1911* (Leicester, 1912), 15.

²² *Eugenics Review*, V (1913–14), 342. See also J.B. Walker, 'Charles John Bond of Leicester (1856–1939)', *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 77 (1984), 316–24.

²³ LRO, Leicester Sanitary Committee minutes, 23/2/17; Leicester Sanitary Committee, *Report of the MOH, 1917* (Leicester, 1918), 12–21; Leicester Sanitary Committee, *Report of the MOH, 1918* (Leicester, 1919), iv.

prolific section of the community, whereas we should like to see them the least prolific'. His conclusion, that birth control could be a 'valuable eugenic instrument' which would improve the quality of the race, was praised in the *Eugenics Review* as being 'clear, condensed, and conclusive'.²⁴ A paper given at the Royal Institute of Public Health in 1918 repeated many of the same points. Millard reiterated that 'birth control, by restricting the undue multiplication of the least desirable classes of the population, might be a valuable eugenic instrument capable of greatly improving the quality of the race'. Moreover his belief that the incidence of tuberculosis was determined more by hereditary factors than by infection had already had a practical effect on policy since the Sanitary Committee had agreed to distribute leaflets to patients leaving the sanatorium advising them not to marry or have children.²⁵ Millard's early reports as MOH for Leicester had indicated his compassionate concern with the issue of poverty, but as he grew older this was increasingly replaced with a flirtation with fashionable eugenic ideas.

With the return of peace, Millard's comments on venereal disease and illegitimacy also betrayed the influence of eugenics, but it was the issue of birth control – not discussed in his annual MOH reports – that was more significant. By this time younger doctors, such as Millard, were more assertive in establishing a medical position on birth control, encouraged by the work of Marie Stopes, author of *Married Love* and *Wise Parenthood* (1918), who was beginning to become involved in the campaign. Millard was also concerned with the attitude of the Church since the report on 'Marriage Problems', issued after the 1908 Lambeth Conference, contained resolutions opposed to birth control, and this created a tension between his professional outlook and his own religious beliefs. In 1919 Millard argued that church leaders should approve birth control, and the following year held a secret meeting with Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury, and wrote to the participants at the forthcoming Lambeth Conference, asking them to reconsider. His memorandum 'Responsible parenthood and birth control' again reflected the influence of eugenics. Millard noted that the middle classes practised birth control, but claimed that 'amongst the lowest stratum of the population, what may be called the "C3" classes, unrestricted and irresponsible reproduction still continues'; a phenomenon that in his opinion must 'inevitably tend towards depreciation in the quality of the race'. Yet while Millard maintained that the poor had large families as they lacked 'care and forethought and some measure of self-denial', he also conceded that they were not educated

²⁴ C.K. Millard, *Population and Birth Control* (Leicester, 1917), 5, 7, 24, 37, 44–5; *Eugenics Review*, X (1918–20), 52. See also P. Fryer, *The Birth Controllers* (London, 1965), 247; A. Leathard, *The Fight for Family Planning: The Development of Family Planning Services in Britain 1921–74* (London, 1980), 3; R.A. Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question in England, 1877–1930* (Chapel Hill, 1982), 130–2.

²⁵ C.K. Millard, 'The problem of birth control with special reference to the public health aspect', *Journal of State Medicine*, XXVI (1918), 321–8, 337.

about birth control, and contraceptives were expensive and not readily available. The memorandum included testimonies in support of birth control by prominent figures, and extracts from letters from 'struggling and overburdened parents', and he sent copies to the Eugenics Society and to Marie Stopes.²⁶

Millard wrote to Stopes in response to her *Letter to Working Mothers*, he stayed with her in November 1919, and their regular correspondence in the early 1920s provides further illustration of a shared interest in eugenics.²⁷ The MOH was keen on Stopes's publications, and while he was less enthusiastic about *A New Gospel*, the two met again in October 1920 at the London meeting on birth control sponsored by the Eugenics Society. Millard reiterated that birth control provided a 'most valuable eugenic instrument', and claimed that health visitors and infant welfare workers, who sympathized with poor mothers, would co-operate as 'birth control missionaries' once they had official sanction and the approval of public opinion. Overall Millard argued that the Eugenics Society should adopt a birth control policy, and while in theory it remained neutral on birth control in the 1920s, in practice it was forced to become more involved.²⁸ Stopes, by now a member of the Society, opened her birth control clinic in Holloway in March 1921, and Millard was a speaker at the public meeting held at the Queen's Hall, London, in May. Stopes suggested that Millard should try to place birth control in the context of local public health services and argue that it would strengthen the race in 'preventing the birth of weak, diseased and otherwise undesirable people', and three weeks before the meeting, Stopes reminded Millard that he should speak as a MOH who had to deal with 'the ruck, wastrels and throw-outs resulting from reckless breeding'. In the final version of his paper, Millard suggested that poverty was caused by large families, and argued that encouraging parents with a 'constitutional taint' to have children was 'wrong, wasteful, and calculated to be disastrous to the nation'.²⁹

Despite holding these views, Millard's own relationship with Marie Stopes cooled in the 1920s. In June 1921 he declined an invitation to join the Research Committee of the Council for Birth Control and refused to become involved in the libel case that Stopes brought against the secretary of the League of National Life.³⁰ This withdrawal of support probably

²⁶ MS Millard, DE 3139/11/2, C.K. Millard to the archbishops and bishops of the Anglican communion, 5/4/20; *ibid.*, DE 3139/11/1, C.K. Millard, 'Responsible parenthood and birth control', 4/20, 1, 4, 8; MS Stopes, The British Library, London, Add. MSS 58564, C.K. Millard to M. Stopes, 3/5/20; Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question*, 233–7.

²⁷ MS Stopes, C.K. Millard to M. Stopes, 3/1/19, 29/10/19, 12/11/19; Leathard, *Fight for Family Planning*, 11–12.

²⁸ MS Stopes, C.K. Millard to M. Stopes, 13/7/20; *Eugenics Review*, XII (1920–22), 291–5; Soloway, *Democracy and Degeneration*, 176–7.

²⁹ MS Stopes, C.K. Millard to M. Stopes, 15/3/21; *ibid.*, M. Stopes to C.K. Millard, 21/4/21, 10/5/21; *ibid.*, C.K. Millard to M. Stopes, 13/5/21, 30/5/21.

³⁰ MS Stopes, C.K. Millard to M. Stopes, 26/7/21, 15/12/22; R. Hall, *Marie Stopes: A Biography* (London, 1977), 211.

reflected the way he had become caught up in the rivalry between Marie Stopes and the rival Malthusian League with which he also had links: he had presided for example over the medical section of the Fifth International Neo-Malthusian and Birth Control Conference in London in 1922.³¹ It also seems that Millard's relationship with the Eugenics Society was more ambiguous than that of Marie Stopes: in April 1927, for example, he declined the general secretary's invitation to give a lecture in Jarrow, writing that 'I am so occupied with other work that I do not feel able to take up Eugenics at present', and he resigned from the Society in 1928.³² Yet he continued to maintain a eugenic position on a number of issues thereafter.

During the 1920s interest in the issue of birth control widened because of the attitude of the Ministry of Health to the early birth control clinics, both those started in London, and the ten clinics in provincial cities, eight of them affiliated to the Malthusian 'Society for the Provision of Birth Control Clinics'. The Ministry of Health responded in June 1924 with a circular on maternal mortality that prevented maternity and child welfare centres giving contraceptive advice to mothers in any circumstances, and a prominent feature of the late 1920s was the campaign to get the Ministry to change its stance. Women's organizations sent deputations to the Ministry, progressive local councils demanded government action, and in the House of Commons, MPs continually asked parliamentary questions on birth control provision for poorer women and maternal mortality; Frederick Pethick-Lawrence, Labour MP for Leicester West, was one of the most persistent.³³

However, until 1930, despite the involvement of Leicester figures like Pethick-Lawrence in the birth control campaign, Millard's contribution was largely at the national rather than the local level. Medical journals rarely referred to birth control in the 1920s, and Millard first mentioned it in his annual report for 1929, published in July 1930. No correspondence between Millard and Stopes has survived for the period between December 1922 and June 1930 and, while he advocated birth control in speeches and articles, he appears to have been more reluctant to support it in public in Leicester. In June 1930 Millard urged Stopes not to hold her proposed mass meeting in Leicester in the autumn, claiming that he was anxious not to 'over-do' his local support for birth control. Millard admitted that he could not openly support Stopes in Leicester, and he conceded that 'I am not quite as free & independent as you, for instance, are. If I was a private individual I would have no hesitation in doing certain things, which in view of my official position I think it wiser not to

³¹ R. Ledbetter, *A History of the Malthusian League 1877-1927* (Columbus, 1976), 220-1, 224-6; Leathard, *Fight for Family Planning*, 31-2; Soloway, *Democracy and Degeneration*, 177-84.

³² CMAC, SA/EUG, C232, box 19, C.K. Millard to C.B.S. Hodson, 1/4/27.

³³ Leathard, *Fight for Family Planning*, 38, 40-3.

do'.³⁴ Millard became a municipal delegate on the governing body of the National Birth Control Council, and his presidential address to the East Midlands branch of the SMOH indicated that his campaign for birth control remained motivated by eugenic concerns; he accepted that birth control was dysgenic, but hoped that 'the lower strata' would adopt it so that eventually birth control and sterilization might 'become a most valuable instrument of negative eugenics'.³⁵ Overall, however, Millard's comments to Stopes suggest that he was much more cautious at the local level in Leicester than he appears to have been in speeches in London or in publications.

Nevertheless his advocacy did lead to the setting up of a birth control clinic in Leicester. As has already been noted, the Ministry of Health had repeatedly refused to allow MOsH to give birth control advice at municipal clinics, and in his annual report for 1929 Sir George Newman had written that birth control advice was 'foreign to the purpose of a maternity and child welfare centre established by a local authority *for nursing and expectant mothers*', and 'would be likely to damage their proper work'.³⁶ Yet the Ministry's position gradually became untenable, and in July 1930 the memorandum 153/MCW, that was not issued to the press or to local authorities generally, indicated that local authorities could establish birth control clinics, and that birth control advice could be given to women on medical grounds. Prompted by its MOH, Leicester's Health Committee had agreed in June 1930 to allow medical staff at the city's ante-natal and infant welfare clinics to give advice on birth control to married women, but the Council was more cautious and in July deferred a decision.³⁷ Millard, perhaps encouraged by the Health Committee's support, now mentioned birth control in his annual MOH report and noted that while the Ministry officially refused to sanction birth control advice, it had indicated that it would not take action against MOs who provided this service.³⁸ In August, the Health Committee again recommended that advice on birth control should be given to married women on medical grounds and a birth control clinic established, and the following month the Council approved the Health Committee's report by 31 votes to 19.³⁹ Millard's report on birth control was crucial to the Health Committee's change of policy.

³⁴ MS Stopes, C.K. Millard to M. Stopes, 17/6/30; Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question*, 256–60.

³⁵ SMOH, B2/1, minutes of meeting 6/11/30; CMAC, SA/EUG, N42, cutting from the *Journal of State Medicine*, 1/31, 46–54.

³⁶ Ministry of Health, *On the State of the Public Health*, 1929 (London, 1930), 31–2; Leathard, *Fight for Family Planning*, 48–50.

³⁷ LRO, CM 21/4, Health Committee minutes, 20/6/30, *Leicester Mercury*, 23/6/30, 15; LRO, CM, 1/62, Council minutes, 29/7/30.

³⁸ Leicester Health Committee, *Annual Report of the MOH*, 1929 (Leicester, 1930), 50–1.

³⁹ LRO, CM 1/62, Council minutes, 30/9/30; CMAC, SA/FPA, A11/24, box 311, cutting from the *Birmingham Post*, 1/10/30.

Nationally, too, the Ministry of Health in the early 1930s gradually relaxed its opposition to birth control clinics. In March 1931 it reprinted memorandum 153/MCW and circulated it to all local authorities, indicating official approval of birth control, and Leicester's birth control clinic opened in the same month. Yet while this marked an important step forward, the Ministry would only sanction birth control clinics in maternity and child welfare centres if local authorities complied with the memorandum; in effect, advice on contraception could only be given on medical grounds to married women attending the centres.⁴⁰ Leicester's birth control clinic created friction between the Health Committee and the small Roman Catholic community; one church refused to allow its hall to be used as an infant welfare centre, and Emily Fortey, a Labour councillor who was a Roman Catholic, fought an unsuccessful campaign to prevent the sale of contraceptives.⁴¹ Despite this local opposition, Millard played a leading role in the campaign to force the Ministry to widen access to birth control, and his annual report for 1930 received extensive local and national coverage in newspapers and medical journals.⁴² The Ministry's stance was affected by the final report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Maternal Mortality and Morbidity, published in August 1932, that emphasized that women suffering from various diseases should avoid pregnancy; and by 1933 Leicester's birth control clinic accepted married women suffering from a range of physical and mental health problems.⁴³ Finally, in a circular issued in May 1934, the Ministry stated that advice on birth control should be available to all married women on medical grounds.⁴⁴ This episode provides an interesting illustration of how appointed officers such as MOsH had much more room for manoeuvre in their professional sphere, in their journals and societies, than in their relationships with elected members on their local Health Committees. In the area of birth control, therefore, Millard's advocacy of birth control was clearly motivated by eugenics and, with the establishment of the clinic in March 1931, had a practical influence on public health policy.

⁴⁰ LRO, CM 21/4, Maternity and Child Welfare subcommittee minutes, 3/12/30; CMAC, SA/FPA, A11/24, C.K. Millard to M.A. Pyke, 28/3/31; *ibid.*, J. Turnbull to C.K. Millard, 12/5/31; Leathard, *Fight for Family Planning*, 48–50, 54–5.

⁴¹ LRO CM 1/63, Council minutes, 2/6/31 and 28/7/31; *Leicester Evening Mail*, 29/7/31, 10.

⁴² Leicester Health Committee, *Report of the MOH, 1930* (Leicester, 1931), 39; CMAC, SA/FPA, A11/24, cutting from the *Leicester Evening Mail*, 20/7/31; CMAC, SA/EUG, N42, cutting from the *Medical Officer*, 29/8/31.

⁴³ Leicester Health Committee, *Report of the MOH, 1932* (Leicester, 1933), 39, 105–8; Leicester Health Committee, *Report of the MOH, 1933* (Leicester, 1934), 123–6; Leathard, *Fight for Family Planning*, 55.

⁴⁴ CMAC, SA/FPA, A11/24, C.K. Millard, 'Memo on Ministry of Health's Circular 1408'; Ministry of Health, *On the State of the Public Health, 1933* (London, 1934), 94–5; Leathard, *Fight for Family Planning*, 55.

Eugenics and housing

It was not only in writing about birth control that Millard deployed the language of eugenics. In his frequent official commentaries on housing problems in the city, he made use of eugenic phrases and drew on appropriate medical metaphors, and the views he formed, particularly on the importance of providing an improved standard of housing for families, giving children priority, embodied a eugenic perspective. But the connections were not as clear-cut as in the case of birth control, and the strongly independent views which he formed about housing policy went against the consensus that had developed in the country at large and amongst Leicester city councillors by the early 1930s on the need for programmes of slum clearance. On this matter Millard seems to have taken a particularly idiosyncratic stance.

In his early years in Leicester, Millard had been enthusiastic about garden cities and in 1907 wrote that gardening was 'the ideal antidote to the evils of factory life, and everything should be done to encourage as many men as possible to take it up'.⁴⁵ Yet by the First World War it is clear that Millard regarded slum-dwellers as a residuum unable to share in the new living conditions of the suburbs; in his annual report for 1916 he argued that tenants could be classified as good, bad and indifferent, many were to blame for their poor living conditions, and 'dirty' families could 'contaminate' their neighbours and lower the social tone of the area that they had chosen to live in.⁴⁶ But it was Millard's report on 'van dwellers' which more clearly betrayed the influence of eugenics at this time. In November 1926, following complaints about a site on the Aylestone Road, the MOH visited the caravans and submitted a report to the Health Committee; he conceded that the problem had been aggravated by the housing shortage, but observed that the people living in caravans 'were of an inferior type judging by their appearance, the dirty conditions of the interior of their vans, and the dilapidated condition of the exterior'. He noted that they worked as hawkers, pedlars and odd-job men, and claimed that one man had spent the previous summer travelling all over the country accompanied by two horses, eleven chickens, three greyhound puppies and a thrush in a cage. These members of the 'nomad class', Millard wrote, were 'not the kind of neighbours that respectable people would desire to have', the caravans were classified as a nuisance, and closing orders were issued under the 1925 Housing Act.⁴⁷ Millard suggested that the Council should provide proper facilities, but in his annual report for 1927 he was less sympathetic,

⁴⁵ Leicester Sanitary Committee, *Report of the MOH, 1907* (Leicester, 1908), 52–3.

⁴⁶ Leicester Sanitary Committee, *Report of the MOH, 1916* (Leicester, 1917), 26. See also P.L. Garside, "'Unhealthy areas': town planning, eugenics and the slums, 1890–1945", *Planning Perspectives*, 3 (1988), 24–46.

⁴⁷ LRO, CM 21/2, Health Committee minutes 5/3/26 and 19/11/26, C.K. Millard, 'Van dwellers at Aylestone', 11/26, 4–6.

writing that this would 'encourage a mode of living which, in a civilised community, and especially in urban districts, ought not to be encouraged'.⁴⁸ Overall it is clear that Millard regarded 'van dwellers' as part of the 'submerged tenth' and this episode provided an early hint of his later views on overcrowding.

In the period 1925–35, as the local authority built new housing estates and began to tackle the issue of overcrowding and slum clearance, Millard's comments on housing policy continued to be clad in eugenic rhetoric. He was also moving away from the earlier 'hard line' attitude to the 'submerged tenth' to argue for a more determined policy to improve the housing conditions of the poorest. During the 1920s, he was arguing that 'filtering up' did not occur as poor people could not afford to move out of the slums and tenements, and the number of houses did not increase at the same rate as family formation. In 1928, for example, Millard wrote that municipal housing schemes had not helped the 'submerged tenth', and suggested that the problem was 'one of poverty, complicated by fecundity, the two factors being largely interdependent'. He advocated a rent allowance scheme for children, and recommended that housing schemes should be assessed by the amount of overcrowding relieved rather than simply the number of houses built. Millard employed an appropriate medical metaphor, and argued that the Council should deal with overcrowding 'because a social sore such as we are considering is prejudicial to the whole body politic'.⁴⁹ The MOH's support for differential renting, with rebates for families with dependent children, and taxes on those with children who were working but lived at home, generated friction between the Housing and Health Committees. Millard remained critical of the Council's housing policy, arguing that high rents meant that the poorest section of the community had benefited least from the houses provided by the Housing Committee and 'meanwhile the overcrowding continues and is a reproach to our vaunted civilisation'.⁵⁰

An opportunity for taking action against overcrowding seemed to arise after the Greenwood Act of 1930 which laid the foundations for an attack on slum housing at the local level. The Act not only provided Exchequer subsidies for slum clearance but based these on the numbers of people displaced and rehoused, making it easier for councils to deal with large families. In addition, local authorities were free to adopt differential renting.⁵¹ However, despite Millard's strong views on the need to tackle overcrowding, he rejected the idea of large-scale housing demolitions to clear slums in favour of improving the old housing stock on a piecemeal

⁴⁸ Leicester Health Committee, *Report of the MOH, 1927* (Leicester, 1928), 63–4.

⁴⁹ Leicester Health Committee, *Report of the MOH, 1928* (Leicester, 1929), 41–4.

⁵⁰ LRO, CM 21/3, Health Committee minutes, 13/12/29, 7/3/30, 28/3/30, 11/4/30; LRO CM 1/62, Council minutes, 27/5/30; Leicester Health Committee, *Report of the MOH, 1929* (Leicester, 1930), 44–5.

⁵¹ J. Burnett, *A Social History of Housing 1815–1970*, 2nd ed. (Newton Abbot, 1980; 1st pub. 1978), 234–8.

basis. When the Health Committee met in December 1930 to formulate plans in accordance with the requirements of the Greenwood Act, two separate proposals were tabled; one of them from Millard, proposing three improvement areas in which 1,054 houses would be inspected but only 210 demolished, and a second proposal from the chief sanitary inspector, who had suggested five clearance areas in which 1,093 houses would be demolished.⁵² Millard's proposal was rejected by the Liberal and Labour majority on the Committee in favour of the clearance area scheme. For the first time, the MOH seemed to have become divided from his Health Committee, and his expertise challenged.

Millard's annual report for 1930 provided a more systematic account of how best to tackle the housing problem under the 1930 Housing Act. He noted that 11,060 houses had been built in the period 1921–30, but overcrowding still remained a key problem. His view was that council houses should be allocated according to housing needs rather than ability to pay, and he advocated rent rebates for large families. Children, he argued, should come first, since houses were 'wasted' if allocated to childless couples. Although the 1930 Housing Act encouraged the building of small houses for old people, Millard maintained that these were unnecessary, and the elderly should be left undisturbed in the slums, concluding 'let our slogan be, "Save the children from the slums!"' to which we may add, "Keep the old houses for the old people"'. He stated that 'there are no real "plague spots" in Leicester to be swept away at any cost' and stressed the advantages of improvement procedure over clearance areas.⁵³ While Millard at times adopted a punitive approach to 'slum-dwellers', he could also write with a compassion that recalled his reports of 30 years earlier; in 1932 he conceded that 'many of the families living in these little houses are in poverty, and poverty is usually the most impassable barrier to securing a larger house, whether municipal or private'.⁵⁴ Millard's annual MOH reports provided a platform for views that were not shared by the Health Committee and these ideas were elaborated in articles in medical journals like the *Medical Officer*. In one, Millard again emphasized the importance of housing for children, and stressed that 'if we want to bring up an A1 nation we must see to it that the children are brought up in a good environment', while in a second he observed of methods of fumigating houses that 'no doubt a badly infested house usually reflects seriously upon the character of the tenants'.⁵⁵ Millard deployed eugenic language in discussing housing, and prioritized the claims of children over the needs of the elderly, but it is not clear that

⁵² LRO, CM 21/4, Health Committee minutes, 19/12/30; Nash and Reeder, *Leicester in the Twentieth Century*, 136–7; N. Newitt, 'From slums to semis: housing the people of Leicester 1900–39' (unpublished University of Leicester M.Phil. thesis, 1993), 111–12.

⁵³ Leicester Health Committee, *Report of the MOH, 1930* (Leicester, 1931), 27–34.

⁵⁴ Leicester Health Committee, *Report of the MOH, 1932* (Leicester, 1933), 5.

⁵⁵ C.K. Millard, 'Healthy housing for the poor: the present impasse and a way out', *Medical Officer*, 49 (1933), 105–7; *idem*, "'Vermineous" houses', *Medical Officer*, 50 (1933), 151–2.

it was his eugenic beliefs that underlay his passionate attachment to improvement rather than clearance areas.

Despite this sympathetic concern about the housing conditions of poor families, Millard's continued support for improvement as against clearance created tensions with the chairman of the Health Committee which emerged in September 1933 during a public enquiry by the Ministry of Health. The Leicester Property Owners and Ratepayers Association drew on Millard's arguments to justify opposition to clearance areas, whereas the chairman, William Hincks, used the chief sanitary inspector's report to argue that improvement areas would be inadequate.⁵⁶ The Health Committee again opted for the chief sanitary inspector's scheme based on clearance areas, which now proposed to clear 3,200 houses with 12,800 people living in them by 1938 at a cost of £1,310,000.⁵⁷ But at the Council meeting on 26 September, Liberal councillors, representing the interests of the Leicester Property Owners and Ratepayers Association, referred the report back to the Health Committee and ordered it to use improvement area procedure.⁵⁸ Millard continued to favour improvement areas, claiming that they were the most interesting innovation of the 1930 Housing Act, and would create open spaces and improve streets and houses. He anticipated the future when 'an army of workmen, brick-layers, plasterers, carpenters and plumbers will be at work, and when all our mean streets will resound with their activities and not merely with the crashing of the house-breaker'. The Health Committee, unimpressed, asked the MOH to submit a five-year plan for slum clearance, and all the Labour candidates in the November municipal elections pledged to support this issue.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, in January 1934, the new Slum Clearance and Property Inspection subcommittee attempted to reach a compromise by resolving that the town clerk, MOH and chief sanitary inspector should draw up a report on the lines of clearance and improvement areas.⁶⁰

Millard's policies became further embroiled in the cockpit of local political battles in June 1934 when the Health Committee attempted unsuccessfully to set up a special committee to deal with the improvement and clearance proposals. The *Leicester Evening Mail* bore the headline 'Angry scenes after city slum debate. Shouting councillors wave papers in protest. Vital vote uncounted'.⁶¹ This acrimonious two-hour debate revealed the depth of the feeling between councillors, and between

⁵⁶ *Leicester Evening Mail*, 19/9/33, 1.

⁵⁷ LRO, CM 21/5, Town Clerk to the Health Committee, 'Slum clearance', 14/9/33; Newitt, 'From slums to semis', 115–16.

⁵⁸ LRO, CM 1/65, Council minutes, 26/9/33; Newitt, 'From slums to semis', 117.

⁵⁹ LRO, CM 21/5, Health Committee minutes, 13/10/33, MOH, 'City of Leicester. Slum clearance: five years' programme', 11/10/33, 1–7; *Leicester Evening Mail*, 14/10/33, 9.

⁶⁰ LRO, CM 21/6, Slum Clearance and Property Inspection subcommittee minutes, 15/12/33, 12/1/34; *ibid.*, Health Committee minutes, 22/12/33; *ibid.*, Housing subcommittee minutes, 17/11/33.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Health Committee minutes, 1/6/34.

councillors and the MOH, and one councillor claimed that the first meeting of the Slum Clearance and Property Inspection subcommittee in November 1933 had been 'nothing more nor less than a meeting to bear-bait the Medical Officer'.⁶² In the event the Health Committee compromised slightly by recommending that the Council should declare nine clearance areas and one improvement area, and in July 1934 the Slum Clearance and Property Inspection subcommittee approved the MOH's draft report on procedure in the first improvement area.⁶³

Millard eventually had to comply with the majority demand for clearance and in January 1935 put forward a proposal for a second phase of the housing policy based on six clearance areas, but continued to use his annual reports to argue against policies with which he disagreed.⁶⁴ His annual report for 1933 maintained that clearance areas did not solve overcrowding caused by poverty and a shortage of cheap houses to rent, and claimed that reconditioned older properties could be let at cheaper rents than new houses.⁶⁵ In his annual report for 1934, published in July 1935, Millard argued that it was healthier for children to live in the suburbs, but observed that these advantages would be lost if the amount of family income available for food was reduced. He pointed out that real hardship could result if slum clearance meant that people were forced to move to distant council estates, and advocated more playgrounds and rest-gardens for old people.⁶⁶ Whether Millard's opposition to slum clearance was based on eugenic concerns or more general moral considerations, it was only in the later 1930s that the pace of slum clearance accelerated; housing policy in the 1930s was interesting in that it illustrated the limits of the power of the MOH and revealed conflicts that were often veiled by a superficial consensus.

The fading influence of eugenics, 1935–40

As we have seen, the Wood Report and concept of the 'social problem group' reinvigorated eugenics in the early 1930s, and Millard had particularly close links with the Society through C.J. Bond, whose book reviews and articles appeared frequently in the *Eugenics Review*, and who was elected a vice-president in May 1930.⁶⁷ In July 1931 Bond promised C.P. Blacker, the Society's general secretary, that he would help local authorities and health insurance committees to 'include and develop eugenic teaching & practice in their schemes for health propaganda', and

⁶² *Leicester Evening Mail*, 6/6/34, 1, 10.

⁶³ LRO, CM 21/6, Health Committee minutes, 15/6/34; *ibid.*, Slum Clearance and Property Inspection subcommittee minutes, 13/7/34.

⁶⁴ LRO, CM 21/7, Health Committee minutes, 18/1/35, MOH, 'Slum clearance: five years' programme: suggested second instalment', 4/1/35.

⁶⁵ Leicester Health Committee, *Report of the MOH, 1933* (Leicester, 1934), 36.

⁶⁶ Leicester Health Committee, *Report of the MOH, 1934* (Leicester, 1935), 31–5.

⁶⁷ CMAC, SA/EUG, C31, C.P. Blacker to C.J. Bond, 21/5/30.

he urged the Society to promote studies of the 'social problem group', sterilization, and birth control.⁶⁸ He continued to be active in the Leicester Medical Society, giving a paper in November 1932 on 'Eugenics in relation to preventive medicine and public health', and occasionally attended meetings of the East Midlands branch of the SMOH, speaking at its meeting in November 1934 on 'Genetics in relation to national welfare'.⁶⁹ Millard suggested that health certificates with questions on sexual health, tuberculosis, epilepsy and insanity should be exchanged before marriage and wrote to the Society's general secretary about this in 1935.⁷⁰ In the late 1930s Bond argued that the Society's support for family allowances for the 'social problem group' contradicted its policy on sterilization, while his talks to local groups emphasized the effect of differentials in the birth rate, and advocated sterilization for the 'ignorant, careless, and irresponsible' people who did not use contraception.⁷¹ Bond's death in 1939 was marked by a glowing obituary in the *Eugenics Review*.⁷² Clearly, therefore, Bond's involvement in the Eugenics Society and his local activities ensured that eugenics remained an important strand in provincial intellectual life through the 1930s, and he continued to have an influence on Millard.

Yet the actual impact of eugenics on public health policy, always tentative, diminished further in the late 1930s. It occasionally surfaced at the meetings of the East Midlands branch of the SMOH, but more often these were taken up with issues like school milk, hospital administration, midwifery, and other questions concerning the development of public health services. Moreover, after Millard's retirement in 1935 his successor, Dr Kenneth Macdonald, a relatively young man aged 39, appeared to have little interest in eugenics. In March 1936, Macdonald asked Blacker to recommend some books on eugenics, and he subsequently borrowed a copy of Gladys Schwesinger's *Heredity and Environment*, but Bond did not succeed in persuading Macdonald to join the Society.⁷³ Macdonald can be seen as representative of younger MOsH who were more interested in the environmental causes of poverty and the expansion of welfare services, and housing policy provides a good illustration of this. As we have seen, under Millard, progress had been slow with battles over improvement

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, C.J. Bond to C.P. Blacker, 5/7/31.

⁶⁹ SMOH, B2/1, minutes of meeting 24/11/32, 39; Leicester Medical Society minutes, 13/11/34.

⁷⁰ Leicester Health Committee, *Report of the MOH, 1933* (Leicester, 1934), 28–9; CMAC, SA/EUG, C232, box 19, C.K. Millard to C.P. Blacker, 21 and 24/5/35.

⁷¹ CMAC, SA/EUG, C32, II, C.J. Bond to C.P. Blacker, 2/7/36; *ibid.*, C.J. Bond, 'The present position of the birth control movement', 16/11/37; Soloway, *Democracy and Degeneration*, 225.

⁷² *Eugenics Review*, XXXI (1939–41), 215–16.

⁷³ CMAC, SA/EUG, C32, II, E.K. Macdonald to C.P. Blacker, 9/3/36; *ibid.*, C.P. Blacker to C.J. Bond, 13/3/36. See also Freeden, 'Eugenics and progressive thought', 670–1; Searle, 'Eugenics and politics in Britain in the 1930s', 162–9; *idem*, 'Eugenics and class', 235–7; Jones, 'Eugenics and social policy', 728.

and clearance areas, but while the 1935 housing survey indicated that Leicester had little overcrowding, the pace of clearance and rehousing accelerated in the second half of the decade.⁷⁴ Tuberculosis was no longer linked to heredity, but to environmental factors, and in 1936 Macdonald concluded from the statistics on its incidence in the new housing estates that 'good housing is, and in the future, even more will be, the greatest factor in the campaign against this disease'.⁷⁵ Macdonald's appointment coincided with a sea-change in social thought in which new ideals of human dignity and citizenship undermined previously entrenched eugenic interpretations of the problems of the slums. In the late 1930s, Millard and a small elderly coterie sat in Bond's house in the affluent Edwardian suburbs organizing their Voluntary Euthanasia Legalisation Society. Meanwhile from the Health Department's offices in the city centre, Macdonald surveyed the expansion of public health services. The new emphasis on welfare that Macdonald personified now held centre stage while the old school typified by Millard was relegated to the margins. Ironically it was only in the 1950s with its promotion of the 'problem family' that the Eugenics Society really influenced public health policy in the city.

Conclusion

The thinking behind this article was that Leicester would provide an interesting case in studying the impact of eugenic views on urban policy at the local level given that in the inter-war years it was the base for three influential professionals – Bond, Cattell and Millard – all of them well known for their association with the Eugenics Society. In fact, the reality was more complex. Eugenics certainly had an influence in shaping attitudes to local and national policies in the field of mental health. This was reflected in the way that the local After-Care subcommittee lobbied for legislation, and in the comments of the School Medical Officer following the Wood Report, as well as the local support for R.B. Cattell's work on intelligence. Similarly on birth control, Millard's interest in eugenics comes across strongly in his lectures and articles, his correspondence with Marie Stopes and his campaign for the birth control clinic. But in the case of housing the eugenic influence seems more elusive. Despite his belief in the existence of a 'submerged tenth', it is not clear how far Millard's views on housing policy were dependent on eugenic considerations, although they evidently embodied a eugenic perspective in his concern for the effects of overcrowding on children at the expense of the elderly. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, eugenic interpretations of poverty and social class dictated his response to venereal disease,

⁷⁴ Ministry of Health, *Housing Act, 1935: Report on the Overcrowding Survey in England and Wales* (London, 1936), xviii, table IX.

⁷⁵ Leicester Health Committee, *Report of the MOH, 1936* (Leicester, 1937), 60.

marriage certificates and sterilization, and throughout the period C.J. Bond was an important local mentor. Yet these issues only comprised a fraction of the sum of Millard's responsibilities as MOH, and there was often a contrast between what he advocated in his annual reports and what he was able to achieve as practical health policy. Eugenic stock-phrases such as 'submerged tenth', 'stock', 'C3 classes' and 'low standard of life' peppered his writing, but he resigned from the Eugenics Society in 1928 and never wrote in the *Eugenics Review*. In the 1920s and early 1930s he was attracted to fashionable eugenic ideas, but their impact on public health policy was filtered through the Health Committee and Council, which as we have seen opposed aspects of his policy for both birth control and housing. Moreover, from 1935 eugenics had little influence on public health in Leicester as Macdonald, the new MOH, reflected new standards of dignity and citizenship, and anticipated the move towards universal services that would characterize the 1940s. Overall eugenics was an important current in provincial intellectual life in the inter-war period, as revealed by the minutes of the East Midlands branch of the SMOH and Leicester Medical Society, but one with limited influence on the development of public health services.

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