

4 October 1930.

Rt. Rev. E.W. Barnes, D.D., Sc.D., F.R.S.,
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Dear Dr Barnes,

Many thanks for your exceedingly kind and encouraging letter.

I should be very glad indeed to discuss with you any points you think worth raising on the mathematics of my book. I ought to say, though, that I think Prof. C.G. Darwin was wrong in suggesting that Chapter IV is the kernel of the book. It is the most difficult mathematically, though not so difficult as some of what I have left undone in connection with other chapters, notably the opening of Chapter VI; but, in any case mathematical difficulty is no criterion of importance. To predict the path of the earth is much easier than to predict the result of the next election, and would be even if we had full data for both cases.

The practical question I want to raise to you, — though please do not put yourself to the trouble of discussing it with me unless and until you choose to — concerns family allowances, especially in relation to the clergy. I imagine that partial and tentative schemes have been already or will

be soon put into operation, and the importance which I myself attach to this particular group, lies in the fact that it may very probably in point of time be ahead of other professional occupations in adopting the principle, and therefore will influence the form and method of its application to other groups.

The general case for the clergy seems to be especially strong. Their children regularly stand high on the average in intelligence tests, proportion of eminent men, etc. Economic pressure and a repugnance for contraception are I imagine not unimportant in furthering the tendency to celibacy. The danger is that the purely sentimental case will stress the needs only of the poorer clergy, and lead to systems of family allowances or their equivalents on a flat rate.

Now a flat rate irrespective of income, will certainly leave the economic motive for childlessness, which is not altogether immoral, stronger among the better than among the worse paid. I imagine that among the clergy as is certainly the case in other professional occupations there is positive association between pay and ability. Presumably among the assistant clergy at least the most useful men are constantly being transferred to more important posts; but even if this were not the case among the clergy, as I am confident it must be, it is important that an economically right principle should be adopted at the first, for the system like the Universities Superannuation System will certainly tend to

be made uniform over a wide occupational field.

The objection to family allowances proportionate to the basic salary, is that they pay more to the rich than to the poor for the same service. This argument is only valid if the allowances come from outside funds. If, as we may anticipate must be the case in any scheme of adequate allowances, the fund comes from proportional deductions from the salaries of the childless, however these deductions may be hidden, these proportionate allowances are the simple result of transferring income from those without to those with dependent children in each economic group. The claim that the allowance should be equal for all, is thus a claim that an economic reform designed to assist the families of the clergy is to be diverted from its purpose in order to serve a different object, namely the equalisation of their stipends. One need have no opinion as to the desirability or undesirability of this second object, to insist that it should be treated separately on its own merits, and not be allowed to gain from its own point of view a very trivial advantage, at the expense of rendering partially ineffective the main object of family allowances. In practice an income range of from £200 to £2000 is and must be reflected by a proportionate range of expenditure per child.

Numerically to judge by groups such as schoolmasters, there is probably a trifle less than one dependent child for each man drawing pay; a deduction of about 10 per cent from all salaries would suffice to give all parents an increment of 12 per cent. over the basic pay, for each dependent child. This averaged over the first 21 years of life would I think bring parents and non-parents very much to the same standard of living. This I should call an adequate system, and I only fear that there is so much to be said for it sentimentally, that a rational economic and eugenic basis may seem to be impracticable.

I should be extremely glad, some time at your convenience, to know how this and other aspects of the question strike you.

Yours sincerely,