

## EDITOR'S NOTE

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### SCANDALIZING THE SCIENCE OF EUGENICS

Just as in their attacks on the scientific basis of race and their attempts to undermine the validity of race differences, egalitarian ideologues have shown a relentless obsession with destroying the concept of eugenics. Edwin Black's recent book *War against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* is the latest attempt to discredit the eugenics movement by impugning the legitimacy of eugenics and scandalizing readers with revelations of ties between American eugenicists and German racial hygienicists in the early twentieth century. His book epitomizes the pseudo-scholarship of the anti-eugenic, Marxian perspective of human nature, which denies the importance of heredity—the core philosophical tenet of egalitarianism. (Richard Lynn's review of Black's book in this issue exposes the shallowness and empty rhetoric that typifies *War against the Weak*.)

Black, an ideological zealot and muckraking journalist, has waged a blacklisting crusade against blue-chip American corporations (IBM) and leading philanthropies (Rockefeller and Carnegie foundations) for their purported roles in fostering German atrocities during the Second World War. Black's previous book, *IBM and the Holocaust*, attempted to implicate the successful New York-based computer firm for selling information technology to the Third Reich. Black's outlook reflects an odd mish-mash of Marxian anti-corporate sentiments, hyper-egalitarianism, ethnocentric Zionism—and his book failed to show any nexus between IBM's data processing equipment and a German mass-killing program.

The *War against the Weak* is full of half-truths, exaggerations, innuendo, and distortions. Even Daniel Kevles, a leading scholar and critic of eugenics, writing in *The New York Times*, calls *War against the Weak* "a muckraking book.... In the vein of the genre, it is a stew rich in facts and spiced with half-truths." In his book Black puts forth two fallacies: First, the idea that eugenics is a "pseudo-science," which Black repeats ad nauseam but for which he provides no corroborating evidence, and second, the dubious argument that the American eugenics movement provided the intellectual rationale for the Holocaust.

Richard Lynn's 2001 book *Eugenics: A Reassessment* punctures the myth that eugenics was a "pseudo-science." Lynn's analysis shows just how firmly eugenics was grounded on empirical genetic discoveries in the related fields of health and biomedical science. The sheer fact that Black spills so much ink to contest a subject which he argues has been otherwise thoroughly discredited suggests that the

opposite is true—he has to make his case rhetorically because empirically he has no case to make. Hence, the soundness of the concept of eugenics remains intact, which forces Black to continually repeat his initial charge in order to square his argument. A child could grasp the sophomoric nature of the author's contention.

In making his case, Black chiefly attacks the character and motives of leading eugenicists, especially two pioneers who were instrumental in building the American Eugenics Society: Charles Benedict Davenport and Harry Hamilton Laughlin. Davenport and Laughlin ran the Eugenics Research Organization out of their Cold Springs Harbor, N.Y., office. Both men were leading organizers of the Third International Congress of Eugenics held at the American Museum of Natural History in August 1932. Laughlin's research was instrumental in guiding the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924. Both are maliciously maligned for their contributions to a movement that, according to Black, spawned the Holocaust. Such hype is all the more reason why Black's New York-based publisher, Four Walls Eight Windows, had a first printing of 75,000 copies, a \$100,000 marketing budget, and a twenty-city author tour: Sleazy, slipshod social science sells!

In an interview with NPR talk show host Tavis Smiley, Black was asked what the eugenics movement "in brief" was all about. Black replied, "The eugenics movement was America's crusade to create a white master Nordic race, a race of white, blond, blue-eyed people to rule the world, to the exclusion of every other type of ethnic and racial minority." This is a good example of the sort of exaggeration that permeates Black's book. In actual truth, the goals of the eugenics movement were much broader in scope. The founder of eugenics, Francis Galton, defined the concept as "...the study of the agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations either physically or mentally." Galton wasn't just referring to the Nordic race: His use of "racial" qualities applied to mankind's various racial divisions. A review of the published literature during this formative period documents the varied scope of the eugenics movement's research interests and activities. Contrary to Black's mischaracterization of that movement, Laughlin, in a paper published in the proceedings of the Third International Congress of Eugenics, noted

Eugenics as a pure science has for its purpose the discovery of fundamental truth about race and family-stock improvement. It is therefore, like all science, international in character. It belongs to humanity rather than to any one nation or race. Applied eugenics, like religion, is essentially something for belief and practice; it is not a thing which works well if its imposition on one nation or family is attempted by another.

Every nation, race and family-stock must set up its own standards of hereditary constitution in physical, physiological, and spiritual qualities. The elements of such ideals do and should vary greatly, for specialization in national purpose

and family talent is essential and must be developed and *conserved* [emphasis added]. It is thus that the fundamental elements for eugenics are applicable to all nations, and it is therefore necessary, for the sound advance of eugenics both in theory and application, to develop a strong international organization.<sup>1</sup>

In a recent article published in the journal *Mankind Quarterly*, Roger Pearson profiles some of the most influential leaders in the eugenics movement, debunking the line of reasoning by which Black portrays eugenicists as sinister genocidal fiends:

The Race Betterment Foundation... was first established in 1906 as the American Medical Missionary Board (but soon changed its name to the Race Betterment Foundation). Its founder was John Harvey Kellogg, a descendant of an Englishman named Joseph Kellogg who had arrived in North America as early as 1651. Kellogg, who launched the breakfast cereals industry by introducing granola to the American public as a health food, was chief surgeon at the then world-famous Battle Creek Sanitorium.

Publishing a journal called *Good Health*, the Race Betterment Foundation became a major center of the new eugenics movement in America. Kellogg himself was an important and respected figure who authored numerous medical and eugenics treatises, and his circle of influence extended to several successful businessmen including J. C. Penney and C. W. Barron, whose names remain familiar to this day. Another member of the Kellogg family, Vernon Lyman Kellogg, a zoologist of international repute, also espoused the eugenics movement. As a personal friend of President Herbert Hoover, he served on various national health and agricultural committees, becoming a trustee of the young Brookings Institution and of the Rockefeller Foundation while continuously taking an active role in the eugenics movement as the latter grew in size and influence.

The movement was also early supported by famed educator David Starr Jordan, first president of Stanford University. Jordan's first American ancestor had arrived in the North American colonies from England circa 1700. Jordan's status in the American education scene of his day is illustrated by the fact that he was a trustee of the Carnegie Foundation and president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the National Education Association, and the California and Indiana Academies of Science, as well as vice president of the Eugenics Education Society in Britain. In the opinion of the present writer, his major contribution to eugenic thought was the emphasis he placed on the dysgenic effect of modern warfare in such books as *War and the Breed* (1915). Charles William Eliot, president of Harvard University, trustee of the Carnegie Institution of New York, and one of the most eminent educators in America, also rallied to the eugenic crusade, as did astronomer William Wallace Campbell, president of the University of California, whose Scottish forebears had migrated to the colonies in the eighteenth century. Livingston Farrand, president of the University of Colorado and subsequently president of Cornell University, chairman of the central committee of the International Red Cross, and editor of the *American Journal of Public Health*, similarly espoused the eugenics movement, as did innumerable other educators and faculty members of note.<sup>2</sup>

One baffling development is the fact that “conservatives” have rushed to promote this blatant work of pseudo-scholarship by a left-wing ideologue. *National Review* hailed Black’s book, noting it “may well be the best book ever published about the American eugenics movement and the horrible events it spawned.”<sup>3</sup> The Conservative Book Club (CBC) listed the book in equally sensational terms: “It began on Long Island—and ended at Auschwitz.” Such pronouncements reveal more about the ideological drift of the “conservative establishment” than they testify to the “genocidal” intentions of the eugenics movement’s leadership. (In attempting to put a “pro-life” spin on Black’s book and thus promoting it around the annual “right-to-life” anniversary march last January, the CBC failed to mention that Black’s publisher, Four Walls Eight Windows, is the publisher of *The Choices We Made: Twenty-Five Women and Men Speak Out about Abortion* by Angela Bonavoglia, with a foreword by Gloria Steinem. The book, a testimonial chronicle in support of the *Roe* decision, hails “the freedom of reproductive choice in America.” The catalog of Four Walls Eight Windows clearly shows the publishing house has a liberal ideological bent.)

Obviously, many leading eugenicists, most notably Margaret Sanger, embraced birth control, abortion, and sterilization—initiatives stemming from *negative* eugenic policies. This will remain an obstacle for Christian conservatives, especially devout Roman Catholics or Protestant evangelicals. These same conservatives, however, fail to recognize that the eugenics movement also stressed policies that would strengthen family and community bonds. In fact, the preservation of the family via improved health—the elimination of hereditary diseases—was one of the foremost aims of eugenic social policies. For conservatives to reject eugenics whole cloth is the equivalent of dismissing cancer-prevention health policies because an anti-smoking program and health fitness policies formed a crucial part of Nazi racial hygiene. Caleb Saleeby’s *Parenthood and Race Culture*, Paul Popenoe’s *The Conservation of the Family*, W. C. D. and C. D. Whetham’s *The Family and the Nation: A Study in Natural Inheritance and Social Responsibility*, and Enid Charles’ *The Twilight of Parenthood* were leading eugenic textbooks that heavily promoted family preservation in an earlier America.

The real lesson here is that conservatives have once again lost sight of their priorities by sacrificing principle (the importance of preserving the gene pool of their cultural heritage) to abstract concepts and superficial political gains. As the birth rate of Western populations continues to fall below replacement levels, conservatives continue to ignore what Pat Buchanan recently warned would be the eventual Death of the West. The problem is not just a question of demographics but one of posterity—ensuring that future generations will have healthy, robust families to perpetuate the genetic qualities (physical and mental traits) of European peoples. So long as an understanding that conserving, and improving, who we are and

what we have come from is the foremost priority of a sane, healthy, and effective conservatism remains lost on it, American conservatism will remain an impotent and infertile exercise.

### ENDNOTES

1. Harry H. Laughlin, "Historical Background of the Third International Congress of Eugenics," in *A Decade of Progress in Eugenics: Scientific Papers of the Third International Congress of Eugenics* (Baltimore, MD: The William & Wilkins Co., 1934), 1.
2. Roger Pearson, "Heredity in the History of Western Culture," *Mankind Quarterly* (Spring 1995; vol. XXXV, no. 3), 247-248.
3. Wesley J. Smith, "Pandora Revisited," *National Review*, September 29, 2003.