

# The Eugenics Movement

The term was coined by Sir Francis Galton in 1883, influenced by the work of his cousin Charles Darwin. It became a major influence on science and medicine in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and legislation for the sterilisation of 'defectives' was introduced first in the United States and later in several European countries. The first 'Scientific Baby Contest' was held in 1908, where measures of contestants' physical and intellectual development were taken.

In 1914, the US Model Eugenical Sterilization Law was proposed to authorise sterilisation of the 'socially inadequate' (those in institutions or dependent on care provided at public expense) and encompassed the 'feeble-minded, insane, criminalistic, epileptic, inebriate, diseased, blind, deaf; deformed; and dependent' as well as 'orphans, ne'er-do-wells, tramps, the homeless and paupers'.

## FIRST EUGENICS CONGRESS. Four Hundred Delegates in London— Americans to Read Papers.

LONDON, July 24.—The first international Eugenics Congress opened here to-day, with 400 delegates, representing twelve countries, in attendance. The congress was formally opened at a banquet and reception, at which speeches were made by ex-Premier Balfour, the Lord Mayor, and Major Darwin.

Mr. Hailour said that the study of eugenics was one of the most pressing necessities of the age. He based his belief in the future progress of mankind on the application of scientific methods to practical life.

Among the papers to be read at the congress, the business sessions of which begin to-morrow, are those of Dr. Raymond Pearl of the Maine Experiment Station, on the "Inheritance of Fecundity," and Dr. D. F. Weeks of the New Jersey State College on "The Inheritance of Epilepsy." Dr. C. B. Davenport, President of the Eugenics Record Office, Cold Spring Harbor, N. Y., will read a paper on "Marriage and Eugenics."

Breeder Van Wagenen will deliver an illustrated lecture which will embody the report to the Congress of the Eugenics Section of the American Breeders' Association. This will consist of a study and report as to the best practicable means of cutting off the defective gene plasm in the human population.

Dr. G. Smith of the University of Minnesota will read a paper on "Eugenics and the New Social Consciousness."

All the papers are to be followed by brief discussions.

During the Congress an exhibition consisting of charts, pedigrees, photographs, and other illustrations of heredity, especially in man, relics of Charles Darwin, Mr. Francis Galton and Gregor Mendel, and portraits of notable workers are to be shown. Many of these relics have come from America.

A programme of entertainments, visits, and receptions has been provided by a committee consisting of the Duchess of Marlborough, the Lord Mayor, Lady Abercromby, Mrs. Leonard Darwin, Mrs. A. C. Gatto, Mrs. Whitelaw Reid, Mrs. Alec Tweedie, and St. Newton Crane.

Three major International Eugenics Conferences were held — in 1912 in London, and in 1921 and 1932 in New York. The scientific reputation of eugenics started to decline in the 1930s, when it was used as scientific justification for the racial policies of Nazi Germany, and for its enforced sterilisation and euthanasia of the handicapped (including those with epilepsy). ILAE leaders active in the field of eugenics included Julius Donáth, David Weeks, James F. Munson, W.N. Bullard, H.I. Schou and William Lennox.