

# BIG FAMILIES

## SCIENTIST'S THEORY

### His Own 8 Children

#### HOW TO CHECK DROP IN BIRTH RATE

*By A Special Correspondent*

**T**HAT the bringing up of large families depends largely on hereditary influences was the view expressed by Professor R. A. Fisher, Galton Professor of Eugenics at University College, in a special talk with me yesterday.

Apart from the fact that he is an acknowledged expert on heredity and genetics, Professor Fisher can speak with added authority on such matters since he is himself the father of eight children, including six girls. The birth of his latest baby was announced only yesterday.

His belief gains striking support from the fact that he was a seventh child—and so was his wife, a daughter of the late Dr. Gratton Guinness.

#### **"SHOULD BE DOUBLE"**

Professor Fisher's solution for the problem of the falling birth rate would be the institution in Great Britain of the family allowance system (a percentage on wages), which operates in France and Belgium.

**"The better-paid occupational grades have ridiculously few children,"** he said. **"If the population is to be maintained, those families need to be at least doubled."**

Professor Fisher believes that a "misguided altruism" is largely responsible for the small family problem.

"It is often possible to give better educational chances and social opportunities to an only child, or to a couple of children. Those are real advantages, and must form a serious consideration, but they are a danger from the eugenic standpoint.

#### **ONLY CHILD LOSES**

"For several generations the social system has given free promotion to ability of all kinds.

**"It has also promoted to the upper classes certain hereditary traits of temperament leading to small families. To the lower classes we have been 'de-moting' more fecundity and every form of social incapacity."**

"Thus we have been uniting the less socially valuable characteristics with high fertility and the socially valuable characteristics with low fertility. That seems to me to be eugenically disastrous."

**At the same time, Professor Fisher holds that there is much evidence to suggest that large families are hereditary, probably from psychological reasons.**

He is of opinion that children who "grow up in a bunch" gain a great deal. The only child loses a tremendous amount of the formative influences of social contact in his own family. The habit of active co-operation in games and play, give and take, and the team spirit are invaluable.

#### **"SOCIALY INJURIOUS"**

"Many only children are lonely at home. They do not get more parental care, as is generally assumed, and they lose childish contacts.

"I should be inclined to say that the small family is socially injurious rather than that it is morally wrong.

"Many wives think their husbands would be afraid of the financial burden. Often they wish to spare him the 'noise and nuisance' of children in the home."

Professor Fisher lives at Harpenden—

"With my family," he says, "I could not afford to live in town"—and, no doubt as the result of heredity, some of his children are already helping him in scientific work.

His concluding comment on the childless or the one-child home was:

"Many people are sacrificing their real happiness to their economic fearfulness."