

## **Human sterilization today. Human betterment foundation.**

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**A publication of the HUMAN BETTERMENT FOUNDATION Pasadena, Calif.**

### **HUMAN STERILIZATION TODAY**

With the Compliments of THE HUMAN BETTERMENT FOUNDATION 321 PACIFIC SOUTHWEST BUILDING PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

During the last twenty-eight years, California state institutions have sterilized nearly 12,000 insane and feebleminded patients.

The following pages embody results shown by a case-study of the first 10,000 of these sterilizations.

This sterilization is a surgical operation, which prevents parenthood without in any way or degree unsexing the patient, or impairing his or her health. It merely cuts and seals the tubes through which the germ cells—the spermatozoa and ova,—must pass. It is wholly different, therefore, from the crude and brutal operations of castration and asexualization, performed for the selfish purposes of the perpetrators. Primitive and pagan peoples castrated boys to produce eunuchs. Roman Catholics continued the practice until modern times, to provide male soprano voices for their cathedral choirs. Unlike these practices, modern sterilization is not a mutilation in any sense of the word.

In men, the operation (vasectomy) can be performed under a local anaesthetic in fifteen or twenty minutes, and in light work occasions no loss of time. In women, the operation (salpingectomy) involving the opening of the abdomen, is comparable to an uncomplicated operation for chronic appendicitis, which means a week or two in bed. In either sex, failures are almost unknown.

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### **EUGENIC STERILIZATION IS NOT AN EXPERIMENT**

Eugenic sterilization in this form represents one of the greatest advances in modern civilization. It is not a novelty or an experiment. It has been continuously used by American institutions since 1899, when the first sterilizations were performed in Indiana.

More than 130,000,000 people, including the citizens of twenty-nine American states, are now living under eugenic sterilization laws. Apart from the United States, the countries which have adopted such legislation are the Canadian provinces of Alberta and British Columbia; Norway; Sweden; Denmark; Finland; Esthonia; Germany; the Free City of Danzig; the state of Vera Cruz, Mexico; the Canton of Vaud, Switzerland; and Puerto Rico.\*

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\* See list of American states and statistics—page 8.

## THE PROBLEM BEFORE AMERICAN CITIZENS

The situation which has led all these commonwealths to adopt sterilization laws, grows out of such facts as the following:

Births among families habitually living on public charity are often 50% higher than births among self-supporting families.

The families that contribute children to the state homes for the feeble-minded in California, are multiplying about twice as rapidly as the rest of the population.

The burden of taxation due to the mentally diseased and mentally defective, is at the same time steadily mounting.

Comparatively few of the feeble-minded are given institutional care, but their presence in the population at large is none the less expensive both in direct costs and in lowered efficiency of industry, in crime and delinquency, and in the deterioration of citizenship which is inevitable when a large number of the citizens are mentally abnormal.

Psychologists estimate that at least 1,000,000 persons in the United States are so feeble-minded as to need special care and supervision. If anyone with less than 70% of average intelligence for his age is called mentally deficient, the number of such persons in the United States is found to be about 6,500,000.

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The number of insane persons in hospitals is growing from year to year. Only 435,000 are cared for at any one time, but the turn-over is rapid, 95,000 new admissions being reported each twelve months. Statisticians have calculated that nearly 5% of the American population or 6,000,000 people,

will at some time during life be legally committed as insane. There are many others who break down to an equal degree, enough to prevent them from carrying on their regular work, but who are not committed to hospitals by the courts. Calculations by Dr. W. F. Ogburn of the University of Chicago show that these amount to an additional 5%, making the total number of the mentally diseased about 10% of the entire population.

The generally admitted trend of the population toward degeneracy is real and vital. The protection of these unfortunate defectives and their potential children, as well as posterity, is the people's problem. They must decide it. They should have all the material facts before making that decision.

### **EUGENIC STERILIZATION IS NOT A PANACEA**

Sterilization is no panacea for these ills of mankind, but it is one of the many measures indispensable to any far-sighted and humanitarian program for dealing with society's tremendous burden of mental disease, deficiency, and dependency.

The principle of compulsory sterilization by the state, under proper safeguards, was upheld as constitutional by the Supreme Court of the United States in the case of *Buck vs. Bell* (1927). In writing the decision, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes remarked: "Three generations of imbeciles are enough."

Agreeing with this view, state after state is now extending the application of sterilization to such of its defectives as are legally committed to state institutions. In this practice, every state benefits by the experience of California, studied intensively and continuously since 1925 by the Human Betterment Foundation.

The first study (1926–1929) covered 6,000 California sterilizations. Its details were published in a score of technical papers in various scientific journals. A bound volume of these, 4 entitled "Collected Papers on Eugenic Sterilization in California", is accessible in most of the important libraries of America. A more popular digest of the facts was published in 1929 by The Macmillan Company, New York City. This book, entitled "Sterilization for Human Betterment", by E. S. Gosney and Paul Popenoe, can be had for \$2 from this Foundation.

A second complete study (1932–1936) brought the subject up to date and confirmed the findings of the first study. Full results are reported in a booklet entitled "Twenty-eight Years of Sterilization in California", now in press, which can be had from this Foundation for 25 cents, postpaid.

## **STERILIZATION IS APPROVED BY ALL**

The most striking revelation from our studies is the extent to which the policy of eugenic sterilization is approved by those who know most about it.

Patients, relatives of patients, state officials, physicians and surgeons, parole and probation officers, social workers, agree on the value of this practice.

It is a protection, not a punishment, and therefore carries no stigma or humiliation.

It permits many patients to return to their homes to live normal lives, without danger of producing handicapped children. It thus keeps homes together by removing the threat of defective offspring, and prevents the breakup of families.

It saves the State of California in the cost of caring for its institutionalized feebleminded and insane, expenses estimated at more than \$2,000,000 per year, and further allows for better care of more defectives in its state homes and hospitals.

## **SEX OFFENSES LESS FREQUENT**

Sterilization has been followed by a marked decrease in sex offenses. This is not because the operation changes the sexual life, for it produces no such change. It is because of better health, educational discipline, careful placement, and supervision on parole. But the record once for all disposes of the charge 5 that sterilization will result in increased promiscuity and the spread of venereal diseases. Just one illustration: Of 304 feebleminded girls sterilized and paroled, 9 out of every 12 had been sex offenders before commitment. After sterilization, only one out of every 12 became sex delinquent on parole.

Sterilization prevents the birth of children who, even if not defective, would otherwise be brought up in unfavorable environments by mentally diseased or mentally deficient parents or by the state. It enables many handicapped persons to marry and to have a life normal in most respects, whose marriage otherwise would be unwise if not disastrous. A study of marriages of 130 feebleminded patients after sterilization and parole, shows that two-thirds of them have been successful. This is as good as the record of all California marriages.

## STERILIZATION IS HIGHLY SELECTIVE

There can be no question that a very large portion of feeble-mindedness is due to inheritance. The same is true of mental disease, though in either case the lack of ancestral histories sometimes makes this difficult to trace.

It must be understood that not every one who is sent to a state institution is sterilized. Mass sterilization has no place in this program. Each case is judged on its own merits. Of the feeble-minded who have been paroled, about one-half have been sterilized. Of the persons admitted to state hospitals for the insane, one in six of the new admissions is sterilized before leaving. Selection of the patients for this operation is made after careful study by medical specialists, and usually with the written consent of the nearest relatives.

Sterilizations in California have been about equally divided between men and women. Two-thirds of the number sterilized were committed as insane, one-third as feeble-minded.

The consistently careful administration of this measure in California is reflected by the fact that during the first six years sterilizations per year increased from 11 to 116; total, 577; a yearly average of 96. During the succeeding years they have gradually increased from 182 in 1915 to the peak of 874 in 1935. The average during the past two decades has been 537 per year.

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## WHAT IS THE HUMAN BETTERMENT FOUNDATION?

The Human Betterment Foundation is a non-profit corporation, organized under the laws of California. Its members, eminent in a wide range of professional and business activities, are as follows (members of the Board of Trustees being marked with an asterisk):

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This organization is not designed to take up original scientific research work, but rather to investigate the results and possibilities for human betterment by a safe, conservative application of the discoveries made by scientists, and to give this information to the public.

Its first major problem is to investigate the possibilities for race betterment by eugenic sterilization, and to publish the results. When the public is familiar with these facts, some other major subject will be substituted. The scope of the Foundation is as broad as its 7 name indicates. It is restricted only to conservative, preventive work for humanity as distinguished from ordinary charity relief work or patchwork. Its goal is the constructive, practical advancement and betterment of human life, character, and citizenship, in such manner as to make for human happiness and progress.

The possibilities of fundamental, constructive, preventive work along these lines are broad. They are limited only by the ability and number of workers.

This Foundation is not designed to perpetuate any name or to be a monument to any individual or family; but to be a center from which effective, constructive work can be carried on by all who feel the importance of such work and are in a position to help either by the contribution of capital or by the contribution of talent. The articles of incorporation leave the future free from undue limitations of organization and policy.

The officers and trustees of this Foundation will be glad to confer with anyone who is interested in the work above outlined, or who may wish to use the opportunity afforded by this organization to realize his own ideals in the promotion of race betterment.

## **DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN "BIRTH CONTROL" AND STERILIZATION**

There is a wide difference between sterilization and "birth control" by contraception. Unless this difference is recognized in any study of the subject, no reliable conclusions involving both can be drawn.

Eugenic sterilization, primarily, is applied by the state or with its sanction, to persons who would be likely to produce defective children. It protects such persons, their potential children, the state, and posterity. Such persons do not have the intelligence, the foresight, or the self-control, to handle contraceptives successfully, nor the ability to care for children intelligently. Sterilization is practically irreversible — permanent — and 100% effective. It is the only method of birth control which defectives can use successfully.

Birth control by contraceptive methods is voluntary and applied by the individual for his own purposes. It requires extreme care, intelligence, and a practical biological understanding of the problem. When not applied under definite instructions from a competent, 8 experienced physician or nurse, **after examination**, it frequently results in failure. At best, what succeeds with one may fail with another, especially with the young and inexperienced.

Both sterilization and contraception have a place in modern society. Both demand careful consideration, but they apply to different classes of people and for different reasons. They should never be confused as merely parts of one program. The best results of each will be promoted by a frank recognition of their differences and the limitations of each.

The following table shows the year of the adoption by American states of their first eugenic sterilization laws, and the number of sterilizations performed under such laws up to January 1, 1938.

STERILIZATIONS PERFORMED	STATE	YEAR FIRST ADOPTED	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Alabama	1919	129	95	234	
Arizona	1929	10	10	20	
California	1909	6,270	5,910	12,180	
Connecticut	1909	23	377	400	
Delaware	1923	273	241	514	
Georgia	1937	0	0	0	
Idaho	1925	4	10	14	
Indiana	1903	383	277	660	
Iowa	1911	70	83	153	
Kansas	1913	1,151	764	1,915	
Maine	1925	14	125	139	
Michigan	1913	420	1,395	1,815	
Minnesota	1925	270	1,189	1,459	
Mississippi	1928	105	225	330	
Montana	1923	35	74	109	
Nebraska	1915	132	201	333	
New Hampshire	1917	51	302	353	
New York <sup>*</sup>	1912	1	41	42	
North Carolina	1919	86	432	518	
North Dakota	1913	90	263	353	
Oklahoma	1931	49	236	285	
Oregon	1917	435	783	1,218	
South Carolina	1935	0	1	1	
South Dakota	1917	139	244	383	
Utah	1925	63	82	145	
Vermont	1931	50	111	161	
Virginia	1924	1,197	1,719	2,916	
Washington	1909	48	245	293	
West Virginia	1929	1	30	31	
Wisconsin	1913	129	776	905	
Totals		11,628	16,241	27,869	

\* The New York law was declared unconstitutional in 1918.

1. Voluntary sterilizations in state penitentiaries of California not included above 302
2. The above figures were furnished by state authorities.





3. In many states lacking sterilization laws, the state institutions sterilize patients with consent. No account is here taken of such operations, nor of those that are primarily therapeutic, not eugenic, in purpose.

When you have read this pamphlet carefully, kindly pass it on to your neighbor with your constructive criticism, favorable or unfavorable; thus aiding us in our educational program.

We shall be glad to furnish more pamphlets for distribution among interested citizens.

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