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DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF THOSE WHOSE MINDS  
HAVE NOT DEVELOPED NORMALLY

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Dr. H. S. Cumming, Surgeon General,  
U. S. Public Health Service,  
Washington, D. C.

My dear Dr. Cumming:

At the request of Dr. Lawrence Kolb I have reviewed certain portions of Miscellaneous Publication No. 18 entitled, "Manual of the Mental Examination of Aliens", issued from your Department in 1918, in order that I may comment thereupon from my professional point of view. My conclusions are as follows:

1. The manual contains many excellent ideas and fruitful suggestions. Its general point of view is sound and its methods comprehensive and its standards conservative.
2. That portion of the examination relating to what is generally recognized as the psychological examination, or measurement of mental capacity as contrasted with the psychiatric examination or the diagnosis of mental disease, can be and should be improved upon in the light of other experiences in the determination of the mental abilities of aliens. The examination as herein described is a most commendable advance over previous methods but lacks the degree of precision and objectivity which might be employed. Moreover, the interpretation of the results of these mental tests is left too much to the discretion of the examiner, and the standards employed are too uncertain, leaving too much room for criticism.
3. I would suggest that some such system be employed comparable to that developed by the psychological group responsible for the examining of men in the army during the recent war (see Vol. XV, Memoirs of the National Academy of Science entitled, "Psychological Examining in the United States Army"). The procedures provide for literate examinations, non-literate examinations, and examinations relatively independent of any form of speech. Moreover, I would suggest that the standards developed as a result of the

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army psychological examining be seriously considered as suggesting more precise and reasonable limits for the exclusion of aliens of limited mental ability.

4. I would suggest that the Manual of 1918 be revised, probably utilizing the army psychological methods as well as the advances of the last ten years in psychological measurement as the foundation for a new manual. I would further suggest that in view of the public importance of this question, with its possible national and international complications, such a revised manual should have the support of technical opinion outside the Public Health Service in order that such a manual might be placed above partisan criticism. To this end I would suggest that you request such a body as the National Research Council to appoint an advisory committee to which a revised manual might be submitted for approval, such a committee to include physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, sociologists and perhaps educationists.

5. In view of the technical difficulties of conducting mental examinations for aliens it might be advisable to organize a traveling clinic staff which might visit the various ports of embarkation, or such other points at which aliens are examined. Such clinic groups could then give specialized examinations to those suspected cases called from the great mass of applicants for admission to this country. This would increase the efficiency of the Service and would certainly give it better standing in the eyes of the various nations concerned, as well as with our own people. This need not greatly add to the expense of such examinations, for such a body of experts using the intensive, rapid methods which their skill would make possible might actually reduce the cost of such examinations while at the same time increasing their efficiency.

Finally I would especially call your attention to the fact that in the elimination of the feeble-minded alien it is the ~~more~~ <sup>more</sup> upgrade of feeble-mindedness that is the most serious menace and also the most difficult to determine. In point of number and in point of social significance the elimination of the idiot and the low grade imbecile is not a serious problem. It is true that such individuals may be an economic burden, but they usually are not otherwise an active social menace nor do they usually reproduce their kind. It is the high-grade imbecile and the low-grade moron who become serious problems.

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They are not only economic failures but they are also likely to be anti-social because of poor judgment, suggestibility, and other defects. And they also do produce their kind usually rather prolifically. The high-grade imbecile and low-grade moron woman or girl is a particular menace from the standpoint of sexual immorality and reproduction, while the feeble-minded male of similar grade is very likely to indulge in sexual crimes of the most reprehensible character.

I am positively in sympathy with a rigid exclusion of undesirable aliens, especially those who are mentally defective, that is, feeble-minded, epileptic, insane, degenerate, and the like. At the same time I believe our national policy should be such as not to exclude otherwise desirable aliens or to work hardship on families in this country or abroad.

Yours cordially,

*Edgar A. Doll*  
Edgar A. Doll.

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