

Book Reviews

not obtain the legal support they wanted. Publicly systematic research in eugenics was advocated by only a small group of people; names like those of the physicians Frets and Van Herwerden often recur. Only after the First World War did a few organizations for anthropogenetics, anthropology, and population studies amalgamate to become the Dutch Eugenics Federation in 1930. The final 100 pages of the book are devoted to the wide range of negative and positive eugenicist measures proposed, ranging from screening for VD to isolation or sterilization. Noordman discusses various parliamentary and media debates, again carefully displaying the multi-layered political, professional, and ethical motivations of their participants.

This is the first comprehensive study of the subject in The Netherlands in recent times. Many of its themes could be further developed: one, as the author himself points out, is the relation between the degenerationist and eugenicist arguments; another is the presence, here maybe slightly underrated, of racial arguments in Dutch medical writings.

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JOAN AUSTOKER, *A history of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund 1902–1986*, Oxford University Press, 1988, 8vo, pp. xvii, 375, illus., £40.00.

Writing the history of an institution presents problems. To balance its scientific achievements with developments elsewhere, to assess the relative contributions of a succession of directors and of individual scientific staff and, in the case of a charity, to relate scientific endeavour to the availability of financial support are tasks that would daunt the faint-hearted. In *A history of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund*, Joan Austoker has achieved a synthesis that demonstrates formidable scholarship. The book has been extensively researched and the footnotes so prolific that on some pages they exceed the text.

The origins of the cancer research are to be found in the nineteenth century but it was not until the early decades of the twentieth that the foundations of modern experimental cancer research were laid. The Imperial Cancer Research Fund, founded in 1902, was the first attempt in this country to set up a national body to organize and fund cancer research. Its subsequent success as a research-funding body was not achieved without difficulty. In the early years there were conflicts with the Medical Research Council and the Department of Health, and the foundation of a rival body during the 1920s, the British Empire Cancer Campaign (now the Cancer Research Campaign) did not help matters. There were, furthermore, differences between scientists who believed that the future lay in the experimental research laboratory, and those clinicians who sought to encourage the study of the patient. Nevertheless, a succession of Directors and Chairmen of Council laboured manfully through the years between the World Wars, although the period 1933–9 was to be associated with disillusion and dissension that necessitated extensive reconstruction. Since the late 1950s, however, new initiatives were undertaken, new buildings opened in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and the way set for the modern era. It was undoubtedly during the years of Sir Michael Stoker's direction of the Fund's scientific activities that a centre of international excellence was established. It was also during this period that the policy of founding extramural Units in the Universities and medical schools was formulated. At St Bartholomew's Hospital, as a result of the tireless activities of Gordon Hamilton Fairley and with support from the Fund, the speciality of medical oncology emerged in this country. The book begins with a perceptive introduction by Sir Angus Ogilvy, who has done so much as President of the Fund since 1964, and there is an epilogue looking to the future by the present Director of Research, Sir Walter Bodmer.

There are moments when the reader may find it difficult to see the wood for the trees, such is the mass of information obtained by generations of dedicated workers in cancer research, retailed in painstaking detail by Dr Austoker. But there is no doubt that this work is a major contribution to the history of contemporary medical science and it will remain the authoritative account of the history of the Fund.

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