

most reliable body of data I could find I read Backman's (1948) review with care and consulted every one of the several hundred references cited that I could find. Many of the data Backman refers to are statistically very poor and some reports include previous series. None can be used without a critical look at the originals. It appears that Brown did not spot Backman's miscalculation of the mean in one of the earlier English references, and why did he count Robertson's cases in twice? Why, too, did he in his Fig. 3 plot data relating to approximately 1913 at 1933 for graphic comparison with data relating to 1949 plotted at 1949? When I first plotted the results from the data I assembled, I certainly had no particular view of the matter.

It seems that Brown's distortion of my views may come at base from his curious concept of biology. He writes:

"If Tanner (1961) believes 'the secular trend . . . is one of the most considerable phenomena of human biology at present . . . and has a host of medical, educational, and sociological consequences', then it must be admitted that no comparable phenomenon readily comes to mind that is not the outcome of a prolonged evolutionary process".

May I suggest a few thoughts to fill the blank Family planning for instance, and the trend toward smaller families; or migration both within and without countries: other examples may be found in a text book of "Human Biology" (Harrison, Weiner, Tanner, and Barnicot, 1964). To Brown, biology seems to exclude the environment, nutrition, disease, and so forth—in other words the warp of the subject. This is an old-fashioned view and one from which I most emphatically dissociate myself.

REFERENCES

- Backman, G. (1948). *Acta anat. (Basel)*, 4, 421
 Brown, P. E. (1966). *Brit. J. prev. soc. Med.*, 20, 9.
 Harrison, G. A., Weiner, J. S., Tanner, J. M., and Barnicot, N. A. (1964). "Human Biology". Clarendon Press, Oxford.
 Tanner, J. M. (1961) "Education and Physical Growth". University of London Press.
 — (1962). "Growth at Adolescence", 2nd ed. Blackwell Oxford.
 — (1965). "The Trend towards Earlier Physical Maturation", in "Biological Aspects of Social Problems", ed J. E. Meade and A. S. Parkes, pp. 40–65. (Eugenics Society Symposia, vol. 1). Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh

CORRECTION

In the article by A. E. Philip and J. W. McCulloch (*Brit. J. prev. Soc. Med.*, 1966, 20, 122) in Table I, the Rank Order for Variable 16, Ward 7, should read 11 (not 1 as printed).