



# **Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945 (Canadian Social History Series)**

*Angus McLaren*

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Was Canada immune to the racist currents of thought that swept central Europe in the 1920's and 1930's? In this landmark book Angus McLaren, co-author of *The Bedroom and the State*, examines the pervasiveness in Canada of the eugenic notion of "race betterment" and demonstrates that many Canadians believed that radical measures were justified to protect the community from the "degenerate." The sterilization of the feeble-minded in Alberta and British Columbia was merely the most dramatic attempt to limit the numbers of the "unfit." But in the decades prior to World War Two, eugenic preoccupations were to colour discussions of immigration restriction, birth control, mental testing, family allowances, and a host of similar social policies.

Doctors, psychiatrists, geneticists, social workers, and mental hygienists provided an anxious Canadian middle class with the reassuring argument that poverty, crime, prostitution, and mental retardation were primarily the products of defective genes, not a defective social system. In explaining why biological solutions were sought for social problems McLaren not only provides a provocative reappraisal of the ideas and activities of a generation of feminists, political progressives, and public health propagandists but he also explores some of the roots of our not-so-latent racist tendencies.

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