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W. N. COLER & CO.
Investment Securities
43 Cedar Street
New York

April 19, 1917

Mr. Starr J. Murphy
26 Broadway
New York City

Dear Mr. Murphy:

Thank you very much for your favor of the 14th, and pamphlets referred to therein and the information of which you assure me by placing me on the mailing list of the Rockefeller Foundation and the General Education Board. I shall gratefully avail myself of the privilege of obtaining further information which you so courteously put at my service.

Your letter gratifies me all the more because of the recognition I flatter myself it implies of the fact that the criticism I have made of the Rockefeller Foundation has a deeper and worthier motive than a mere desire to seize upon a convenient issue for political exploitation. I have never concealed I think, in any public utterance of mine my profound admiration for the vast practical benevolence of the numerous enterprises to which the amazingly powerful personality and stupendous wealth of Mr. Rockefeller have given source and direction. I am not unmindful of their world encompassing extent and the universality of their application. I know that the same directive and vitalizing interest has been concerned with the reparation of the little crippled children of the tenement houses of New York, with the refreshing of the vitality of the hookworm victims in the South, with plague preventive methods in South America and India and with the eradication of maladies that inflict the inhabitants of the Philippines and Borneo. These are not things that excite any hostility on my part; how could they excite anything but approval in the heart of a man of ordinarily humane sentiment. And this is the work which appeals to the imagination and stimulates the enthusiasm I presume, of those who direct the flow of benevolence at its source into the innumerable channels which convey it to so many different points of practical application. I can very well believe that the directors of the Rockefeller Foundation might be so enchanted with the splendor of the practical object they seek to effect as to be honestly intolerant of efforts to restrict or reform their administrative methods, without in the least

seeing that it is their methodical procedure which involves a danger to democracy of the deadliest quality. Such things have been before. Richelieu produced Louis XIV, and Louis XIV produced Louis XV and Louis XV produced the French Revolution. Yet, the dominating thought of Richelieu was not the aggrandizement of any one man or any one institution, except as a means to a greater and nobler end. His is one of the master minds of human history, which formed a clear plan of government with the object of ameliorating the hard lot of man, and his was a personality of such power that he was enabled to ruthlessly break down all opposition. How little the work of his hands corresponded with the ideal in his mind, The practical result was an artificial division of interest and thought between a powerful and self indulgent minority and an oppressed, plundered and finally bloodily revengeful majority. His ideal as he expressed it himself was as follows - "the humblest craftsman, the obscurest vassal, the very leper shrinking from the sun, though loathed by charity might ask for justice. Not with the fawning air and cringing mien of some counts and princes kneeling for favors, but erect and loud as men who ask men's rights".

Historians removed from the confusion of details which obscure the tendency of contemporary existence discern the broad currents which have developed in the activity of preceding generations, and it is easy for them from the eminence of a succeeding period to interpret the lines of direction that have become fixed in the record of the past. Thus without difficulty and with unanimity historians of our day articulate into the unbroken chain of cause and effect, the bloody conflict of Europe at the end of the 18th century and the statesmanship of the Cardinal Minister of the court of Louis XIII. In analysing the affective movements of our own time we lack the advantage of the elevated view point, but not entirely. Yesterday is history. Yesterday's processes are what we deal with to-day. There is a certain persistency of direction in all the social movements that enables us, if we have sufficient vision and sufficient energy, to apply the methods of historical analysis to co-existent phenomena. I have tried in my imperfect way to do this. I have been impressed against my will with the evidence that the whole current of which your foundation is one of the most powerful units of force, is driving in the direction of the establishment of an artificial line of division between the more fortunate minority and the less fortunate majority of our people.

I may say then in this letter something that I would not say publicly because it might militate against the solidity of our country, so essential to national safety in the present ordeal. I know the agitation of society by the war of the nations has unmistakably disclosed the line of cleavage. It can not escape your attention that the division between command with social recognition, and obedient, sacrificing service is being consciously drawn between the collegiate and non-collegiate public. The young men of our colleges and universities are purposely diverted to officers' reserve corps, are designedly trained for duties of command, and the young men whose means have not enabled them to enter the recognized higher institutions of learning are being called on to enlist as private soldiers and sailors, and will within a few weeks be drafted for such service. Do not misunderstand me. I am a believer in a conscript army. I am a believer

in the command of the several units of such an army by men qualified for such command by superior intelligence and training. I see no future for our country as a national entity if the recognition of obligation is not emphasized more strongly than the recognition of the privileges of citizenship. But my practical experience with life has convinced me that there is no artificial line that can be drawn in society whereby we can say: "On this side are those fit for supervision, direction and control and on the other are those fitted only for directed service." Training in the military colleges does create a presumption of qualification for military command, but to my mind democracy requires, and the efficient operation of vast armies no less requires, that additional officers should be obtained by competitive examination open to all citizens, whether or not they have matriculated in the higher institutions of learning. I do not think this question can be brought to the forum of public opinion to-day without injury to our country, therefore I only cite it to you in this letter as one of the most significant evidences of a cleavage which is manifesting itself unmistakably. You may protest that this is only a single instance, and not directly related to the Rockefeller Foundation. I shall try to show you that it is an instance in reality of a general tendency to which agencies directly connected with your foundation make efficient contribution.

I referred in my brief to the contributions made by you to the Bureau of Municipal Research. I need hardly tell you that this bureau through its directors is related to the School of Philanthropy, nor is it necessary that I should go into the fact that the School of Philanthropy's avowed object is the training of young men for professional public service. The records of the Civil Service Commission show that the city government of New York for instance formally allies itself with the School of Philanthropy and lets down civil service bars for the graduates of that school which are held inflexibly against applicants for public employment who have not been trained in it. The Bureau of Municipal Research has consistently endeavored in its activities related to the civil service to remove the direction and control of administrative employees completely from the hands of elected representatives. In Bulletin No. 76 of the Bureau entitled "Standardization of Public Employments, Part 2" is the following paragraph -

STANDARDIZATION, TO BE EFFECTIVE, MUST BE MADE THE SUBJECT
OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW.

As has been pointed out, the work of standardization in New York City has been undertaken under the direction of a political body, the board of estimate and apportionment. Whatever may have been the advantages of having the initial steps taken by a staff created for this purpose, it is evident that the application of these standards must be made a matter of current administration, - that is to say, every question having to do with the determination of who shall be appointed, who shall be disciplined, transferred, suspended or dropped, and every question having to do with giving instruction, holding examinations, determining relative "merit and fitness" must be taken out of the hands of political representatives."

Is it necessary for me to say then that administration is the reality of government and that the bureaucracy unregulated by democratic control is bound to develop in itself the principle of self interest distinct from the public interest and to seek, through the activities of a principle for which striking analogy is found in biology, the consistent amplification of its own activities and processes. I have touched on these two points because in our conversations we have discussed the tendency of the activities in education of the foundation and its secondary instrumentalities.

There is no point at which I have come in contact with the foundation or its related agencies where there is not disclosed an affinity for governmental association on the part of the human agents or of these numerous organizations. While it is true that the section of the annual report of the foundation which I quote in my brief to the Senate Judiciary Committee deals specifically with the public health work of the foundation, it is truly symptomatic of the whole movement, and it can not very well be otherwise. The foundation represents wealth and power to increasing thousands of young men of college training, and when they find your service the road to government you may rest assured they will take that road. That is the great danger. It has been found possible for private agencies of benevolence to relieve poverty and pain without imposing their conditions upon the branches of popular government. It can not be possible to conduct popular government, itself the beneficiary of private benevolence, without subordinating that government to the will and opinion of the man or group who act as the intermediary between the source of the benefaction and the public department selected as its agent.

It may be thought that efficiency requires some limitation of the popular control of government, and that the distinction between men and women trained in a particular school and for a particular purpose and the great mass of man-kind is necessary in order to prevent the economic wastes consequent upon control by the unenlightened. This however is nothing more or less than the old dialectic progress, the shuttlecock of civilization from revolution to revolution. Where do we get the term aristocracy? Let philology help us. It is the old Greek "aristokratia" the compound of "aristos" the best, and "krateo", rule. It is not the modern theory but a very ancient one, and a very persistent one which has swung backward and forward from despotism to revolt and from revolt to despotism. It is the rule of the "Optimates" of Cato, and decked out with a few rags from the terminology of modern biology, the rule of the "master class" of Neitzsche's philosophy.

I wish you gentlemen of the foundation could see your way clear to use your great power to break the vicious circle and take a real and direct step in advance. Do not for a minute consider cessation of your benefactions to the sick and the poor, but do use the principles of mass psychology with which through every related agency you so powerfully affect public opinion, to teach the people to become a real democracy and live not in the thought furnished them by others but by their own power to think for themselves.

Recently some Dutch or Danish psychologists, I have forgotten which, published a report of a study of the processes of human thought and asserted the universality of that process. I think they were right, and I hope they were right, because they would thus establish the fundamental of a possibility of stimulating the mental power of the people. It seems to me that this must be done if we are ever to break away from the ceaseless repetition of disastrous experiences and the diversion of benevolently projected movements to conclusions never in the thought of their originators.

You have at your service the science of the world. Can it not be employed to do away with obscurantism, the politician's robe of invisibility from time memorial? Can it not be turned against the movement of the times that divorces realities from words, so that now we feel the evils of social wrong in terms for which we have no language and think politically in terms unrelated to facts? Let us reintegrate the reality and its symbol! Let us teach people to know that a dirty street is a dirty street in politics as in our sight and smell. Let us not rely upon the thought of the elect but upon the thought of all. This is democracy. I know its inconveniences and its crudities, and even its cruelties. But they are incomparable with the cruelties and inconveniences and crudities of governing classes. They are the only broad foundation we can find for just government which can never have stability while pivoted on its apex, but must always disturb civilization in its effort to find rest on the most extensive base.

Viscount Morley said in 1914 in an address to the University of Manchester "Well was it said 'C'est toujours le beau monde qui gouverne le monde' ". It is true that it is the thought of the social class of wealth and fashion that governs us still, but really it ought not to be. It ought to be the thought of the whole people, not played upon by the tricks of psychologists, not prepared for it in advance, but issuing from the cultivated brain of a people.

This is a long and possibly not too lucid expression of my views and I ask your pardon for imposing it upon you. My only excuse is that a movement for whose direction, in part, you have the responsibility, is so vast and far reaching in its effects as to make impossible its existence without a practical and intimate relationship with the general principles of social development and government I have touched upon.

Very truly yours,

(signed) Bird S. Coler.