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November 20, 1943

Dr. Raymond Fosdick, President
The Rockefeller Foundation
49 West 49th Street
New York 20, N.Y.

Dear Dr. Fosdick:

I enclose a communication which I ask to have presented at the forthcoming meeting of the Foundation in order to bring about a fresh consideration of the Foundation's war-time policy.

I appreciate your note of November 10 and the enclosed reprint of your statement on "The War Work of the Rockefeller Foundation". I had previously read this and have done so again with decided interest and approval.

In this reprint you say:

"Nevertheless, this emergency assistance is invariably related to the far target. In trying to be of service in the calamity that engulfs us all, the Foundation has endeavored to make certain, in so far as it could, that its work had some constructive reference to the world after the war."

It seems to me that our apparent difference has to do with the interpretation of this statement. My interpretation would be that any action which helps us to win the war as quickly as possible is by that very fact related to the far target of the Foundation and that nothing can have greater constructive reference to the world after the war than the bringing of the war to a quick conclusion.

It seems to me that the interpretation which the

Executive Committee appears to have given is an "ivory tower" interpretation. This seems to me proven by the fact that you said that it would be embarrassing for you to bring to the Executive Committee a proposal which was not in line with the Foundation's "program".

I am very sorry that I cannot be present to present the case in person and greatly appreciate your willingness to let it be presented in absentia.

Very sincerely yours

Karl T. Compton

President

KTC/L



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To the Members of
the Rockefeller Foundation

Dear Colleagues:

Dr. Fosdick has approved of my presentation to you of a matter concerning the war-time policy of the Foundation. This came to my attention in connection with a request for a revolving fund to facilitate a new type of field service by O.S.R.D. for the Army and Navy. Another agency is now providing this fund, so that this particular item is no longer an issue; but the fact that the Rockefeller Foundation policies prevented consideration of this and several other somewhat similar requests appears to me improper and dangerous.

As I understand it, the Executive Committee decided that emergency war projects could be considered only if they fitted into the "approved program" of the Foundation. Granting that it is highly fortunate and desirable if a project is important both in winning the war and in forwarding the Foundation's long-term program, I believe that the exclusion, under present conditions, of all war projects not related to the program is not good Foundation policy and does not conform to the pattern of public responsibility which is now expected of all elements of our nation. Let me amplify this statement as follows.

1. There are many thousands of citizens whose "programs" are voluntarily or forcibly abandoned, temporarily, because these personal programs mean little unless the forces that threaten and attack the bases of our freedom can be subdued. So these citizens are throwing their full efforts and even their lives into this survival struggle.

2. Educational institutions and business concerns of the better type have almost universally put aside

their normal "programs" and have thrown their resources without stint into this effort. To them, as to the individual citizens, defeat would be a ghastly loss of those things which make their "programs" possible and attractive. They know that the more wholeheartedly they throw themselves into this effort, the more quickly the war will be won, the less will be the total loss, and the sooner they will be able to resume their programs of peace-time objectives.

3. In this situation, any policy or statement of the Rockefeller Foundation to the effect that it will help in the war effort only if such help fits into its own program would, if generally known, create a public relations situation that might easily wreck the Foundation, or at least seriously damage it and its program. We can imagine, for example, the field day which Congress could have over the matter. No explanations or interpretations would then avail or probably be listened to. When I think of the personal sacrifices which practically all of my colleagues and friends are making at this time, or the way in which the educational institutions are modifying their programs and straining their resources to help win the war, I can assure you that the present policy of the Foundation, as it was described to me, would, if known to them, arouse disillusionment and resentment.

What can justify this great Foundation, so broadly established for public welfare, in setting a policy which would make it "embarrassing" for its President to present to its Executive Committee a project in line with what the rest of the country feels to be the first duty of every citizen and organization? Does it hold itself and its program above the allied nations and their cause? Do its great resources give it an obligation to pitch in and help where help is needed, or do they grant it immunity? Such questions will be asked and answered unfavorably. My first argument for a reversal of present policy is therefore based on consideration of public relations.

4. My second argument is based on our moral responsibility to assist in this emergency where we can do so with especial effectiveness. Of course the resources of the Foundation, great as they are, are only a few drops in the bucket compared to total war needs.

Even the scientific agency in which I am working will spend about as much this year as the total resources of the Foundation. Fortunately the government has provided adequate funds for scientific and medical war research and for related field activities, and it will presumably provide likewise for relief and humanitarian enterprises. This is proper, since it is a national effort to which all contribute in sacrifices, services and taxes.

The place where the Foundation and other agencies can contribute effectively in this war effort is in facilitating actions which either are handicapped by governmental regulations or which are temporarily lost sight of in existing enabling legislation. A number of such situations have come to my attention, all relatively small in terms of money but quite important in terms of getting ahead with the war effort. For example:

a) A governmental regulation prevents a man on government payroll from making policy or contractual decisions in some agencies. So, in order to get the job done, the man's services must be contributed. M.I.T., for example, is contributing a number of men on this basis, for whose salaries it is getting no direct or indirect reimbursement. We are even carrying several salaries of men in this category from other institutions whose regulations (as in some state universities) make similar procedure impossible. Many other institutions are making similar contributions.

b) Travel in danger zones is frequently required of scientists. Government provides \$10,000 of insurance. A majority of the scientists involved have family responsibilities such that they do not feel justified in taking the risk without more adequate insurance coverage, which they are frequently unable to carry without financial embarrassment. One of the Foundations has made available to O.S.R.D. a fund to handle this situation.

c) My newly established Office of Field Service is now engaged in recruiting about two hundred young scientists and engineers, and presumably later a group of medical scientists, for temporary duty in theaters of operation. By governmental regulation we can pay salaries, travel and subsistence expenses. But the

governmental procedure for reimbursement of expenses, even when well oiled, involves a delay of at least two months before reimbursement. Few of these young scientists are financially able to stand this delay and hence our recruitment effort is handicapped. It was for this that I sought a revolving fund from the Rockefeller Foundation and was told (1) that the item did not conform to the policy of dealing only with projects related to the established "program" and (2) that the Foundation has never made a grant for a revolving fund.

If this application had been refused on the ground that the objective was not deemed of sufficient importance in relation to other requests and to funds available, I should have had no basis of objection. But the first reason for refusal seems to me wrong in principle and the second reason is trivial.

I should like to see the Foundation reconsider the action of its Executive Committee of two or three years ago and take a positive stand expressing its intention to place the war effort on at least a par with its permanent program in consideration of priorities for its support during the period of the war. I believe that the funds involved would be relatively small, but that the public service rendered could be proportionately very large, - for reasons outlined above. I do not advocate entry into large programs which the government is handling or should handle, but rather an effort to assist where supplementing or "lubricating" the existing war effort can enable existing agencies to do their jobs with maximum effectiveness.

I appreciate Dr. Fosdick's willingness to bring this before you. I should have done so in person except for circumstances which make my attendance impossible. May I also say that I recognize the fact that the Foundation is supporting some very important war and emergency activities. My only argument is against putting the Foundation's regular program as the supreme criterion at a time when other criteria may be more significant.

Sincerely yours

Karl T. Compton

President