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SOCIAL SECURITY BUILDING

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Dr. Joseph Willits, Director  
The Social Sciences  
The Rockefeller Foundation  
49 West 49th Street  
New York, N. Y.

JHW	JUN-6 '41	DMW	6/10

Dear Joe:

Sometime ago you expressed a desire to have me record my opinion of the accomplishment of the National Bureau's Conference on Income and Wealth through discussion. I attempt to record it below.

The field of wealth and income is one which deals with concepts which are so basic to economic thinking that it is difficult to write even a brief paragraph without employing one or more of them, either explicitly or implicitly. The processes of statistical measurement through which these concepts are defined are extremely complicated. The formulation of basic economic concepts in terms of methods of statistical measurement represents a long step forward for economics,--a following of the example set by the physical sciences in defining their basic terms empirically.

When the Conference on Income and Wealth first assembled over five years ago, it seemed to me that intellectually we resembled the situation in ancient Babel "each speaking a different tongue." Largely through the process of discussing our problems together, I think we have arrived at a mutual understanding and at a substantial consensus with respect to the definition of basic concepts in terms of the methods of statistical measurement. I do not mean, of course, that no issues remain; there are plenty of issues left. But the degree of agreement reached represents, I think, an achievement of great importance. I do not believe it could have been achieved except through personal contacts such as those the Conference has afforded.

You also expressed a desire sometime ago for a copy of  
my remarks at New Orleans. These have recently been mimeographed  
and a copy is enclosed.

Sincerely yours,

*Morris A. Copeland*  
Morris A. Copeland

Enclosure

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