

June 4, 1917.

Hon. Bird S. Coler,
43 Cedar Street,
New York City.

Dear Mr. Coler:

I must apologize to you for my apparent discourtesy in failing to reply earlier to your letter of April 19th. I read it with great interest when it was received, and laid it aside to be replied to after I had had time to give it more careful consideration, but pressure of other matters has prevented my doing so hitherto.

Permit me, in the first place, to thank you for your generous words of appreciation of the work we are doing looking to the control of infantile paralysis, hookworm and other diseases. I notice, also, toward the close of your letter, the words: "Do not for a minute consider cessation of your benefactions to the sick and the poor." These passages have led me to examine with the greater care the balance of your letter, to find out why, in spite of this feeling on your part, you still think that the corporation should be destroyed; for the bill in favor of which you appeared in Albany was a bill to revoke the charter of the Rockefeller Foundation, which of course would put an end to all its activities, good and bad.

You say that you "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." On the contrary, the trustees of the Foundation welcome criticism and suggestion,

and for that reason have, of their own motion and without any requirement of statute, adopted a policy of the widest publicity with regard to all their activities, administrative and financial, as well as those having directly to do with carrying out their philanthropic purposes. But the attack made on the Foundation at Albany was not intended to restrict or reform, but to destroy, and that was the reason why I was surprised to see a man of your intelligence and standing giving your support to that endeavor.

I find it difficult to reply to your letter, for the same reason that I found difficulty in replying to the remarks made at the hearing in Albany,- because of the lack of specification. This, you will recall, was the same difficulty that the members of the Senate Committee had, and they again and again requested you and the other speakers to indicate some particular thing which the Foundation had done or omitted to do which could properly be made the subject of criticism.

You speak of the Bureau of Municipal Research and what you describe as its "School of Philanthropy." This last is evidently a slip of the pen, and is intended to refer to its Training School for Public Service. But, in the first place, the Rockefeller Foundation is not the Bureau of Municipal Research. The Foundation has no representative either upon its Board of Directors or among its executive officers, and has no relation to it whatever except as a contributor to its funds. As I told you on the train coming down from Albany, I have myself from time to time had occasion to criticize the activities of the Bureau, and have never hesitated to do so, but I nevertheless think that it has on the whole rendered a useful service to the community in greatly improving the efficiency of public administration.

I agree with you that "administration is the reality of government," and that bureaucracy unregulated by democratic control is bound to be injurious to the public welfare. I had not seen the quotation from the Bureau's Bulletin which you embodied in your letter, but as I interpret it, what the writer has in mind by saying that the matter of appointments must be taken out of the hands of political representatives is the fact, which you and I as practical men both know to be true, that heretofore to a very lamentable degree politicians who have been elected to office have used their appointing power to reward men for political services rendered to them, to the great detriment of the public service. In the earlier and franker days they openly placed upon their banners the slogan "To the Victor belong the Spoils", and in spite of all that has been done to check that system it is still one of the greatest menaces to the life of the republic. I have always felt that a public official who uses the appointing power as a means of rewarding political services rendered to him is just as corrupt as the official who uses his access to the public funds for the same purpose.

Aristocracy has a twofold meaning. The old evil meaning of the word was that of a Government by a self-declared better class for its own benefit and for the exploitation of those who were weaker, but if we take the word in its other meaning, as "rule by the best", I am sure we do not differ in our belief that a democracy more than any other form of Government demands that the administration of public offices should be in the hands of those who are best qualified.

I note your references to the war, and the fact that the young men of our colleges and universities are purposely diverted to officers' reserve corps, and are designedly trained for duties of command. May I say,

parenthetically, that my own son, who is too young to be drafted into service, has enlisted as a second class seaman in the United States Naval Reserve Force, which is at the bottom of the ladder, and there are thousands of other boys from the preparatory schools and colleges who have done the same. I agree fully with you in your belief that the command of an army should be by men qualified for such command by superior intelligence and training. I fully agree with you that there is 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. I also agree with you 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." You also say that "Training in the military colleges does create a presumption of qualification for military command", and in that I thoroughly agree with you, and I also agree with you that notwithstanding this fact, opportunities should be open to all citizens to prove their capacity for command, and that they should receive appointments for which they are fitted, irrespective of whether they have matriculated in the higher institutions of learning or not. But there is nothing in any of the activities of the Rockefeller Foundation, or any of the other of our institutions, which has any tendency to prevent this.

In speaking of the activities of the Rockefeller Foundation you say "that it is their methodical procedure which involves a danger to democracy of the deadliest quality." I find it rather difficult in this connection to follow you in your reference to Richelieu and the French Revolution. Surely it was not Richelieu's demand that the poor should receive justice which led to the Revolution. If Your suggestion as to danger to democracy

is predicated upon the idea that our philanthropic activities are driving in the direction of the establishment of an artificial line of division between the fortunate minority and the less fortunate majority of the people, I can only feel^{that it} is based upon an insufficient study of our activities, and that if you will study what we are actually doing you will see that our whole influence is toward rather than away from democracy.

The two great fields of Mr. Rockefeller's philanthropic activity are the increasing of educational opportunities for the young, and the fight against disease through medical research, the improvement of medical education and active public health measures. The effect of these is the direct contrary of what you have suggested. The three great enemies of man are disease and poverty and sin, and the mother of these is ignorance. The best way to combat ignorance and all the evils that follow from it seems to me to be through education, using that in its broadest sense to include the extension of the boundaries of knowledge, the spread of enlightenment, and the development of character. I do not know of any agencies which will tend more certainly to break down the artificial lines between men than these factors.

As I see it, we are doing the best we can to comply with your suggestion to teach the people to become a real democracy and to live not in the thought furnished them by others, but by their own power to think for themselves,--because I am sure you do not mean by this latter phrase that they should discard the experience of the past and rely solely upon their uninstructed intuitions. What we are endeavoring to accomplish is, that all that is best in the history and experience of the world, that all the most recent achievements of science and of art, shall be placed at the service of the humblest individual in order that, as far as humanly possible,

the handicaps of birth and of social position may be overcome, and that man, freed from the blight both of disease and of ignorance may achieve the best of which he is capable.

Sincerely yours,

STARR J. MURPHY.