

H A R V A R D U N I V E R S I T Y

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Dr. F. F. Russell, Director
International Health Division
The Rockefeller Foundation
61 Broadway, New York City

Dear Dr. Russell:

I said very little at the discussion on the first day of our last meeting. I realize fully that the policies followed by the I.H.D. in the past have been fruitful and that it is not feasible to make any rapid or striking changes.

However, I do not agree at all with the last sentence, bottom of page 39, agenda for Nov. 4, "Research by Foundation staff should, however, be developed, not as an independent function, but as a part of some concrete control problem which may call for it."

If we had followed this policy in the past, some of the most important contributions that the I.H.D. has made would not have been undertaken. I need refer only to the studies of Darling, Barber, and Hacker in the Orient, the work of Darling and his assistants in Leesburg or Dr. Boyd's work in Edenton, Corts and his associates' studies in Central America and China, and Beurkes and his associates in West Africa, etc.

None of these studies were part of some concrete control problem, but they have proved of fundamental importance in aiding the I.H.D. and also official governmental agencies in their administrative methods.

I have been so impressed by the value of this type of field research that I believe the I.H.D. should gradually and slowly shape its policies so that a major part of its budget and interests will be concerned with activities and investigations which have no direct bearing upon some concrete control problem.

I would not be willing to abandon any one of the three methods as outlined in the memoranda, but feel that as the years go by the I.H.D. can and should place less emphasis on "a" and place more and more emphasis on "c", and think this sentence should be worded, "by conducting investigations in regard to the soundness of public health procedures".

If progress is to be made, research as an independent function must be carried out. It would be a most shortsighted policy to limit these investigations to those items which have a bearing only upon some concrete control problem. This work must be done, of course, but is clearly a special function of the official health agency.

10/31/29

But some one must make the basic studies on which concrete control problems can be based. Who can make these studies?

The Universities? No, for they do not have the resources, the personnel, the entre to the areas, the interest in the specific problem, or a continuity of plan.

The official governmental agency? No, for they cannot justify themselves in expending public funds for research that may not be of immediate value in practical application.

The I.H.D. possesses all the factors lacking by the university groups, and does not, I believe, need to give primary consideration as to whether the investigation has immediate practical value in a specific administrative procedure. The real and special contribution, therefore, that the I.H.D. is particularly qualified to offer, and which perhaps no other organization in the world can offer, is "field investigation" as an independent function, without concern as to the direct practical application of the results to a specific concrete control problem.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) Wilson G. Smillie, M.D.

WGS/W