

16th February, 1956.

My dear Professor Darmois,

You may recall that at our last reunion at Petropolis I was left ^{as} your Rapporteur, or President, of the committee appointed to consider the possibility of amendment of the Statutes of the International Institute, and particularly of the proposals put forward by M. Vincent involving creation of a new order of associate members of the Institute.

A number of communications have been received and have been circulated to members of the committee. So far I have not taken part in these deliberations as I felt I had talked quite enough at Petropolis. However, consideration of the position that has been reached has led me to wonder whether the initial impetus of our discussions was not altogether mistaken and misguided, and if acted upon in the ways proposed would lead the Institute into a maze of difficulties.

I am enclosing a draft of a letter which I started as one to M. Vincent himself, but which, if sent off at all, should perhaps be circularized to the whole committee.

If I could conceive that it would have the effect of getting M. Vincent to drop his proposals, it would certainly be better if such a letter was received only by him personally, for I seem bound to challenge the somewhat nationalistic assumptions of Mr. Rice, ~~and~~ ^I Indeed he himself, and perhaps the majority of his compatriots, may have been brought up to assume the undeniable superiority ^{in all matters} of their own citizens. However, even if this were genuine it would, in my opinion, not be a consideration to put before an international body.

Clearly then I am in for some trouble, and I am writing to you for guidance, since I do not wish to have any share in causing the International Institute to become one of those fields of ^{contention of great} ~~operations for some~~ propaganda ~~of~~ value to the Communists, due not to ill-will on the part of the Americans, but to the fact that some of them may be ill-informed and insensitive.

As President of the Institute, my dear Professor Darmois, perhaps you will give me a lead and say whether you would like a letter such as I have drafted (a) to be circulated to the committee, (b) to be sent ^{only} personally to M. Vincent, or (c) to be dropped, at least for a while.

Looking forward to meeting you at our next reunion,

I remain,

Sincerely yours,

Copy of part of a letter to Dr. C. I. Bliss, dated 25th February, 1956, signed by Prof. Sir Ronald Fisher.

"I have today received your papers on proposals for the amendment of the Statutes of the International Statistical Institute. When I suggested an age rule at the Quitandinha last summer, it was with the intention of meeting a quite temporary stringency in the elections; I did not think that any permanent alteration was needed on the scale of your second amendment, setting the limit for membership for any one Confederation of States at one-sixth. I think, for my own part, that this is too high a fraction to set as the maximum, and that it will militate against there being room in the Union for isolated and remote peoples such as the representatives of Uruguay or Jordan.

I am, of course, sure that you will have United States support for this step, for like other nations, citizens of your own great country are capable of overrating their superiority to the inhabitants of other lands, and Rice left us in no doubt at the Quitandinha that he considered that no one could doubt an overwhelming American leadership in the statistical sciences.

For my own part I do not take this view. The educational effort in statistics in the United States is magnificent, but it would not be true to say that members of the Institute recently elected from that country are appreciably superior to those of

other countries. Moreover if it were true I think it is a circumstance that we should appreciate, and by no means resent, if those elected from my country, or yours, or others tolerably enlightened, should really be better than those available from countries to which statistics is a comparatively new study.

In my opinion by about 1935 the United States was taking a definite lead in statistics, but that the propagandist activity in the mathematical departments of your country in favour of ideas fantastically remote from the natural sciences has left the United States rather in the position of a rewarding field for missionary enterprise!"