

20 Professor Haavelmo til Økonomisk Rådgivnings Institut

28 February 1950

RF|IQ

Mrs. Joan Robinson,  
Newnham College,  
University of Cambridge,  
Cambridge,  
England.

Dear Mrs. Joan Robinson,

I am sure it has been a great shock to you, as it was to me, to learn about the death of our mutual friend Schumpeter.

His passing has raised the problem of appointing a new associate editor for *Econometrica*. I am writing to ask whether you would do *Econometrica* the honour to have your name listed as associate editor in Schumpeter's place.

The post does not involve any burden from the viewpoint of work to be done. It is more a question of giving moral support and of occasionally advising on points of editorial policy. All technical matters, the routing of papers for refereeing etc., are taken care of by our excellent assistant editor Mr. William B. Simpson.

To fill the vacancy we need someone of established repute who is theoretically engaged in the burning economic problems of our days, someone with a broad unconventional attitude who is decidedly favourable to the econometric approach without being "too pure" from the mathematical viewpoint. I know of no one who would fit better in the picture than you. I do hope to receive a favourable answer from you.

I shall need the answer as soon as possible since we would like to put it on the cover beginning with the next issue.

With best personal regards,

Sincerely yours

Ragnar Frisch

AIRMAIL  
Copy by seamail

Seth  
3/5  
WA

Telephone: 2248

JOAN ROBINSON

62a GRANGE ROAD,  
CAMBRIDGE.

March  
(1950)

Dear Professor Fusch

I am very much flattered  
by your letter, but I fear I cannot  
accept the offer as I find  
that I cannot begin to understand  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  of the articles - Econometrica  
+ it would be a pure farce to

have my name on the cover.

Would it not be appropriate to  
invite Dick Stone?

Yours with many thanks

Jean Robinson

will you be coming this way  
any time?

1952  
Dulak  
Aug 22

Mrs. Joan Robinson  
Henty

My dear Regnar

It was so nice of you to make  
a party for us - & such a lovely  
party. Please thank your daughter  
for her charming hospitality.

I was so pleased to see you again  
& so grieved to think of all you  
have been going through.

We intended to give a gift to  
Professor Einarsson to AS, but the

car broke down she had to fetch him  
& drive us back, as well as spending  
the next day helping Nicky to get  
the car repaired. All ended well  
as far as the car was concerned  
& I hope we can say the same  
for Piero who is making very  
good progress. Everyone has  
been extraordinarily kind  
& helpful - I have found out

Mrs. Joan Robins

7 2 2

that if we had to have accidents  
Norway is the best country  
to have them in.

I hope you will look at  
Cambridge next time you are in  
the north

Yours always  
Joan Robins X

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Check and attach to the original copy  
as a separate document  
Editorial comment  
Coordinating  
Speech  
Kingsbridge Centre  
Joan Robinson

By Joan Robinson  
18 July 1962 at the Britain-Commonwealth-EFTA Conference in London

I just thought it might be useful, if I gave you a footnote on the talk which Professor Frisch gave us <sup>yesterday</sup> because it was a very brilliant and very important talk, but I think those people who have not been put through the process of taking examinations in academic economics might have not quite twigged what his point was.

The point he was making is essentially quite a simple one and you don't need really to understand matrix algebra or vectors to grasp it. The point is this: if you have a number of independent countries and each one is finding itself in balance of payments difficulties, each one making a national independent policy, all they can do is try and push exports and cut imports, and in this way they make the position worse for the others. So that you get a situation in which everybody is suffering, everybody with unemployment, everybody with less trade and you end up at the bottom, <sup>no further</sup> still some people with deficits, others with <sup>positive</sup> balances, (perhaps some have succeeded in changing, those who had deficits may now have <sup>positive</sup> balances, and those who had <sup>positive</sup> balances now may have deficits), but the general pressure you see simply reduces trade all round, reduces employment all round, reduces wealth all round and gives no real contribution towards solving the problem.

The only way in which it is possible to get any solution to this sort of problem is for the countries to meet and agree to trade and to make the balances at a high level instead of struggling with each other and ending up making the balances at a low level.

Well, this is essentially the point which Professor Frisch was making and I think it is a point which is extremely relevant to our <sup>big</sup> discussions, and extremely relevant to what the last speaker was saying.

If a forward policy was started in <sup>(a group of)</sup> ~~this~~ <sup>the</sup> country, ~~we~~ <sup>they</sup> could break part of this terrible negativism and defeatism that seems to have overcome our statesmen, and tackle the problem in a forward way, and we have got a very good nucleus in the Commonwealth and the EFTA countries to start on arranging a pattern of trade through the agreements. They can be quite loose agreements, you don't have to have ~~every~~ every tin of tomatoes

I'll buy your goods and then we are both out of danger of forcing each other into slump measures to defend our balance of payments". You get a nucleus of countries doing it.

We can then talk to the Common Market, we can talk even to America, we can talk to the socialist bloc and widen the circle again, in a loose overall global way. ~~Don't bother about filling in the controlling trade-~~

We don't need to control our trade in the same way that the <sup>completely</sup> planned economy countries do, but have this loose, overall scheme and as Professor Frisch tells us, you can do wonderful things nowadays with electronic computers and work out the optimum. I wouldn't say we are likely to hit off an <sup>exact</sup> optimum, but we could certainly hit off something a great deal better than anything that will ever be done by independent national action.

So I think, without going so far as to hope that the matrix algebra will produce an absolutely ideal solution, we should certainly accept this point of view: that the only way to solve the problems is by making a forward policy on the basis of <sup>some</sup> <sup>international</sup> planning of trade. In doing so, we are making an enormous help to the under-developed countries because we are giving them more security in their markets, and we are forming the nucleus of the "Full Employment Club" which I referred to yesterday.

I am rather surprised in this meeting that I am the only one who has mentioned that this is a year when we are beginning to worry again about a world slump. <sup>Some year ago</sup> Everyone was talking about the problems of full employment, but it seems to me that the atmosphere now is one where we need to have a positive defence of economic prosperity, and not a negative defence, and not a spirit of defeatism and think, "Oh dear! we will have to go in the Common Market we are in a bad way, there is nothing else to do". The moment has come when it is absolutely necessary for us to take a positive policy and in this the matrix algebra will be quite a useful



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*Professor* R. Frisch, ~~Edg.~~  
Institute of Economics,  
University of Oslo,  
Karl Johansgt 47,  
Oslo,  
Norway.

22/10-62

19th October, 1962.

Dear Ragnar,

1963 Gen

Many thanks for sending your Paper on Decision Models which gives an excellent outline of the whole business. I agree particularly with what you say at the end, that a plan for location must be made centrally, though of course there is bound to be an element of politics involved particularly in a federal country. I am rather dubious, however, of what you say in paragraph 8 if it is to be applied to a country like India, where deep political and social problems are involved in the "preference function".

You will see that the Common Market controversy is raging and opinion against it is rising in this country, but I fear that MacMillan is determined to sail us down the river.

Yours sincerely,

*Joan Robin*

Joan Robinson

23 October, 1962.

RF|SE

Mrs. Joan Robinson,  
62, Grange Road,  
C a m b r i d g e.  
England.

Dear Joan,

Thank you for your letter of 19 October.

My experiences in underdeveloped countries and in Norway have convinced me that it is possible to arrive at a workable preference funktion through cooperation between politicians and economic experts. See p.255 and p.260 of my paper "Preface to the Oslo Channel Model", sent you to-day under separate cover.

Please find enclosed a photograph of two beautiful girls taken in London July 1962.

Best regards

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FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICS

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SIDGWICK AVENUE  
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62 Grange Road,  
Cambridge.

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Institute of Economics,  
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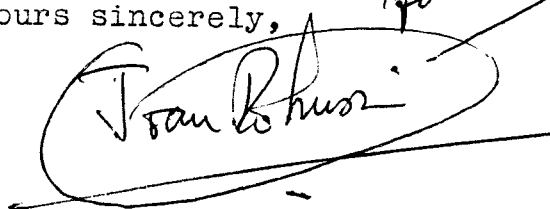
26th October, 1962.

Dear Ragnar,

Many thanks for the photograph and for your paper.

You and I put first in the preference function not to have the world blown up but this does not seem to be the case with President Kennedy.

Yours sincerely,

*Joan Robinson*  


I have asked my publisher to send you a little book which might amuse you. *The cracks about mathematical economists are not addressed to you but, like to the*

*28 Oct 1962*

12 November, 1962.

RF|SE

Mrs. Joan Robinson,  
62 Grange Road,  
C a m b r i d g e.  
England.

Dear Joan,

Your little book "Economic Philosophy" has arrived, and the reading of the few pages has certainly given me great appetite for reading the rest.

Your reference to the elephant on p.2 made me think of the excellent illustration of the concept of degrees of freedom in a model: Give me three parameters and I will construct an elephant, give me four and the elephant will waive his tail. This, of course, is definitely a side-line and no objection at all to your argument.

But when you refer on p.3 to professor Popper's criterion I feel that quite a lot of more digging in the ground below the statement is needed. Indeed, we all know that some purely mathematical propositions have in the course of time been disproved by "evidence", namely by the construction of a special case in which the proposition is not true. Hence mathematics is according to Popper's criterion an empirical science. Is it really? I am not speaking of the obvious fact that the mathematical axiomes which permit us to deduce mathematical propositions, are themselves directly or indirectly in some mysterious intuitive way influenced by our sensation of the exterior (or interior, i.e. personal) world, but of the logical mechanism by which mathematics as an abstract science deduces propositions from axiomes.

At dinner table today when Mrs. Frisch saw your booklet and your picture on the cover and understood that the book was about something deeply human and deeply radical, said immediately: Both things - both the picture and the book - bear a great resemblance to Madame Marie Curie and her work. It struck me like lightning that this remark was very true. Anybody who has read Eve Curie's wonderful book about her mother will understand that this is, and is meant to be, a great compliment to you.

Sincerely, as ever  
yours,

Ragnar Frisch

TELEPHONE 57548

Joan Robinson

22/11-62

62 GRANGE ROAD  
CAMBRIDGE

20th November, 1962.

Dear Ragnar,

Your reference to Madame Curie is much too flattering. I have been lucky enough to live in a setting where to be honest does not cost very much.

I am very pleased that you like my little book. I think mathematics is a special case and as far as I recollect Popper treats it as special.

I am shortly off to India but I am rather afraid it will not be at all enjoyable in the present situation.

Yours

Universitetet i Oslo

JR