Copy of R. A. Fisher's Letter

19 February, 1962

Dear Oscar,

Thanks for your interesting letter and enclosures. I think your comments will be helpful to Birnbaum who seems to be a very bewildered type.

I have recently received a letter from H. Kyburg of the Rockefeller foundation who on the basis if you please of "complicated symbolic logic", unintelligible he says save to "dedicated symbolic logicians", concludes that fiducial inference is the cats' whiskers. I do not know if he realizes that it is not always available, but if it is it certainly supplies the strongest type of uncertain inference.

I made sense of all you said except that I do insist and have often demonstrated that statements of fiducial probability are verifiable in exactly the same sense as any other statements of probability, usually (?) by further or more penetrating observations. This is all that can be meant by verification unless one is talking about checking someone's calculations or algebra. But a probability statement about the real world can be verified by observation of frequency in the real world - tedious and futile as such verification could often be.

I know of no case where the statement of fiducial probability can be called unverifiable.

Was there any useful discussion at the time?

Sincerely yours,

Ronald

Oscar Kempthorne had this letter to him typed out. Seymour Geisser found a copy in a library copy of one of Fisher's books. AWEdwards, Minneapolis 28/10/92 Adelaide 10/11/92