16 April 1931.

Dr A.C. Aitken,
2 Sycamore Terrace,
Corstorphine,
Midlothian.

Dear Dr Aitken,

Many thanks for your long and interesting letter. I am extremely glad that you do not share, and I hope you will not allow your words to support, the detraction of Jordan's method. I was myself astonished at the acrimony of the feelings aroused by my calling attention to it. The fact is, I fancy, that the number of people interested is extremely small, and these think the more of their claim to be know-alls about computation, which means more to them than one would suppose. Consequently, when I innocently mentioned Jordan's method, assuming it to be well-known, when in fact the Committee had not heard of it, I was evidently felt to be doing a most offensive thing.

However, you now probably know the situation, through your correspondence with Wishart, and are aware that any word of yours adverse to the new method, will be very eagerly received and reported as the findings of Comrie's

Committee. You must remember that, if Wishart stated the matter correctly, Professor Whittaker was asked if he could arrange an experimental test between two conflicting opinions. If your results are intended as such an experimental decision you can hardly call them the isolated remarks of a single individual; if not, they should be withheld.

I quite understand the confusion between Everett without and Everett with differences; though Wishart must have been in a muddle to have made it. The practical question is the extent to which the printing of differences shall be undertaken, at the expense, as it must always be, of the printing of other tabular matter. To put this on a practical basis, it is the ratio that is wanted.

I think the only point for which consecutive interpolations are done is for further interpolation, as you suggest. I doubt, however, if this is the best way with the Jordan method.

As to test timings, I should never take a timing if I felt in the least hurried; I am sure from what you say that you have given yourself a lot of fatigue trying to make the quickest time, which is not at all what is really wanted; but the time for steady unhurried work on a familiar process.

As to all details each method should be carried out in the way which is judged to be quickest for it. Doing all that would in fact be done when applying the method to printed data. I think this should have been made clear from the first, though it throws upon you much of the difficulty of designing a fair test.

Yours sincerely,