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Letter From Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson to William Allen White, September 6, 1940

Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson

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September 6, 1940.

William Allen White, Esq., Chairman,

Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies,

8 West 40th St., New York City.

My dear Mr. White,

In his letter of August 25 Mr. Eichelberger kindly invited further suggestions from me. By telephoning your headquarters I learned that you and Mr Eichelberger would return to New York this evening. I have therefor sent you a telegram, which I confirm as follows:- "Suggest following simple basic principle for Committee (The paramount policy of the United States must be to make sure, at whatever cost, that command of the seas shall never pass to America's potential enemies.) If we face this reality, all necessary steps logically follow. Letter follows."

Of course the only way to keep command of the seas from passing to potential enemies is to reinforce the British fleet (and air-force et cetera) so much as may be necessary. Naturally, by "at whatever cost" I mean by joining in naval warfare, if necessary. If we and our only friends that are still free, namely Britain and the British Commonwealths, lose command of the seas, then I see nothing but a disastrous future for our country,--no more democracy, high wages, good standard of living, ^{or} individual freedoms; no more foreign trade or prosperity or freedom from foreign pressure. For an indefinite future we might well have to be a regimented armed camp facing alone a hostile world against overwhelming odds. The picture is black; but it is well within the range of possibility,--if Britain and the British fleet fail.

If naval warfare now were necessary to remove these dreadful possi-

sibilities, it seems to me no responsible government should hesitate to risk it. A technical state of war would differ little from the present moral situation. It would solve many problems,--such as automatic repeal of the idiotic "neutrality" laws, for example.

I realize, of course, that the American people cannot, perhaps, be too suddenly awakened from their profound slumber and made to see that all they value hangs on the British fleet. Nevertheless, I was somewhat disturbed by the headlines in today's Herald-Tribune representing you as favoring aid to Britain on a "safe, legal basis" and as being "dead set against war". I do not think you will disagree with my formula regarding command of the seas. I think it has (with a statement of the consequences of failing to abide by it) an appeal hard to be evaded even by haters of Britain and irresponsible new arrivals in this country. It is also impossible of reasoned answer by isolationists and pacifists, behind whose skirts lurk so many disloyal and subversive elements.

I have nothing but admiration for the splendid material being distributed by your Committee; but most people read so little that I think terse things in words of one syllable are also desirable.

As honorary chairman of the Waterbury committee for this region I heard at yesterday's meeting of the chapter that you were soon to outline fresh objectives, now that the destroyers have at last been released. It is in this connection that I suggest the formula about command of the seas. In my opinion we should work for repeal of all our fancy neutrality legislation. We should, I think, work for ultimate registration up to, say, 65, because it would be so useful in identifying and controlling disloyal elements; and we should favor a draft for selective service because the voluntary system is unjust and undemocratic and sends the best men to war leaving the others at home to carry on the race. One more suggestion. Your committee and all its chapters would be greatly

strengthened in workers and propagandists^{if} "Bundles for Britain" and all such like-minded organizations could be enlisted with your committee. Also I think the "National Committee to Uphold Constitutional Government" should be enlisted. If command of the seas passes to our potential enemies "there ain't goin' to be no" constitutional government!

I enclose copy of telegrams sent on receipt of the last telegram I received from headquarters, calling attention to the latter part of the one to Mr. Wilkie. I enclose also another cheque for \$25. as a small contribution to the committee's work.

Yours very faithfully

F. M. Huntington-Wilson