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Letter From Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson to Philander C. Knox, May 29, 1912

Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson

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May 29, 1912

Dear Mr. Secretary:

In addition to the copy of the letter and accompanying memorandum to Senator Warren, which you have in your hands, and our circular with memorandum, copy of which is herewith, I enclose an analysis of the principal recommendations of the Economy and Efficiency Commission and (2) a synopsis of the Commission's critical comments on the Bureau of Trade Relations. The reading of these last two will, I think, give you a clear idea of what the Commission proposes and I can only say that it is so preposterous and represents so singularly narrow and one-sided a view as to be downright astounding.

As you were saying this morning, Commerce and Labor could get this Government into any amount of trouble by directly instructing consuls and directly acting on the recommendations of consuls, for, as we so often find, a commercial opportunity will involve various political and legal considerations that only the department of foreign relations

The Honorable

The Secretary of State.
relations can deal with.

One of the silliest things in the report is their absurdly proceeding as if the Act of 1903 creating the Department of Commerce and Labor had defined the commercial functions of the Department of State. They quite overlooked the fact that since 1856 we always had, under one or another name, such a bureau. The Act they rely on simply gave two or three specific functions without at all disturbing the old functions. It was not a case of expressio unius exclusio alterius. In any case, without legislation prohibiting the Department of State from using the foreign service for commercial expansion it would be ridiculous to say that this Department's Bureau of Trade Relations was to sit with folded hands and the foreign service be allowed to drift along doing the country a minimum of good.

As for initiative by the Department of Commerce and Labor, if we had been waiting for that Department we should have accomplished practically nothing during the last three years. Literally it would be hard to find a single achievement of the Department of State in the field of foreign trade which was not initiated in this Department. Apparently because we have made something out of this work another bureau comparatively moribund wishes to take it over since we have proved it to be worth having!

I think a re-reading of the Warren letter and memorandum and of the enclosures herewith will fully prepare you for this evening. Unless the fight lasts all night do stop for a Whiskey & soda & tell us about it on the way home!