



4-9-1917

Letter From Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson to Theodore Roosevelt, April 9, 1917

Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson

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Roosevelt Hospital,

New York, April 9th 1917.

(Permanent Address)
(c/o J.R. Clark,)
(Hibbs Vldg.,)
(Washington, D.C.)

Colonel Theodore Roosevelt,
Oyster Bay, L.I., N.Y.

My dear Colonel Roosevelt:

I am just recovering from an operation I had to have to cure the trouble with my shoulder, but I want to write you a few lines and to enclose these two clippings.

It seems to me that if you would only take hold of the National Committee of Patriotic and Defense Societies, or some such consolidation of that kind of agencies, there could be developed a great patriotic club which would live after the war and could be a great engine of reform even to the extent of waking up the solid South and making citizens think about public questions and vote with their heads and convictions instead of ignorantly or slavishly or not at all. Such an organization moreover is needed right now. Propagandists have had to fight every inch of the way to get us at last into the War, and no doubt still people are ready to advocate a "half portion" war or to oppose universal service.

It is especially disturbing to see how the President has thrown sand in the wheels of preparedness by encouraging people to think that national service is only a temporary expedient. I think that is horrible, and that we have a chance to get good reforms in the present situation which ordinarily might have awaited almost a century of propaganda.

I think to keep things going right about the War constant vigilance and organized pressure upon public opinion and upon the Government are vital and necessary.

I think, however, that since we seem to personify our sovereignty in our President quite as much as the British do in their King, and to stand behind him a good deal instead of letting him stand behind us and push, the propaganda I mean by a great organization would have to be done with a lot of tact and the avoidance of all fear of rancor. It would have to be in fact candid criticism and fearless criticism under the guise of the assurance of support as it would in fact be the assurance of support in good works. I think one should support the President in good works, but if he falls or back slides in good works one must support America and make him do so.

Excuse this outpouring. I so often think that your name and your energy put behind an active amalgamation of all patriotic and preparedness and even some other organizations could build an irresistible machine of public opinion, and one that need not be under political or financial obligations to anybody in particular.

With kind regards, I am, my dear Colonel,

Yours sincerely,