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Letter From Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson to Henry P. Fletcher, June 4, 1936

Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson

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Copy to F. M. Huntington - Wilson
Woodbury
Conn

June 5, 1933.

Honorable Francis T. Maloney
House Office Building
Washington, D.C.

Dear Frank:

I hope you won't consider me presumptuous in writing you about the contest that has arisen between Congress and the President over the allowances to veterans. I read that the leaders expect the House to follow the action of the Senate in limiting the power previously granted to the President to cut these allowances.

In the first place I want you to understand clearly that I speak, not as a "conservative business man" but as one having real interest in liberal social legislation (at this moment particularly unemployment relief) and a further interest in the political aspects of the situation, especially as regards your own political future.

The issue, although beclouded by the special claim to consideration claimed by, and generally conceded to, persons who have served their country in a war, is whether or not a special minority group actively represented and well organized can obtain special benefits from the government because of the fear that they can excite in representatives who are thinking of the votes to be cast in the next election.

Naturally, professional proponents of veterans benefits, the beneficiaries themselves, and representatives justifying their support of measures of this sort, will not accept this statement. But consider the situation. The present administration is obviously embarking on the greatest program of social and economic reform in the history of this country. The principal and almost exclusive purpose is to improve the lot of the average citizen.

The president is willing to go to any necessary lengths, first to take care of emergency relief, second to stimulate business, and third to so regulate industry as to insure the general participation of all classes in the benefits of that improvement. His intention is clear and we then come to method. He hopes to conserve as much

Honorable Francis T. Maloney

June 5, 1933.

of the old economic order as is compatible with the accomplishment of the desired results and it was the economy bill including the reduction in disbursements to soldiers that reassured the business men of the country that uncontrolled inflation was not probable and that government credit was to be maintained.

An undertaking of the proportions of the present administration's program must be along the line of a definitely co-ordinated plan. Congress could not itself, at this point, without disastrous effects substitute a new complete plan of its own and it would seem, therefore, highly undesirable for it to do anything that Roosevelt considers offers an important obstruction to his own plan. It seems to me a catastrophe to interfere with a program that has such an almost incredible general acceptability to the public. The most conservative business men are readily accepting Roosevelt's most radical suggestions because of their belief in his fundamental soundness, while the supporters of liberal and radical ideas, the enemies of "big business" are happy to accept the measures that are conservative or that seem to help "big business" because they are convinced of Roosevelt's sincere and fearless humanitarianism.

I have been somewhat lengthy in order to try to show you that, whatever veterans relief legislation may have been in the past, today it is not a contest of the liberals versus the conservative wealthy class, but an effort of a special privileged group to obtain advantages that may interfere with the larger interests of the whole country as served by a truly liberal program.

I fully appreciate the type of political pressure that is being brought to bear by the veterans' representatives but I am certain that in this case yielding will be mistaken political expediency.

On the other hand, you will seldom again have so splendid an opportunity to demonstrate that you must be considered as a statesman rather than an office seeker who is principally interested in obtaining votes through the favor of special groups.

Very truly yours,