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## Letter From Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson to Medill McCormick, January 28, 1918

Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson

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January twenty-eighth  
1918.

The Honorable Medill McCormick,  
House of Representatives,  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Medill,

Allow me to congratulate you on your excellent work in giving the Senate Committee on Military Affairs testimony so valuable for the stimulation of resolution on the part of the Congress to fight vigorously for sweeping reforms indispensable to our success in the war.

I think every possible effort should be made to pass the Chamberlain Bill creating a war council, as it might better be called; but even if you succeed in passing it, there are two ways in which the Administration could make it nugatory. The first is by bad appointments upon which, however, the Senate confirming power plus public opinion should be an adequate check. The second is the fact that the President might appoint to the war council men whose names would satisfy the country, and might then serenely proceed to ignore the war council. As a safeguard against this latter danger I am thoroughly convinced that you ought to add to the Chamberlain Bill some such amendment as the following:

Upon all matters affecting the conduct of the war and questions of policy relating thereto, The War Council shall confer, consult, and co-operate with a Congressional Joint War Committee to be composed of three senators and three representatives, at least one in each case to be of the minority party, to be appointed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, respectively, upon nomination by the respective party caucuses.

If you did this you see, then your little Committee of Congress would ask the war council at any time to go ahead and confer and consult with it. If the war council was being ignored, it would be obliged to report the fact to your Committee. Thereupon there would be exploited in Senate and House the fact that the President was actually ignoring and refusing to use an



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The Honorable Medill McCormick, (2)

instrumentality created by the representatives of the people for the purpose of cooperating with him in the conduct of the war. This I think would be a dramatic and clear-cut issue which could safely be fought out in the arena of public opinion.

The only hope of reform seems to lie in agitation by the public and in Congress. Without a small Congressional Committee, at least morally ancillary to the war council, neither Congress nor the public will have the means of information on which to base just demands.

I feel so strongly on this subject that I have brought these views to the attention of Senators Knox, Lodge, Johnson of California, Gallinger and Penrose, and have also written Colonel Roosevelt, the National Security League, the American Rights League and the American Defense League. I hope you will think well of this suggestion.

I wish you all success in your efforts to help bring order out of chaos, and remain always, with kind regards,

Yours very sincerely,