



2-21-1918

Letter From Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson to William F. Snow, February 21, 1918

Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson

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Recommended Citation

Huntington-Wilson, Francis Mairs, "Letter From Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson to William F. Snow, February 21, 1918" (1918). *World War I Era Documents, 1914-1918*. 65.

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February 21, 1918.

My dear Major Snow:

May I ask you to be so kind as to consider the project indicated in the enclosed article? I feel sure you will agree that the four subjects of eugenics, sex hygiene, children's welfare and early education are but four sides of one great problem and can, therefore, be effectively urged as such in a nation-wide campaign to avail of the war's awakening to do an essential work now which might have taken many years in normal times. With the cachet of a measure of preparedness, of governmental approval and of authoritative provenience, the proposed pamphlet of propaganda, however brutally frank, could now, if ever, break through the disastrous reserve of the ultra-conservative and stir them up to a realization of the terrible importance of these subjects and could, at the same time, supply to them, including clergy, teachers, and many others, both the incentive and the information necessary to the preaching of a new era.

Therefore, the pamphlet should ultimately have the approval, if possible, of the Council of National Defense, of your Committee thereof, of the Federal Bureau for Children's Welfare, of the Commissioner General of Education and of the Eugenics Record Office, which is now under the Carnegie Institution. It should show on its face that instead of being of specific authorship, it represented on each subject the views of organizations and individuals of high authority. But you will readily see the idea. The first requisite seems to me to be a satisfactory rough draft of the pamphlet. My friend, Dr. Charles B. Davenport has kindly promised a thousand words on the practical essentials of eugenics.

I am venturing to enclose a mere sketchy outline of the pamphlet in which I have myself jotted down all I know about sex hygiene from your own writings and others. I have done this merely to emphasize my own conviction that each subject should be treated with entirely brutal frankness giving the most succinct statement of the most impressive facts. My idea would be that each authority should set down on his subject what he thinks it would best serve the national interest to have the men and women of the country know. I talked the whole subject over with Dr. Zinsser in New York and he kindly offered to lay the matter before you when he should see you. I have concluded, however, also to write you directly. I hope that you will consider the project good enough to justify you, busy as you are, in

February 21, 1918.

My dear Major Snow:(2)

taking the time to substitute, re-write, change or revamp my notes on sex hygiene so that there may result a really good presentation of the practical essentials of the subject suitable for the purpose in view.

If you can be so very good as to do this, I shall be most grateful. I am, meanwhile, trying to induce other authorities to undertake a thousand words each on the subjects of children's welfare and early education in the real sense along the lines of Professor William James's ideas. I shall be most thankful for any suggestions also that you can give me upon any point and particularly as to who would be the best people for the two remaining parts of the work.

It is hardly necessary for me to explain that I am not a specialist in any of the subjects covered, that I represent no organization, and that I do not expect myself to figure in the matter at all, but am simply interested as a citizen who believes these things of vital national importance and am trying, if I can, to interest the proper people in order that the plan may be worked out and realized. My friend, Professor Irving Fisher, of Yale, as well as Dr. Davenport, thinks the scheme a valuable one and promises me his support in the matter.

As to the funds necessary for printing and distribution (possibly \$20,000), in case the project is carried out, I had thought that perhaps they could be sought from four or five individuals or organizations, including very likely the Rockefeller Foundation, especially interested in the respective subjects. The distribution, it had occurred to me, might perhaps be made through the Committee for Patriotic and Defense Societies or some such appropriate channel.

I hope that I am not imposing too much upon your time which must be already fully occupied, and that I may surely count upon you for your indispensable help in bringing the project into presentable form and your invaluable support later, if we find that it can be put through.

Some day when I am in Washington I shall give myself the pleasure of calling upon you. Meanwhile, I hope to get this preliminary work done in a very few weeks so that the further carrying out of the matter may be put in more appropriate and competent hands than my own.

I am, my dear Major Snow,

Yours very faithfully,