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Letter From Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson to Philander Claxton, February 21, 1918

Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson

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February 21, 1918.

Dr. Claxton,
Commissioner General of Education,
Washington, D. C.

My dear Sir:

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.

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 object now is to gain, if possible, your interest in this scheme as one that might have a valuable connection with Miss Lathrop's admirable project for a "Children's Year". Meanwhile, I am endeavoring to get various authorities who can spare the time to produce a rough preliminary outline of the proposed pamphlet of propaganda. The idea is to get in each case a thousand words setting forth what it would be most to the national advantage to have the men and women of the country know upon each of the four topics. If this preliminary work can be done, of course the draft will be submitted for your approval as well as for that of the Federal Bureau of Children's Welfare and the Council of National Defense,

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Dr. Claxton, (2)

without which approval it would lack one of the first essentials of usefulness. At that stage, also, will arise the question of funds and the question of the best channel of distribution.

When I am in Washington, I shall ask for the pleasure of an opportunity of discussing this project with you and meanwhile I shall much appreciate any suggestions which you may care to make.

I am, my dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,