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Letter From Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson to William H. Burnham, March 19, 1918

Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson

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THE LINCOLN
13th & Locust Sts.,
Philadelphia, Penna.

March 19th, 1918.

Professor Wm. H. Burnham,
Clarke University.

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.

Dr. Charles B. Davenport has kindly undertaken to embody in a thousand words the practical rudiments of eugenics. With the cooperation of Major Snow and the Society for Social Hygiene, the section upon sex hygiene is being attended to. I am now in negotiation with certain authorities regarding the material on the topic of children's welfare, and I am, at the same time, beginning the work of interesting some other authorities and individuals, both governmental and private, in this scheme of propaganda upon these four great concatenated

subjects. In these preliminary efforts my friend, Professor Irving Fisher, of Yale, and others are kindly giving me the benefit of their suggestions, and have assured me that they think the project has very useful possibilities.

It has been suggested that I may be fortunate enough to induce you to supply the material for the section on education. I am, therefore, writing, not only in the hope of enlisting your interest in the scheme, but particularly to make the very earnest request that, however busy you may be, you will have the great kindness to do that work. 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. When this preliminary work has been done, the idea would then be the perfection of the draft through collaboration so that ultimately the pamphlet may show on its face that it had the approval and represented the ideas of such individual authorities as yourself and also of various authoritative organizations. At that point would be sought the approval of the Council of National Defense, the Commissioner General of Education, the Federal Bureau for Children's Welfare, and so forth, in order that the pamphlet might carry the weight of governmental sanction. Then would come the question of obtaining from four or five individuals or organizations the funds (possibly \$20,000) required for printing and distribution. Distribution might be carried out, for example, through the Committee of Patriotic and Defense Societies or some other appropriate channel calculated to reach the right people and to carry the truth that the work had a decided bearing upon preparedness in the large sense.

Merely to give you a perhaps more vivid idea of the scheme and of the kind of appeal it is proposed to make, I am enclosing a purely tentative and very rough outline. The sex hygiene section, as you will see, is a mere basis for Major Snow's revision, and the others are the barest outlines. The section regarding education, if my slight impressions correspond to your expert knowledge, would do the most good if directed to set forth simply and cogently the principles (I suppose more or less along the lines of Professor James's views) governing the deep and practical realities of the much-abused subject of education.

I sincerely hope that I may succeed in gaining for this plan your invaluable cooperation and that you will do the great service of drafting the educational section. If the plan is susceptible to being worked out into a valuable piece of propaganda, that can only be done by authorities like yourself.

And only so can the scheme be advanced from the present preliminary stage so that its further carrying out can be transferred to more appropriate and competent hands than my own.

Trusting that the importance of the subject will persuade you to forgive me for troubling you, I am, my dear Sir,

Yours very faithfully,