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Letter From Helen Cordelia Putnam to Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson, April 6, 1918

Helen C. Putnam

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HELEN C. PUTNAM, M. D.
CONSULTATION BY APPOINTMENT
TELEPHONE

RHODE ISLAND AVENUE, PROVIDENCE, R. I.

April 6, 1918

Huntington Wilson, Esq.

Philadelphia

Dear Mr. Wilson:

I have been en route for a month or more and much mail was not forwarded. Your letter was among those I found here last week, and I have held it a few days to think it over. I am sorry your important undertaking has met with this delay.

Enclosed is an announcement by my committee of the National Council of Education attempting work along lines related to yours, but limited to people preparing to lead public schools. It is evidence that I am in sympathy with your proposition.

I like the idea of having a suitable pamphlet distributed by a special war service organization as you purpose, because it will be more generally read than if sent thru the channels of peace times. The choice of Drs. Davenport and Snow is unexceptionable. I shall be glad to contribute the 1000 or so words desired on Children's -- may I say Well-being instead of "welfare"? The latter has a triteness and popular bias which I like to avoid in my own writing.

You ask for suggestions. 1. Prof. C.-E.A. Winslow, Director of the School of Public Health at Yale University, might be the best for "Education" if you wish the article to be scientifically dependable.

2. I am wholly sceptical of the plan to have a rough draft of the pamphlet "worked over by various interested authorities", if it means having the articles "worked over". Instead, each of the four writers should be authoritative specialists, as are Drs. Davenport and Snow; the four should collaborate directly and fully to secure unity, to eliminate overlappings, and for mutual criticism.

My scepticism is based specifically on knowledge of three experiments in cooperative pamphlet making. In (a) the MSS were submitted to a working over group, and eventually the whole undertaking was dropt. In (b) the ideas were "cribbed" by the "working over" person or persons who produced a more or less inaccurate version -- a composite that was shortly defunct. In (c) the method I urge on you succeeded, the pamphlet being subsequently demanded in several languages and in other countries.

3. The federal endorsement of most value I am confident is that of the United States Public Health Service, and I almost believe it is the only one likely to cooperate. The Bureau of Education and the Children's Bureau prefer their own people to do their work, and neither is equal to yours. It is also possible that the U.S.P.H.S. would publish your pamphlet, first in its weekly Public Health Bulletin, and then as reprints from the Government Printing Office, for distribution thru other channels.

As all this is still somewhat tentative, I shall hope to hear again from you before I begin anything definite.

With best wishes, I am

Very truly yours,

Helen C. Putnam