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Letter: Agnes Houston Craig to Ida M. Tarbell, October 1, 1924

Craig, Agnes Houston

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DEPARTMENT OF HOME ECONOMICS
AGNES HOUSTON CRAIG, SUPERVISOR
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

October 1, 1924

My dear Miss Tarbell,

Last April I had the privilege of offering some ideas for discussion at the Inter-collegiate Conference of the Women's Colleges which was held at Vassar. This was the outcome of a conversation with one of the Presidents relative to the fact that the home should be viewed as a focal interest in the higher education of women and that the Women's Colleges should be giving leadership in it. For your information I enclose a copy of the points that were sent in.

I was informed on May 27 th. that the topics had been brought before that body and that it had taken the following action:-

"Voted, that it is the sense of the meeting that coordination of courses relating to the home and the community could be made to establish a major which would take its place in a liberal arts college as both scholarly and scientific."

It was also ~~st~~ stated that the discussion indicated that other colleges (Vassar has taken steps in this direction) Smith, Wellesley and Mount Holyoke, will offer courses so coordinated and supervised by a single director in a short time.

Immediately after this meeting President Neilson of Smith College appointed a committee to study the curriculum at Smith and recommend a coordination of courses as a major in homemaking.

Previous to this time Dr Neilson had also invited the State Home Economics Association of Massachusetts to hold its October meeting at Smith. We are to be the guests of the College on October 25 th. I am planning the program which on account of illness I have not been able to do earlier. The general idea around which the discussions are to center is "What the Newer Knowledge May Contribute to Better Home and Community Standards." Dean Bernard will speak on "The Significance for the Home of the Newer Knowledge of the Child." Prof. Chase Going Woodhouse will present some phase of the Newer Theories of Economics of interest to Home-makers.

I want one outside speaker who has a vital interest in this whole subject. You have made such a fine contribution in your "The Business of Being a Woman" and in other ways. Can you not assist us at this time to make the faculties of these colleges see that it is not necessary nor is it desirable to deprecate education for the home, as a matter of interest that does not concern the intelligent or intellectual woman. They are all searching for some name under which they can hide it instead of being willing to use that ancient and honorable word HOME, than which there is none better.

I feel that this meeting is an extremely important one, that it is strategic and I also feel that you have more than a casual interest in this whole question. Will you, if it is at all possible, give us the powerful influence of your sane and respected point of view by coming to us at this time. We have five hundred and fifty three members and we will have a large listening-in audience from the faculty and student body of Smith College and perhaps from Mount Holyoke.

Under what conditions can you come? May I ask for as prompt a reply as possible. I am sorry to have been able to give so little time.

Cordially yours


Chairman, Program Committee,
Mass. State Home Economics Assos.

Neglected to enclose in my letter - A.H. Craig

1:

Under what conditions may home making be viewed as a learned profession?

2.

Are the values of the home, as a fundamental institution, of sufficient importance to use the home as a focal interest in higher education, especially in the education of women? If so, should not the women's colleges provide leadership in developing a high type of education to this end.

3:

That preparation for a high standard of home making requires liberal education rather than too specialized training, and that the liberal art colleges provide most of the subject matter necessary, but that it would be desirable to find some way of relating it consciously, to the end that the physical aspects, the biological foundations, the economic values, the psychological problems, the technology and the social interests of the home may be understood, and that each of these interests in home making may be properly evaluated and related to each other.

4:

Accepting the home as a focal interest for which liberal education is necessary and recognizing the present tendency to specialize knowledge, is it desirable to have on each faculty a coordinator, who would assist the various departments of specialized knowledge; such as, biology, chemistry, physiology, economics, psychology, art, etc., to relate subject matter so that there will be less duplication in educational processes and more unity in the final results.

5:

Education for the home should not be viewed as technical education and it should not be deferred for post graduate work in special professional schools, unless such training is to be used vocationally outside the home.