
My dear President Wilson:

I am deeply touched by your letter. You must know how honored I feel that you should have thought of me for a place on the Tariff Commission. I hope you realize how much I regret that I cannot accept. I came very reluctantly to the conclusion, for I of course realized that there was a public obligation involved; and that is the last thing that I should want to shirk. I believe, my dear Mr. President, that I appreciate, perhaps better than most people, what this Commission ought to do. I am not physically fit to give it what it deserves.

It is really humilitating to me to confess this. I have worked steadily all my life, and, until the last year, almost entirely at a desk. I realized at least three years ago that I must make a change, if I was to keep to the end the physical and mental vigor which I feel is both the privilege and the duty of a sane worker. Some months ago I gave up all editorial work; and have substituted three or four months a year of Lyceum and Chautauqua talking. It has always seemed to me that this was a legitimate way of reaching the public with the things in which one was interested. My experience has given me a real respect for the work, and an ambition to help develop it into a more serious medium than it seemed to most people.

I would give a great deal, however, if I might help the Tariff Commission in some way. It might be possible that I could aid in interpreting its task to the public through my writing. I have even thought of preparing a lecture to be called "Our Tariff." Possibly this is only a way of salving my conscience for the twinge it feels in refusing to do anything that you, who carry such heavy burdens, ask; nevertheless it would give me real satisfaction if I could help educate the public to an understanding of what it ought to expect from the Commission, and to a realization that it should be given time.

I want to take this opportunity to say how glad I was your peace note, and how rejoiced I am to see the way that best opinion in all of the belligerent countries receives it. You did a great and courageous thing, my dear Mr. President, when you send that note, and I am thoroughly convinced tr
the whole world is going to come one day to that belief.

I am giving myself the pleasure of sending you a copy of my last book, "New Ideals in Business." It is a report of things I have been following for three or four years in certain factories and shops of the country. I went out to see what I could find that was hopeful. Here are the results. I have made bold to send you the book, because of certain things you said to me when I had the pleasure of talking to you last fall at Shadow Lawn. I am convinced that wherever any or all of these ideas are worked out intelligently and honestly, they make for the thing which you so deplored the lack of in your talk with the men concerned in the railroad controversy, that is, the ability to consider without suspicion and ill-will questions which concern them both.

Forgive me, dear Mr. President, for this long letter. It simply says two or three things which I have wanted much to say to you, but which I have refrained from saying because I hesitated to swell in the slightest degree the flood of correspondence which I know pours upon you. I have always felt that keeping silence was the most useful thing that a citizen could do in such periods as you have had to face in the last four years.

May I not say now how much I regretted to be obliged to refuse the invitation to dinner on December 12th with which you and Mrs. Wilson honored me. I feel that this is the kind of thing which is not done, but I was under bond to speak in New Orleans, and though I tried to get a release, both my lecture bureau and the people having the course in hand refused to let me go. They were good, progressive Democrats, so though I paid the price of missing the dinner, I had the consolation that I was indirectly at least serving the cause. I go out again in a few days, and it will be with renewed energy and enthusiasm because of the confidence you have shown in me, in believing me fit for a position so important as that of a member of the Tariff Commission.

With the very best of New Year wishes to you and Mrs. Wilson, believe me, my dear Mr. President,

Faithfully yours,