THE PEOPLES OF AMERICA SOCIETY

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EXECUTIVE OFFICE
41 UNION SQUARE
NEW YORK

TELEPHONE
STUYVESANT 4000

November 24, 1919.

Dear Miss Tarbell,

Some time ago I took the liberty of sending you a pamphlet entitled "Democratic Americanization: A Criticism and A Policy". Its content was substantially a statement of the reasons for the organization of the Peoples of America Society, and I am writing to you now to ask you whether you will not join your efforts to ours in an endeavor to bring a more constructive spirit into the relations between Americans by inheritance and Americans by choice.

It is the judgment of this committee that nothing is more necessary at the present moment for the attainment of this end than that there shall be an association of the forward-looking and clear-thinking men and women everywhere in the country - in a word, of the liberals of America - for common counsel and common action toward both the elimination of friction between native and foreign-born, and the promotion of mutual knowledge between them.

The Americanization propaganda, which was artificially stimulated during the period of the war seems to us to be, in the main, already flagging; or, where it still retains its vigor, to be diverted into unexpected and somewhat unsalutary channels. Those of us who a year ago were genuinely concerned over the prospect of having our newer peoples, with all their valuable heritages, reduced to a drab uniformity, are now asking ourselves whether we had not, after all, been over-sanguine in our fears that something really serious, whether good or evil, was about to be attempted. At the moment we are faced with the far graver possibility that the entire well-intentioned public interest in our younger populations may be scrapped and consigned to limbo, and in its place and under cover of the Americanization label, a disintegrating agitation launched. The widespread publicity so discrediting to the alien-born workers which has made its appearance in the press and on the public platform in the past two months, gives color to our apprehensions.

The question, therefore, which was so spectacularly raised at the time of our entry into the war remains unanswered. If the Americanization propaganda has altered matters at all it has, it would seem, merely made the problem more challenging than ever. A wave of know-nothingism, of blind distrust of the "foreigner", and of thought less insistence upon an undefined "Americanism" is upon us. It is for those of us whose interest survives the passing of the fashion to band together for the actual work that has to be done. In a sense the waning of the unhealthy enthusiasm is a gain. An earnest effort can much better be made in an atmosphere of calm deliberation.

The task before us is difficult and complex, but specifically there should be three fields for our efforts; (1) to reassert the vital content behind the somewhat debased term "Americanism"; (2) to redefine the aims and the possibilities of the word "Americanization"; and, above all, (3) to establish an educational machinery for conveying to the peoples of America a knowledge and an understanding of one another.

It is with this programme as a goal that the Peoples of America Society sets out. If its aims are to be achieved it will need the cooperation and the constructive counsel of every genuine lover of America.

Yours sincerely,

M.E.Ravage.

Miss Ida Tarbell

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