

No 122-a

**Some Correspondence
of Interest
to American Women**

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Lawmakers are now meeting in forty capitols. The widespread demand for constructive social legislation makes this an opportune time to secure, in states where it is now lacking, the necessary statute authorizing a wider community use of school property.

Make the schoolhouses social centers and you quicken the spirits and enrich on many sides the lives of old and young.

To secure social center laws there is need of experienced committees which will take steps immediately to bring about the introduction of the necessary bills.

Through this booklet Miss Margaret Woodrow Wilson, an ardent champion of the social center cause, appeals to the State Federations composing the General Federation of Women's Clubs to take up this timely and important task.

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DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION, RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION
400 Metropolitan Tower, New York City

MISS MARGARET WOODROW WILSON

January 23rd, 1913.

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

My dear Mr. Pennybacker,
As Vice Chairman
of the National Social Service Regio-
nals Committee I write, expressing
your sympathy and approval
in this my new work. Your well
known interest in school matters
has emboldened me to do so.

I am told that the state organizations
comprising the General Federation of
Women's Clubs, could greatly advance
the cause of Social Service, especially
just now when so many state
legislatures are convening, if the

TO MRS. PERCY V. PENNYBACKER

would work for the enactment of
social center laws in these respective
States.

Will you advise me as to how
I could be induced to see in
motion legislative campaigns to
this end? The Russell Sage
Foundation stands ready to assist
with printed matter, and the time
seems propitious for a concerted
movement for the needed laws.

Any advice or encouragement
you may give me will be deeply
appreciated. I am,

most sincerely yours,
Margaret Woodrow Wilson

Mrs Percy V. Pennybacker,
Austin, Texas.

M R S . P E N N Y B A C K E R T O M I S S W I L S O N

Form 2707-BL

NIGHT LETTER
THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY

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DOUGLAS, ARIZ. JAN. 29-13.

MISS MARGARET WOODROW WILSON,

NAIL ARTS CLUB, GRAMERCY PK NY CITY.

I AM HEARTILY IN SYMPATHY WITH THE SOCIAL CENTER MOVEMENT AND HOPE THE STATE FEDERATIONS WILL DO ALL IN THEIR POWER THROUGH LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES TO SECURE PROPER LAWS ENABLING COMMUNITIES TO ENJOY FREER USE OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS FOR SOCIAL AND CIVIC PURPOSES. LETTER WILL FOLLOW.

MRS. PERCY V. PENNYBACKER.

5.44 P.M.

General Federation of Women's Clubs

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LAFAYETTE, MISSISSIPPI

Jan. 30 - 1913

My dear Miss Wilson:-

Your effort to secure legislation to make possible the opening of school houses for social center work meets my approval.

In Philadelphia a number of our school houses are being used as social ~~leisure~~ centers. These centers are in charge of the Home and School League. After several years experience we are convinced that such work is of benefit to the community and that it should be extended over the country. Care should be used in selecting the proper people to direct and ~~stimulate~~ these centers.

Cordially yours
Lucretia L. Blankenburg

MRS. SAMUEL B. SNEATH TO MISS WILSON

Figure 2.49.9

NIGHT LETTER
THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY

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[illegible]

ROBERT C. CLOWAY, PRESIDENT

BELVIDERE BROOKS, GENERAL MANAGER

RECEIVED AT 96 Nassau St., Princeton, N.J.

11 N.Y. H. 91 Collect N. L.

NEW ORLEANS, LA. FEB. 1-1913.

MISS MARGARET WOODROW WILSON.

PRINCETON, N.J.

I HAVE BEEN INTERESTED FOR SOME TIME IN THE SOCIAL CENTER IDEA AS A MEANS FOR CRYSTALLIZING INTELLIGENT COMMUNITY INTEREST AND BECAUSE OF ITS GENERAL EDUCATIONAL VALUE I AM THEREFORE VERY GLAD TO ENDORSE PERSONALLY YOUR PLANS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF THIS MOVEMENT BY MEANS OF PROPER LEGISLATION IN THE VARIOUS STATES LOOKING TO THE USE OF PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDINGS AS SOCIAL CENTERS AND THINK THAT THE STATE FEDERATIONS CAN AND SHOULD AID IN ANY WAY POSSIBLE AND PROPER IN PROCURING THE PASSAGE OF SUCH LEGISLATION AS SOON AS PRACTICABLE.

MRS. S. B. SNEATH.

9:32 A.M.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROCURING THE ENACTMENT OF SOCIAL CENTER LAWS

Before framing a bill the state committees will generally find it advantageous to consult the state department of education or any commission which may have been appointed to revise the education law. Through conferences with these bodies the committee will learn how far the existing law is inadequate and precisely what amendments need to be made to legalize the maintenance of social centers. Oftentimes the state department will be willing to stand as sponsor for the bill, especially if it is already contemplating other changes in the school law.

Consultation with persons familiar with the attitude of the various political parties will enable the committee to determine whether or not it is necessary to organize a state-wide campaign in order to get the needed bill through. Frequently the committees of the legislature through whose hands the bill will pass are all that need to be converted.

Since public sentiment varies so greatly as to the propriety of permitting social dancing, political meetings, and religious activities in public schoolhouses, the bill should be so framed as to approach the desired regulations for such uses as nearly as may be expedient from the standpoint of securing its passage within a reasonable period.

The statutory conditions differ so much in the several states that it is impossible to suggest a model social center law which would be generally available. The essential provisions of such a law are enumerated on the following page. In putting them into the phraseology of a bill it will be found helpful to consult the comprehensive law upon this subject recently passed by the Wisconsin legislature, and the laws of several other states which have partially paved the way for the wider use of the school plant.

THE ESSENTIAL PROVISIONS OF AN ADEQUATE SOCIAL CENTER LAW

1. A paragraph authorizing the local school directors or boards of education to establish, equip, and maintain social centers on school premises, specifying some of the principal activities to be maintained therein and providing for the employment of competent persons to conduct them.

2. A measure providing appropriations for the maintenance of social centers.

3. A paragraph indicating the method whereby, in case the school board does not establish social centers, the question of their establishment can be submitted to the electors of the district upon the initiative of a certain minority of the electors. (See provision in the Wisconsin law to this end.)

4. A paragraph prescribing for what purposes and under what conditions schools may be used by individuals and organizations.

5. A paragraph authorizing school directors or boards of education to permit voluntary organizations to maintain and operate social centers in school buildings. (In communities where sufficient public sentiment has not developed to warrant the appropriation of funds for this work, it may sometimes be created by permitting a voluntary organization to support and conduct a social center demonstration.)