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Reports of the Secretary to the President
Student Affairs President's Correspondence,
1900-1907

William J. Kerr

4-22-1904

Letter from David Felmley, R. H. Halsey, J. F. Millspaugh, and E. O. Vaile

David Felmley

Illinois Committee on Simplification of Spelling

R. H. Halsey

Wisconsin Committee on Simplification of Spelling

J. F. Millspaugh

Minnesota Committee on Simplification of Spelling

E. O. Vaile

Illinois Committee on Simplification of Spelling

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To Our Fellow Active Members of the N. E. A.: APR 22 1904

DEAR FRIEND:

We send you the enclosed circular that you may understand the crisis now at hand in a movement which must appeal to you, we believe, as an educator and a lover of childhood.

Under separate cover we also send you a copy of an interesting pamphlet containing the speeches and letters at a late banquet of the Chicago School Principals on this same general subject. We have no doubt you will feel repaid in reading it.

The critical question is, How will the Council of Education and the Board of Directors of the N. E. A., who have the final decision, dispose of the two requests so distinctly made of them by our three State Associations and by the Department of Superintendence?

We feel sure that the members of the Council and of the Board of Directors, as the representatives, especially in a financial way, of the active members, are ready to comply with whatever requests they are perfectly satisfied express the deliberate and wise sentiment of the Association as a whole. There is no way for them to know definitely and precisely what that sentiment is except by the personal action of the members. It is eminently right that the Council and the Board should hesitate to make any appropriation, especially a considerable one, so long as the circumstances might warrant the members in subsequently criticising the appropriation as a mistake, should developments not seem fully to justify it. As representatives faithful to our trust they can not and should not be expected ever to make an appropriation unless it is unmistakably endorsed by a decided majority of the members heard from in response to an open call.

Is the endorsement thus far given to the plan under consideration of this perfectly conclusive character? Many of our prominent members, some of them opponents of the movement, frankly declare that it is, and we are free to say it seems so to us.

Yet to make assurance doubly sure, and to leave no particle of doubt in the minds of our representatives as to the attitude of the great majority of our members, we send this letter to you and to all our 4,200 other fellow active members, and ask you to consider the matter and to be sure to indicate your wish promptly on the coupon petition below. In addition a personal letter from you to your state director would be helpful.

We feel, as we believe you and the great mass of our practical educators feel, that the time has come when this movement should be organized in a safe way so that discreet and recognized scholarship shall guide it and that systematic and efficient business methods may be brought to bear in promoting it. Would it be less than a calamity if this plan, now so widely endorsed and so near to being launched, should be defeated in the court of last resort? If this danger is not already passed we are confident it still is in the power of our members to ward it off if they will. Will you join in the petition below?

If you are opposed to the petition kindly put your name, etc., on the back of it in the place provided. This letter is sent to the address of every active member in the 1903 Year Book, except those previously canvassed. We ask for a full expression on both sides and shall report both sides. Please favor us with a prompt answer one way or the other.

A prepaid return envelope is enclosed for your use.

Very truly yours,

(Signed)

DAVID FELMLEY, (Pres. State Normal, Normal, Ill.)
Chairman Illinois Committee
on Simplification of Spelling.

R. H. HALSEY, (Pres. State Normal, Oshkosh, Wis.)
Chairman Wisconsin Committee
on Simplification of Spelling.

J. F. MILLSFAUGH, (Pres. State Nor'l, Winona, Minn.)
Chairman Minnesota Committee
on Simplification of Spelling.

E. O. VAILE, Sec. Illinois Committee, Oak Park, Ill.