HELEN KELLER

15 West 16th Street, New York 11, N. Y.

March 26, 1946

Dear Mr. Graves:

I am indeed happy to inform you that a Committee on the Deaf-blind of America has been started. It is to be one of the departments of the American Foundation for the Blind with which I have worked for twenty-two years.

All that time there has burned within me an unceasing pain because the problems of the doubly handicapped remain for the most part unsolved, and I have made one attempt after another in their behalf.

Now that there is a Committee to study their needs, I am writing to you because it offers a wonderful opportunity for your noble impulses -- effective aid to the most appealing and loneliest group of human beings on earth. They are widely scattered over a vast continent, and it will require careful study and patient search if they are to be properly served.

Try to imagine, if you can, the anguish and horror you would experience bowed down by the twofold weight of blindness and deafness, with no hope of emerging from an utter isolation! Still throbbing with natural emotions and desires, you would feel through the sense of touch the existence of a living world, and desperately but vainly you would seek an escape into its healing light.

All your pleasures would vanish in a dreadful monotony of silent days. Even work, man's Divine heritage -- work that can bind up broken hearts -- would be lost to you. Family and friends might surround you with love, but consolation alone cannot restore usefulness, or bring release from that hardest prison -- a tomb of the mind and a dungeon of the body.

I doubt if even the most imaginative and tender normal people can realize the peculiar cruelty of such a situation. The blind who are taught can live happily in a world of sounds, and the deaf use their eyes instead of ears, but the deaf-blind have no substitute for sight or hearing. The keenest touch cannot break their immobility. More than any other physically fettered group, they need right teaching and constructive procedures to reclaim them to normal society.

Will you not, dear friend, give some thought to the Helen Keller Committee on the Deaf-blind, so that more of those who cannot see and hear may regain life's goodness and the dignity of useful work? I plead for your financial support of this work, where so much needs to be accomplished.

Trustingly and cordially yours,

Helen Keller