C O P Y

May 18, 1918

WOMAN'S COMMITTEE
1814 N. St. N. W.

To his Excellency
The President of the United States,
The White House
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. Presdient:

The Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense is sending you a formal, though very heartfelt expression of gratitude for the generous way in which you treated our recent conference. I want to add a personal word. It is not anything that needs an answer, only something that I feel I should like to say to you, if it were right or proper for me to ask a conference.

When this committee undertook its work, I had an unexpressed but real doubt about our success. As you of course know the great woman's organizations of this country are fairly jealous groups. There has grown up among them something that approximates a caste system. They divide, in many communities in something the way churches did thirty or forty years ago, and do still, I fear, in some parts of the country. There have been times when I have felt that this growing separation of groups might become a real danger. When the Woman's Committee asked these organizations to come together in what might be called a federation of organizations, and to establish in each community a clearing house for women's war efforts, I must confess that while I thought it was a beautiful idea I feared it impractical. The wonderful way in which the women have answered to the suggestion of unifying their powers in order to serve to the best advantage in the winning of this war, has been an amazement and a joy to me. There is enormous potentiality in this merger. I never felt this so strongly as I did at this recent conference.

Of course we go to the women with the government requests and they work together but the response is voluntary on their part and if they respond it means in the case of hundreds of thousands of them the sinking of some special interest or association which they have always put before anything else in their public and social activities. I know you will agree with me that this is a wholesome thing for the women and that the more completely they do it, the better for the future.

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Our first year's experience shows that if we are to carry this out as effectively as we should, we ought to have a little more general recognition to call your attention to the fact that if this great cooperative force which is voluntarily gathering in this country is to go on to full completion, the time may come that we shall ask of you a little more definite recognition than as yet has been wise.

You see, My dear Mr. President, this is to put an idea into your mind about this Woman's Committee. As a woman, I have never worked in organizations. I have been, I fear, very individualistic in my activities. I come with a new eye and a fresh outlook. I have rarely in my life been stirred more deeply than by the response that the women all over this land have made to the suggestion of the Council of National Defense that they coordinate their undertakings. It will not only be a wonderful thing for the Government, but a most wonderful thing for the women in the future if this movement can be fostered.

I have taken the liberty of writing this to you, not in my capacity as a member of this committee, but as an outsider - I really believe I am both! I have ventured to do it because of the exceeding kindness with which you have always treated any communication of mine.

Most sincerely and faithfully

CHAIRMAN: NEWS DEPARTMENT

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