

1814 N Street N.W.
Washington D. C.

August 20/1918

Dear Member of the Women 's Committee:-

As soon as Miss Patterson and I had our interview with the Secretary of War last week, I telegraphed you that she and I (who were the only members of the Committee in Washington) saw several objections to the plan submitted in the letter of the Secretary of War, which practically eliminated the Women 's Committee from any actual service, and made it a scattered group of five or seven advisory members, not in Washington but in different sections of the country, not in touch with each other or with the work, that it was practically of no value or service to either the women or the Government. The only woman to be connected with the work was not an Assistant-Director but merely an Assistant to the Director, who could only advise him and act through him if at all. The whole plan was simply an elimination of the Committee while making a pretence of keeping it to advise with those States where amalgamation had not or would not take place; which was merely turning over to the co-called Women Committee the opportunity to advise without any authority where the State Councils refused to work with or actually opposed women, where the poor women would have no money or influence while this plan would simply keep the Assistant to the Director in the midst of local conflicts. I know of no woman whom I would recommend as fitted for such a position who has not better and more desirable work already, or who would accept such an undesirable place. While there might be women who would accept the position as members of a camouflage committee, I personally (and Miss Patterson agrees with me) would decline to recommend the formation of such a committee and impose it upon the women of the nation as in any way an adequate recognition of their services to the country.

The Secretary of War himself did not seem to have anything to offer in its behalf. We talked a half hour, and I told him that the Woman's Committee had submitted our proposal, and were willing to accept Secretary Lane's, which seemed to us to be reasonable, both of which the Council of National Defense had rejected without giving an adequate reason for doing so; that we felt our proposals should be considered and good reason given for their rejection unless the Council of National Defense had something better to offer us; that we felt our first proposal should be placed before the President and receive either his acceptance or rejection. And the Secretary of War said he would submit it as soon as the President returned to Washington.

Miss Patterson had an interview with Mr. Clarkson yesterday, who reported that the Secretary of War was apparently still opposed to having us placed under the President, as the President had problems enough already; that amalgamation seemed the best thing, and the Council of National Defense seemed to agree with him. It is supposed that the matter will be settled at the next Council meeting, and I am therefore asking you to hold yourself in readiness to come to Washington some time next week on call by telegraph if we get any definite word from the Council of National Defense, as we must meet and discuss their final decision as early as possible. Those of us who are compelled to remain on here from week to week in this uncertainty greatly desire to adjust our personal affairs and settle ourselves in some less arduous and more constructive or congenial service. Four months' time is long enough to live in this unsettled state, especially in such weather as we have had in this city.

Faithfully

Anna Howard Shaw

Chairman Woman's Committee
Council of National Defense