COUNCIL OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF DIRECTOR

June 25, 1917.

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
324 E. Main Street,
Titusville, Pa.

Dear Miss Tarbell:

Replying to your letter of June 20th: I fear that the story as to how the Woman's Committee originated is too complicated to be of interest. While many people will claim the distinction of having started it, in all fairness, I do not think any one could be said to be responsible.

Various individual women and organizations of women asked for recognition by the government for specific purposes. For some time I recall advising the women that it would be necessary for them to first unite into one organization before obtaining official recognition by the government. I had in mind the formation of a conference of women's socieites similar to the conference of patriotic societies which was formed. The League for Woman's Service and others attempted to do this with only fair success. It became obvious that this method of procedure would not work and yet something had to be done to make use of the woman power of the country for the war.

During this period of confusion members of the Council of National Defense as well as some of the members of the Advisory Commission were approached by individual women and representatives of women's organizations. A discussion therefore arose in the Council as to how the situation could be simplified and clarified. After discussion it was thought wise to appoint a committee of prominent and able women to advise us as to how the woman power of the country could be made effective. Such a Committee was formed composed primarily of able women who in many cases happened to represent large women's organizations. From there on you know the story.

I regret very much to hear that your mother is seriously ill and sincerely hope that she will have a speedy recovery.

Very truly yours,

W. S. Gifford
Director.

Digital Images, 2010. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.