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1626 RHODE ISLAND AVE., WASHINGTON, D. C.

Philadelphia
September 23, 1918.

Mrs. B. J. Cunningham,
Galveston, Texas.

Dear Madam:

I am writing to inform you that Mrs. Catt has asked me to serve as Chairman of the National Suffrage Committee for the Protection of Women Workers in War Time. As you know, this committee was organized in the beginning of the war and was able to do some valuable work; especially in the matter of propaganda as to the necessity of such protection for women.

The public had not been taught at that time to consider the questions involved in the substitution of women for men in industry, and the Government was not prepared to handle the problems as they arose.

In the last few months, the Government has gradually come to recognize its direct responsibility in this matter. In the re-organization of the Labor Department for war service, and in the appointment of Women's Divisions in other government departments, it has created the instruments for handling this question directly. Until then it had been attempted mainly by the work of voluntary associations, such as the very excellent committee of Women in Industry working under the Council of National Defense.

This is the logical and inevitable development for which suffragists have stood from the beginning. The protection of its women workers is a matter of the first importance to a nation at war, and such protection and standardization can only be accomplished effectively by the Government itself.

Because of these new developments the question of the continued existence of the suffrage committee has come up again. It had not been very active of late, and in these busy times only work that is actually necessary to the community can be carried on.

Our National Board has decided, however, that it can not afford to let this committee pass out of existence. It feels that a body such as the suffrage association, organized along political lines, yet independent of parties, with its power to command publicity, can be of enormous value to the Government itself in many ways; in helping to develop public opinion to understand and stand back of the Government in this pioneer work; in suggesting new avenues of service for women; in insisting upon representation of women in various departments or boards where they are still overlooked, etc.

I am asking you, therefore, either to act yourself, in your State, or to appoint a chairman to act for you either with or without a committee, as you prefer.

I think the main work for the moment is to keep closely in touch with all the organizations in your State, the State Department of Labor, the State and Local Federations of Labor, Trade Assemblies etc., the Women's Trade Union League, the Consumers League, the American Association for Labor Legislation, Child Labor Committees (in the States where those associations exist) and any other workers along these lines; to familiarize yourself as much as possible with the more important and immediate labor problems; and to give these associations help wherever it is possible. Suffragists must stand everywhere solidly for the adequate protection of women and children in industry for equal pay for equal work, and for the right of women to organize.

As the war goes on there will be constantly increasing pressure brought to bear for the repeal of protective legislation for women and children. Here is one field where the cooperation of the National Suffrage Association through the wide influence which it wields, can be enormously valuable.

A knowledge of the labor history of the first year of the war in England is important to us. The reports of the Industrial Commission appointed by Lloyd George show that at the beginning of the war the Trades Union and Labor Associations, in a spirit of patriotism, offered the Government to lay aside many of the regulations protecting labor. The results have been universally bad. The abandonment of standards has made in the long run for decreased output, and the Government has had to build up a new system of industrial protection for its workers.

I am going to begin by giving you a job at the very start, which is to urge you to telegraph in the name of your organization to the President, to the Secretary of Labor, to the National War Labor Board, urging the representation of women on this board.

As you know, this board was organized last spring for the arbitrary settlement of industrial disputes.

The ever increasing share which the women are taking in the industrial field makes it vital that they should be represented in the board. Indeed, it is hard to understand how in these days such a board could have been organized without women at the start. They have lately employed a woman to prepare and work up the women's cases which come before it. This is a recognition of the importance of women's labor, and is in itself an important step, but by no means sufficient to safeguard the rights of the women workers.

There is a wide movement on foot to bring enough public pressure to bear to have women appointed to the board. Your telegram will be one of many sent by various organizations national and otherwise, (such as the Women's Trade Union League, the Y. W. C. A. and the National League for Women's Service and many others.) Will you send a telegram on the 30th of September direct to the White House, another to the Secretary of Labor, Labor Department, Washington, and another to Taft and Walsh, Chairmen of the War Labor Board, Department of Labor?

If possible send me a letter to room 820 Munsey Building, Washington, D. C. so that we can arrange for publicity with the Washington end of it. I hope you will try and get as much publicity in your state as possible by editorials in the newspapers, discussions in women's clubs, resolutions etc. and as many more telegrams as you can arrange.

If you could use it, I should be glad to send you some literature on this subject which should be helpful to you in any publicity campaign you may find it necessary to make.

Sincerely yours,

Amelia Bliss Pinchot