

February 5, 1917.

To Members of the Executive Council:

Our nation may be on the brink of war. To those who live in the interior, war may seem a long way off, but in the East where public buildings, water works, forts, etc. are now under military guard, and where some of the regiments of the National Guard have been called to duty, it comes as a sad realization that our country is facing a far more serious crisis than most of us have ever known. A few days may determine whether our people are to be drawn into war at once, or whether the break can be patched up and the more tragic consequences postponed or even averted.

If the worst comes, very serious problems confront us. Our work would unquestionably come to a temporary standstill. How shall we dispose of our headquarters, our workers, our plans? How shall we hold our organization and resources meanwhile, so that our movement will not lose its prestige and place among the political issues of our country? These are questions we must not leave to answer themselves. If we are not "the hammer our cause will be the anvil".

Women not connected with any particular movement are calling meetings in order to pass pointless resolutions of the promised service of women if required. The big question presents itself, shall suffragists do the "war work" which they will undoubtedly want to do with other groups newly formed, thus running the risk of disintegrating our organizations or shall we use our headquarters and our machinery for really helpful constructive aid to our nation? The answer to these questions must be given now.

Because this unexpected turn of public affairs creates an unprecedented condition, the majority of the National Board avails itself of the provision of the constitution which permits the call of the Executive Council on a two weeks notice. I therefore issue this call to all Elected Officers, all Presidents, all Auxiliaries, all State Members, (all auxiliaries which pay dues on a membership of 1500 or more are entitled to a member in addition to the President), all Chairmen Standing and Special Committees to meet in Washington at the Headquarters, 1626 Rhode Island Avenue, February 23-25 inclusive, as per inclosed program. ✓ In issuing this call

*Each state is urged to send its State Congressional Chairman to this meeting.*

we are not unmindful that the date falls in the midst of several legislative campaigns. Nor are we forgetful of the protest made by Western members that so many Eastern meetings of the Association puts a heavier burden of expense upon them; but the seat of our Government is here. Our offer of help if made at all must be made here. I think you will realize that the meeting would lose much of its effect and usefulness if held elsewhere.

Even though the press should indicate that the present crisis has passed, the meeting must and will be held, as other matters of imperative importance await adjustment. Several States have sought referenda in direct opposition to the rule adopted at Atlantic City. The Executive Council, not the Directors must decide whether the National owes any duty to these States. Certain questions concerning the Federal work in the next Congress should be decided by the Council, not the Board. Of course, the new developments preclude any vote on our amendment this session.

Last September an emergency convention was held and no one who has studied the effect of that meeting has doubted the existence of the emergency nor the wisdom of the call for the unusual date.

An emergency far more critical has now arisen. The future success of our movement depends upon right action being taken now. This can only be done at a full meeting with a representative present from every State. I beg each President to come herself if possible; if not, to send her best helper. If the President or proxy feels that she cannot afford the expense, her organization should pay its cost. To come is her duty. Auxiliaryship in the National Association carries responsibility with it, and this is a time when prompt response to the National call should be considered obligatory.

Anticipating the pleasure of seeing you soon, I am,

Yours cordially,

MRS. CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT.