

CLUBS.

[LOUISA L. RICKETTS.]

The following are the officers of the General Federation of Women's clubs:
President—Mrs. Rebecca D. Lowe
Atlanta, Ga.

Vice President—Mrs. Sarah S. Platt,
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Recording Secretary—Mrs. Emma A.
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Corresponding Secretary—Mrs. George
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Treasurer, Mrs. Phillip N. Moore, St.
Louis, Mo.

Auditor—Mrs. C. P. Barnes, Louis
ville, Ky.

State Chairman—Mrs. Louisa L. Rick-
etts, Lincoln, Nebr.

Officers of the State Federation of
Women's clubs;

President—Mrs. S. C. Langworthy,
Seward.

Vice President—Mrs. Anna L. Apper-
son, Tecumseh.

Recording Secretary—Mrs. F. H. Sack-
ett, Weeping Water.

Corresponding Secretary—Mrs. D. G.
McKillip, Seward.

Treasurer—Mrs. H. F. Doane, Crete,
Librarian—Mrs. G. M. Lambertson,
Lincoln.

Mrs. A. B. Fuller, Auditor, Ashland.

We are pleased to present our readers with the personal opinions of prominent club women of Nebraska upon the question of reorganization which is being so generally discussed by those interested in club work. Both sides of the question are represented in these communications and we shall be glad to give space to further expression on this subject, or any other subject that will promote the club interests of Nebraska:

The discussion relative to the reorganization of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, indicates an increased interest among club women in the usefulness and perpetuity of that organization, and also in the advantages of combination in club work.

As a means of uniting the women of our country in all laudable and noble endeavor, it stands without a parallel.

Its superstructure is based not only upon the membership of thirty State Federations, but also upon more than six hundred independent clubs. It also has a foreign representation in Africa, Australi, South America, England and India, and I very much doubt the wisdom of any attempt to curtail the privileges and benefits which these clubs enjoy. The result would be to lessen the enthusiasm and efficiency of this earnest and intelligent body of women, who by their unity of effort, are leading their aid in favor of all educational, sociological and industrial reforms. Surely the exigencies of the situation do not demand the restriction of membership to state federations. One of the grandest features of the general federation of Women's clubs is "to encourage and promote clubs among women of the business world, on the principle of co operation, self government and self support, and to limit its membership would be to destroy its general usefulness and effective methods of work.

Elizabeth C. Langworthy,
President N. F. W. C.,
Seward, Nebr.

Shall the G. F. W. C. be reorganized so that its representation shall be confined to delegates from the state federations only? I answer yes. First, because order and system are desirable in all things and these would result from a smaller representation. Second, under the present system there is no means of

determining in advance the number of representatives that may attend a biennial meeting, and a difficulty exists in forecasting for their accommodation and entertainment. Third, a parliamentary body is only useful when confined to reasonable limits. When membership in any body becomes too large it becomes unwieldy and unmanageable. It may be said that the efficiency and results accomplished by a parliamentary body, all other things being equal, are in the inverse ratio to the number of its membership. Fourth, the purpose of the G. F. W. C. is doubtless, to bring together the best and brightest women in club work for conference, for interchange of views, and general promotion of the work. Fifth, if representation is confined to the state federations, those organizations will sift from their representation, the strongest and brightest, as delegates to the biennial meetings, the result will be a much higher grade of representation, with correspondingly better work. Sixth the state federation does and will voice the sentiment of the club women of that state, hence the sentiments or wants of the state will be carried to the G. F. W. C. by its delegates, and their work much simplified by a sifting of numbers. In short it seems to be the natural order of things that the state federation should select the delegates. It would be after the precedent established by political organizations, which as they now exist are the residuum of a century's agitation, growth and development. The individual clubs are the units, the state organizations the tens, and the general federations the hundreds. To recapitulate, it would give better system, a definite knowledge of the number of representatives, a good working body and a higher grade of representation. The work for each state could be largely accomplished by the state federation, thus leaving time and leisure for better work at the biennials.

July 27, 1899.

Dear Mrs. Ricketts:

While I do not know that I have any thing new to offer, I do know that my opinion on this subject is strongly upheld by the members of the Fairbury club.

I have been much interested in reading the different views on this question of representation to our national organization and sincerely hope that such a contemplated reorganization of the General Federation will not be made for some time to come, if ever.

Some one has said that the object of the general federation is, primarily, conference and mutual helpfulness, and with this object standing first before us, it certainly can be better and more easily attained by the present method of representation than by state representation only. The general body is now based on broad and democratic principles and is most serviceable to the greatest number, so why change this most successful way for one that would be an experiment?

Individual club representation brings to these general club gatherings the brightest club women from the north, south, east and west of these United States as well as from abroad, and this confederation is especially beneficial to the smaller club, for here it is that it learns of the great and good work that is being accomplished by the larger clubs in cities and can compare its own line of work with the course being pursued by other clubs of its own size and in this way may not only be helpful but is more probably helped in learning of greater possibilities for its own members and so becomes broadened for good. This same club may belong to its state federation but will not derive the same amount of advantage and inspiration from the national order owing to its far away position from that body, provided

the representation is from the state federation only, as if it had individual representation.

I know that our club was benefitted and its ideas broadened by the reports brought back from the Denver meeting last summer by the delegates and visitors who were there, while if our knowledge of what was done and said at that biennial had been derived from reports rendered at or by the State meeting alone we should have received absolutely no good and should have taken no interest whatever in the work of the G. F. W. C. Consequently I am firmly of the opinion that if the representation to the G. F. W. C. be from the state federations only, that the general effect will be detrimental to the interests of club work and the small club that now receives its greatest inspiration from this great body will be the one to suffer most. And when we think of the many small clubs as compared with the few large ones we should certainly give much thought to the question will the reorganization be just to the many.

I wish to thank you for the privilege of expressing my opinion. While I am not a delegate I hope and plan to attend the meeting at York.

Yours sincerely,

Athera H. Letton,
Fairbury, Nebr.

Dear Mrs. Ricketts:—

In response to your request in the Courier of July 1 for the women of Nebraska to express their opinions on the question of reorganizing the G. F. W. C. so that representation in that body shall be from the State Federation only. I wish to say that I thank you for the privilege of voicing the sentiment of the club women of Wood River Valley. I have not heard one word in favor of such action. On the contrary the women of this section of Nebraska feel that it would be a calamity to take such a step as it would greatly lessen the attendance at the biennial and thus lessen the enthusiasm always attendant on large gatherings. A small attendance would naturally result in a lack of interest, with a further result of slow but sure extinction.

I plead with the women of Nebraska to be loyal to the general federation. We do not wish to criticize or impugn the motives of our sister club of Worcester, Massachusetts, but would it not have been in better taste if it had waited for the general federation to discover its own unwieldiness rather than point out to its mater a possible clumsiness?

Kindly sympathy is the moral force more needed today than aught else in the world. If we have it in large measure, heaped up, running over, there will be no room for the untimely criticism that resolves itself into a stumbling block. Cut off all representation except through state federations and you cut off sympathy, interest, support and activity. Remove these from any organization and you remove the life giving principle. Nebraska will certainly go on record as a unit as opposed to this scheme of disintegration. I wish to thank the Courier that the club women of far away Custer county (often called the state of Custer on account of its size) have this privilege of entering a discussion so vital to the interests of club life.

Sincerely yours,
Emma A. Cornish.

The reason assigned for reorganizing the General Federation is, "such an immense size as to make it burdensome, awkward and difficult to conduct business in a proper manner," and the remedy suggested is, to restrict membership to representatives from state federations only. In other words, assuming that in all cases the presidents of State Federations are the representa-

tives of their states, what now is called the "Council" will be the entire General Federation.

Suppose instead of severing the trunk and calling the head and arms the whole body, it were decided to refer all business to the head and arms and make the body as large and strong as possible to give financial support; that no business except the election of general officers and directors, and amendments to the constitution, be brought before the biennial meetings, that instead of depending on a per capita tax for revenue, arrangements similar to those of the National Educational Association be made with railroad companies whereby the General Federation shall receive a certain amount on every ticket sold; that all feasible measures and arrangements be used to encourage as large an attendance of club women as possible; that ideas which may be carried home and utilized, be esteemed paramount to costumes and jewels; that discussions ("two minutes apiece") relating to the problems of citizenship, industrial reform, public schools, social and economic questions, problems which women, mothers and teachers, must solve, be substituted for "stand-up receptions" and "social functions."

An organized force is the greatest power in the world, but let it be organized "to a purpose," and on a scale large enough to include all who crave its benefits, thus reaching the ones in need, without percolating benefits from general federation to state federation, from state federation to federated clubs and from clubs to individuals.

Cut off and retrench in entertainment and display, in red-tape, in useless verbiage, but do not abridge the privileges, curtail the pleasures or lessen the opportunities for diffusing that inspiration, enthusiasm, energy and vigor which comes by contact with gifted persons.

The National Educational Association which has just closed its 38th session, does not complain of a membership of twelve to fifteen thousand as being "burdensome" or "awkward," it does not want for invitations, and it has "a snug little permanent fund."

Instead of adopting a "tabernacles-for-three" plan, let the watchword of the General Federation be "United we stand, divided we fall."

Winona Sawyer.

The greatest wrong in reorganizing the G. F. W. C. as suggested by the Worcester (Mass.) club would be in cutting off the 600 small clubs that now belong to the general federation, from representation in that body.

How much enthusiasm from the Denver biennial could have been disseminated among Nebraska clubs had they been dependant on the reports made at the State convention held four months later? "The greatest good to the greatest number" can never be obtained by narrowing "the greatest number" down until it means the "select few."

Representation from state federations only, would inevitably defeat the democratic principles underlying the woman's club movement. A few would obtain and manage to hold control of the biennials, slowly but surely forming an aristocracy. An aristocracy has never yet been recorded as a broadening uplifting element in society. Personal interest in any work is largely the result of personal contact with those interested in said work, and personal activity. You remove the greatest possible stimulus to the club movement when you say to 200,000 women. "In the future it will not be possible for you to have a voice in the councils of the G. F. W. C. That will all be cared for by a selected few who can very easily manipulate matters to retain control for indefinite periods.

The reason urged viz: "The unwieldy-