May 26, 1947

Dear Lady Reading:

I quite understand your feeling about taking the chairmanship of the International Council of Women. I think you are doing the right thing to stick to the very important job which you are doing within your own country. Your problems seem to me tremendously difficult to face and I think it will require every bit of brains that can be brought to bear on them for solution.

The great trouble about the project which you and I talked about, is the fact that the State Department is not really interested in doing much about women. It is so upset about its own program and contacts with the USSR, I think it can give very little thought to anything else.

If I get an opportunity to talk to anyone again, I shall do so, but my last conversations with the State Department gentlemen were so discouraging that I decided it was best not to try.

I think of you often with great affection and concern, and admiration for the gallantry which you and the British women are showing.

Affectionately,
Belle brought me a lovely box of chocolates from you and I cannot tell you how excited I was to get them. I had finished the very last sweets I had, which had had to be shared with the children, because Easter having come, and the sweet ration having been cut down, obviously the adults couldn't eat any at all, and I am afraid I immediately attacked your box of chocolates and enjoyed them so much, and also felt stimulated and better for them! It is curious if you don't smoke or drink, how much you enjoy eating sweets, and at present drink, sweets and tobacco have all been so fearfully cut that the stimulation from any of them is negligible beyond words!!

I was going to write to you anyhow, and now am doubly glad to be able to do so, because I wanted to tell you that I had been offered international Chairmanship of the Council of Women, which I had very much hoped to be able to accept. The nomination came as a surprise to Great Britain from the Scandinavian countries and the existing Chairman, who is a Belgian, flew over from Belgium to try and
something like a possible way of working.

One of the most pathetic things of the moment is the excitement with which one glimmer of sun is being welcomed. The flooding situation is still so grievous that we are, of course, working all out on it, but it is going to take months and months and months to get anything done. Yesterday, one of my colleagues came into me looking very, very serious. I asked her what was the matter, she said she had just come from viewing 11 square miles under water, and this sort of thing in a country as small as ours, means a very, very great deal as you can imagine, but when you realise that most of the land which has been flooded is our most arable land, you realise our extra pre-occupation with the situation.

We are about to launch a colossal campaign for the saving of fuel and that is going to be a very difficult thing to get across to people who have already saved so much and are very near rock-bottom. Voluntary organisations are co-operating to a tremendous extent on this and on other schemes, and we are hoping that we shall be able to play no less a part in the fight for Peace than we did during the war.

Yours affectionately,

Mrs. F. D. Roosevelt,
Chairman

Chairman

Apartment 15-A, 29 Washington Square West,
New York 11, N.Y.,
U.S.A.
WOMEN'S VOLUNTARY SERVICES

41 TOTHILL STREET
LONDON
ENGLAND

President: H.M. THE QUEEN
Chairman: The Dowager MARCHIONESS OF READING, G.B.E.

29th August, 1947.

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

I am just finishing up my summer holiday, so am taking the opportunity of writing to you to say how much I hope you are well, and hope that you yourself have had some sort of a rest this summer and have benefitted by it. I have been extraordinarily lucky, I have had four weeks, the longest holiday in 9 years, and I have enjoyed it enormously, although I must say, very slothfully. I have slept and slept, to an extent that I never knew anything but a salamander could and I have enjoyed it very much, and hope I have benefitted sufficiently to be of some use in the months ahead.

One of the things that always worries me so much is that there is going to be a tremendous amount of work to be done of every sort and kind in this country, and we know that we are going to need to use our voluntary services just as energetically, just as thoroughly, and just as unselfishly as we did in the war. We are looking into the many angles in which part-time service can relieve full-time workers, and we are hoping to be able to help just as functionally as we did in the war-time but, of course, in people's minds there is a great confusion between war and peace, and emergencies and crises seemed so different when bombs were falling and when nothing but chaos threatened.

I must
I must admit from our point of view, I am very stimulated by the amount of help available. Never have we in WVS had to refuse any single job for want of personnel and I can safely say that that is true today and there is no scheme which we could, or might be asked to undertake, which we have to refuse because we felt we had not got sufficient people to operate it.

What we are looking at from the broad point of view is, that we will undertake those statutory undertakings which are necessary, both on a peace-time and on an emergency basis, for instance, we will do everything in the conservation and preservation line, in the social services from the voluntary side integrating into the statutory obligations, and in the stimulation of more production, whether from the point of view of growing food or from any other point of view at all. We calculate that the care of the old people, the extra care of the children, the lifting of domestic burdens of every sort and kind, is a form of alleviation of burdens for those who are at full-time production and is a very great help to absenteeism.

One of the things that always worries me so much is the confusion there is in the minds of the public, between voluntary absenteeism and necessary absenteeism; with women the necessary absenteeism is so much higher than one could ever legislate for, especially after a long term of strain such as we have had. I often notice that in the list of causes for absenteeism, are all sorts and kinds of people who really are absent without a health certificate because they are not fit to undertake the gruelling work of a particular operation and, therefore, are unable to do it, and also, again and again, a woman is absent because of illness in the home, or some trouble which necessitates the presence of someone at home and, therefore, the
woman has to remain. In all these ways we are hoping
to do a great deal of work, and I shall write to you
a little later, to show you exactly how the programme
is working out.

I had always thought that the balloon would go up
about October or November and so from the 1st May to
the 1st August, I did an intensive tour of Great
Britain, I travelled just under 9,000 and made over
90 speeches, and in consequence, I am glad to say that
our machinery is all set and ready and we can take the
burden that is coming to us.

Last night the full volume of our new austerities
was broken to us, no more basic petrol, which means no more
cars for anything except business and work, necessary
work, only 1/- worth of meat a week, and of that,
2d. worth will be canned or corned beef or something
of the sort, and it looks very much as if we will go
down to 1 pint of milk per week, which when you think
it has to do for cooking and coffee and tea and
everything else, is not very much. I recently had
two people staying with me who had come over from
Holland and they were complaining bitterly about their
milk - they were quite shocked to realise that under
our ration at that day, which was double what it is
going to be, they had exactly twice as much milk a
week as we had, and then one of them added naively,
"and, of course, the Black Market is there so we can
always get as much more as we want, and we do".

So far, thank God, the Black Market has been kept
well strangled in this country, and I hope it always
will be, but people are getting very, very tired of
everlasting restrictions, and I must say my heart quailed
last night when I listened to the things to be done
and thought that my task for the next so many months
is going to be putting those across, and trying to keep
people
people cheerful when they are feeling very, very far from cheery.

We are all looking forward so much to your coming over to the unveiling and I do hope that you are looking forward to the visit.

Ever your affectionately,

Mrs. F. D. Roosevelt,
Apartment 15-A,
29 Washington Square, West,
New York City 11, N.Y.
U.S.A.
Dear Stella:

I have been officially notified that I am a delegate to the next International which meets in Paris in April. I send Arts 13 on this America.

My grandson, Carter Beattie, aged 16, has graduated from military school and wishes to go to college. He feels he wants to go to Paris with Tommy and me.

I am trying to arrange it if I can do so. I need to send him to London for a visit. Will you be there in Sept-Oct? I hope to get to London myself during the season if we are not too busy.

The summer is fine. We have 10 children here. It is like a camp!

Much love,