

composed of the Executive Committee and one delegate from each National Council.

#### ARTICLE VI.

This constitution may be altered or amended by a majority vote of the Council at any quintennial meeting, printed notice thereof having been sent to each member of the Executive Committee at least three months prior to such meeting.

The International Council convened in Washington on the appointed day and continued its sessions through eight days, adjourning April 1st, 1888. Fifty-one national organizations of women and seven different countries were represented in this meeting.

The Council seemed too important to the women participating in its deliberations to permit of its being adjourned and dissolved without taking measures toward a permanent organization of the National and International movements represented in it. Accordingly on the 31st March, 1888, the National Council of Women of the United States and the International Council of Women were both formally organized, under the form of Constitution hereto appended. The International Council of Women was officered as follows:—

*President*, MILLICENT GARRETT FAWCETT, England.

*Vice-President*, CLARA BARTON, United States.

*Corresponding Secretary*, RACHEL FOSTER AVERY, United States.

*Recording Secretary*, KIRSTINE FREDERIKSEN, Denmark.

*Treasurer*, ISABELLE BOGELOT, France.

By the terms of the Constitution, meetings of the International Council were to be held quinquennially, and the first was set for five years from its organization, viz., the spring of 1893. It was informally agreed that the first meeting of the International Council should be convened in London, unless prior to the date fixed for it, circumstances should render it advisable to convene it elsewhere.

In July, 1889, in response to an invitation of the progressive women of France, an International Congress of Women was convened in Paris, under the auspices of the French Government.

The French leaders were generous in repeatedly ascribing the courageous impulse under which they had acted to the Council held in Washington the preceding year. Before its adjournment, that Congress, composed of delegates representing over one hundred societies and twenty-six different nationalities, by a unanimous vote, passed a resolution approving the permanent International Council of Women, the organization of which had been effected in Washington the preceding year, and pledging its members to work for the establishment of National Councils in their respective countries, and for the dissemination of information concerning the International Council and its objects.

So soon as the United States Government had, through Congress, made provision for celebrating the discovery of America by the World's Columbian Exposition, and had fixed the time and place for such Exposition, the American officers of the International Council at once conceived it to be appropriate, inasmuch as the year fixed for its first meeting coincided with the year for the Exposition, that the International Council should be convened in Chicago during the Exposition season of 1893. Through correspondence

concerning this plan, the cordial concurrence of the foreign officers was received. The organisation of the World's Congress Auxiliary, under the authority and with the support of the World's Columbian Exposition and with the recognition and approval of the Government of the United States, afforded to the officers of the International Council of Women an unanticipated ally, in securing a meeting of the character they desired, viz.: a General World's Congress of the representative Women of the World.

It was believed that such a Congress of women would be able to present the history of woman's development and progress, and her present status as an acknowledged factor in the worlds of Art, Science, and Industry, and a potent influence in civil as well as in social and domestic life.

In May, 1891, the National Council of Women of the United States, through its Executive Committee, passed a resolution pledging itself to entertain, during the Congress, all delegates attending it from foreign countries.

This was announced to organisations of women wherever known, and in many countries, notably in England, France, Canada, Scandinavia, and Finland, and more recently in Italy, Switzerland, and Germany, the organised activity of women has been quickened by it.

Home and Foreign Advisory Councils were formed to co-operate by correspondence with the Local Committee of Arrangements, to the end that the Congress might be conducted to the distinguished success which the conditions demanded. All officers of the International Council were made members of the Foreign Advisory Council. All officers of the National Council were made members of the Home Advisory Council.

Women in all parts of the world, interested in any department of intellectual activity, in philanthropy or reform, were solicited to correspond with the Chairman of the Local Committee, or with the Secretary of the International Council of Women, and freely suggest topics for discussion in this Congress, the names of women who should be invited to present papers, or to participate in the discussions, and also the names of women who should be included in either of the two Advisory Councils.

On May the 15th, 1893, there opened at Chicago the Congress of Representative Women. This Congress was convened, not for the purpose of advocating any one cause, promoting any one doctrine, or of advancing any one propaganda, but for the purpose of bringing together the representatives of all worthy organisations of women, whatever their nationality or their specific object.

Every living question pertaining to the education or the employment of women was discussed at the Congress of Representative Women. In its sessions the woman's view upon every issue affecting humanity, upon the Home, the Church, the State, and her own function in these institutions, was represented. What such a Congress may do for the uplifting of humanity, if the women of the world interpret aright, the views set forth of the present condition of the race, of its struggles, its possibilities, its hopes—is incalculable. The aid which such a Congress will give to the solution of the hundreds of problems included in what is concentrated under the phrase, "The woman question" is equally beyond measure.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)