

criticize the lack of orderly administration, the overlapping of duties, and the absence of any Army control. The confusion in the welfare groups was in striking contrast to the organized service given by members of the British Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, the largest of the British auxiliaries, whose services were lent to the AEF when the need for women's skills grew desperate. American Army officers in later years remembered favorably the discipline, efficiency, and *esprit de corps* of the British women's services.¹²

In still further attempts to solve the AEF's labor shortages, the commanding general of the AEF's Services of Supply, Maj. Gen. James G. Harbord, cabled repeatedly to the War Department in August of 1918 for authority to send a representative to the United States to recruit and organize a group of 5,000 women clerical workers to replace enlisted men. The representative was sent, followed by a proposal from the AEF that a women's service corps be organized as a part of the Army Service Corps. After considerable War Department debate as to whether the women should be enlisted, Civil Service, or uniformed contract employees, General Harbord was informed that, because of the change in draft age, 5,000 limited service men would be sent instead of the women. Concerning a women's corps, the War Department stated that it was not yet convinced of "the desirability or feasibility of making this most radical departure in the conduct of our military affairs."¹³

Meanwhile, strong supporting action for the AEF's effort came from posts and camps and from headquarters agencies in the United States. All Army and National Guard cantonments and camps had previously been forbidden to employ civilian women in any capacity except as nurses.¹⁴

In the face of pleas from station commanders, this ruling was soon modified to authorize civilian employment of women "in essential work for which men employees cannot be obtained . . . taking only those of mature age and high moral character."¹⁵

The War Department noted, "With careful supervision, women employees may be permitted in camps without moral injury either to themselves or to the soldiers."¹⁶ Even with this concession, enough employees could not be procured, especially in isolated and uncomfortable stations, to perform all necessary duties. The Washington headquarters offices also found it difficult to obtain and hold an adequate number of female Civil Service employees.¹⁷

Therefore, the conclusion was reached almost simultaneously by several Army agencies, both in Washington and in the field, that a corps of women under military control would be the solution to these problems. As The Quartermaster General pointed out concerning laundresses:

Every effort in the past of this office to provide a hired force of women at camps and cantonments has been unsatisfactory . . .

¹² (1) Memo cited n. 11(2), Table G, Rpts on Welfare Work, AEF; Tables A, B. (2) Senate Com on Mil Affairs, 77th Cong, 2d sess, *Hearings on S 2240*, 6 Feb 42, pp. 10-14.

¹³ (1) Memo cited n. 11(2). Also: (2) Memo, CofS for TAG, Oct 18, sub: Enlmt of Women for Serv in France. WD Rec OCofS, 10730-19, National Archives. (3) Memo, TAG for CofS, 2 May 18, AG 011.2; approved by ACofS, 11 May 18, in Memo for TAG, 11 May 18. WD Rec AGO, WPD 10730-7, National Archives.

¹⁴ Stf Memo, 8 Oct 17, in 1st Ind OQMG, 16 Oct 17. G-1/7000-2.

¹⁵ Ltr, TAG to CGs of all National Guard and National Army Divs, 11 Dec 17. AG 230.2211 (Misc Div). See Memo cited n. 11(2).

¹⁶ Memo, Lt Col Robert I. Rees, GSC, for CofS, 7 Dec 17. Copy in Memo cited n. 11(2).

¹⁷ Memo 62, Col Ira L. Reeves, IGD, for ASW, 24 Aug 18. Copy in Memo cited n. 11(2).