

only women of doubtful character show any inclination to remain as long as the voluntary system of employment is in vogue.¹⁸

The Quartermaster General thereupon recommended that legislation be secured to authorize the enlistment of women, ages 21-45, to be organized as the Women's Auxiliary Quartermaster Corps. Similar requests, giving similar reasons, were also made by the Inspector General's Department, the Chief of Engineers, the Operations Branch of the General Staff, and the Chief of Ordnance. The Chief of Ordnance estimated that the yearly turnover of civilian employees in his branch was approaching 84 percent. Ordnance and other branches went so far as to devise the uniform to be worn by enlisted women. At a meeting with representatives of The Quartermaster General, The Surgeon General, Signal Corps, Military Aeronautics, and the Corps of Engineers, it was decided that the uniform should be of "soft silver brown wool material," with a tan pongee blouse and brown Windsor tie, and that "no furs shall be worn with the uniform."¹⁹

These pleas did not receive favorable consideration by the War Department. Legislation to enlist "effective and able-bodied women" had in fact already been introduced in Congress in December of 1917, but had been returned to the House Military Affairs Committee by the Secretary of War with an expression of his disapproval. The memorandum upon which this opinion was based stated in unmistakable terms:

The enlistment of women in the military forces of the United States has never been seriously contemplated and such enlistment is considered unwise and highly undesirable . . . the action provided for in this bill is not only unwise, but exceedingly ill-advised.

War Plans Division noted in May of 1918:

Industrial conditions in the United States are not yet in such shape that it is necessary to undertake a line of action that would be fraught with so many difficulties.²⁰

The War Department was equally unfavorable to an attempt by The Surgeon General to commission women doctors in the Medical Corps. The Judge Advocate General was unable to discover in the terminology of the National Defense Act any legal barrier to the appointment of women under that act. Nevertheless, the War Department's opinion was upheld on the grounds that only persons "physically, mentally, and morally qualified" could be appointed and that women doctors were obviously not physically qualified.²¹

The dismay of certain Army agencies at the lack of Army authority to enlist women was heightened by the Navy's action in placing the opposite interpretation upon its legislative authority and enlisting all the women it needed without further ceremony. As one Army planner later complained, "By enlisting Yeomen (F) the Navy Department ignored the Civil Service Commission and satisfied its needs regardless of the needs of others. They

¹⁸ Memo, OQMG for TAG, 24 Apr 18, sub: Legislation Authorizing Enlmt of Women. WD Rec, OCofS, War College Div, 10730-7, 400.6 General, National Archives.

¹⁹ (1) Memo cited n. 11(2), Tab F. (2) Series of five studies by Dr. Kristine Mann, Civilian Workers' Br, OCofOrd, 19 Sep to 28 Sep 18. (3) Memo, CofOrd for WPD, 26 Sep 18. WD Rec, OCofS, War College Div 10730-16 and 17, 342/8, National Archives.

²⁰ (1) HR 7112, 6 Dec 17. (2) Memo, Actg Chief, War College Div, for CofS, 22 Dec 17, sub: Bill Introduced in House of Representatives. Rejection was by Ltr, Newton D. Baker, SW, to Chmn, House Com on Mil Affairs, 26 Dec 17. WD Rec, OCofS, War College Div, 10730-1, National Archives. (3) Memo, Dir WPD for CofS, 8 May 18. WD Rec, OCofS, War College Div, 10730-7, AG 011.2, National Archives.

²¹ Operations JAG 1917, I, 126. National Archives.