

its own nature and purpose. To this end, Secretary Baker in 1920 created a new position under the comprehensive title of Director of Women's Relations, United States Army, with an office in G-1 Division of the General Staff. The director was to maintain liaison between the War Department and the women of the country and to secure their co-operation by explaining to them that the Army was "a progressive, socially minded human institution" and that women voters should not "fanatically demand the dissolution of a ruthless military machine."²⁹ There was some consideration as to whether the director should have military status, but the Army decided to await developments.

The first incumbent of the position resigned after one year, for personal reasons and for what her successor believed to be "dissatisfaction with the lack of support given her."³⁰ The next appointee, Miss Anita Phipps, the daughter of an Army family, was also dissatisfied. There ensued a decade-long battle as to whether her position should degenerate into that of a supervisor of the Army's thirty-odd hostesses, or should be expanded into that of planner-in-chief for a women's Army corps, and first director.

Miss Phipps' difficulties, as set forth in periodic lengthy memoranda to the Secretary of War, centered around War Department failure to support her commitments and to give her military status. She thus, in her opinion, lost prestige in the eyes of powerful women's groups. She was embarrassed in the presence of Army and Navy nurses by her "undignified make-shift" of a uniform. Headquarters divisions and offices often failed to consult her when corresponding with women's organizations. General officers, when asked to speak before women's groups, ignored the

careful tip sheets Miss Phipps had prepared for their guidance, and often alienated those whom she had cultivated with care. Her recommendations and staff studies were frequently filed without further action. One of her chiefs in G-1 Division went so far as to state baldly that her position should be abolished, since the male members of the General Staff were competent to plan the future utilization of women by the military service.³¹

In 1929, after almost ten years of work, Miss Phipps had nevertheless secured tentative approval of a plan that would unite the support of the most powerful women's groups behind the Secretary of War by means of a system of civilian aides to the Secretary—one chief aide, one in each corps area, and one in each state. Secretary of War Dwight F. Davis on 25 February 1929 publicly announced this plan to the press after a conference with women members of the League of Women Voters, American War Mothers, Daughters of the American Revolution, National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, and other such groups.

There at once arose a storm of letters from Senators and clergymen and from male civilian aides threatening to resign if women were also made civilian aides. Only fifteen days later a new Secretary of War, James W. Good, was in office and promptly sent telegrams to the women representatives, canceling the meeting of the nominating committee. This action, which in Miss Phipps' opinion greatly alienated the powerful women's groups,

²⁹ Memo, Dir Women's Relations for SW, 8 Jan 27. G-1/9562. Copy, with history of the office attached, in G-1/9835.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Memo, Brig Gen Campbell King, G-1, for CofS, 29 Sep 27, sub: Duty of Dir Women's Relations for U.S. Army. G-1/9835.