

of Staff, G-1, General Hildring, for the fact that in the following hectic weeks they actually did complete full plans, workable if not perfect. General Hildring repeatedly stepped down from his echelon to give planners more of his personal time and advice than the small WAAC organization could have expected from its current importance to the war effort.³²

The Services of Supply immediately delegated WAAC planning to the various SOS divisions, in much the same way that this once had been divided among War Department staff sections. For example, the SOS's Training Division received authority to establish policies for the training of all WAAC officers, auxiliaries, and units. In actual practice, the general nature of the subsequent WAAC plans was worked out in joint conferences, put in writing by the preplanners, and approved by various SOS Divisions.³³ It was not made clear what procedure would be followed if disagreements occurred.

The British Parallel

Mrs. Hobby's first step was to pause and assess the experience of the British and Canadian women's services, already well established.³⁴ During the first days of March she visited Canada, accompanied by Colonel Tasker and the commandant-elect, and was afforded the opportunity to talk to leaders of the Canadian WAC and of the Women's Division, Royal Canadian Air Force, as well as to British women officers then visiting Canada. She also later dispatched Major Macy to England to collect references and histories.

The visit did much to restore Mrs. Hobby's morale, which had been depressed by the opinion of many of her friends among older U.S. Army officers

that a women's corps could not succeed. Every Canadian staff officer and post commander to whom she talked told her that he had experienced initial doubts but was now enthusiastic about employment of women in his command. British officers likewise reported the success of their women's services in spite of extensive early hardships.³⁵

The histories of the several British and Canadian women's services presented patterns so nearly identical as to suggest a certain amount of inevitability, with the British, of course, one or two wars ahead. Before and during World War I, the British had set up a few tentative women's corps, on a civilian auxiliary basis. Manpower problems had proved so great, and the women such efficient workers, that by 1918 such groups were to be found in every branch of service. The only handicap had been the very considerable public gossip concerning the alleged immorality of women in France, which hampered recruiting and alarmed parents, although a Royal Commission of Enquiry reported after investigation that the charges were "mischievous and false."

Nevertheless, when the British women's services were revived in World War II, they repeated the whole unhappy pattern

³² (1) Interv cited n. 29, and from study of whole series of documents and orders cited. (2) Min, Gen Council, 4 May 42.

³³ 1st Ind, Dir Tng SOS to WAAC Preplanners, 25 Apr 42, to Memo, Preplanners for Dir Tng SOS, 15 Apr 42, sub: Preliminary OCS. SPTRS 353 WAAC (4-15-42).

³⁴ Unless otherwise indicated this section is based upon, and quotations are from: (1) *Report of the Committee on Amenities and Welfare Conditions in the Three Women's Services, Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, August, 1942*, (London: HM Stationery Office, 1942). Hereafter cited as *Conditions in the Three Women's Services*. Copy in 1942 WAAC files. (2) Wadge, *Women in Uniform*.

³⁵ Interv cited n. 29.