

limiting the armed forces to such manpower supply as could be obtained through authorized draft quotas. It was the Army's opinion that the Commission did not possess powers so to limit female recruiting, since in this case the armed forces' needs were not supplied by a draft. Nevertheless, in preliminary negotiations with the Commission over the extent of its influence, the suggestion was made that the WAAC restrict its recruiting to Group IV areas—the most limited and unpromising part of the nation's manpower area. It was also hinted that the WAAC should not recruit in occupational fields in short supply in industry—namely, the clerical, stenographic, and other fields most needed by the Army. This action followed the standard world-wide pattern: in almost every nation in which womanpower had become important, there had existed a stage in which military needs were considered secondary to those of industry. In at least one country the pressure of industry upon the national control group had been such that an army had been ordered to release to factories the women it had already recruited and trained.¹¹

For its first months the WAAC had had no restrictions upon the sources from which it might accept recruits, although almost every civilian concern expressed the opinion that its womanpower needs were more important than those of the Army. A typical protest was one forwarded to a United States senator by a state manufacturers association, which said:

A great deal of training is needed to produce a cotton mill operator. . . . Don't you think these women are more needed in the cotton mills than in the WAACs? Can you advise us of any steps this mill can take to prevent these girls from leaving their positions to join the WAAC?¹²

Early objections also came from government agencies, such as the General Accounting Office and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which asked that the WAAC refuse to accept their female employees.

At this time Director Hobby still clung to what she felt to be the "only tenable position":

So long as enrollment in this Corps is voluntary, and [women] citizens of this country are free to choose whether or not they shall make a war effort and if so in what manner, the Corps cannot refuse to enroll those who desire to join its ranks if they are otherwise eligible.¹³

On 6 February 1943, when the General Staff conference met to decide the WAAC's future recruiting quotas, the imminence of the Army's defeat in this encounter was perhaps not fully realized. However, within three months tremendous pressure from government and industry was to compel the armed forces to agree to sweeping limitations on women's enlistment: no women federal employees to be accepted without a release from their agencies; no women from "war industries" to be accepted without a written release from their employers or a statement of compelling reasons; no agricultural workers to be accepted at all.¹⁴

The Director informed the General Staff that recruiting prospects, excellent in 1942, had by this date deteriorated badly. For its first six months the Army had en-

¹¹ New Zealand. Memos, Alice R. Randolph (Civilian Consultant) to Dir WAAC, 1 Jan 43, and 4 Jan 43. WAAC Planning files.

¹² Ltr, 5 Jan 43, and atchd corresp. SPWA 201.6.

¹³ Ltr, Atty Gen to SW, 15 Sep 42, and atchd replies. WA 044.2 FBI. Also Ltr, GAO to 1st Lt Henry Lee Munson, 5 Oct 42. SPWA 324.72 (1943).

¹⁴ Ltr, TAG to all SvCs, 26 Feb 43. AG 341 WAAC (2-25-43) PR-I-A, in SPAP 341 WAAC (2-26-43).