

to stay by emotional appeals or any other means.

The WAC bill itself, as it neared passage, offered women the mixed blessing of Army status, but few other inducements. Little was left of the simple version proposed by the War Department, which would have placed few limitations on the Secretary of War's power to decide administrative matters. The Congressional situation had continued unfavorable all spring. In April the War Department became so alarmed at the rejection of the Navy bill to send Waves to foreign countries that it withdrew the WAC bill entirely and submitted it again in May.⁷

Even so, a number of amendments had to be accepted: the Corps was to last only for the duration plus six months; it was limited to women aged 20-50 years; its commanding officer could never be promoted above the rank of colonel and its other officers above the rank of lieutenant colonel; its officers could never command any men unless specifically ordered to do so by Army superiors; physicians and nurses could not be accepted because of the Medical Department's insistence on autonomy.⁸ Many even more hampering amendments had been narrowly averted—the Senate's proviso that the Corps expire on 1 January 1945, and the House's attempts to limit the Corps to 150,000, to set the top age at 45, to forbid WAC officers to be assigned to Army jobs, and to deny all dependency benefits to women—but all these were eventually eliminated in conference. Director Hobby stated that she was willing to accept any amendments if only the bill might pass.⁹

Just as they had been a year previously, the efforts of the Army's highest authorities were required to secure Congressional approval. General Marshall urged pas-

sage of the bill in a letter to Chairman Andrew J. May of the House Military Affairs Committee, and also intervened to secure the new age limit of 20-50, which would admit more recruits than the previous 21-45 limit. General Somervell was also summoned to testify when the Military Affairs Committee seemed about to disapprove the bill because of the erroneous idea that Wacs would be used to displace Civil Service workers in Washington. This had actually been done on a large scale by the WAVES without Congressional disfavor, but never by the Army. "They've got the Waacs and the Waves confused," noted the Office of the Secretary of War.¹⁰

The First Wac

The bill to establish a Women's Army Corps in the Army of the United States was passed by the Senate on 28 June and

⁷ Min, Gen Council, 28 Apr 43.

⁸ Whether to commission women doctors in the WAC or in the Medical Department was for a time a controversial problem. The WAAC had consented to commission women doctors recommended by The Surgeon General, and did commission several—the only exception to its rule that all WAAC officers must attend OCS. (WD Cir 23, Sec II, 18 Jan 43.) The Secretary of War had personally directed Director Hobby to include a clause in the WAC bill permitting commissioning of women doctors in the WAC. (WAAC Daily Journal, Vol. I, Feb 43.) However, Congress refused this and passed a separate law permitting direct commissions in the Medical Corps.

⁹ (1) HR Rpt 595, 78th Cong, 1st sess, 24 Jun 43, sub: Establishing a WAC for Serv in Army of U.S., Conf Rpt to accompany S 495. SPWA 314.7 (1-7-43)(1) sec 1. (2) Speech, Min, Tng Gen Comdts Conf, Washington, 31 Mar 43, SPWA 334.8 (3-20-43).

¹⁰ (1) Ltr, CofS to Hon A. J. May, 1 Mar 43. CofS 291.9. (2) Memo, Dir WAAC for Leg&LnDiv, WDSS, 24 Apr 43. CofS 291.9; also in SPWA 341 (4-7-43). with note re Gen Marshall's desire for this plan. (3) Quotation from M/R, Tp Conv, Mr. Mitchell and Dir Hobby, 11 Jun 43. SPWA 314.7 (1-7-43)(1) sec 1. See also pp. 557-59, below.