

Staff to his needs, he went so far as to bypass the Bureau of Public Relations to give alarming statistics, based on the new Nurse Corps ceiling, to a well-known columnist. Great national concern resulted. Near the beginning of the new year, a proposal to draft nurses went from the Secretary of War to the President, and from him to Congress. Meanwhile, to fill the immediate gap, plans were made for the Red Cross to recruit 5,000 more nurses' aides. And even earlier, on 15 November, The Surgeon General's Office discussed plans to reverse the decision on WAC recruiting and to request some 8,000 more Wacs.³⁴

Exact plans for these 8,000 WAC recruits developed slowly during the last six weeks of 1944. At first The Surgeon General, Maj. Gen. Norman T. Kirk, after receiving the pledge of higher authorities to do everything possible "to strengthen Kirk's hand,"³⁵ asked for 8,500 enlisted medical and surgical technicians, either men or women. It was stated that each could fill a nurse vacancy by assuming enough routine nursing duties to permit one nurse to handle the professional duties of two. For each of these men or women, The Surgeon General asked a rating of T/4, or sergeant, as befitted the skills involved. After discussion, both The Surgeon General and the Army Service Forces recommended that all of the technicians be Wacs, since the limited service men available for retraining seemed chiefly interested in getting out of the Army, and it was felt that women would have more enthusiasm for caring for the wounded in the long hospitalization and rehabilitation period ahead. Again the Medical Department asked for women in the upper AGCT and educational brackets.³⁶

The Service Forces immediately authorized their hospitals to carry one WAC

medical technician overstrength for each unfilled vacancy for a nurse. No announcement was made to the field as to how these extra technicians would be obtained, or whether they would get the T/4 rating previously recommended by The Surgeon General.³⁷

Over this point, the General Staff disputed during the last days of 1944. Directives to curtail all WAC recruiting went to the field on 20 December, and an immediate decision was necessary if they were to be recalled. Resumption of the Female Medical Technicians Campaign would have been simple, but Director Hobby was not willing to sponsor a drive to induce highly qualified women to enlist unless some better assurance could be made that recruiting promises would be fulfilled. She sent The Surgeon General a list of questions concerning the means of providing the guaranteed job and grade, and in reply was assured only that the hospital training would be very valuable and would give the women an excellent chance, after the war, of being hired by the Veterans' Administration.³⁸

The temper of the moment was one that made refusal to recruit for the purpose unthinkable. Director Hobby's telephone

³⁴ (1) ANC Hist, pp. 526 ff. Also Memo, SW for President of U.S., 30 Dec 44, Mr. Goldthwaite H. Dorr's file, Office of Records and Co-ordination, Office of SW. (2) Memo, Col Whitehurst, SGO, for Maj Gen George F. Lull, Deputy SG, 15 Nov 44. SGO Hist Div 220.1 WAC.

³⁵ Pencil note on Memo, SG for G-1 through MPD ASF, 23 Nov 44. SPMCM, in SPAP 220.3 WAC (7-28-43).

³⁶ (1) Memo Routing Slip, Exec SGO for Dir WAC, 22 Nov 44. WDWAC 341. (2) Memo cited n. 35.

³⁷ Ltr, Dir Pers ASF to SG and all SvCs, 9 Dec 44. SP GAS 320.2 Med (12-9-44)-285, SGO Hist Div 220.1 WAC.

³⁸ (1) Ltr, TAG to all SvCs, 20 Dec 44. SPXPR-I WAC (12-20-44), in SPAP 341 WAC, sec II. (2) Memo Routing Slip cited n. 36(1).