

the only women's service maintaining such an institution.

As the only alternative, a confidential letter was sent to all commands stating that, while courts would adjudge sentences as usual, the reviewing authority would direct discharge instead of confinement for Wacs who could not be transferred to Alderson and who did not appear to be useful members of the Corps. Under this policy, the Corps operated for the duration. Although confidential, this policy came gradually to be known and occasioned some unfavorable comment from men who felt that "nothing could be done to Wacs who break rules." Such an impression was entirely erroneous, as all penalties remained identical with the sole exception of confinement over thirty days for offenses that did not violate civilian law. Director Hobby felt that the discrimination was in fact in the other direction—that male offenders had an opportunity for rehabilitation and return to service where they could earn an eventual honorable discharge. A paragraph was inserted in the directive admonishing reviewing authorities against the natural tendency to give a woman, in lieu of confinement, a more severe type of discharge than the case merited.⁴⁵

All women's services in the United States adopted an identical policy in this respect. The officially approved explanation stated:

The laws creating the Women's Services set up voluntary organizations. . . . Women volunteering for these services are not subject to the draft law. It is presumed that if volunteers are no longer in a position to fill a military mission, they should be returned to civilian life. It is not believed that there was any intent to place them in confinement for such offenses as would not be punishable by civil law.⁴⁶

It was also felt that there was little economic value to the armed forces in attempting to rehabilitate women offenders, since a man who spent most of his time in the guardhouse might eventually make a good combat soldier, but a female habitual offender would seldom settle down to be a good clerk.

Maternity Care

Another of Director Hobby's first projects after her arrival in G-1 Division was a hitherto unsuccessful plan to provide some form of maternity and postnatal care for Wacs discharged from the service for pregnancy. Soldiers' wives were entitled to maternity care in Army hospitals,⁴⁷ but a Wac was not eligible to receive it on the basis of her own service, since upon discharge she was not a soldier but a veteran. As for the chances of care in veterans' hospitals, the Veterans' Administration from the beginning had refused to provide care for women discharged for pregnancy, maintaining that it might legally provide only for "defect, disease, or disability cases," and that pregnancy was not a disability but a normal condition.⁴⁸

The War Department's reluctance to take any action apparently stemmed from the fear that attention to the problem might lead the public to exaggerate the numbers involved, which actually continued to be less than comparable civilian rates. However, the infrequency of occurrence did not, in the Director's opinion,

⁴⁵ AG Ltr, 29 May 44. AG 250.04 OB-S-M.

⁴⁶ Memo, Exec WAC for Col Hobby, 25 Apr 45. WDWAC 250.3.

⁴⁷ WD Cir 305, 5 Oct 45, sec VII, replacing earlier Cir.

⁴⁸ Memo, G-1 for Exec WAC, 27 Apr 44, sub: Maternity Care for Mil Pers (describes conf with VA representatives, 25 Apr 44). WDWAC 702.