

to be discharged on length of service should not be affected by the numbers discharged because they were veterans' wives or for any other reason. Even before Colonel Hobby left, G-1 Division's Statistical Branch had objected to this system, saying:

In order that the relative importance and prestige of the WAC be maintained throughout the entire demobilization period, it seems necessary that the present WAC percentage of the total Army strength be maintained. . . . Although the WAC is under moral obligation to release women who have performed long and arduous service, yet . . . it seems necessary to sacrifice a few for the good of the many.¹⁵

Attrition losses were by this time considerable. First, several thousand veterans' wives had been discharged. Next, the Army let men and women over 38 years old leave if they wished, and some 7,000 more women were made eligible for discharge. No sooner were these gone than the outcry of nonveteran husbands forced the release of all married women. Their discharge was authorized regardless of length of service, at the same time that men with three or more children became eligible for discharge regardless of length of service. The WAC took this step reluctantly, and only at the insistence of G-1 Division, and after the Nurse Corps, WAVES, SPARS, and Marines had already taken it, since this made 13,000 more women eligible. In order to maintain Corps strength after recruiting had ceased, these women had been substituted on the monthly demobilization quota for those who would ordinarily have been made eligible by a lowering of point scores comparable to that of the men's scores.¹⁶

Even more significant for the future was the refusal of the General Staff to approve

public announcement of the final demobilization date of the WAC, still tentatively set as June 1946. At the same time, the Navy Department was also considering holding the WAVES beyond the originally scheduled June date, over the protest of the WAVES leaders.¹⁷ This delay, in all the armed forces, was generally related to the discovery that the need for the skills common among female personnel had been underestimated, to an extent that raised doubts as to whether enlisted women could be allowed to leave at the same rate as enlisted men. Overseas theaters in particular had resolutely refused to face the fact that the WAC could never be entirely demobilized, as required by law, until male replacements were accepted for discharged Wacs. In justification for its action in retaining discharge-eligibles, the European theater pointed out that, when it had returned a few women for discharge, these had not been separated as men were, but had been pulled out by Army Service Forces' separation centers to process men for discharge, on the grounds of "military necessity."¹⁸

The Army Service Forces informed the War Department that, in order to main-

¹⁵ Memo, Maj A. J. Bonis, G-1 Stat Br, for Dir WAC, 28 Apr 45. WDWAC 370.01.

¹⁶ (1) Memo, Maj Bonis for Dir WAC, 5 Sep 45. WDWAC 370.01. (2) Memo, Dep Dir WAC for Col Boyce, 14 Nov 45. WDWAC 319.1. (3) Memo, Exec WAC for Col Boyce, 27 Nov 45. WDWAC 220.8. (4) Memo, Maj Bonis for Col Boyce, 10 Sep 45, atchd to Memo, G-1 for MPD ASF, 6 Sep 45. WDWAC 354.1.

¹⁷ Memo, Dep Dir WAC for Dir WAC, 23 Jan 46, sub: Rpt of Mtg of Dirs of Women's Servs, 22 Jan 46. WDWAC 337.

¹⁸ (1) Memo, "KKJ," WAC Exec, for Dir WAC, 13 May 45, sub: Rpt for Week 7-13 May 45. WDWAC 319.1. (2) Ltr, WAC Stf Dir ETO for Dir WAC, 6 Aug 45, and Reply, 13 Aug 45. WDWAC 320.2. (3) 1945 Budget Hearing material. Hobby files. See also Chs. XX and XXI, above.