

greater instead of less difference was desirable:

In the event of another emergency, more consideration should be given to the problems of the women in the Army—their protection from ruthless male officers in their environment, their personal needs. . . . Such steps would greatly improve their . . . mental health.³⁴

It was evident, however, that less, instead of more, attention to these matters would be likely in future emergencies, particularly under selective service for women. It was also noted that peacetime policies were set increasingly in the direction of elimination of wartime safeguards, although every such loss meant some change in the traditional social, cultural, and moral standards of women in national life.³⁵ With the peacetime abolition of most specialist groups in The Surgeon General's Office and elsewhere, it appeared doubtful whether the well-being of women in the Army could be given care equal to that normally given men.

The commission's report therefore concluded:

The whole subject of the use of women for war must be studied against the background of the American philosophy. The proper utilization of women in the Armed Services and elsewhere for war purposes can undoubtedly aid military efficiency and the national effort. This factor of increased efficiency must be weighed against a break with the philosophy of the past and the possible dangers of too great a growth of militarism. Many of the steps proposed to this committee—among them, the compulsory utilization of women—undoubtedly would increase military efficiency, but at the same time all of them collectively and some of them individually would greatly increase military influence in the United States and, over a period of time, might tend to set the national thinking in a military mold. . . .

The utilization of women for war, if improperly developed, has certain dangerous implications to our way of life. This subject deserves the most careful and cautious study.

The Final View

In retrospect, many of the difficulties that had appeared incomprehensible to the WAC's leaders and its members were at last explained by the realization that the Women's Army Corps had passed through the natural evolution of any new cultural phenomenon: the mistakes and experiments, the blind opposition of opponents of change, the enthusiasm of a pioneering minority, the slander by the less venturesome majority, the gradual adjustments, the eventual success partially nullified by the exhaustion and departure of leaders and the bewilderment of followers—all might equally well have applied to the history of the flying machine, the forty-niners, or the American Revolution. The chairman of the WAC's National Civilian Advisory Committee, Mrs. Oswald Lord, wrote later:

These women were pioneers. Many of us wondered if the American sense of adventure and steadfastness had died with their grandmothers. . . . I know now that the American woman of today can "take it" as her grandmother did. With her sense of humor unimpaired, she has pioneered in a new field and has done her job well.³⁶

All agreed on one thing. The Women's Army Corps, Army of the United States, World War II, had been a new thing un-

³⁴ Menninger, *Psychiatry in a Troubled World*, p. 120.

³⁵ M/R, 17 Apr 46, sub: Presentation of Army Post-war Policy for Female Pers at Joint Army-Navy Pers Bd, 17 Apr 46; sent by G-1 to Col Boyce. WDWAC 326.

³⁶ Article in *New York Times* by Mary P. Lord, September 2, 1945.