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# The Separate Spheres of the State: Mobilization Rhetoric and Public Policy Objectives During World War II

KATE CANNON

ON AUGUST 6, 1942, the Office of War Information [OWI] released a “summary of women’s attitudes toward domestic and foreign issues in the first eight months of the war.” OWI’s Bureau of Intelligence believed that the government needed to examine thinking among the female population of the United States. “Women,” they wrote, consistently exhibited, “patterns of opinion which differ from the male half of the population.”<sup>1</sup>

The bureau characterized women’s viewpoints on the basis of eight nationwide polls concluding that women were more “apprehensive” about the war, more “pessimistic” about the war lasting for a long time, more receptive toward ideas regarding “peace” and “appeasement,” and less “bloodthirsty” than men. The report identified women’s values as more “idealistic than men in describing reasons why this country is fighting,” but also discovered a “strong anti-Russian bias” with “suspicion of Russia’s intentions to pay for lend lease.”<sup>2</sup> The final summary of the report on women states:

Most of their [women’s] especially characteristic attitudes seemed to grow out of a lack of interest and information on topics related to the present world situation, but their greater desire for security must also be considered as a factor. They might be considered a potentially dangerous nucleus of isolationist, appeasement or anti-Russian sentiment—but it is probably because of their greater apprehensiveness and timidity, and their failure to see broad integrated aspects of the world situation that this picture develops. Their attitudes do not seem to reflect lack of patriotic fervor, however, and they apparently constitute a reservoir of recruits waiting for effective mobilization to fight on the home front.<sup>3</sup>

Certainly this survey reveals as much, if not more about the surveyors' attitudes towards women as it does about women's attitudes towards American involvement in World War II. The report confirms strongly held traditional beliefs about women and illustrates how the surveyors pre-conceived notions influenced their interpretation of data regarding relatively small differences in opinion between women and men.<sup>4</sup>

This essay examines the gendered nature of public policy and mobilization rhetoric during World War II. Federal agencies which influenced and initiated social policy included the Children's Bureau, the Women's Bureau, and advocacy organizations which were affiliated with them. I also examine federal agencies created specifically to meet war-time needs, including the Office of War Information and the Women's Advisory Committee of the War Manpower Commission.<sup>5</sup> The OWI, the War Manpower Commission and other federal agencies worked in cooperation with private organizations to mobilize Americans for war. Significantly, rhetoric and policy directed toward the American homefront made distinctions between women and men. The differentiation between the sexes supported the unconscious and conscious belief in sex differences and the institutionalized sex bias in policy-making. This analysis of federal public policy objectives focuses on the apparent contradiction in mobilization policies for women defense workers which undermined both conventional constructions of gender and traditional arguments for women's rights.<sup>6</sup>

When the Office of War Information initiated their propaganda drive to mobilize citizens for World War II they did so with a belief in gender differences and within the public policy framework of gendered institutions. The "female dominion" of women's reform efforts began in the late nineteenth-century and culminated during the Progressive Era with the establishment of separate governmental agencies dealing specifically with issues affecting women and children.<sup>7</sup> In effect, the federal government generated American domestic policy through "separate spheres" of political power within the state itself.

Through the lobbying efforts of Florence Kelley and Lillian Wald from Chicago's Hull House, the Children's Bureau was established under the newly created Department of Commerce and Labor in 1912. President William Taft signed the Children's Bureau Bill at the end of his administration and appointed Julia Lathrop as director of the Bureau.<sup>8</sup> The bureau focused on child welfare policy, but also established "the primacy of women in its area of public policy."<sup>9</sup> In 1920, President Woodrow Wilson appointed Mary Anderson to the directorship of the newly formed Women's Bureau. The Women's Bureau, also within the Department of Labor, was given the federal mandate, "to formulate standards and policies which shall promote the welfare of wage-earning women,

improve their working conditions, increase their efficiency, and advance their opportunities for profitable employment."<sup>10</sup> The Women's Bureau became the most influential federal agency advocating policies for female wage-earners.

These federal agencies also embraced non-governmental voluntary organizations. The reform network of women's advocacy included the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee, the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, the Women's Trade Union League, and the League of Women Voters. Most of these agencies and organizations consolidated power during President Franklin Roosevelt's administration because of Eleanor Roosevelt's alliance with women reformers who endorsed New Deal legislation, and with further appointments of female reformers to head federal agencies.<sup>11</sup> Frances Perkins, a Progressive reformer and women's rights advocate, became the first woman cabinet officer when FDR appointed her as Secretary of Labor.<sup>12</sup> Molly Dewson, also a veteran of Progressive reform, became Director of the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee during Roosevelt's first term. Like many New Deal supporters, Dewson's career could be followed in "a direct line from Progressive reform to the New Deal."<sup>13</sup>

Feminist social reformers believed in government action and turned to the state for social policy solutions to the urgent problems of working women. Through organizational power and government appointments, these middle and upper-class professionals initiated and dominated federal public policy regarding women. During the war, social feminists focused the debate for women's rights on the issue of women's paid labor. While exploiting the defense emergency, the separate spheres of female advocacy within the government used mobilization rhetoric for their own propaganda purposes of expanding women's role and empowering female wage-earners.

Furthermore, female leadership in federal policy-making viewed World War II as an opportunity to educate Americans about women wage-earners. They had long been aligned with a strategy of protectionism for female workers and opposed the Equal Rights Amendment.<sup>14</sup> As social feminists, they stood for protective legislation, even while supporting "equal pay for equal work" during World War II.<sup>15</sup> With the stepped-up demand for production during the war and the shortage of male workers, many of these leaders advocated a complete reorganization of American industry and community standards which would favor women workers. Their convictions were grounded in their belief in gender differences, asserting that women workers were mothers and family members first and foremost.

In contrast, a contingent of New Dealers staffed the newly established OWI. They viewed the war as an opportunity to broaden the American perspective

toward world events and away from traditional ideology. From the OWI's inception in 1942, propagandists proclaimed a larger meaning for the war by articulating an idealistic vision for a better post-war world. Liberals especially looked at war propaganda as an opportunity to mobilize people not only for war, but for post-war prosperity based on New Deal reforms, and global peace through the ideals of the Four Freedoms.<sup>16</sup> These forces within the OWI saw women as special targets for propaganda because they believed women, despite their traditional outlook, were more malleable than men. The OWI often portrayed women as individuals who needed to expand their narrowly-focused world view and become equal to mobilized men. The mobilization of women required them to become "masculinized" to a more sophisticated political perspective.

On the other hand, most mobilization rhetoric actually rewrote women's work history, ignoring the steady increase since the turn of the century of wage-earning women and characterizing women war workers as a temporary labor pool. Women war workers were perceived by propagandists as middle-class white women entering the workforce briefly for patriotic reasons. In fact, the majority of female war workers were working prior to the war effort. Many developed new job skills and subsequently earned higher pay because of expanded employment opportunities during the war-time labor shortage. Most women war workers hoped to keep their jobs after the war.<sup>17</sup> However, recruitment campaigns often characterized women workers as an emergency workforce and frequently reflected "long standing myths" about female workers.<sup>18</sup>

Most importantly, the various agencies responsible for recruiting war workers never coordinated their policy objectives regarding women. Male-headed agencies knew little about the long history of female wage-earners and remained inconsistent and self-serving toward the concerns of female leadership during the recruitment campaigns. The OWI's mobilization rhetoric of sexual equality was directed toward "traditional" women whom they had targeted as a threat to the war campaign, while male-headed war manpower agencies exploited the rhetoric of sexual equality to recruit female defense workers. Ultimately, the rhetorical discourse of sexual equality had the unanticipated effect of disrupting the argument for sexual difference, a concept which was the cultural and institutional basis of female worker's rights. The tension between the arguments for sexual equality and sexual difference appeared to contradict one another and ultimately would collide in the post-war period.

### **1. Before Pearl Harbor**

What the Office of War Information failed to record in its 1942 survey was that female leadership had in fact become energized during the New Deal and that



women's organizations had grown in strength and political clout. The declining momentum of women's welfare and social policy advocacy in the late 1920's received a much needed boost from New Deal legislation.<sup>19</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt served as the White House liaison to many federal agencies and advocacy groups which addressed the issues of women and children.<sup>20</sup> Her interest and support provided these groups with unprecedented access to political power. Like so many other middle and upper-class women reformers, Roosevelt was born into a world which endorsed Victorian morality and came of age during the Progressive Era. When her husband became president during the depression, Eleanor Roosevelt sought to "extend the New Deal to American women."<sup>21</sup> ER and the vast network of female social reformers cultivated during the New Deal made preparations for their next call to duty when the United States inched closer to war in 1941.

The Children's Bureau was the first to respond to concerns for children and their mothers when American involvement in the war appeared imminent. On July 31, 1941, the Children's Bureau sponsored a "Conference on Day Care of Children of Working Mothers with Special Reference to Defense Areas." The two day conference held in Washington D.C. under the auspices of the Department of Labor adopted recommendations which were sent to State departments of health, labor, and welfare and to other State and local agencies especially concerned with the problem of providing necessary resources for safeguarding children affected by the emergency.<sup>22</sup>

The Children's Bureau and its director, Katherine Lenroot, tried to coordinate federal agencies and organized a Joint Planning Board to set day care standards and provide services for working mothers who were needed in the defense emergency. The Women's Bureau was also deeply concerned with the recruitment of young mothers into the defense industry and Lenroot addressed this fact in her opening statement at the conference. Drawing the two bureaus together, Lenroot also drew together what was considered the inevitable connection between "the employment of women" and the "welfare of children."

Mary Anderson, head of the Women's Bureau, responded to this concern by preparing a memorandum on "Trends in Women's Employment." She noted that the greatest percentage of increase in female employment from 1930 to 1940 was in women from the ages of 25 to 44 years old, precisely the age, "when family responsibilities are normally the greatest." Anderson noted the effects of the economic depression on female employment and stated that in "recent years much has been done and said to prevent married women from working."<sup>23</sup>

Historically, the Women's Bureau had advocated a policy which equally balanced child welfare with the rights of working mothers. In regard to women's

rights, the Women's Bureau adhered to a resolution adopted at the "Eighth International Conference of American States," held in Lima, Peru, in December of 1938.<sup>44</sup> The conference sub-committee on women and labor standards passed "The Lima Declaration of Women's Rights." This resolution declared that "women workers have suffered from special forms of exploitation and discrimination in the past;" therefore, it was in the "best interests of society" to recognize "full political and civil rights and full opportunity" for women. The Lima Declaration demanded "equality with men... full protection in and opportunities for work... [and] the most ample protection as mothers." The Women's Bureau advocated policies that provided full equality for women which would not be at the expense of maternal well-being.

At the 1941 Conference on Day Care, Anderson appeared cautious about the rise in married women's employment since the defense emergency. She cited women's obligation to meet "the needs of the family" along with the trend among employers to prefer married women to single women for the dubious reason "that when the emergency is over these married women can be discharged much more easily."<sup>45</sup> The Women's Bureau did not endorse the employment of women with young children; however, they also fervently opposed the arbitrary dismissal of married women, as was often the case during the Great Depression.

Anderson requested an investigation into the impact that large numbers of working mothers would have on communities with defense plants. In the absence of a coherently developed plan for working mothers, Anderson did not believe it advantageous for "any community to have the employers set up nursery centers within the factory."<sup>46</sup> Anderson was concerned about the dislocation of women workers into defense areas and resisted the employment of married women with young children until all other manpower sources had been exhausted, what she called the "saturation point."

Anderson's trepidation about the mass recruitment of women workers could have been perceived as antithetical to her position as an advocate for female wage-earners, especially in light of the comments by Colonel Frank McSherry, head of the Defense Training Branch under the Office of Production Management [OPM]. McSherry cited the shortage of male workers for defense work and optimistically argued that women workers could enter these industries, "without creating welfare problems, without creating shortage of school facilities for children, without creating a shortage of public utilities, and without creating other civic problems of similar character."<sup>47</sup>

McSherry illustrated his favorable view of women workers with effusive compliments stating that, "when it comes to what jobs women can fill there is no limit," and that in many manufacturing positions "women [were] doing the job

better than men," later adding that the OPM would be opening "training programs for women." McSherry admitted that as the demand for women workers increased so too would the Children's Bureau's "problems of taking care of the children of these women who are working." However, McSherry hoped that "childless women will be the ones employed, rather than the mothers with children, but we can't always control such matters."<sup>28</sup>

McSherry's responses characterized the ignorance or indifference of certain federal agencies responsible for mobilization toward the historical problems facing female wage-earners. On the one hand, the Office of Production Management, recruited women, trained them in new fields, espoused favorable views toward the productiveness of female workers, and advocated for the equality of women in the workforce. On the other hand, McSherry and many other administration officials had no knowledge of the long history of struggle for women workers. The Women's Bureau and the Children's Bureau had been created to protect both women and children from exploitation in the workplace. Both bureaus, operating under the Department of Labor had advocated for protective legislation and the establishment of child welfare programs for working mothers. While both bureaus welcomed the possibility that women could earn higher wages, and that new professions would be opened to them, neither bureau wanted to sacrifice the gains women had made in past toward better working conditions and fewer hours.

In fact, both Anderson and Lenroot were leery of McSherry's call to duty for women. Neither of these leaders responded to McSherry's praise of women workers, both already knew that women were just as competent as men in industrial work. What concerned them was McSherry's indifference toward the relaxation of labor standards for women because of the emergency. Anderson confirmed that the Women's Bureau would "hold to the standards now in effect" and that to do otherwise was "unnecessary." Nevertheless, Anderson knew she had to cooperate with Roosevelt's appointed war agencies, including the Labor Commission established at OPM. At the conference, she complimented the War Department and the Labor Commission for requesting information regarding the bureau's labor standards.

However, Anderson and other advocates for women workers at the conference expressed concern over McSherry and OPM's effort to allow women to work 60 hours a week. Anderson agreed that "60 hours was far too long" and that the working mother would bear an especially difficult burden "to provide for her family," as Lenroot stated. Although some states already regulated women's work hours, Anderson admitted that FDR's Wage and Hour Act allowed women to work over 40 hours, as long as they were paid overtime.<sup>29</sup>



Anderson and Lenroot's viewpoints reflected the perspective of the network of female reformers who advanced a strategy of protectionism for female wage-earners.<sup>30</sup> They did not see a conflict between their support of women's traditional familial role and their defense of women's rights, including female worker's rights. Like Eleanor Roosevelt, they refused to address married working women as "controversial."<sup>31</sup> However, they found a politically expedient route toward legislation which protected women workers by arguing that women were traditionally responsible for the family's needs. They held strong convictions about the "double burden of employment and domestic chores," on married women workers. The Women's Bureau and the National Consumers League had been instrumental in researching high infant mortality rates, along with the poor health and premature deaths of working mothers in the early part of the century.<sup>32</sup>

These reformers endorsed women's paid labor as long as the children of working mothers were adequately cared for and all women were treated decently in the workplace. The Children's Bureau conceived its role as one which would protect children *and their mothers*. The Women's Bureau's support of protective legislation drew from their awareness that female wage-earners had different familial responsibilities than men. The Women's Bureau often advocated for special treatment of women workers and within the framework of protectionism demanded better working conditions, shorter work hours, but also broader employment opportunities and higher wages.

Many social reformers upheld women's traditional role based on the notion that characteristics of femininity and masculinity were both biologically and socially ordained. At this point in time, female social reformers did not argue that women were morally superior to men, as nineteenth-century reformers and suffragists had done. The argument for sexual difference did allow for a sexual hierarchy which maintained the patriarchal order. On the other hand, social feminists exploited sexual differences for both political and personal reasons. Politically, women were often permitted to enter the public realm to address and resolve society's problems.<sup>33</sup> Personally, women, especially mothers, were given status within the family, respected and revered for their familial role. Challenging and dismantling the argument for difference would have meant denying women an important route to power and social status.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, these women perceived the difficulties facing women and working mothers as community concerns. Disrupting family structure would not necessarily provide needed social reforms and in fact could have threatened the very basis for their existence. The Women's Bureau and Children's Bureau along with other voluntary organizations had advocated for social services founded

on the principle that civic improvement supported the institution of the family. Therefore they advocated for better schools, improved transportation, standardized day care, efficient public utilities, and accessible health care facilities.

In 1941, before the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the declaration of war, most reformers affiliated with federal agencies and women's advocacy organizations were rightfully suspicious of industry and government mobilization efforts. Lenroot and Anderson heard the praises of women workers by industrial leaders and government mobilization officials who only years before had resisted their efforts to overturn the "married person's clause" which had been the basis for employment discrimination of married women. For women's advocates, doubt existed because there was no evidence that industry would respect the long fought for labor standards, also it was unclear whether communities would make adjustments to large numbers of working mothers and provide the social service support, and it was undecided how much the federal government would intervene.

## 2. After Pearl Harbor

On December 7, 1941, Japanese bombers attacked the U.S. fleet at Pearl Harbor. Within the week, the United States was at war with both Japan and its European allies, Germany and Italy. One month after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, in January of 1942, Roosevelt disbanded the Office of Production Management and created the War Production Board [WPB] to coordinate efforts between the military and civilian sectors of society. Prior to this, American war production had been inefficient and lacked a central governing authority. In 1943, the Office of War Mobilization [OWM] took over most of the war administration from the WPB. The War Manpower Commission [WMC] was organized in April of 1942, with Paul V. McNutt as its director. The WMC worked with the Labor Division of the War Production Board, and with the Secretaries of War, Navy, Agriculture, Labor, and the Commissions of Civil Service and Selective Service.<sup>35</sup>

In June of 1942, six months after war was declared, by executive order, President Roosevelt created the Office of War Information. Primarily the OWI was designed as an information service which would provide the American public with the "truth" about the war. But the OWI also found itself "providing the background for war news" because "throughout the country there was public confusion about the various wartime activities of the government."<sup>36</sup> Part of the OWI's activities were to coordinate information from the many government war agencies. Elmer Davis, head of the Domestic Branch of the OWI found this aspect of his position the most frustrating since many of the war agencies

refused to cooperate and suspected OWI interference in their policies. The OWI could only relay policy decisions, it could not resolve policy conflicts, "nor analyze publicly the important questions" of the war.<sup>37</sup>

Through-out the war, mobilization agencies had difficulty in developing a consistent blueprint for meeting defense needs. Unfortunately, almost all of the agencies except those under the Department of Labor had little knowledge of the issues affecting labor and appeared ignorant of the vast civic problems associated with a mass recruitment of war workers. However, mobilization of domestic defense workers was still highly effective because it was economically lucrative to both industry and labor. Americans were also motivated by patriotic reasons to enter defense work, yet this justification was most often reserved for women who were not generally expected to become paid laborers.

Along with patriotism, it was for various purposes that female leadership heartily answered the call to war mobilization after Pearl Harbor. First, they saw the war as an opportunity to broaden the scope of employment for working women, and they felt that the shortage of male workers could provide women with a bargaining chip for improving working conditions and addressing the social problems of married women workers. Finally, most women's leaders were Democrats, closely associated with the Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt. Many of them held presidential appointments. For them, support for the war effort was support for FDR and the Democratic party.

In June of 1942, the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee held a regional conference in Boston on "Women and the War."<sup>38</sup> The program included several panels under the heading of "Women in the War Effort," including: "Women on the Production Front," which addressed, "how women can serve in industry and agriculture." "Women on the Home Front" spoke to "the consumer in war time... and women in civilian defense." The third portion of their program outlined "Women on the Fighting Front," with speeches from the leadership in women's military auxiliary forces.

The conference rhetoric was unswervingly supportive of FDR, brimming with patriotism, and dedicated to the war effort. The most influential female leadership during Roosevelt's era came from within his own administration and were often presidential appointees. These women shaped the arguments for women's rights and directed the course of feminist debate. However, they had risen to the ranks of institutional power from grass-roots reform organizations, women's clubs, and frequently, the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee. Six months into the war, they rallied all women to defend American democracy in "field and factory; in hospital and arsenal; in clinic and club."<sup>39</sup>

The conference leadership attacked isolationism as a policy that “has failed us as a nation again and again.”<sup>40</sup> With all hesitancy toward American involvement in total war abandoned, female leadership at the conference moved toward the goal of winning the war. For these leaders, winning the war was an “opportunity” to acclaim the special abilities and heritage of women. Genevieve Forbes Herrick, Public Relations Director for the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps declared that, “in every national crisis... women have been resolute and resourceful,” and that “thousands of women ... have played their courageous and anonymous part in every war we have waged.”<sup>41</sup> Mary Dublin, Director of the Survey Division of the Civilian Mobilization Branch, was more specific stating that, “We women especially, treasure our democratic heritage. Our rights and privileges are unique. No women in the world have known like opportunities in work, education or in community affairs.”<sup>42</sup>

A conference speech on “What Women Lose If We Lose Democracy” went further in this analogy and condemned Hitler’s slogan “Kirche, Kinder, und Kueche (church, children, and kitchen.)” The speech explained that under the Third Reich, women “were not allowed the freedom to choose between a career and home, *they were told what to do.*”<sup>43</sup> Conference leaders emphasized the rights of women under American democracy as opposed to women living in the fascist state of Germany. Under “Hitlerism,” women’s lives were divided into “three spheres” and “women lost all their hard-gained rights and privileges.”<sup>44</sup>

Ironically, among the patriotic rhetoric and pro-war discourse, the conference leadership also insisted that American women wage-earners should not lose their hard-won privileges because of the war. Louise Stitt, Director of the Women’s Minimum Wage Bureau, at the Department of Labor, made it clear that, “it is especially important that the maximum workday and week for women workers does not exceed the 8 and 48 hours.” For a session on the “Standards For Employment of Women in War Time,” Stitt revealed that, “Immediately after the United States entered the war, manufacturers of war products deluged state labor departments with requests for relaxation of labor laws for women,” and many state labor boards complied.

At the conference, Stitt and other female labor leaders advocated for the rights of female wage-earners. Conscious of the anti-Hitler propaganda and the pro-war discourse of equality under democracy, Stitt asked if women “working side by side with men and doing the same or similar work” were being paid the same rate. She answered that women were not earning equal pay with men and that most women were barely earning a “living wage.” She argued for a change in the minimum wage budget since most states had determined budgets for women based on “self-supporting women,” when in fact, “practically all women have dependents.”<sup>45</sup>



While demanding equal pay for equal work and arguing that women wage-earners were also breadwinners, Stitt made a different case for better working conditions based on women's heightened sense of their environment:

Investigations have shown that women are affected much more than men by poor lighting, inferior equipment, and unpleasant surroundings. This is not surprising when we realize that over the centuries women have been responsible for creating comfortable and pleasant surroundings in the home. At a time when women are playing so vital a part in the nation's race for increased output, it is important to know that their efficiency and productivity are considered higher in plants where the working conditions are good.<sup>46</sup>

Stitt clung to an argument of sexual difference when advocating better working conditions for women, further stating that, "Women are more susceptible than men to some industrial poisons." The contention of female susceptibility had been a popular strategy for protective legislation dating back to the 1908 Supreme Court decision of *Muller v. Oregon* which upheld the constitutionality of maximum hour legislation for women workers.<sup>47</sup> Stitt, like many other women's rights advocates and labor bureaucrats, had no trouble balancing arguments for equal pay based on sexual equality with arguments for better working conditions based on sexual difference.

Furthermore, Thelma McKelvey, from the Women's Labor Supply Service of the War Manpower Commission called for universal acceptance of women in the industrial labor force. McKelvey spoke of the dramatic changes in the paid labor force because of war industry jobs which employed over 2 million new women workers in 1942 and would employ another 2 million the following year. McKelvey explained that the War Production Board and the War Manpower Commission advocated "opening up training opportunities" for women and that the operating policy specifically stated that women were to be referred "on the same basis as men." She further stated that, "women should have exactly the same training that men have... and there is no need for a duplication of effort in separate classes."<sup>48</sup>

While McKelvey claimed full equality for women workers she did so based on the understanding that the "shift of women from home to factory" would require a coordinated effort by both industry and community. She asserted that the "change in attitude" which would allow for more "trained women... increased opportunities for women... [and] the trend toward the greater use of women" would have to be accomplished within the context of "a critical change in the social pattern." McKelvey reasoned that the labor market must be aware of



women's "capacities" during the planning stages of women's mobilization into war industries. McKelvey's reference to the need for community response to industrial shifts reflected the conviction of female leaders that for women to achieve full equality within the labor force, society would have to recognize their unique role within the family.

Therefore, female labor leaders lobbied for industrial and community awareness of women's traditional functions within the family. Female leadership did not perceive a contradiction in demanding sexual equality based on differences between female and male roles. In fact, it was an opportunity to alter radically "social patterns" which unfairly discriminated against female wage-earners and remained ignorant of their "double burden" of domestic chores. The position of female leadership regarding women's roles illustrated how World War II both transformed women's traditional sphere and maintained gender differences. At this time, leadership did not perceive the erosion of gender differences as necessarily for female empowerment. In fact, by demanding industry and community accommodation to the special needs of women, leadership provided women with a level playing field to compete with men for employment.

### 3. Waging War with "Womanpower"

On December 5, 1942, the Women's Advisory Committee to the War Manpower Commission was created by executive order. Margaret Hickey was appointed "Chairman" to the committee which was designed to advise Chairman Paul McNutt of the War Manpower Commission on agency policy concerning the utilization of women in war industry. The WAC was composed of thirteen members, all of whom were women. Hickey was also President of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs. The creation of a separate women's advisory committee within the War Manpower Commission illustrated the internal division along gender lines extended to wartime bureaus. Hickey's appointment also reflected the traditional course of female leadership from grass-roots voluntary organization to institutional power during Roosevelt's administration. Through-out Hickey's term at the War Manpower Commission, she remained a strong advocate for "womanpower" while maintaining that communities and industry adapt to the needs of female wage-earners.

In July of 1943, civilian employment of women reached an all-time peak of 17.7 million workers. Two months later, Hickey issued a report noting that increased employment opportunities had "almost exhausted the groups of women who can be brought into the labor market."<sup>49</sup> The report expressed apprehension over the shortage of workers to fill vital war production jobs and enumerated reasons why recruitment of female workers was not completely successful,

including "existing concern for post-war job security" and that after the war women "will be treated as usurpers of men's jobs and denied equal opportunity for employment."<sup>50</sup> Hickey also asserted that the "inability of responsible agencies to develop adequate child care facilities," prohibited the WMC from referring working mothers to defense areas and also compelled them to discourage women with small children from accepting employment. Hickey also reported that there had been no "consistent effort to develop for women part-time work plans, which would permit great numbers of them to accept and retain employment without serious disruption of home responsibilities." Finally, Hickey stated that recruitment methods had been inconsistent and that there had been "no concerted approach to the evaluation of successful techniques," noting that "in general women fail to respond to the solicitation of volunteer workers, urging them into the labor market."<sup>51</sup>

Hickey argued that recruitment and retention of female workers would require a greater effort on the part of industry including, "adequate facilities and safety precautions," the "installation and maintenance" of restrooms, rest areas, and "cafeterias with well-balanced meals," recreation facilities near the plant, "scheduled rest periods," and "trained personnel counselors to assist in the induction" and training of unskilled workers. Hickey maintained that the community also must offer "adequate medical, dental, and nursing care, the expansion of existing "restaurants and other eating facilities," the "expansion of school facilities" for the families of war workers, "child care facilities with nursery schools, daily foster home replacement, extended school programs, home-maker service, and play centers to serve the children of working mothers."<sup>52</sup> Hickey insisted that the "womanpower" campaign be "integrated into the manpower program" because the "scope" of the national emergency demanded awareness that women were the "major segment of labor resources." The Women's Advisory Committee report concluded that the ultimate success of female mobilization rested on enlisting women workers to "replace and substitute" for men, and for adjustments by industry and local communities so that "the basic homelife of the nation" would not be disrupted.

Hickey reasserted this position throughout her tenure at WMC.<sup>53</sup> In April of 1944, Hickey issued an appraisal of the "womanpower" campaign.<sup>54</sup> Her report maintained that the "haphazard" nature of the earlier recruitment campaign was now better coordinated within the War Manpower Commission. However, Hickey noted the perpetual problems of recruitment of local women in defense areas because employers hired men referred from other regions. In response to this problem, Hickey argued that employment opportunities for women would be greatly increased by expanding female job classifications. Ac-

According to Hickey, labor shortages could be reduced if female jobs "expanded" allowing factories to "release men for occupations unsuitable for women." Hickey further asserted that certain occupations should be reserved for women and that there should be a "ceiling" on the employment of male workers, and "controlled referral" until complete utilization of women workers was reached.<sup>55</sup>

In 1944, the Women's Advisory Committee to the War Manpower Commission made further requests for a clarification of "manpower aims in the readjustment period" which was impeding the progress of recruitment during the war.<sup>56</sup> Throughout the war, the Women's Bureau had issued similar statements urging a federal post-war policy for recruited women because concern for "job security" had slowed mobilization.<sup>57</sup> The Women's Bureau also expressed concern regarding mobilization policies which disregarded the steady increase of female wage-earners since the first World War. During the post-World War I era, the Women's Bureau noted that women left war manufacturing jobs in large numbers; however, overall "the proportion of women among... workers was larger than before the war."<sup>58</sup> The Women's Bureau and the Women's Advisory Committee of the War Manpower Commission used the leverage of the defense emergency to argue for a coherent federal policy regarding women workers in the post-war period. At the same time, both agencies endorsed the "continued utilization" of community facilities after the war. Hickey recommended that "child care, recreation" facilities, and other civic improvements "be transferred to peacetime usefulness."<sup>59</sup>

Throughout World War II, female leadership pressed for mobilization policies which would benefit female wage-earners, address the problems of working mothers, and ultimately expand women's rights. The war produced extensive public discussion about women's traditional role since female mobilization both challenged the scope of women's sphere and also confirmed the problems of working mothers. However, prescriptions for federal policy often appeared contradictory, demanding both equal rights for women and "favored" treatment for working mothers. It is evident that female leadership perceived war-time shifts as an "opportunity" to educate Americans and change social patterns toward acceptance of both a broader public role for women and the special responsibilities of female wage-earners.

To some extent these leaders were successful in their objectives to both influence policy changes and enact federal legislation. Protests from female-headed agencies regarding mobilization plans and the lack of a coherent post-war policy for female laborers did make an impression on both the War Manpower Commission and the Office of War Information. The Women's Advisory Committee overcame earlier difficulties concerning communication and policy chan-

nels to propose recommendations to the WMC.<sup>60</sup> The WMC responded to the problems of female wage-earners and the OWI circulated information obtained from the Women's Advisory Committee and the Women's Bureau regarding these issues.

For example, on May 2, 1944, Frank Constangy, the Regional Chief of Operations for the WMC directed state manpower agencies to a "systematic and concentrated course of action" to recruit women workers and to keep women working throughout the defense emergency. Constangy determined that the "woman-ing" of plants would only take place if employers prepared their plants for the employment of women by providing special training, adequate facilities, and physical check-ups. Moreover, he detailed community transformation during female recruitment campaigns relating the demands made by female leadership including "transportation, housing, shopping hours, banking hours, doctor's hours, [and] day nurseries."<sup>61</sup>

Similarly, the OWI publicized reports made by both the Women's Advisory Committee and the Women's Bureau and released these reports to American newspapers. One report, in September of 1943 combined information from both the WAC and the Women's Bureau describing "womanpower" proposals from both agencies.<sup>62</sup> The press release maintained that full utilization of women workers required "adaptations for women with household responsibilities."<sup>63</sup> These adaptations included, part-time shift work, medical care, eating facilities, child care, and changes in the hours of operations for commercial establishments such as grocery stores and laundry facilities.

The Children's Bureau was instrumental in securing the use of federal funds to help finance child care centers under the Lanham Act.<sup>64</sup> Child care facilities remained largely a local matter. However, federal start-up money became available through several means. The Community Facilities Act or Lanham Act passed in 1943, allowed federal funds for the establishment of local and state programs for day-care centers.<sup>65</sup> War boom communities could apply for funding to coordinate and establish child-care services in their area. At its peak, the program provided care for approximately 130,000 children.<sup>66</sup> However, the Lanham Act was not originally intended to fund child-care and Georgia Congressman Fritz Lanham opposed its use for this purpose. In addition, the application process was a "bureaucratic maze" which involved several federal agencies.<sup>67</sup>

Therefore, industries and communities often found more creative and expeditious ways to fund child-care services. Kaiser shipyards in the Northwest applied for funding through the U.S. Maritime Commission and by-passed the Lanham Act basing their claims on the war-time emergency. Kaiser constructed



three nurseries with capacity for almost 1500 children.<sup>68</sup> The Women's Bureau had also advocated for the counselor program which was adopted by many defense plants.<sup>69</sup> The counselor program helped women to arrange appointments with doctors and dentists and offered working women homemaking advice. The Women's Bureau reported in 1943 that child care and ancillary services were available in over 4400 war production areas.<sup>70</sup>

The OWI battled against "traditional" attitudes of Americans who viewed day nurseries as welfare by promoting child care programs as "far better care than the majority of [children] receive at home."<sup>71</sup> The OWI was committed to persuading reluctant families, unprepared communities, and conservative government officials that child care facilities were essential to the war effort. OWI's Womanpower campaign included a strong appeal to communities to endorse the use of child care facilities and to support government efforts to provide federal start-up money. Information about war-time child care programs was disseminated to editors of women's pages and to the Women's Radio War Program Guide.

The OWI went so far as to publicize the controversial War Area Child Care Bill in its program directives. The Children's Bureau supported the bill which had been introduced in Congress by Senator Thomas of Utah, and authorized "the expenditure of 20 million dollars a year for payments to States for the operation of programs for care of children of war-working mothers." The OWI asserted that the proposed program would "secure the welfare of pre-school age children," while, "more parents work for victory."<sup>72</sup> However, several federal agencies were against the establishment of what they believed would become a permanent social-welfare program and the bill was killed in Congress.<sup>73</sup>

Nevertheless, many female policy-makers argued that women would fight for gains made during the war through the power of the vote. For example, a WAC report submitted to the War Manpower Commission in April of 1944, underlined the fact that in many states "potential women voters" would outnumber men's votes.<sup>74</sup> The report cautioned against policies which would threaten the newly developed female workforce because unlike the post-World War I period when women were disenfranchised, in the post-World War II era women represented "half the voting strength in the coming election." The report confirmed that 71% of working women polled wanted to retain their war-time jobs, yet the research also acknowledged that female employment depended on the "extent to which child care, eating and other facilities are established and retained after the war."<sup>75</sup>

However, it is evident that neither the WMC nor OWI saw their role as creating a long-term policy for female wage-earners, nor did they aspire to the



goal of permanently altering gender roles. In fact, they viewed the task of mobilization as short-term and crisis-oriented. Their objective was simply to overcome the labor shortage and maintain war industry production so that the United States could win the war. It was only because war production became entangled with the inherited problems of labor discrimination that they were forced to deal with these issues to the extent that they did.

Indeed, leadership at the WMC and OWI had no background in the particular problems of female wage-earners. The assumption of these agencies was that women did not want to work outside the home and that recruitment involved transforming the views of traditional women. Therefore, mobilization campaigns often focused on women who resisted wage-labor. Women who were already in the paid labor force were not the targets of their campaigns. In OWI releases they often emphasized the need to expand recruitment to "women outside the labor market."<sup>76</sup> If the OWI misrepresented the female labor force as middle-class and temporary it was because that was the very group they targeted for mobilization.<sup>77</sup>

In truth, the WMC and OWI reflected much of the sentiment of the Women's Bureau by avoiding recruitment of mothers with young children which kept the "numbers of working mothers... surprisingly low." Historians have noted that during World War II, the "unprecedented expansion of the female labor force... was women whose housekeeping and child care responsibilities were lightest."<sup>78</sup> Interoffice memorandums often stated the preference to "draw heavily upon married women whose children... reached the age where they no longer need[ed] maternal care and supervision."<sup>79</sup>

Nevertheless, these agencies exerted a great effort toward full utilization of female workers and seriously considered mandatory conscription and registration of women for defense work. Along with this effort to "leave no stone unturned in obtaining the voluntary accession of women to our total working forces," mobilization agencies were cooperative in attempts to "provide nurseries and other similar social services to free women of their many household chores."<sup>80</sup> At the same time, they adopted an "official policy" which made "no distinction between male and female workers."<sup>81</sup>

Ultimately, these agencies embraced mobilization rhetoric and set policy based on an impressionistic and inconsistent concept of female equality. Their assumptions were grounded in the liberalism of the New Deal and compelled the WMC to treat all workers "equally." This policy was evident in their mandate for defense employers to hire not only more women, but also minorities, and teenagers.<sup>82</sup> Discrimination in hiring practices persisted throughout the war even though the federal government tripled the number of Blacks employed in de-

fense industries from 1941 to 1945.<sup>83</sup> The OWI was sensitive to complaints from the NAACP regarding discrimination and conducted polls concerning the under-utilization of Black workers which they relayed to the WMC.<sup>84</sup> OWI polls also measured the lack of awareness on the part of white Americans toward the rising "discontent" among "Negroes."<sup>85</sup>

Essentially, the OWI operated from the principle that employment discrimination could best be attacked through education. Therefore, they used propaganda to preach tolerance, equality, and New Deal reform. George Gallop at the American Institute of Public Opinion laid out the fundamental convictions of liberals associated with propaganda campaigns in a memo to Gardner Cowles, interim head of the Domestic Branch of the OWI.<sup>86</sup> Gallop maintained that, "Some people may ask what the underprivileged, the uneducated, the oppressed minorities ... have to fight for. Can we not portray the fact... that under the democratic process the underprivileged have become less underprivileged? For example, the Negroes have a real, legal, and a permanent chance of improvement."

The righteous goals of the OWI were often thwarted by a lack of coordination between agencies and by conservative backlash. Republicans and conservative Democrats saw the OWI as a propaganda effort to extend New Deal ideology around the globe.<sup>87</sup> At the same time, OWI's unfamiliarity with the specific concerns of female wage-earners encouraged them to associate discrimination against women with other issues of inequality. While trying to best serve the needs of the war manpower campaign, the OWI made an effort to overcome both employment discrimination and the "fears of women who have never worked before."<sup>88</sup> In fact, the OWI was so consumed by efforts to recruit "traditional" women who resisted paid labor that Rhea Radin from the Bureau of Manpower Utilization wrote to chastise the Women's Advisory Committee which was working in cooperation with the OWI on a "Women in the War" program book.<sup>89</sup>

Radin maintained that recruitment campaigns could not be initiated without "realistic recognition of the factors which prevent... [women's] retention." Radin acknowledged the "personal resistances of women," to wage labor, but attributes the failure of retention of women workers to "unsanitary working conditions" causing illness, and the lack of child care. She stated that these problems are "management's responsibility and the... responsibility of the community." She directed her complaints to the organized recruitment campaigns which ignored these important factors and focused their attention on "the comparatively small percentage of women who have no valid reasons for not working."<sup>90</sup>

While female leadership during the war petitioned for both sexual equality and special protection in the workplace, OWI's philosophy toward recruitment was influenced more by general arguments for equality and transforming the views of traditional women. Therefore, campaigns were inconsistent and often ineffectual in addressing the interests of women war workers. The OWI's respect for work-place equality often undermined the principles for protective legislation and special consideration for women workers. While neither the OWI or the WMC wanted to threaten the basic homelife of the nation, they often used the rhetoric of equality to convince "traditional" women that their paid labor could be accomplished with little societal change.

By the end of the war, demands made by women's advocacy agencies for female entitlement in the workplace were not consistent with the discourse of equality presented by mobilization forces. In the post-war period, industry and community, which had resisted change through-out the war, would characterize the special needs of female workers as demands for privilege and entitlement. The "equalizing" of women and men in the workforce and the integration of the separate spheres of female advocacy into mainstream social policy would result in the transfer of entitlement to a different group, one that was considered more deserving than women: returning veterans.<sup>91</sup>

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#### NOTES

1. Office of War Information, *Women and the War*, Bureau of Intelligence Report #31 (August 6, 1942). Copy available in Widener Library, Harvard University. Each month for eight months between January and July of 1942, the OWI questioned groups of women and men ranging in numbers from 2278 women and 2358 men in the month of January and 1735 women and 1767 men in July. Women and men were divided into three age groups: 21-34, 35-49, 50 and over. The women were separated into five categories: employed women, non-employed women, laborer families, farmer families, unemployed families. Men were divided into four categories: white collar, laborer, farmer, unemployed.
2. *Ibid.*, 1.
3. *Ibid.*, 2.
4. In most questions women and men varied in their answers by an average of only 3 to 7 percentage points.
5. For further explanations of women and World War II see: William H. Chafe, *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), Susan M. Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940's*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), D'Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), Karen Anderson, *Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women During World War II*, (Westport: Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1981).
6. For an analysis of women laborers during World War II, see Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987). For an analysis of propaganda images of women see Leila J. Rupp, *Mobilizing Women For War: German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945*, (Princeton: Princeton Univer-

- sity Press, 1978), and Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984).
7. Robin Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). See also Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).
  8. *Ibid.*, 46-49.
  9. *Ibid.*, 47.
  10. Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor, *Milestones: The Women's Bureau Celebrates 70 Years of Women's Labor History*, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, (1990), 1.
  11. See Joan Hoff-Wilson and Marjorie Lightman, eds., *Without Precedent: The Life and Career of Eleanor Roosevelt* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984.) Selections of most interest are Susan Ware, "ER and Democratic Politics: Women in the Post-suffrage Era": 46-62, and Tamara K. Hareven, "ER and Reform": 201-214.
  12. Anthony J. Badger, *The New Deal: The Depression Years, 1933-1940* (New York: Noonday Press, 1989), 258-259. Badger discusses Eleanor Roosevelt, Molly Dewson and Frances Perkins. He states that Perkins, "exemplified the career pattern of a generation of female reformers who contributed so much to both Progressivism and the New Deal."
  13. Susan Ware, *Partner and I, Molly Dewson, Feminism, and New Deal Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), xiv. See also Blanche Weisen Cook, "Female Support Networks and Political Activism, Lillian Wald, Crystal Eastman, Emma Goldman," *A Heritage of Her Own*, Nancy Cott and Elizabeth H. Pleck, eds. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 412-44.
  14. Skocpol has identified this social policy as the establishment of the "maternalist welfare state." See Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), chapters 7-9. See also Linda Gordon, *Women, the State and Welfare* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).
  15. See Margaret A. Hickey, "Equal Pay For Equal Work", Speech for national radio, 1945, War Manpower Commission files, National Archives, RG 211, E-34. Hickey was the Chairmen of the Women's Advisory Committee to the War Manpower Commission and President of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs. Also see: The National Women's Trade Union League, *Life and Labor Bulletin*, No. 55 (October 1944), which called on Congress to "kill" the Equal Rights Amendment and demanded both wage equity with men and protectionist labor laws and Rose Schneiderman, President of the New York Women's Trade Union League, correspondence to Dorothy McAllister, Director of Women's Division of the DNC (July 1940), Democratic National Committee files, FDR Library, General Correspondence, Box 316. Schneiderman obliges McAllister with an anti-ERA and anti-Women's Party message for use by the DNC. The National Women's Party was the one exception to the anti-ERA cause, functioning outside the mainstream of federal policy-making, the NWP pressed on for the Equal Rights Amendment. For an early history of the NWP, see Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 53-81. For an alternative view, see Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work, A History of Wage-Earning Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982). Kessler-Harris cites Susan Hartmann's 1978 OAH paper as evidence that, "Despite the opposition of organizations representing poorer women, business and professional women continued to support the ERA and paid little attention to such mundane issues as day care", 286. In fact, female leadership at the Women's Bureau, the Women's Advisory Committee of the WMC, the Women's Trade Union League, the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, the League of Women Voters, and the Women's Division of the DNC were unconditionally aligned in their anti-ERA sentiment and used the full force of their policy-making positions to promote the establishment of day care programs.
  16. Allan M. Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information, 1942-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978). See also, Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes To War: How Politics, Profits & Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (New



- York: The Free Press, 1987).
17. Chafe, 178. A 1945 Women's Bureau survey in 10 war production areas found 3 out of 4 women workers expressed a desire to keep their war-time employment.
  18. Honey, 26.
  19. Muncy, 124-165. Muncy gives various reasons why the female dominion of women's reform lost power in the later half of the 1920's. She also asserts that the New Deal allowed "for the continuing reform activity of white, middle-class women", 159. Muncy does not examine how World War II revived and boosted the female dominion of reform.
  20. See Eleanor Roosevelt's personal correspondence to Molly Dewson, Katherine Lenroot, Mary Anderson, the Women's Trade Union League, and many others, in correspondence collections, FDR Library.
  21. Martha Swain, "ER and Ellen Woodard: A Partnership for Women's Work Relief and Security," in *Without Precedent: The Life and Career of Eleanor Roosevelt*, 136. See also: Susan Ware, *Beyond Suffrage: Women in the New Deal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).
  22. Children's Bureau, Department of Labor, *Proceedings of Conference on Day Care of Children of Working Mothers with Special Reference to Defense Areas, Bureau Publication No. 281*, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office (1942). Copy available in University Research Library, UCLA. Among those attending were Katherine Lenroot, Director of the Children's Bureau, Mary Anderson, Director of the Women's Bureau, Florence Kerr from the Works Projects Administration, Elizabeth Christman from the Women's Trade Union League, Dorothy Bellanca from Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, and Florence Thorne from the American Federation of Labor.
  23. The "married person's clause" or Section 213 of the Economy Act of the 1883 pertained to the employment of civil service personnel. The act allowed for the termination of employees who were married to other civil service employees. This clause had been added to the Civil Service Act during the depression of the 1880's and was meant as a measure to fairly distribute employment in government jobs. Instead, the termination of "married persons" usually meant women were arbitrarily fired. The consequence of the clause was that industry used it as a model for their own employment guidelines and therefore "legally" terminated and discriminated against married women. During the Great Depression, almost all women's organizations including the Women's Bureau, the Women's Division of the Democratic Party, the Women's Trade Union League, and the National Women's Party opposed the clause. In 1937, through the efforts of these groups, the clause was repealed. However, employment discrimination against married women continued. See file on Molly Dewson, General Correspondence, FDR Library, Box 316.
  24. International Labor Conference 1938, *Resolution on Conditions of Work of Women*, Mary Anderson, Chairman, Women's Bureau files, National Archives, RG 86, Box 231.
  25. *Proceedings of Conference on Day Care*, 13-14.
  26. *Ibid.*, 14.
  27. *Ibid.*, 15.
  28. *Ibid.*, 16.
  29. *Ibid.*, 24-25.
  30. See Alice Kessler-Harris, "Where Are the Organized Women Workers?", *A Heritage of Her Own*, Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth H. Pleck, eds. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979). Kessler-Harris argues that women workers had to align themselves with organizations which promoted protective legislation because they were excluded from most labor unions. However, protective legislation did not necessarily isolate women workers from the mainstream of labor and many female dominated unions, such as the Women's Trade Union League affiliated themselves with organizations and federal agencies which promoted protective legislation.
  31. Eleanor Roosevelt, *It's Up To The Women* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1933), 64. Many



historians disagree with this point, notably Sonya Michel, "American Women and the Discourse of the Democratic Family in World War II," *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, Margaret Higgonnet, et al, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 154-167. Michel argues that female policy-makers such as Katherine Lenroot believed that once women marry "they must relinquish their work outside the home", 161. While this perspective held true during the Progressive Era, female policy-makers evolved in their thinking and by the 1940's did not object to working mothers. Furthermore, many female leaders of the later era were wives and mothers themselves. While they resisted the idea of mothers with young children working outside the home, they did so within the context of concern for maternal well-being.

32. Leslie Woodcock Tentler, *Wage-Earning Women: Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States, 1900-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 150. Eleanor Roosevelt had worked for the National Consumers League during this time.
33. See Skocpol, chap. 6.
34. Early writings on women's history argued that the achievement of women's rights and equality would occur only if the concept of sexual difference was discredited and when women were perceived as the "same" as men. Feminist Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1970) critique<sup>d</sup> femininity and masculinity as the "tool-kit of oppression." Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1966), 151-174, distinguished the nineteenth-century ideology of womanhood as narrowly-defined and oppressive. Women's historians in the 1960's and early 1970's, argued that separation between men and women was associated with subordination. However, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female Worlds of Love and Ritual," *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) presented a new interpretation. Smith-Rosenberg's analysis of separation implied that there existed a distinctive women's culture. The oppressive separate spheres argument gave way to a more radical vision of an empowered women's culture. Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Women's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 75, No. 1 (June 1988), 9-39, traces the development of the women's sphere/women's culture argument. She sees implicit problems in early writings on women's history, and identifies both the troubling aspects of separate sphere ideology and the liberating aspects of women's culture. Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, examines how feminists grappled with competing conceptions of gender equality and gender difference in the post-Suffrage decades. Susan Ware, *Partner & I: Molly Dewson, Feminism and New Deal Politics*, discusses the role of women in social reform during Roosevelt's New Deal. Her examination of the life of a woman involved in a powerful women's network is significant for it's broadening of the concept of "women's sphere" from something that is limiting to an empowering force for change. However, Ellen Dubois, "Politics and Culture in Women's History: A Symposium," *Feminist Studies* 6 (Spring 1980), 26-64, warned that a distinct women's culture must not blind historians to women's oppression.
35. *Executive Order establishing War Manpower Commission*, Files of Samuel Rosenman, FDR Library, Box 11.
36. Winkler, 51.
37. *Ibid.*, 52.
38. Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee, *Women and the War Conference*, Boston, June 15-16, 1942, Eleanor Roosevelt's Papers, FDR Library, Box 333. Among the speakers at the conference were: Congresswoman Mary T. Norton, "Chairman," Committee on Labor, Mrs. Ellen C. Woodard, Social Security Board, and Mrs. Charles Tillett, Assistant "Chairman," Democratic National Committee.
39. Mrs. Ellen S Woodward, "Women on the Production Front - Factory and Farm," Speech delivered at Women and the War Conference sponsored by the Women's Division of the

DNC, Boston, June 15-16, 1942.

40. Speaker unknown, "Isolation and War," Speech delivered at the Women and the War Conference.
41. Genevieve Forbes Herrick, "Women of the WAAC," Speech delivered at the Women and the War Conference.
42. Mary Dublin, "Community War Activities," Speech delivered at the Women and the War Conference.
43. Speaker unknown, "What We Lose If We Lose Democracy," Speech delivered at the Women and the War Conference. Italics theirs.
44. Ibid.
45. FDR had passed the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938 which regulated wages and set a minimum wage based on federal and state budget estimates. The minimum wage laws allowed for "differential wages" though based on budgets and other considerations. Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins and Eleanor Roosevelt were "opposed to differential wages" since most disproportionately affected women by underestimating their budgets based on a belief that women were not self-supporting. See Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, 262.
46. Louise Stitt, "Standards of Employment for Women in Wartime," Speech delivered at the Women and the War Conference, Boston, June 15-16, 1942, sponsored by the Women's Division of the DNC Conference.
47. The *Muller v. Oregon* decision is considered an excellent example of Progressive reform tactics and the famous "Brandeis Brief" has remained a perplexing case for feminist scholars. On the one hand it protected women workers from exploitation in the workplace, on the other hand, it defined women workers as "different" from men based on their physical inferiority and "maternal functions." See Leslie Friedman Goldstein, *The Constitutional Rights of Women: Cases in Law and Social Change* (New York: Longman, Inc. 1979), 16-20.
48. Thelma McKelvey, "Training Women for War Work," Speech delivered at the Women and the War Conference, Boston, June 15-16, 1942, sponsored by the Women's Division of the DNC Conference.
49. Women's Advisory Committee, War Manpower Commission, *War Manpower Commission Program To Mobilize And Utilize Women For Wartime Employment* (September 1943), War Manpower Commission files, National Archives, RG 211, E-34.
50. 51. bid.
52. Ibid.
53. See Margaret Hickey's speeches for the Twentieth Regional Conference of the South Atlantic Region, American Federation of Sorptimist Clubs, May 2, 1943, Board Meeting of National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, July 10, 1943, Annual Convention, National Association of Women Lawyers, August 23, 1943, and the Columbia Network Radio Program, February 27, 1944, War Manpower Commission files, National Archives, RG 211, E-35.
54. Women's Advisory Committee, War Manpower Commission, *Womanpower - An Appraisal By The Women's Advisory Committee* (April 30, 1944), War Manpower Commission, National Archives, RG 211, E-34.
55. Ibid.
56. See Women's Advisory Committee, War Manpower Commission, *The Wartime Responsibility of Women's Organizations* (January, 1944), *Statement of Women's Advisory Committee of the War Manpower Commission With Respect to Cut-Backs Affecting Women in Industry* (March 1, 1944), and *Women Workers After the War* (April, 1944), War Manpower Commission files, National Archives, RG 211, E-34.
57. See Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, *The Employment of Women After The War* (October 1942), and *Women Now and After the War* (October, 1943), Women's Bureau files, National Archives, RG 86, Box 231. See also Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, *The Postwar Role*

- of *American Women* (March, 1944), by Mary Anderson, and *War and Postwar Adjustment of Women Workers*, address by Frieda Miller (December 1944), in Eleanor Roosevelt's Personal Papers, FDR Library, Box 3051.
58. Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, *The Employment of Women After the War*, October 1942, Women's Bureau files, National Archives, RG 86, Box 231.
  59. Women's Advisory Committee, War Manpower Commission, *The Wartime Responsibility of Women's Organizations*, January 1944, National Archives, RG 211, E-34.
  60. key of the Women's Advisory Committee did not have a vote on the War Manpower Commission board and that the WAC had to channel their proposals through the Management-Labor Committee, 288. However, it is evident that the WMC carefully considered the WAC recommendations because they are reflected in WMC own policy memos.
  61. War Manpower Commission, *Suggested Action Program for Increasing the Use of Women in War Establishments*, May 2, 1944, National Archives RG 211, E-34.
  62. Information, *Press Release on Facts About the Nation's Womanpower* (September 3, 1943), National Archives, RG 211, E-34.
  63. *Ibid.*, 5.
  64. *Womanpower*, 147.
  65. See Amy Kesselman, *Fleeting Opportunities: Women Shipyard Workers in Portland and Vancouver During World War II and Reconversion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 73-89.
  66. *Womanpower*, 147.
  67. Chafe, 166-167.
  68. Kesselman, 74-75.
  69. Kesselman, 71.
  70. Mary M. Schweitzer, "World War II and Female Labor Force Participation Rates", *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. XL, No. 1 (March 1980), 93.
  71. Office of War Information, *Women's Radio War Program Guide* (June 1943), OWI files, National Archives, RG 208, E-90. Marion Sabatini, Director of Women's Activities at OWI's Radio Bureau stated that the estimated audience for the Women's War Program was over 2.2 million per week. See memo from Sabatini to Dave Frederick, Director of War Programs, OWI, December 12, 1944, OWI Files, National Archives, RG 208, E-90.
  72. Office of War Information, *Child Care Program - Womanpower Campaign*, OWI Files, National Archives, RG 208, E-90.
  73. Chafe, 166-170
  74. Women's Advisory Committee, War Manpower Commission, *Women Workers After the War*, April 1944, National Archives, RG 211, E-34.
  75. oll referred to in the report was taken by the Northwestern Life Insurance Company at "7 scattered war plants early in 1944."
  76. *Ibid.*, 3.
  77. Honey maintains that the mischaracterization of the female labor force as temporary in World War II propaganda that ultimately led to the dismissal of women workers after the war.
  78. Anderson, *Wartime Women*, 5. See also Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, who argues that female employment during World War II, "represented a response to emergency rather than a shift in attitude", 286.
  79. Memo from Milton Handler to Oscar Cox, March 4, 1943, Files of Samuel Rosenman, FDR Library, Box 11.
  80. Memo Handler to Cox, March 4, 1943.
  81. Women's Advisory Committee, War Manpower Commission, *Statement of WMC Women's Advisory Committee Relative to Post War Employment of Women* (December 3, 1943), OWI Files, National Archives, RG 208, Box 90.
  82. See files of Samuel Rosenman, FDR speechwriter and advisor who worked closely with Rob-

- ert Sherwood and the OWI, memos from March, 1943 outline plans to recruit new workers, FDR Library, Box 11.
83. John Morton Blum, *V Was For Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 184.
  84. Blum, 189. See polls in OWI Intelligence Reports, December 12, 1942, and December 25, 1942. Copy available in Widener Library, Harvard University.
  85. Office of War Information, *OWI Intelligence Report* (December 25, 1942), OWI files, National Archives, RG 208, Box 90.
  86. George Gallop to Gardner Cowles, August 11, 1942, OWI files, National Archives, RG 208, Box 6.
  87. Koppes and Black, 136. Koppes and Black refer to Republican Representative John Tabor of New York and conservative southern Democrat Joe Starnes of Alabama who informed the House that the OWI "had a distinct socialistic tinge."
  88. Office of War Information, War Manpower Commission, *Basic Program for Womanpower* (August, 1943), OWI files, National Archives, RG 208, E-90.
  89. 16, 1944 from Verda Barnes and Rhea Radin to Sophie Nack, Clearance Officer at the OWI, OWI files, National Archives, RG 208, E-90.
  90. Rhea Radin memo to Sophie Nack, February 16, 1944.
  91. Robin Muncy argues that the separate "dominion of female reform" disintegrated after the passage of New Deal legislation in the 1930's when child welfare policy "slid into the mainstream of public policy", xvii. Muncy's position is correct; however, the process of "integration" of separate women's agencies within the government was very slow and lasted well into the 1950's.

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