



Wacs landing in North Africa. This is the only women's enlisted service permitted to go overseas. Total of all women in U. S. armed services at close of last year: Only 175,000.

ACME PHOTOS

# Are Women Doing Their Share in the War?

By J. C. FURNAS

MRS. ELEANOR ROOSEVELT recently published a magazine article that began: "Our women are serving actively in many ways in this war, and they are doing a grand job on both the fighting front and the home front."

When you feel that a quiet evening in mixed company is too quiet, read that sentence aloud. Then stand from under. In thirty seconds, men and women will be at daggers drawn. In this matter, as explosive as it is important, many Americans apparently do not share the First Lady's serenity.

Women are undeniably "serving actively in many ways" and "doing a grand job on the fighting front." Also undeniably, some are doing a grand job on the home front. But the implication in the article and in much current advertising that the ghost of Molly Pitcher would approve of her female descendants is dubious. Mistress Pitcher, a rough-and-ready type, would probably ask harsh questions about why, if women are doing themselves so proud, the Wacs have recruiting trouble, hospitals clamor for unobtainable nurses' aides, retail sales are still stepping up the inflation hazard and so much household salvage still goes to waste.

Still, if women were predominantly lying down on the job, the war effort would be badly crippled. Actually, it is doing fairly well. So the man who claims women are acting like spoiled children may be no nearer right than the lady heaving a chunk of firewood at him to emphasize her belief that, in women's shoes, men would do ten times worse and, anyway, women are doing swell. Both disputants need more facts. Never mind the roto pictures of a debutante in slacks bending over a milling machine at the behest of the plant's press agent. The question is: Where and how much are women doing fine, all right or badly?

**"Women don't have wives," says one expert. And that's as close as most analysts have come to the reason why some of the ladies are lagging in war work.**

It would be easy to make women look bad. Volunteers in a large Midwestern city, for instance, recently tied in with the board of education to promote courses in make-it-last home conservation—an important part of the hearth-and-home front. Block leaders, usually women, were to distribute handbills on their beats advertising the sign-up meeting. Held in a hall seating 1000, the meeting drew a dismal thirty people. The board of education quit in disgust. A check-up showed that it had rained most of the preceding week and most block leaders had neglected to venture out in the wet to distribute handbills.

Evidence on how the average female conscience worked on canned-goods rationing is mixed. OPA headquarters accepted the 72,000,000 cans reported in excess of five per individual when ration books were first issued, but that figure sounds low to an outsider. Checking is impossible, for lack of reliable estimates of what should have been on the nation's pantry shelves. Some discouraged OPA subordinates, however, say their personal observation indicated that hardly one housewife in fifty failed to lie a little or a lot when stating what she had on hand. That was clarified for the present writer by a chatty secretary whom he met while exploring this angle.

"Why, I knew lots of folks didn't declare all their cans," she said. "If you had more than so much, they took coupons out of your book. So, if a woman said

she had a lot of cans, they wouldn't of left her anything in her book. That wouldn't of been fair, would it?"

Leaving comment as superfluous, take the other extreme and consider the Wacs who give blood and roll Red Cross bandages after their long day's work, the Army nurses who went ashore with the men at bloody Salerno, the nation's champion nurses' aide, a Mrs. Goldenberger, of New York City, with more than 4000 hours to her credit. Or, for something close to every woman's pocketbook, the neighborhood epic of the United Housewives, a doughty group in the Bronx who rebelled with great effect against local butchers' violations of price ceilings.

If Mrs. A asked for the beef liver visible in the display case, the butcher would cut off a hunk, lay it briefly on the scale and say, "That'll be two dollars." If she asked what it weighed or what the ceiling was, he gave her a pitying look, put it back in the case and said, "Next!"

So the girls got together. One morning a specially tough butcher found his shop picketed by fifteen vigorous housewives wheeling baby carriages and carrying extremely outspoken signs. Few women crossed that line. Those who did explained elaborately that they were fetching orders paid for the day before. At first, the butchers showed fight, refusing service to anybody suspected of United Housewives connection.

"I'm patriotic!" bleated one when descended on. "I've bought sixteen thousand dollars in War Bonds!"

"With our money, you robber!" answered the picket line, ominously marching on. He came to time. So did the others. By now, known members of the United Housewives get polite service at strictly ceiling prices, and that neighborhood is an island of meticulous price-and-ration compliance in chisel-handy New York.

American housewives in general, however, show less spunk in backing up price control. OPA can only



# ARE WOMEN DOING THEIR SHARE IN THE WAR?

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died a lingering death and, hard as it is to believe, Congress is still dickering and rival agencies still bickering over bills that would start things moving again.

Washington's responsibility for this lunatic gap is plain. But Congress at least passed no law prohibiting local agencies from tackling the need under their own steam—as some have, often with success. A particularly sensible wrinkle is fixing take-home hot suppers at cost for women to pick up along with the youngster. There

are knotty details—how to get suspicious mothers to use such places, whether to charge small sums, whether to use school buildings or private property, how to bypass clumsy local red tape. None of the problems is simple, but all could be solved by good will and energy. Yet, principally because American women have done little but talk about the matter, there are few communities in which Rosie can find a good place for her kids.

For all her accomplishment under handicaps, however, Rosie is not yet ripe for a halo. She is not only earning—often for the first time—she is also spending—dangerously. If the current buying spree does bring catastrophic inflation, American women, in or out of war jobs, will be primarily responsible. That is

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partly economic accident. Many things men usually buy when flush have disappeared—new cars, radios, new houses. But, as a glance at any daily paper shows, women with money to spend can still splurge on fancy underwear, dresses, furs, furniture and jewelry.

Too many do splurge in a welter of potential economic sabotage. With grim appropriateness, the 1943 Christmas shopping season—principally a woman's affair—saw Red Cross collection of blood plasma fall way off. They hoped it was attributable to the flu epidemic until, early in January, blood collections shot right up again, even though the flu was still going strong.

It may be unrealistic to expect human beings to understand that millions of damaging private behaviors can add up to a major public crisis. "After all," some despairing women in the thick of things say, "women weren't brought up to connect what they do themselves with what happens generally." They insist that women can honestly believe at one and the same time that the nation badly needs tin and kitchen fats and that it is obviously too much trouble for them personally to save tin and fats, see them collected or raise Cain if they aren't. Fat collections were disappointing last autumn until giving extra ration points for fat salvage was decided on. The first month it was tried, fat salvage in New Jersey, for a sample state, jumped 42 per cent. The nation's general need for fats, well publicized ever since Pearl Harbor, was no such stimulus as personal extra butter in the icebox.

### A Bow to the Farm Front

It makes good hearing, however, that the 600,000 women who did emergency farm work last year proved a lot. They not only harvested and graded vegetables and fruits but detasseled corn, topped onions—a crucial range of wartime activity. The why of the success of the Women's Land Army makes interesting speculation. It probably ties in with the fact that, by and large, small towns do better than big cities on volunteering anyway. It was often short-term work, a matter of a few weeks as local crops matured. And, for the feminine mind, the fairly direct connection between helping pick tomatoes and having canned tomatoes on the grocer's shelves next winter probably appealed

more than that between the despised tin can and the bearings of an anti-aircraft gun.

The farmer's wife has unmistakably been pitching well; but, then, she always did. In addition, the net accomplishments of Victory gardens and home canning, principally women's doing, were gratifying last year. But those are not year-round activities and it is not so gratifying to find that the backbone of volunteer war work in general is the woman with a full-time paid job, not the housewife with a few hours to spare. With great consistency, the most active and longest-lasting civilian volunteers are women who have already put in eight hours that day.

### The Hand That Rocks the Cradle

Hospitals find that, whereas they can often raise nurses' aides after business hours from among girls with jobs, the daytime problem is acute—women without paid jobs aren't so interested, even though nurses' aides are asked for only 150 hours a year. Red Cross blood depots, their donors 50 per cent women, are usually busy through lunchtime and after five o'clock. But the afternoons from one to four, when housewives and nonworking women have most free time, are notably slack. "Busy women," says a veteran volunteer handler, with acid emphasis, "can always work in one more thing."

The steady rise in the birth rate in the last few years is one thoroughly valid reason, of course, why many young women are not in war work. The nation now has more than 1,500,000 babies and children under four whom it would not have had if the birth rate had stayed at 1937 levels. Taking care of them under wartime shortages of help and safety pins is often a full-time job for a new mother, and always the best possible national service. Almost 3,000,000 babies born since 1940 were "first births," meaning inexperienced mothers. The total woman-hours involved in taking care of the 10,300,000 American babies known to have been born in the last four years is no negligible factor in the national situation.

The week after Pearl Harbor saw floods of women registering for war activities. That was long, long ago. By now, volunteer organizations report, elder women are dropping out—some



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have just plain worn themselves out—and younger ones are not replacing them. Home chores and paying jobs will not account for all the missing recruits.

"Look at the department stores this afternoon," said another volunteer veteran. "Look at the lines in front of the movie theaters. Why, all we ask them for a week is about the same number of hours it takes to sit through a double feature. Too many women are sitting out this war."

Figures on volunteers are often deceptive, in however good faith issued. It sounds fine that the Red Cross has 3,500,000 women in production work on bandages, clothing and such. But, what with absenteeism and other lukewarmness, average time put in, as reported by chapters, comes out to only sixty-three hours a year per woman. Without the many devoted workers who put in twelve and fifteen hours a week, the average would be even lower. Of volunteers registered for various services in the American Women's Volunteer Services in the District of Columbia, hardly more than a quarter were active in a sample three months, though hours put in per volunteer tripled the above Red Cross rate. There is little question that many women of relative leisure use the fact that they have occasionally rolled a bandage as conscience salve. A good deal of current advertising aimed at women abets the tendency. This was the copy on a full newspaper page in a big city last December:

"She's doing grim, exhausting work these days—whether it's hurrying to the hospital every morning or learning all over again how to cook and keep a house tidy. And she needs to be pampered this Christmas. Mink, of course, is the most wildly exciting, deeply momentous of all gifts . . . priced from \$3500."

It would be tough convincing Molly Pitcher that learning all over to cook and keep a house tidy was such grim, exhausting work that it called for \$3500 worth of pampering.

The only women's services that can count on enough recruits are those offering direct contact with servicemen. Traveler's Aid centers have long waiting lists, yet the turnover is so near nil that the waiters seldom get a break. When leaving town for short periods, these volunteers ask guarantees that they'll get their jobs back. New York agencies seeking girls to dance with servicemen have waiting lists of more than 2000 names. When the job gets tough, however, even the lure of the uniformed male is not sure fire. Red Cross Motor Corps girls have to work like beavers driving wounded men, officers and visiting firemen hither and yon, driving local ambulances in lieu of men made over into first-aiders, doing much servicing on the cars, standing by on twenty-four-hour call regularly, averaging 148 hours a year among the 47,000 of them. The Red Cross would like 90,000, but it hasn't got them yet.

"The trouble is," they tell you, "too many women think of war work as consisting strictly of holding a wounded soldier's hand." Working a few hours a week in a hospital to help his sick wife or grandpa has too remote an appeal to supply anything like the nation's need for nurses' aides. Swank hospitals in

the right neighborhood can usually get enough, while beds go unmade for want of help in the hospital way downtown.

Much of the foregoing may help account for women's failure to flock into the armed forces, the only widely publicized angle of this general picture, and a baffling problem. The armed services offer uniforms, supposed to be great drawing cards; pay that, with living expenses covered, compares favorably with many women's jobs. Yet, of the six women's enlisted services—Wacs, Waves, Spars, women Marines, Army and Navy nurses—only the Marines and Spars are comfortable about recruiting. Even they have not been exactly swamped with applicants. The Waves do next best, the Wacs trailing. Nurse recruiting, the two services being sup-

## INVOCATION

By JOHN W. ALEXANDER

Lexington,  
Concord,  
Valley Forge—  
Names from our people's creed,  
Pioneer courage that set us free,  
Help in our hour of need.

Sumter,  
Antietam,  
Gettysburg—  
Brothers in blue or gray,  
By the blood they shed,  
By the thousands dead,  
Help us, Lord, we pray.

Cantigny,  
Belleau  
And Argonne Woods—  
Pride of a war long past.  
Send us, O God, in thine own  
good time,  
Peace that will last.

By Gilberts,  
Marshalls  
And Solomon Isles,  
By the dead on the road to  
Rome,  
Through the steel-torn way we  
tread today,  
Lord, bring us, victorious, home.

plied through Red Cross procurement, was 18 per cent behind its quota the first of the year.

Efforts to find what is wrong turn up only paradoxes. Relative smartness of uniform is often mentioned, but a January Gallup poll showed that women much prefer the Waves' to the Marines' uniform, counter to the recruiting trend. Girls in uniform are mostly eager to get overseas. Waves and Marines bitterly resent Congress' refusal to let them go. So why is it that the Wacs, the only service that can go overseas, have the most recruiting trouble?

Their colonel was recently quoted as implying that the nation could never raise all the Wacs it needed by volunteering, since it had never raised a male army that way. But the fact is that,

More tears, probably crocodile, Evelyn reflected, because her mother never bawled; but just for that reason these made her uncomfortable because they might be genuine. The conversation had languished.

"Evvie," her mother had finally said, "do you think you'd be worth a hundred thousand dollars a year to your country?"

"Lord, no!" said Evvie, shocked at this apparent attack of acute dementia.

before volunteering was stopped in World War I, more than 1,250,000 men—a sizable army even now—were in olive drab on one or another voluntary basis. Nothing stands up under scrutiny—not even the ill-natured theory that girls from well-off families, best able to enlist, are too soft to join up. Actually, the proportion of enlistees from the Junior Leagues—women in the right age groups and higher-income brackets—is much higher than for women nationally.

The favorite general diagnosis for the failure of women to enlist is that fathers' and boy friends' disapproval is the catch. In view of how little masculine disapproval affected women's urge to vote and wear colored nail polish, the theory seems inadequate.

"We haven't been bombed," others say. "The war hasn't been brought home here as it has to the English." Then the facts about Canadian women, who haven't been bombed either, crop up. By last December, Canada had 37,000 women enlisted in her armed services out of some 12,000,000 total population. The United States had 175,000 out of 135,000,000.

Wherever you look, Canadian women, living in a culture nearer that of the United States than any other nation's, involved in the same war, are way out ahead. Women in paying jobs in the dominion have practically doubled their numbers since the war began. You have to stretch to get the corresponding figure in the United States up to 30 per cent. Canadian women, according to a first-class professional observer, began pleading for rationing long before the government was willing, as "the fairer thing." Housewives' buying, after a flurry of spending, is already back to normal, whereas January, 1944, was 6 per cent ahead of January last year in United States department stores. Women notice the difference themselves.

"We have Canadian members on our board," said an executive of a continent-wide social-service outfit. "They come down here to meetings, wearing old clothes because they have no new ones, and look at our American members as if they were creatures from another world. They mean business up there; it's startling to see the contrast."

Half a dozen able American women who know both Canadian and American war activities confirmed that. Why women don't enlist in the Wacs and furnish enough nurses' aides narrows down to the question of what have Canadian women got that ours haven't got? An eminent American legislator, asked to wrestle with that problem for purposes of this article, finally muttered something about "Why just talk about women? Too many Americans of both sexes are still trying to sit out the war."

Women's lack of generalized imagination, however, still seems the likeliest diagnosis. There is no possibility of such a lack in the dramatic case of which the Red Cross is so proud:

A young woman who had just seen her Navy husband off to active service in the South Pacific came in to give blood. She came back again and again—five times in all. As she arrived home from the fifth time, there was news of her husband. Very seriously wounded; life saved by five successive transfusions of Red Cross blood plasma.

"If you'll promise to stay to keep me company—with your brother off in those dreadful jungles—I'll promise to buy you your limit of bonds every year while the war lasts—a hundred thousand—no, a hundred and five thousand dollars."

"Huh! Generous of you! And draw up to nearly three per cent. And have only forty million to live on till the bonds come due."

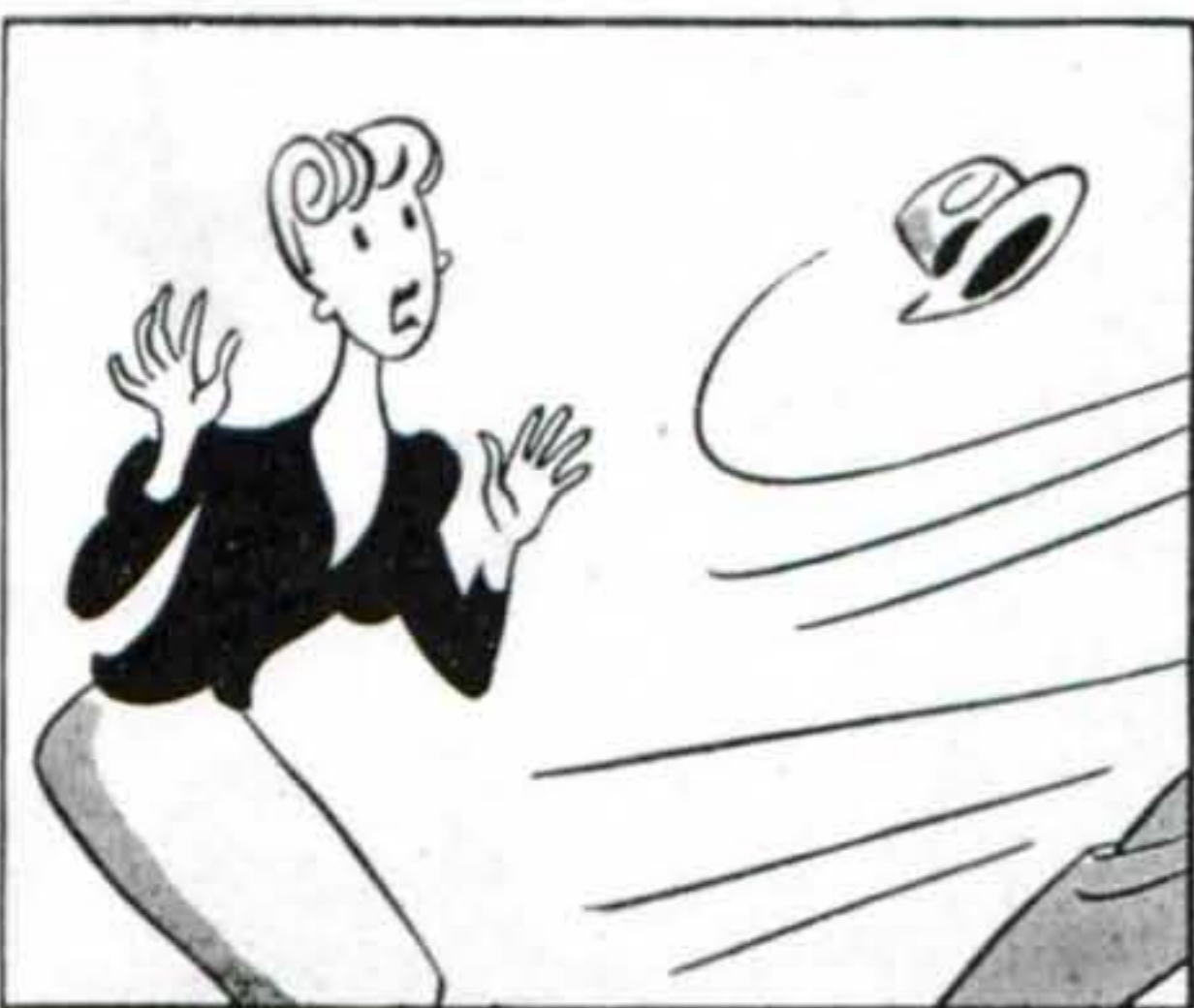
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You're tall, blonde  
and willowy . . .



. . . you've got beauty,  
brains, breeding but



you haven't a Proctor  
toaster with a crisper.

A Proctor has beauty . . . and also the "brains" to make all kinds of toast. Pops up light, golden or dark toast—plus the crunchy dry toast that its "Crisper" makes automatically. Buy War Bonds for Victory—a Proctor after the war.

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Proctor & Schwartz, Inc.  
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**PROCTOR**  
AUTOMATIC TOASTER

For competent repairs, 81 Service Stations, Coast to Coast . . . see Classified Telephone Directory.

## DON'T TALK ABOUT LOVE

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"I won't have you speak of your brother that way—besides, Dean Mendenhall said he was going to be one of our great surgeons."

"He was just fishing for an endowment," Evelyn had said, grimly and quite unjustly.