

1997

# At the agricultural front: the Women's Land Army during World War II

Stephanie Ann Carpenter  
*Iowa State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/rtd>

 Part of the [United States History Commons](#), [Women's History Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

## Recommended Citation

Carpenter, Stephanie Ann, "At the agricultural front: the Women's Land Army during World War II " (1997). *Retrospective Theses and Dissertations*. 11964.  
<https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/rtd/11964>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Iowa State University Capstones, Theses and Dissertations at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Retrospective Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [digirep@iastate.edu](mailto:digirep@iastate.edu).

## INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

**The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.** Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

# UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company  
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA  
313/761-4700 800/521-0600



At the agricultural front:  
The Women's Land Army during World War II

by

Stephanie Ann Carpenter

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Agricultural History and Rural Studies

Major Professor: R. Douglas Hurt

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

1997

Copyright © Stephanie Ann Carpenter, 1997. All rights reserved.



UMI Number: 9814624

Copyright 1997 by  
Carpenter, Stephanie Ann

All rights reserved.

---

UMI Microform 9814624  
Copyright 1998, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.

This microform edition is protected against unauthorized  
copying under Title 17, United States Code.

---

**UMI**

300 North Zeeb Road  
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Graduate College  
Iowa State University

This is to certify that the Doctoral dissertation of

Stephanie Ann Carpenter

has met the dissertation requirements of Iowa State University

Signature was redacted for privacy.

, Major Professor

Signature was redacted for privacy.

For the Major Program

Signature was redacted for privacy.

For the Graduate College

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1.	INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2.	PRE-WAR PRECEDENTS	20
CHAPTER 3.	AND ON THE FARM: PRECEDENTS TO THE WLA	45
CHAPTER 4.	THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND THE WLA	86
CHAPTER 5.	MONEY, CLOTHING, HEALTH, AND HOME	130
CHAPTER 6.	PITCH IN AND HELP: THE WLA CALLS WOMEN TO THE FARMS	174
CHAPTER 7.	REGULAR FARM GIRLS: WOMEN IN SERVICE ON THE COASTS	209
CHAPTER 8.	WOMEN IN SERVICE, THE MIDWEST: IN THE HOUSE OR IN THE FIELDS, THE DEBATE REGARDING NONFARM WOMEN	240
CHAPTER 9.	WOMEN IN SERVICE, THE SOUTH: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN RACE AND CLASS GET IN THE WAY	270
CHAPTER 10.	CONCLUSIONS	295
	APPENDIX	320
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	326

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The Women's Land Army (WLA) of World War II helped bring to the United States agricultural front the needed labor for the country's farms. Established during a time of national emergency, the WLA placed more than three million women on farms. And while the WLA operated only from mid-1943 to the end of the war, its significance to American farming and agricultural labor is multifold. The use of farm and nonfarm women, including middle-class, urban white women and women of color, initiated a change in the manner that the nation viewed the farm labor force. By accepting all available women as agricultural labor, farmers in the 1940s abandoned accepted labor practices and adopted wartime measures. This action by the nation's farm sector differed from earlier decades. Subsequently, after World War II, farm labor practices in the country experienced change as more women remained in agriculture than had been present before World War II.

The 1940s would become the watershed for major changes in American women's lives, including farm women. With the onset of world war, women faced the possibility, and then the reality, of entering the defense and manufacturing industries and the military. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the federal government recognized the need for women in the work force. Women became war workers as a result of a national effort to win the war. Although the number of women who had worked in industry or had been members of the military previously, had not been prominent, in 1942 the federal government began actively recruiting women for defense manufacturing and military positions. Posters depicting Uncle Sam and "I Need You!" and similar advertisements such as "Women Wanted!" became common sights. By the end of 1942, two million American women had joined war industries in efforts to provide goods and services required for a country at war. Images of women in military dress uniform and in defense-

manufacturing uniform appeared in the media. The WACS, WAVES, and "Rosie the Riveter" became symbols for American women. These images alone, however, do not tell the complete history of American women during the Second World War. For millions of women, military and industrial or defense manufacturing positions did not encompass their assistance to the war effort.<sup>1</sup>

For many American women, the cultural, economic, and social characteristics so often identified with the Second World War do not represent the total experience. More than three million women participated in a defense industry that has not received the publicity or attention that military or industrial service garnered. Beginning in 1943, and continuing through the end of 1945, women worked as agricultural laborers, assisting farmers to increase production and reach quotas established by the federal government. This wartime practice established a precedent that allowed women in the 1950s and beyond to justify the changing structure of American female employment that had been taking place since the onset of the twentieth century.

The impact of World War II on American society brought great change to people's lives. As women prepared to enter the defense job market, they made changes that would radically alter their lives. It is within wartime that the role of American women in society transformed from the 1930s, allowing as well a change in society's perception of women. Federal administrators, assuming that women were content with their lives and that they were not needed for defense work, did not immediately recruit women for war work. Subsequently, women arrived late to positions in the defense industries, but more so to agriculture. With defense recruitment, manufacturing and industrial interests received the labor needed to continue operation. In terms of agriculture, however, the federal government hesitated and did not implement a comprehensive labor policy until mid-1943 when the situation had become

extreme. The hesitation to set in motion a farm employment plan at the same time as the industrial recruitment measure, coupled with the "unglamorous" nature of agricultural work, forced WLA, Extension Service, and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) administrators to work hard to recruit female labor later in the war.

Regardless of federal action at the time, or perhaps because of it, the historical study of female agricultural labor during the Second World War is an underdeveloped subject. While historians have long debated the military and social aspects of World War II both on the home front and overseas, the examination of agricultural labor has not received similar treatment. In the work that has been completed regarding farm labor during the war, the main body of scholarship has concentrated on the analysis of work performed by convicts, interned Japanese Americans, Mexican nationals, and prisoners of war. Even so, more publications exist that deal with the social and cultural characteristics and actions of these groups than of their experience as farm laborers. In terms of American women, however, the examination of their contribution to agricultural labor during World War II has been almost nonexistent. Thus, a study of the WLA provides a worthy subject.<sup>2</sup>

A survey of the available literature, including contemporary farm and government publications, national media, and WLA annual reports, allows conclusions to be drawn concerning the status of women in agriculture and society during the early 1940s. Within this analysis, the relationship of the WLA to federal agencies and organizations illustrates the importance of the group to the overall war effort. With the millions of women participating, the WLA effectively recruited, trained, and placed its labor on national farms. The continuation of this agency past its initial year relied on the farmers, federal government, and women to establish and maintain a successful program. To this

end, the number of women who enrolled as members of the WLA, as well as the presence of farm women in agriculture, gave further testament to the success of this program.

Even so, the organization and success of the WLA did not occur without the support of federal agencies and officials. In this case, the USDA and one of its agencies, the Extension Service, promoted the WLA, along with other USDA agricultural labor programs, to create a viable Emergency Farm Labor Program. The establishment of these programs had been affected by previous state- and private-run labor initiatives. These earlier models allowed the USDA and Extension Service to effectively administer and organize their labor program. Relying on the experiences left by World War I and the New Deal, as well as state models for utilizing available sources for farm labor in the early 1940s, the federal government finally created its own farm labor program in mid-1943, years after the first call for such a program.

In the period before the creation of the Emergency Farm Labor Program and the WLA, individuals such as Eleanor Roosevelt and Dorothy Thompson, and organizations such as the Women's National Farm and Garden Association and the United States Women's Bureau, argued for the re-establishment of a land army. The federal government, however, did not immediately act following these calls for a labor program, but kept to a different timetable in its efforts to create a viable farm labor program. Clearly conditions existed that kept the USDA and Extension Service from adequately providing labor to the nation's farmers upon the onset of war. As a result, it would not be until more than one year after Pearl Harbor that the federal government would legislate and pass Public Law 45, the measure that created the Emergency Farm Labor Program.

What kept the federal government from immediately creating the Emergency Farm Labor Program as demanded by farmers and others in 1941 and 1942? In part, the federal

government's hesitation can be attributed to the bureaucracy that controlled Washington, D.C. However, federal administrative and legislative structure cannot be held totally responsible for the delay in governmental action regarding an agricultural labor program; individuals also played a part. It is apparent from the national and local presses during the early years of war that many individuals, agencies, and organizations petitioned the federal government to create an effective farm labor program in the wake of its recruitment policy for domestic defense and industrial manufacturing. To accomplish their plans, private and public people and groups compared World War II experiences with earlier decades. In this case, World War I, the New Deal, and state- or private-run labor initiatives of the late 1930s and early 1940s provided these examples. As models for a successful labor program, these earlier events laid the groundwork and established precedents by which the government would formulate a successful labor organization in 1943. Additionally, the presence of labor initiatives in other countries also influenced the creation of a program in the United States.

In World War I, the United States experienced its first labor shortage of the twentieth century. As men went to fight in 1917, the nation searched for alternative labor sources. One of these was the Women's Land Army of America (WLAA). The WLAA had been created to recruit and place women on farms that needed labor. As a semi-private organization that did not use government resources, the WLAA placed fewer than 20,000 women on farms, a negligible number compared to the millions enrolled in the WLA. However, the precedent, a structured farm labor program that utilized female workers, for World War II had been established. This example from World War I assisted in efforts to create a similar program in the early 1940s. Fortunately, American farmers and the federal government did not depend entirely on the events of World War



I, but also utilized experiences from New Deal work programs to create a comprehensive agricultural labor program.

The New Deal and the decade of the 1930s provided examples to the federal government for the creation of an effective decentralized farm labor program. The New Deal brought reform and relief to a depressed nation by establishing federal, state, and local programs. With federal administration, New Deal programs extended into rural and urban areas with a variety of help programs for the nation's population. By mirroring the New Deal, the WLA depended on federal administrative control and monies, while allowing local control for the actual contact with those women employed on farms. In many ways, the WLA followed the precedent set by earlier programs to organize its administration, recruit women, and offer relief on a scale similar to New Deal programs. And, just as no one factor had been responsible for World War I's mobilization or New Deal relief work, no single precedent or cause was responsible for the creation of a defense program in World War II. For the most part, these separate actions made up the ideas and efforts that defined the WLA. Agriculture and society during the preceding decades of the twentieth century are important in the overall study of the WLA, because both provide clear precedents for the activities, programs, and policies established in the early 1940s.<sup>3</sup>

Although much of the nation favored the New Deal and its policies, areas did exist that rebelled against government control and intervention. Many of these same locales also resisted war-time defense programs. Thus, within this study of the WLA, the organization's strength will be found in those areas and locales that did not initially accept female farm labor. It is important to discover states that did not openly embrace the WLA and address their reasons for doing so. In several cases the reluctance present in 1943 regarding the use of female agricultural labor would not be present in 1944 or

1945. The acceptance by these states to utilize women as farm workers is important to the overall study, especially in locations where biases and attitudes changed over time. On the other hand, a few states remained faithful to their farmers' prejudices and ideals, sacrificing agricultural production and money because of their opposition to women as farm workers. In this regard the opinions of farmers in the American Middle West and South are important to the analysis, because these regions did not openly embrace the WLA in 1943, but would use several hundred thousand women as farm laborers by the end of the war. States in the western and eastern coastal regions readily accepted the female labor force in 1943 and continually hired women as farm workers during the war. And, states in the Great Plains and the eastern Rocky Mountain region found it difficult to establish WLA organizations and to endorse a program that local farmers rejected. It is these conflicting views of farmers and state officials that allow an in depth analysis of the WLA organization, one that will address the general concept of the use of women as agricultural labor, as well as the regional differences and biases, and the issues of class, gender, and race regarding the WLA and other farm labor programs. This, along with the creation, development, and practice of the WLA will encompass most of this project, taking into account issues such as type of work, wages, housing, transportation, safety and insurance, and length of time in service.

The development of the WLA within the USDA and Extension Service in mid-1943 calls into question the development of defense programs during World War II. Although the establishment of such an organization had been discussed among various women's groups, governmental agencies, and individuals as early as 1940, Congress did not establish the WLA until midway through the war. Coming more than a year after the official declaration of war, as well as months later than defense and industrial labor recruitment programs, the WLA and

other agricultural labor relief programs lagged behind industry in their creation. Abdicating to pressures by governmental agencies, individuals, and private organizations, the federal government worked to alleviate the labor shortage faced by the nation's farmers. By placing the WLA within the USDA's Emergency Farm Labor Program and the Extension Service's United States Crop Corps, the federal government became the caretaker for emergency farm labor during World War II.

The passage of Public Law 45 and establishment of Emergency Farm Labor Program in 1943 did not represent the only agricultural worker plan in place during World War II. In the years before the federal labor plan, farmers had not sat idly by and waited for the government to create its war-time program. Instead, American farmers addressed their labor concerns from the start and sought to provide themselves with needed workers. In efforts to obtain and reach production goals and quotas, farmers achieved their success with any means available. For the most part, that success hinged on farmers' abilities to increase their production and output.

To reach production quotas, farmers turned to an example already in place--industry. Shortly after the declaration of war in late 1941, and before an official government policy, defense industries recognized the necessity of using female workers and encouraged their hiring. Although men saw women as threats to their permanent positions, defense and manufacturing industries hired women in significant numbers during the war. In some companies, such as the Vultee Aircraft Corporation, women accounted for 95 percent of the workers on the assembly line. While men had made up most of the workers in the late 1930s, as much as 98 percent of the work force, in 1942 women accounted for as much as 96 percent in arsenals.<sup>4</sup> And while viewed as temporary employees, women proved themselves capable, and at times better than their male counterparts, as they worked to build airplanes and ships, as

well as other defense products.

Just as industry and manufacturing recognized the importance and contributions of women to the country's businesses, so did American farmers. Thus, prior to mid-1943, agriculturalists engaged available laborers to assist with harvests. While farmers demanded that the federal government institute a federal labor program, they did not wait for that eventuality. Specifically, eastern and western farmers searched for a way to locate necessary agricultural labor, as well as produce required crops for the war effort. During World War II, the federal government urged farmers to "raise more soybeans and peanuts for oil, vegetables, and livestock" to meet domestic and international demands. In 1943, farmers were requested by the government to produce 8 percent more foodstuffs than the previous year, an increase of 38 percent over the period from 1935 to 1939. Over time, agricultural production increased more than 10 percent during the war years, and overall farm acreage in the nation increased about 5 percent.<sup>5</sup> In terms of farm labor, women began to replace men as workers by the 1941 crop season. Recruited through several state-run programs, women labored on farms in 1941 and 1942 and established the path for those who would follow as employees of the WLA. In some western states, the demand for labor occurred before the actual declaration of war.

Individuals, state employment services, and farmers set up programs for recruitment and placement of labor on farms during 1941 and 1942. While these early labor initiatives did not depend on federal money or assistance, these efforts committed states to the national war effort. During the 1941-1942 crop season, states on the East and West coasts hired women (and high school students) to plant, cultivate, and harvest fruits and vegetables. Local, county, and state organizations as well as individuals in these regions established their own forces in an effort to alleviate the labor situation. "Land army" states found it possible to

combat labor shortages within their own political sphere, as well as provide administrative models that other states could easily duplicate.

In addition to providing other states with workable models, these early state initiatives also presented the federal government with a plan by which to recruit, train, and place a labor force for a national farm labor program. In their efforts to request the creation of a federal farm labor program, these state leaders were not alone as federal agencies, government officials, and the private sector also raised the call for a land army. Women involved in state initiatives, such as Dorothy Thompson in Vermont and Corinne Alsop in Connecticut, advocated a commitment by the federal government to establish a national WLA. And, while considered a low priority by the federal administration, agencies such as the United States Extension Service and the Women's Bureau discussed ways to bring aid to the country's agricultural sector. Pressure exerted by these groups and individuals to establish a WLA had an effect on the administration. As a result, by 1943, the idea of establishing the WLA, as well as other farm labor programs, was acceptable to those in positions of power in the USDA, Extension Service, and other agencies. Prior to 23 January 1943, the U.S. Employment Service held "responsibility for the recruitment, placement, transfer, and utilization of agricultural workers." However after that date and by order of the War Manpower Commission, the USDA obtained the authority to raise a national farm labor force. Further legislation placed the Emergency Farm Labor Program, United States Crop Corps, and several labor programs within the Extension Service. This action allowed USDA and Extension Service officials including the WLA in April 1943, to appoint program administrators.<sup>6</sup>

Florence L. Hall, a former extension agent, acknowledged the challenges of the WLA within the Extension Service and USDA and the retention of this program during the war. Thus

one of Hall's first actions as WLA administrator occurred with efforts to recruit a labor force for the 1943 crop season. With the overall administration of the WLA based in Washington, D.C., each state's Extension Service and personnel worked effectively to run their WLA organization. Communities and individuals, worked alongside Extension Service personnel in efforts to provide the nation with the needed and necessary agricultural labor. State agencies became responsible for the compensation, recruitment and placement, and training of women who volunteered to spend their summers, vacations, and weekends working on farms.

The placement of the WLA within the USDA and Extension Service is complicated at best. The political maneuvering of Congress and federal agencies affected the status of American agriculture and demand for labor in the early 1940s. The testimony of officials from numerous farm organizations such as the Federal Farm Bureau Federation and Grange, along with personnel from agricultural experiment stations, expressed their views regarding female agricultural labor. While those employed by the state extension services and experiment stations generally supported the use of women on farms, those from the Federal Farm Bureau Federation and Grange did not. These activities, as well as the reluctance of USDA administrators to engage women as farm workers delayed the establishment of the WLA and other programs within the Emergency Farm Labor Program.<sup>7</sup>

The attitudes of the Grange and Farm Bureau members are indicative of the larger picture; many viewed the use of women as farm labor as unnecessary and inappropriate. Congressmen and senators regularly echoed the views of their constituents during hearings and sessions. In the South, congressmen, farm organizations, and farmers viewed the use of nonfarm white women for agricultural labor as socially unacceptable.<sup>8</sup> Historically, middle-class white women had not toiled in the southern cotton, tobacco, and other crop fields. Thus, the

war threatened to alter the perception of farming in the South, by including white middle-class women in fields that had previously been dominantly by tenant farmers and sharecroppers, black and white. The presence of nonfarm urban white women in the region's fields attacked the perceived norm and image of women in the South. But, while this image had been threatened during the war, a return to tradition in the following decades brought the conclusion that the South did not change its farm labor practices in non-wartime years. Other areas of the country also protested the use of women as agricultural labor. For example, the Middle West challenged the presence of all urban women in the fields.

Middle western farmers contested the use of urban women on their farms, not because of race but for social reasons. For the most part, midwestern farmers did not trust the urban women and questioned their morals. Additionally, they did not expect the nonfarm women to be able to perform the required work. The farmers expected the women to corrupt their families, as well as tire of their farm experience quickly and leave. If this occurred, farmers incurred additional expense and time to locate and train new workers. To avoid this inconvenience, midwestern farmers did not actively recruit an urban labor force for the region. As a result of these preconceived ideas regarding the use of urban women, midwestern farmers hoped to rely on their own or local labor forces to achieve the required high levels of production mandated by the government. Eventually, midwestern farmers conceded the use of urban women for seasonal farm work; but, for the most part, midwestern labor shortages would be filled with farm women, usually their own wives and daughters. These biased farmer opinions were in direct conflict with states that established early labor programs, because these locales recognized the ability and necessity of farm and nonfarm women to the war effort.

Had the rejection of these women as farm laborers in 1943

been the result of regional, ethnic, or cultural biases? The answer to this question lies in examination of agricultural and farming publications, national newspapers, and WLA state reports which illustrate the attitudes of midwestern and southern farmers in each year of WLA operation. What made these regions different from western or eastern areas that embraced women as agricultural laborers? The presence of non-Caucasian farm workers in the East and West did not affect the hiring of other women as strongly as the use of nonfarm urban and middle-class white women in the Middle West and South, respectively. The questions and concerns surrounding the placement of women on farms throughout all regions of the country affected the significance placed on women as agricultural labor during the Second World War. By minimizing the role of women within agriculture, the federal government and USDA perpetuated an inaccurate image of the WLA within the Emergency Farm Labor Program. By expressing their reluctance at the use of women on American farms, federal administrators hindered the acceptance and placement expected by WLA officials, instead influencing regions of the nation to turn away available labor. Thus, it is important to examine the significant contribution that women made to agriculture during the war in order to perceive the position of women within American society.

The WLA continued to the end of the war. Each year the federal WLA administration increased its call for women to work in the fields. And, this request was met each year. Consequently, it is possible to quantify the number of women who worked on the nation's farms during World War II. For the purpose of this research, farm and nonfarm women have both been counted within the figures of women employed in agriculture. Most government reports published during the war, and scholarly articles written since, use both characteristics to identify the number of women involved. Then, in terms of economic development for farmers, political



development of the state and nation, and social development for women, the WLA provided Americans with several opportunities in the period from 1943 to 1945. The WLA's significant contribution to the war effort as well as its contribution to agricultural policy and the status of women in the war and post-war period are issues that bear analysis and contemplation, because its members helped shape the position of women in society following the Second World War.

Further, the success of the WLA demonstrates its significance to the agricultural and defense communities during the war. The recognition of the women's efforts to participate in defense programs brought the importance of the WLA and other farm labor programs to national attention, at least during the war. In the years that followed, however, the significance of women in the agricultural labor force has all but been forgotten. By ignoring wartime female agricultural labor, World War II scholars have removed from WLA participants any importance they might have regarding their war service. Without reaffirmation of the WLA as a viable defense program, women's war effort becomes marginalized. Examples of this marginalization can be viewed in several works depicting World War II, the American home front, and the defense industries. Susan M. Hartmann in The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s, as one example of scholarly work regarding women and World War II, does not address the topic of agricultural labor. The same is true of scholars who addressed other groups during the war. Although studies exist that examine the presence of interned Japanese, Mexican nationals, and prisoners of war in agricultural labor during World War II, several more omit the subject of agricultural labor from their analysis.<sup>9</sup>

Primary materials, however, present a different story. The federal government published many documents discussing the importance of the WLA to the agricultural community, and the Extension Service, Women's Bureau, and USDA publicized the WLA

across the country. Additionally, contemporary periodicals such as farm journals, popular publications, and women's magazines determined the overall societal image of the WLA and the effect of this image on the organization's operation. In the period before the establishment of the federal program, publications debated the issue of a land army, or promoted the state program in their area. After April 1943 and initiation of the federal program, journal and newspaper articles began to call for additional women farm workers, both rural and urban, to join farmers as they planted, cultivated, and harvested their crops.

As the early 1940s became known as the period of WACS, WAVES, and "Rosie the Riveter," it is past time to recognize the importance of the "regular farm girl" as well. Although the Emergency Farm Labor Program continued through the 1947 crop year, the WLA did not. After ceasing operation in December 1945, the WLA did not remain an official part of the federal government's labor program. However, the end of the program did not result in the end of women's involvement in American agriculture. The placement of millions of American women on farms during World War II ensured the continuation of this practice after the end of the war. Even without the WLA as an administrative structure, farmers, states, and women carried on their labor tradition into the late 1940s and 1950s. Women remained a part of the national agricultural labor force.

Because farmers continued to employ women as agricultural labor after the end of World War II, the early 1940s proved to be a time that changed the status of women in American society and on farms. Women's efforts to join the nation's defense movement, in the early 1940s, demonstrated their desire and ability to assist the country during its time of need. In terms of agricultural labor, the WLA illustrates the importance of female war-time service. Women's presence in the nation's fields after the war demonstrates the need of

additional labor in those years as well. In numbers greater than the period before World War II, women remained as agricultural workers following 1945. The continuation of women on farms can be attributed to the success of the WLA during the years from 1943 to 1945, and, although, historical research and study has not readily included the role of women in agriculture during the war, that omission has begun to be reversed in recent years. Thus, recognition and importance has been brought to a group of women previously unseen by the academic, popular, and scholarly worlds. Thus the WLA will become as important to the historical study of women in World War II as "Rosie the Riveter" and the women who joined the military service.

## Notes

1. See Susan L. Allen, "Preparing Women for the National Crisis: The Role of Oklahoma A. and M. College," Chronicles of Oklahoma 69 (Winter 1991-1992): 392-407; Karen Anderson, Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981); Keith Ayling, Calling All Women (New York: Harper, 1942); D'Ann Campbell, Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984); Chester W. Gregory, Women in Defense Work during World War II: An Analysis of the Labor Problem and Women's Rights (New York: Exposition Press, 1974); Susan M. Hartmann, The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982); Margaret Randolph Higonnet et al., eds., Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Ruth Milkman, Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); What Women Can Do to Win the War (Chicago: Consolidated Book Publishers, 1942); Nancy Baker Wise and Christy Wise, A Mouthful of Rivets: Women at Work in World War II (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994).

2. While historians have overall ignored the position of women in war-time agriculture, recent scholarship has discussed the presence of women in agriculture. See Stephanie Carpenter, "At the Agricultural Front: The Women's Land Army in World War II," Agricultural History 71 (Spring 1997): 163-85; Marie Dawson, "Pitching in on the Home Front," Countryside 1 (Winter 1990): 84-86; Katherine Jellison, Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology, 1913-1963 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Judith Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, "'To the Rescue of the Crops': The Women's Land Army during World War II," Prologue 25 (Winter 1993): 347-61; Caron Smith, "The Women's Land Army During World War II," Kansas History 14 (Summer 1991): 82-88. Other worker groups in war-time agricultural programs include: convict labor. See Ward M. McAfee, "A History of Convict Labor in California," Southern California Quarterly 72 (Spring 1990): 91-140; Japanese Americans, see Russell Bearden, "Life Inside Arkansas's Japanese-American Relocation Centers," Arkansas Historical Quarterly 48 (Summer 1989): 169-96; Melyn Johnson, "At Home in Amache: A Japanese-American Relocation Camp in Colorado," Colorado Heritage no. 1 (1989): 2-11; Ward M. McAfee, "America's Two Japanese-American Policies During World War II," Southern California Quarterly 69 (Summer 1987): 151-64; Sandra C. Taylor, "Japanese Americans and Keetley Farms: Utah's Relocation Colony," Utah Historical Quarterly 54 (Fall 1986): 328-44; "Uprooted: A Portfolio of Japanese Americans in World War II," Colorado Heritage no. 1 (1989): 14-27;

Rosalie H. Wax, "In and Out of the Tule Lake Segregation Center: Japanese Internment in the West, 1942-1945," Montana 37 (Spring 1987): 12-25; Bracero Program, see Erasmo Gamboa, "Braceros in the Pacific Northwest: Laborers on the Domestic Front, 1942-1947," Pacific Historical Review 56 (1987): 378-98; Erasmo Gamboa, Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942-1947 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990); Erasmo Gamboa, "Mexican Migration into Washington State: A History, 1940-1950," Pacific Northwest Quarterly 72 (July 1981): 121-31; William L. Hewitt, "Mexican Workers in Wyoming During World War II: Necessity, Discrimination, and Protest," Annals of Wyoming 54 (Fall 1982): 20-33; Johnny M. McCain, "Texas and the Mexican Labor Question, 1942-1947," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 85 (July 1981): 45-64; Roger L. Jungmeyer, "The Bracero Program, 1942-1951: Mexican Contract Labor in the United States" (Ph.D. diss., University of Missouri-Columbia, 1988); prisoners-of-war, see William P. Corbett, "'They Hired Every Farmer in the Country': Establishing the Prisoner of War Camp at Tonkawa," Chronicles of Oklahoma 69 (Winter 1991-1992): 368-91; Susan Badger Doyle, "German and Italian Prisoners of War in Albuquerque, 1943-1946," New Mexico Historical Review 66 (July 1991): 327-40; John Fahey, "John Fahey on 'Reeducating' German Prisoners During World War II," Oregon Historical Quarterly 93 (Winter 1992-1993): 368-93; George H. Lobdell, "A Tale of Two Christmases at the Algona Prisoner-of-War Camp," Palimpsest 73 (Winter 1992): 170-83; Joe D. Rogers, "Camp Hereford: Italian Prisoners of War on the Texas Plains, 1942-1945," Panhandle-Plains Historical Review 62 (1989): 57-110; William L. Shea, ed., "A German Prisoner of War in the South: The Memoir of Edwin Pelz," Arkansas Historical Quarterly 44 (Spring 1985): 42-55; Hazel Wages, "Memphis Armed Service Forces Depot Prisoner of War Camp, 1944-1946," Tennessee Historical Quarterly 52 (Spring 1993): 19-32.

3. Litoff and Smith, "'To the Rescue of the Crops,'" 349.

4. What Women Can Do to Win the War, 5. For additional information on women in industry, see Gregory, Women in Defense Work During World War II.

5. R. Douglas Hurt, American Agriculture: A Brief History (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994), 320-22; "Women in Agriculture--General," press release, Magazine Division, Office of War Information, 3 June 1943, folder Agriculture 1943, box 200, Women Workers in World War II, 1940-1945, Division of Research, Records of the U.S. Women's Bureau, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter NARG 86).

6. Litoff and Smith, "'To the Rescue of the Crops'"; Wayne D. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program, 1943-1947," Agricultural Monograph No. 13, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, USDA, September 1951, 24.

7. These assumptions are based on testimony given during House and Senate hearings in the matter of appropriations for farm labor in 1943. Individual and organization statements implied the position of each who testified, and for the most part, demonstrated their attitude regarding women as farm labor.

8. House, Committee on Appropriations, Farm Labor Program, 1943: Hearings before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943, 40-41.

9. Most historians of World War II have not addressed the significance of women in agriculture or as agricultural labor, however, Jellison is the exception, rather than the rule. Most, like Hartmann, have ignored agricultural labor or women's roles in agriculture, as well as the social significance of women in American agriculture and the political significance of the WLA in local, state, and federal government. For general studies concerning interned Americans, see Roger Daniels, "The Decisions to Relocate the North American Japanese: Another Look," Pacific Historical Review 51 (February 1982): 71-77; Thomas James, "The Education of the Japanese Americans at Tule Lake, 1942-1946," Pacific Historical Review 56 (February 1987): 25-58; Valerie Matsumoto, "Japanese American Women During World War II," in Unequal Sisters: A Multi-cultural Reader in U.S. Women's History, ed. Ellen Carol DuBois and Vicki L. Ruiz (New York: Routledge, 1990), 373-86; Rose D. Scherini, "Executive Order 9066 and Italian Americans: The San Francisco Story," California History 70 (Winter 1991-1992): 366-77; Sandra C. Taylor, "Interned at Topaz: Age, Gender, and Family in the Relocation Experience," Utah Historical Quarterly 59 (Fall 1991): 380-94; Sandra C. Taylor, Jewel of the Desert: Japanese American Internment at Topaz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). For prisoner-of-war camps see Thomas R. Buecker, "Nazi Influence at the Fort Robinson Prisoner of War Camp During World War II," Nebraska History 73 (Spring 1992): 32-41; Anton H. Richter, ed., "A German P.O.W. at Camp Grant: The Reminiscences of Heinz Richter," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 76 (Spring 1983): 61-70.

## CHAPTER 2. PRE-WAR PRECEDENTS

The Women's Land Army of World War II provided American farmers with essential labor as their regular hands joined the military or industrial front. Created during a time that the nation faced a labor crisis in all aspects of society, the WLA had been overshadowed by labor needs in defense and manufacturing industries. Millions of women entered defense operations while farmers anxiously waited for legislation that would authorize their own labor force. As a result, the process by which the USDA formulated an agricultural labor program together with the time Congress spent debating the feasibility of such a program, resulted in a delay of almost eighteen months for the creation of the WLA after the declaration of war by the United States against the Axis powers. Thus it was not until April 1943 that the WLA officially began its service to the nation's farmers. During the course of its operation, the WLA recruited, trained, and placed millions of farm and nonfarm women on farms. With total participation reaching almost 3.5 million women, the WLA is an important component of the American home front during World War II, and especially during the period from 1943 to 1945.<sup>1</sup>

During the war years, rural and urban women worked in agriculture assisting the nation's farmers in providing needed food products and supplies to the market. The presence of urban nonfarm women in agriculture changed the way farmers had been accustomed to operating. Aside from advancements made in agricultural biotechnology and hardware technology, the changes that occurred within the realm of agricultural labor forever altered the perception of those employed on American farms. The importance and significance of those women who participated in the WLA heightens our understanding of women's accomplishments and status within American society, as well as their position within the realm of American agriculture during

the war and beyond. The importance of the WLA, however, cannot overshadow the significance of earlier federal and private labor programs designed to offer assistance to a given sector of American society. Thus, the WLA can trace its origins to several movements in American history, which include World War I, the New Deal, and the early 1940s. Within each period, federal and/or private agencies established programs that provided labor to individuals or groups.

The Women's Land Army of America (WLAA) in World War I, New Deal work programs of the 1930s, and state- and private-run labor initiatives in the early 1940s influenced the federal government to organize a farm worker policy for the nation in 1943. As men and women left the farm under the guise of patriotism and national duty to enter defense industries and military service during World War II, those who remained behind discovered patriotic duty led to severe labor shortages. Between April 1940 and July 1942 more than two million men left the farm, and by the end of the war, the American farm population had decreased by six million. The federal government's official response to labor shortages became the Emergency Farm Labor Program, instituted in 1943 under the auspices of Public Law 45. Recognizing the need for millions of farm laborers, the federal government, through this legislation, authorized the hiring of convicts, high school students, imported persons (Caribbean and Mexican), military personnel, prisoners of war, and women to work on farms. With its organization mid-way through the war, the Emergency Farm Labor Program may have been too late to provide adequate benefits to farmers. While the federal legislation placed agricultural labor under its jurisdiction from 1943 to 1945, the government did not make plans to accommodate labor policy in the years prior to 1943. Therefore, it is important to note any activity in the early 1940s that benefitted farmers and their desire for an established federal labor



program, as well as any requests to the government for labor relief.<sup>2</sup>

Prior to the organization and formation of the Emergency Farm Labor Program, numerous agricultural and women's organizations and individuals requested relief for the nation's farmers. From the beginning of domestic war build-up, individuals, federal agencies, and women's organizations, including First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and the United States Women's Bureau, foresaw potential agricultural labor problems and began to call for the establishment of a land army. By using the models available from the First World War and Great Britain, many believed that the revival of a land army would effectively deal with the issue of insufficient farm labor. As war seemed likely by May 1940, the Women's National Farm and Garden Association hoped that the federal government would follow other countries' leads and realize the necessity of re-institution of the land army concept for the United States.<sup>3</sup>

The Women's National Farm and Garden Association, active in the formation of the WLAA during World War I, led the charge in calling for a revival of the farm labor program in the early 1940s. Its call for a land army in 1940 echoed the calls placed in 1917 to encourage women to join the agricultural labor force. During World War I, the Women's National Farm and Garden Association extended its membership to include all women who wished to join their efforts and work on the land. The association's purpose had been to encourage women to "take up outdoor occupations and to bring together the rich and the poor in their common love for gardens."<sup>4</sup> With America's entry in World War I, however, the women's goals shifted as they placed additional emphasis on the importance of their participation in wartime activities. Projecting ahead in 1917, the Women's National Farm and Garden Association saw the goal of the Land Army to "increase the supply of food during the next five years, to conserve the live stock, to increase the cultivation of grains and

vegetables, and to be ready, if needed, to take the places of men on farms in case this country should be drawn into a protracted world struggle."<sup>5</sup> Thus, through this organization's influence, as well as other agricultural, defense, and women's groups, the establishment of a land army during World War I became a reality.

The WLAA, created in 1917, was a semi-private organization with limited federal government interference.<sup>6</sup> Its administration operated in a manner that would be easy to duplicate in a later decade, and for all purposes was used in the 1940s. The WLAA had tenuous ties to the Department of Labor, as well as various local, state, and federal agencies and organizations. Farm and nonfarm women participated in the program on a strictly volunteer basis. During the course of its existence, the WLAA recruited 15,000 women from twenty states.<sup>7</sup>

The success of the WLAA during World War I established a precedent that would be used in a later decade and another war. Women's groups around the country worked to provide suitable conditions for the female agricultural workers. Women lived in camps, worked together or individually, received wages per hour or by the piece, and did all types of farm work. Women needed to be "physically fit and efficient" and work "eight or nine hours a day" in all manner of farm labor. Duties included general farming, such as "plowing, harrowing, seeding, planting, transplanting, cultivating, hoeing, weeding, harvesting, care of horses, cows, dairy work." Women were also used on specialty farms where their work included: "fruit and berry picking, sorting and packing of fruit, thinning of fruit on the trees (in which women have been found to be particularly satisfactory), or canning and preserving of fruits and vegetables; or again it may be care of poultry, etc."<sup>8</sup>

As a result of the semi-private, semi-public status of the WLAA, states established work programs suitable to their

needs. In New York, the Mayor's Committee of Women on National Defense appointed a Standing Committee on Agriculture in May 1917 that placed women on farms as hired labor and a "form of patriotic service." Considered an "experiment" to use women as farm labor, the New York committee advocated the benefits and usefulness of women in the fields. The Mayor's committee discovered that certain women, particularly college and university women, "all-round" women, and industrial employees, worked effectively on the region's farms. The usefulness of student and faculty women can be determined by their ability to work during school vacations, especially in the summer. The "all-round" women were described by the committee as "unskilled, but strong, who might be turned permanently to this type of labor"; and factory workers who had been engaged in seasonal positions and could "derive benefit, physically, socially and financially, from a few months' work out of doors."<sup>9</sup>

Whatever their classification, women were employed in the area surrounding New York City by farmers who expressed an interest in using women as farm workers. With money raised "to start the experiment" and automobiles loaned "for transporting the workers," the WLAA became operational in New York. Women were hired to improve agricultural production and alleviate the farm labor shortage, while they themselves relished the opportunity to participate in the war effort and demonstrate their patriotism. On a fruit farm near Milton, New York, for example, six women worked together for five weeks, paid in the manner of piece work. The women for the most part were from universities, working during their semester breaks. On average the women earned \$31.07 for the five weeks of work. Their weekly expenses amounted to \$3.09, and transportation to and from New York City cost \$1.50. Thus, on average, the women received, after expenses, less than fifteen dollars for five weeks work.<sup>10</sup> Less than three dollars per week for physical labor did not support female

agricultural laborers or their families. Thus, it is apparent that, during World War I and World War II, women worked for patriotic rather than financial reasons.

At the same time, women who worked in the industrial sector during World War I received higher wages for their service. Over the course of World War I, women in industrial wage positions realized yearly increases from 5 to 12 percent over the previous year's rate. Women employed in the railroad industry enjoyed monthly wages from sixty dollars to over one hundred dollars per month for a forty-eight-hour work week. In many cases, these women who worked in the rail industry had been paid on a similar scale as men during World War I; in other industries, however, that did not always occur. At the International Fuse and Arms Company, inexperienced women received two dollars per day for their work, with increases to as much as seven dollars per day once trained. These figures do not take into account the amount of money needed to pay room, board, and other expenses. Considerations of marital status and family size would require varying amounts of money for expenses; it had been estimated, however, that an average weekly amount for room and board in eastern cities for a single person ranged between eight dollars and fifteen dollars. Only during wartime did single women within the manufacturing sector receive wages high enough to pay expenses.<sup>11</sup>

Following the first crop season with the WLAA in the fields, a conference was held in New York City in December 1917, to discuss the activities of the past crop year, and make projections for the future. Organized by the Women's National Farm and Garden Association, with the assistance of the Women's Committee of the Council of National Defense, the conference elicited a response from several agricultural, civic, and women's groups concerned about war-time labor needs. One outcome of the conference led to the organization of the Advisory Council of the Women's Land Army of America.

This organization would "stimulate the formation of a land army of women to take the places on the farms of the men who are being drafted for active services."<sup>12</sup> Following the conference in December 1917, the advisory council met several times to formulate plans for the 1918 crop year. At its initial and subsequent meetings other organizations participated, including: Women's Committee on the State Council of Defense; Garden Club of America; Federal Food Administration; National Board of Young Women's Christian Associations; College of Agriculture, Cornell University; New York State School of Agriculture, Farmingdale; Women's College of Delaware; New York State Grange; New York State Labor Bureau; Westchester County Farm Bureau; Committee of Women in Industry; New York State Suffrage Party; Women's University Club; Committee on Agriculture of the Mayor's Committee of Women; Agricultural Camp at Bedford; and Scarsdale Community Farm.<sup>13</sup>

The Advisory Council determined that during the 1917 crop season certain impressions regarding the employment of women on farms had surfaced and been found important. Mainly, these impressions centered on the concepts of volunteerism and patriotism. By volunteering for farm work, American women answered the nation's appeal for defense action. Farmers, state officials, and federal administrators found that women, "even untrained, city-bred women," worked effectively in all aspects of agriculture. In return the women found health benefits in hard labor and working outside. The Advisory Council, through its publications, further enhanced the success of the first crop year by describing the conditions and experiences of women who volunteered for the WLAA. In New York, Virginia C. Gildersleeve, chairperson of the state WLAA organization, reported, "women enjoyed the work thoroughly. They were a healthy, happy community. The college girls proved especially well able to stand the physical strain of hard labor, and their zeal and enthusiasm were exceeding

valuable in developing a good spirit." Further, "women, with little or no technical training, could perform satisfactorily most kinds of farm labor and help remedy the shortage caused by the withdrawal of men from agricultural work." These comments by Gildersleeve brought the importance of the WLAA to the public eye and allowed, along with the ideas of the Advisory Council of the Women's Land Army of America, the continuation of the program in 1918.<sup>14</sup>

As a result of the December 1917 conference, the Advisory Council established guidelines for a successful harvest for the 1918 crop season. The Council asked agricultural and women's colleges throughout the nation to institute programs to assist the WLAA in its efforts for 1918. Recruitment for, and registration within the WLAA occurred at various colleges across the nation as women stepped forward to serve. Goals of the WLAA included the recruitment of college women early in the crop season to take advantage of women's labor from planting to harvest. Schools offered short agricultural training and extension courses for those in rural communities, and arranged academic credit for the women who joined and participated in the WLAA. Additionally, colleges cooperated with numerous employment and housing organizations to provide adequate work and shelter for WLAA workers. Other recruitment efforts encompassed a paper campaign to encourage participation, on the individual and institution level. The WLAA hoped to entice more women to join the organization, as well as encourage national academic institutions to administer the farm labor program. The involvement of the nation's colleges and universities further extended the exposure and participation that the WLAA enjoyed in World War I.<sup>15</sup>

During crop seasons women completed a variety of farm tasks. Anita Voorhees wrote of her experience. As an educator, Voorhees had time to participate in the WLAA after the conclusion of the school year in 1918. During that summer she joined several of her students in a "farmerette unit"

placed in Whitford, Pennsylvania. The women cut, raked, and pitched hay, hoed corn, and harvested soybeans. And while Voorhees wrote of the strenuous work involved in farming, she described her contribution to the war effort with these concluding comments to Ms.: "Yes, it was fun, and I believe we really contributed quite a bit to the farms of Chester County." Other women expressed similar sentiments regarding their involvement with the WLAA. In the West, farmers utilized the WLAA to assist truck-crop harvests. In Colorado and Wyoming women worked throughout the summer months to participate in each year's crop season.<sup>16</sup>

Not all women who worked on farms during World War I did so on private farms; many labored on college and university farms. Eastern schools such as Vassar, Bryn Mawr, and Mount Holyoke colleges established programs that hoped to increase farm production, provide a patriotic opportunity for the women enrolled, and offer employment opportunities at the institution. At Vassar, twelve women worked eight-hour days for \$1.40 per day. Expenses included room and board at the school's main dormitory, at a minimum cost of \$5.50 weekly; the women needed to work four days each week to pay their expenses. By working an additional two days, these Vassar students, like the women employed near Milton, New York, would make approximately three dollars for their week's work. The college students employed at Vassar performed the following chores: "plowing (with traction and two-horse plows), harrowing, planting, cultivating, thinning, weeding, hoeing, potato planting, berry picking, mowing (with scythe and mowing machine), hay-raking and pitching, reaping, shocking grain, making fences, and milking." The superintendent of the program wrote concerning the women enrolled in the WLAA, "They took great interest in the work, and did the work just as well as the average man, and made good far beyond the most sanguine expectations."<sup>17</sup>

At Bryn Mawr, work teams consisted of twelve to fifteen

women. Working in alternating shifts, eighty-five women participated in the Bryn Mawr program. In addition to the planting, cultivating, and harvesting of vegetables, the Bryn Mawr women also built a small cannery and processed "ten thousand quart cans of beans, corn, tomatoes and peaches." At Mount Holyoke, four hundred women responded to the call for farm volunteers during the spring term. Divided into teams of twenty, the women "removed brush, scattered fertilizer, planted crops, hoed, pulled weeds, picked potato bugs, and sprayed vegetables." In none of these cases does there appear to have been a shortage of women for the work, but in some cases, there was a shortage of work for the women. At Vassar and Mount Holyoke, for example, women were turned away.<sup>18</sup>

Initially termed as an "experiment" by many within the government and agricultural communities, the success of the WLAA prompted the idea that the use of women as agricultural labor should continue in the years following war. To this effort, the WLAA organized a system to keep the women informed of labor developments, issues, and situations. With its own publication, the WLAA advisory council continued to reach those women who had participated in the war. Deemed their own "little newspaper," the first issue of Farmerette, was printed in December 1918. With Farmerette, the WLAA created a way for its members to remain in touch and report on farm life throughout the nation. Further, the WLAA would provide information regarding winter work or training and work plans for the 1919 crop season. With these arrangements made, the WLAA planned not to close its operation with the end of World War I, but to continue placing women on farms throughout the next decades.<sup>19</sup>

In the first issue of Farmerette, Ida H. Ogilvie, director of recruiting, wrote about the benefits that a land army provided for farm communities. After discussing the importance, need, and use of the land army during war, Ogilvie expressed the necessity of such an organization in peace-time



as well.

Women have won their place in intellectual and in political fields; the Land Army opens the door of opportunity for physical work. The development of the labor movement has an ever-increasing tendency to give dignity to all labor, and to require that every member of a community should as a matter of duty and of right, contribute some kind of useful work. . . . The need of food production continues, but the Land Army has another and a higher duty in the reconstruction period that is at hand. To it is presented the supreme opportunity of giving to large numbers of women the chance to do out-of-door work under conditions which afford the chance for the working out of one of the most interesting of experiments in Democracy. To break through class barriers has hitherto been easy for men; the Land Army camp shows to women the unreality of such distinctions, proves the imperative necessity for the subordination of the individual to the good of the whole, and illustrates these principles through the unhampered use of muscle and brain. The Spirit of the Land Army is the true substance of the democratic idea.<sup>20</sup>

Through Ogilvie's writing and other articles contained in Farmerette, it is clear that the WLAA expected to be present during the next decade of American agriculture. The WLAA's expectation to remain in farming in the 1920s illustrates the organization's short-sightedness regarding the position and role that women played in agriculture and society in the late 1910s and 1920s. The group's assumption that women would remain in farming due to their presence in World War I had been naive. The return of American men to the home front assisted in displacing women from the fields initially, while the arrival of the 1920s did much more to discourage the use

of women as agricultural labor. The goal of the WLA and Emergency Farm Labor Plan of World War II would be to devise a plan that allowed women to remain on farms after the armistice was signed.

In terms of World War I, however, no post-war contingency plan existed, although the WLAA expected that its labor force would be able to remain on farms into the 1920s and beyond. And, according to the January 1919 issue of Farmerette, administration of the WLAA had been turned over to the United States Employment Service in the Department of Labor, where Secretary William B. Wilson saw great opportunity for the use of women as farm labor for the coming crop season.<sup>21</sup> The demand for farm labor in 1919 continued to perpetuate the WLAA's assumption that their labor would be desired in the coming decade. American farmers provided foodstuffs and supplies to Europe, and made use of all available labor to guarantee a successful crop. Twenty million tons of food had been promised to Europe by food administrator Herbert Hoover, and it had been recognized that this level of production could not be reached without assistance from the WLAA. Thus the WLAA made preparations for the recruitment of labor and continuation of its program in 1919. The organization's Washington, D.C. office directed women's training, while the office in New York assessed the program's success and published Farmerette and other WLAA materials. The WLAA recognized its association with the federal government as bringing "an unparalleled opportunity for usefulness." But WLAA leaders believed that "Direction from Washington can only be direction and the actual efficiency which the Army may attain rests on the cooperation of the State Divisions and on the spirit of the landworkers."<sup>22</sup> Thus, while the federal government provided minimal support and administrative structure, the success of the WLAA hinged on the actions of local and state administrators and the women who participated.

Women's participation in the 1919 crop year caused WLAA

administrators to assume their presence within the American farm labor work force would continue. However, these plans never materialized. By December 1919, the WLAA had received from the Department of Labor a message that essentially fired the WLAA administration and labor force. Recognizing that returning soldiers would need to reclaim their pre-war jobs, the federal government announced that the presence of women in the national farm labor force would no longer be necessary. By allowing the WLAA to work in the fields during 1919, the government offered the women the possibility of continual farm service. This action would not be repeated by the federal government at the end of World War II, the WLA ceased operation after the 1945 crop season. However, in terms of post-World War I, the removal of the WLAA from the fields in 1920, then the resulting farm crisis of the 1920s ensured that WLAA participants would not work in agriculture during that decade. And while that had been the rhetoric of the national labor organization, individual states had the opportunity, if necessity dictated, to hire their own labor force for the 1920 crop season. For example, Pennsylvania continued to recruit female farm labor into the next decade.<sup>23</sup>

For the most part, however, the country had been plagued by an agricultural crisis in the 1920s. Increased agricultural production, over-extension in land and credit, loss of European market, and low commodity prices occurred. Farmers were not able to make their financial commitments. During World War I, as prices rose for such agricultural commodities as wheat, livestock, and corn, farmers increased their land holdings and credit responsibilities. Without thought or regard for the future, American farmers, especially those in the Midwest, continued war-time production strategies. They still saw Europe as a viable market, but also needed to pay for their expansion, modernization, and improvements made during World War I. The farmers' practice of heightened production meant a large domestic surplus when

Europe no longer demanded American foodstuffs and goods. The end result meant severe decreases in commodity prices and farmer bankruptcies.<sup>24</sup>

If a post-war plan similar to the one used in World War II had existed for World War I, farmers might have avoided the agricultural crisis that developed in the 1920s. World War II post-war policy had been devised in the early 1940s. Recognizing that much of the crisis of the early 1920s had revolved around crop prices, USDA officials established price ceilings and supports for farm products. In May 1941, as the nation dealt with its changing economy from depression to war, the federal government legislated to set agricultural prices. On the heels of the declaration of war in December 1941 additional legislation was passed to handle crop prices. In January 1942, the Price Control Act regulated commodity prices. A price ceiling was issued only if crop prices reached 110 percent of parity. With this measure the federal government hoped to control prices to guard against high fluctuations and a repeat of the past. Thus, in October 1942, the government initiated additional legislation that guaranteed 90 percent parity for crops two years after the war.<sup>25</sup> With these measures, the federal government controlled farm prices without sacrificing farmer income. Women hired as labor during this time recognized the nature of their employment. As temporary workers, federal policy did not encourage the continual presence of women in the labor force in their war-time positions after World War II. Women would be relegated to their pre-war employment positions or back to the home.

World War II post-war policy had not been a result of a similar plan in 1918, but from the lack. The absence of a comprehensive post-war plan in the 1910s and early 1920s hastened the economic depression that occurred after World War I and brought an end to continued war-time labor measures. Faced with a severe farming crisis, the nation did not

anticipate the need for female agricultural labor and therefore did not utilize the WLAA after World War I. The women's presence, however, in the nation's fields during the war changed the structure of agriculture for the century. Legitimized as an acceptable farm labor source, women would be called upon in later decades to assist in agriculture and other war-needy areas.

The WLAA, while in operation only a short time during World War I, represented a national effort to organize women as farm workers. Although the federal government established other labor programs, such as contractual Mexican laborers, that placed agricultural workers on farms during the war, the WLAA illustrated the first organized effort to use women as farm labor. The WLAA assisted in establishing a precedent for future action during times of national emergency. The farm crisis of the 1920s and the Great Depression of the 1930s did not allow another chance for the WLAA to re-establish itself. The federal government would seek other methods by which to alleviate agricultural labor issues during those decades.

In the 1930s, the decade that became known as the Great Depression, legislative policy formed a collective body that President Franklin D. Roosevelt termed the New Deal. Within federal reform measures, Roosevelt initiated programs that changed the way the government had previously functioned. Moving away from the self-help mentality of Hoover's administration, New Deal programs instituted policy that allowed national programs to reach into communities. By operating on the local or county level, decentralized New Deal initiatives attempted to work for every American. Although not every measure reached the success rate that the president expected, New Deal programs did bring change to the nation. As a result, decentralized provisions such as the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), and Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) were administered on the local level by area officials, but funded by the

federal government.<sup>26</sup> By staying out of the day-to-day operation of a particular initiative, the Roosevelt administration allowed local officials to effectively run New Deal Programs. This methodology and policy would later be utilized successfully to operate several programs initiated during World War II.

In order to combat the nation's high unemployment rate, New Deal policy enacted labor relief programs. The Civilian Conservation Corps placed unemployed individuals in communities and gave them jobs, and in doing so, gave towns and cities a needed labor force. Commonly the CCC placed urban youths and young men in positions that rebuilt the land. Dependent on location, these jobs provided reforestation, erosion control, land maintenance, and other environmental projects to areas in need. In Vermont, CCC workers (men and women) provided labor for dairy farms. Promoted as a successful CCC project, this Vermont farm labor tradition assisted the state's establishment of an agricultural worker program prior to the federal labor program initiated in 1943. The creation of the Vermont Volunteer Land Corps in the early 1940s developed through the experiences of CCC workers in Vermont during the 1930s.<sup>27</sup> Bridging the transition between New Deal policy and war-time build-up, programs such as the Volunteer Land Corps anticipated the drain of farm labor as men left for the military and defense industries, and worked to provide an alternative source.

President Roosevelt and his New Deal programs sought to employ millions of men who had become unemployed in the 1930s, as well as provided relief to the population. The federal government instituted nationwide policy to establish work relief programs and other forms of assistance for the public. The methods utilized by the federal administration in the 1930s have been likened to that of war preparation. Historian Lawrence E. Gelfand described President Franklin D. Roosevelt as attacking the "nation's domestic crisis as an emergency not

unlike that posed by a war for national survival."<sup>28</sup> With the implementation of New Deal programs, Roosevelt prepared for war in the form of economic depression and unemployment. In the next decade, it would become essential to prepare for actual war using the same methodology and planning. With World War I as the most recent example of American involvement in war, one might assume that World War I was the precedent for World War II labor programs. However, the scale of the New Deal, as well as its far-reaching programs, clearly outdistanced any precedent that World War I provided. Thus, due to size of its programs, far-reaching goals of the administration, and its structural influence (decentralization) toward future policy, it is not surprising that New Deal policy, rather than World War I, became the greater precedent for World War II programs.

The beginning of war in Europe and the position that the United States held regarding neutrality and then assistance to its allies became all-encompassing in society in 1939 and the early 1940s. Through governmental action of 1940 and 1941, the American public became familiar with defense contracts, increased agricultural and industrial production quotas, and military enlistments. None of these actions, however, involved actual combat. Through the Lend-Lease Program and other diplomatic decisions of 1940, Roosevelt supplied the nation's allies with necessary war-time supplies and changed America's status as an isolated nation to one that intervened on behalf of its "neighbors."<sup>29</sup> This move, as well as the eventual declaration of war in December 1941, would change the course of things to come.

With the declaration of war in December 1941, the government's priorities changed. Military and national industry forces would be needed to combat the enemy. Even the terminology used later by historians and other scholars to describe the situation in the country during the war, "military-industrial complex," does not imply the importance

of other sectors of domestic society. The importance of the military and industry to society can be viewed by the amount of money and manpower used in its mobilization for war. Millions of men and women joined the military forces and defense manufacturing centers, while Congress authorized huge budgets and spent billions of dollars to prepare the nation for war. The government continued its efforts to run programs in a manner similar to New Deal legislation by funding from Washington, while administering on local levels.<sup>30</sup> Communities created local war boards and other community-action committees that urged citizens to assist in any manner possible. And, while the military response had been almost immediate, that of the domestic front progressed a bit more slowly.

The establishment of the "military-industrial complex" allowed the federal government to improve conditions for American manufacturing interests. With the nation's permanent industrial work force headed to war, recruitment programs for defense and manufacturing interests began in 1942, just months after the declaration of war. As part of the government's plan to increase defense production, industrial recruitment included single and married women, and others who had not been in the work force previously.<sup>31</sup> In the agricultural sector, labor relief continued to be needed; the federal government, however, did not listen to demands made by farmers as they asked for assistance. Instead, agency after agency had been created, each in an effort to remedy some economic, political, or social problem, and at times they overlapped or conflicted in duty and responsibility. Organizations such as War Production Board, Office of Price Administration, Office of Economic Stabilization, and others, had been created to maintain the nation's economy.<sup>32</sup>

As a result, much of the early war-time legislation regarded defense and industrial manufacturing businesses and employees rather than farm workers. Thus, not until several agencies, organizations, and well-placed individuals requested



assistance for agriculture did the government address their concerns. And while the nation's farmers had been expected to increase production, they had not been given the labor by which to accomplish it. The absence of an established agricultural policy resulted in the government's inability to draw up a quick plan of action. Instead, several groups debated the agricultural issue from all sides in efforts to implement successful policy. More than one year after the declaration of war would pass before the federal government brought forth a plan to assist the nation's farmers in their search for labor.

During that time, agricultural interests called for the revitalization of a national land army. In any event, the Women's National Farm and Garden Association had not been the only organization to request the return of the land army. One individual who worked hard to bring about this end was Eleanor Roosevelt. Committed to many causes, Roosevelt, as assistant director of volunteer service for the Office of Civilian Defense (OCD), called for the use of a land army by the end of 1941. Using the British land army as an example, Roosevelt announced the OCD's plans to recruit women as farm labor for the coming crop year.<sup>33</sup>

The actual declaration of war against Germany and Japan brought a renewed effort by the federal government and American public to provide war-time services. Industry manufacturers and agriculturalists expanded to increase production. In terms of farm labor, the creation of the WLA in World War II resulted from many issues forcing action by the federal government during a time of national crisis. The precedents established by World War I and New Deal policies of the 1930s did much to foster the idea of a land army once the Second World War became a reality. The emergence of a female farm labor program in World War I, the WLAA, established a framework by which future state and federal administrators had been able to formulate their own agencies. Further, the

strength of New Deal programs, mainly the decentralization and effectiveness of organizations and their ability to provide jobs and income to the nation's masses, created a formula for the large-scale agencies developed in the 1940s. And, while World War I and the New Deal did foster action for the activities of the 1940s, they by no means represented the only examples of precedents to the WLA. As the decade of the 1940s progressed, other issues developed and established additional assistance to efforts to formulate a Women's Land Army for the nation.

## Notes

1. Marie Dawson, "Pitching in on the Home Front," Countryside 1 (Winter 1990): 86; Judith Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, "'To the Rescue of the Crops': The Women's Land Army during World War II," Prologue 25 (Winter 1993): 349; U.S. Women's Bureau, Women as Workers: A Statistical Guide (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1953), 15; "Women Prove Helpful in Meeting Nation's Food Crisis," Labor Information Bulletin 11 (March 1944): 3. Each reporting agency gathered its own statistics regarding the number of women involved in farm labor during World War II, and in most cases, no two agencies agreed. However, they did agree that women accounted for one of the largest groups of farm workers employed during the early 1940s. The U.S. Women's Bureau reported that in 1940 women accounted for 8 percent of all farm workers, and, in 1945, 23 percent of farm workers. In contrast, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE) recorded that in April 1940, 500,000 women were employed as farm workers (6 percent of total); April 1942, 1.3 million women (14 percent of total); and June 1943, 3 million women (27 percent of total). The Extension Service indicated that it placed 1.5 million urban women on farms in the period from 1943 to 1945, in addition, at least 1.5 million farm and rural women had been recruited by farmers or found work on their own during the same time period. Dawson, in her article, stated that nearly two million women worked on farms by summer 1943; however, without any documentation, her figure is arguable.

2. Litoff and Smith, "'To the Rescue of the Crops,'" 349; Wayne D. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program, 1943-1947," Agricultural Monograph No. 13, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, USDA, September 1951. Under the Emergency Farm Labor Program, other groups, in addition to the WLA, had also been hired to maintain farm production, their numbers were: foreign labor, 230,000; prisoners-of-war, 265,000; military men on furlough, 8000; conscientious objectors, 6200; relocated Japanese, 26,000; and Victory Farm Volunteers, 2.5 million.

3. Litoff and Smith, "'To the Rescue of the Crops,'" 349.

4. Catherine Cook, "National Service and the Women's National Farm and Garden Association: Join the Land Army, A Call to the Women of America," Women's National Farm and Garden Association Monthly Bulletin 4 (October 1917): 1.

5. Ibid.

6. The following are a representation from the National Agricultural Library, Beltsville, Maryland regarding the WLAA

and women in farm service during World War I: Harriot Stanton Blatch, Mobilizing Woman-Power (New York: The Womans Press, 1918); T. D. A. Cockerell, "War Work of College Women in the West," School and Society 6 (15 December 1917): 699-705; Edith Diehl, "Report of the Wellesley College Training Camp and Experiment Station for the Women's Land Army of America," 2d ed., 1919; Farmerette, vol. 1 (December 1918-May 1920); Helen Fraser, Women and War Work (New York: G. Arnold Shaw, 1918); Dudley Harmon, "Is the Woman Needed on the Farm?: What the United States Government has to Say About Farm Work for Women this Summer," Ladies' Home Journal 35 (May 1918): 105-06; Help for the Farmer (New York, N.Y.: Advisory Council of the Women's Land Army of America, 1918); M. V. Landman, "Women Farmers," Cornell Countryman (Spring 1918): 479-81, 500, 502, 504, 508; Reinette Lovewell, "A Woman Who Needs You," in A City Woman Who Found Her War Job on a Farm, USDA, 1918; Ida H. Ogilvie, "Agriculture, Labor and Woman," Columbia University Quarterly (October 1918): 293-300; Ida H. Ogilvie, "Women's Agricultural Camp, Bedford, New York, Second Annual Report," 1918; Clarence Ousley, "Women on the Farm," given as address before Woman's Committee, Council of National Defense (Washington, D.C.: USDA, 1918); "She Makes Idle Acres Feed the Hungry," Literary Digest, 8 March 1919, 98-102; Anita Voorhees, "Over Here: The Women's Land Army," Ms. 4 (November 1975): 22; Edith Wetmore, "Report of the Newport Farmerette Unit, 1918, First Annual Report"; Women on the Land (New York, N.Y.: Advisory Council of the Women's Land Army of America, 1918); Women's National Farm and Garden Association Monthly Bulletin, vol. 4 (1917/1918); Edith Franklin Wyatt, "The Illinois Training Farm for Women," Kimball's Dairy Farmer, 15 April 1918. Also, Penny Martelet, "The Women's Land Army, World War I," in Clio was a Woman: Studies in the History of American Women, ed. Mabel E. Deutrich and Virginia C. Purdy (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1980).

7. Esther M. Colvin, "Another Women's Land Army?" Independent Woman 21 (April 1942): 104; Litoff and Smith, "'To the Rescue of the Crops,'" 349. Of the twenty states actively involved in the WLAA, California, Illinois, New York, and Pennsylvania along with Washington D.C. had the largest enrollments.

8. "Placing Women on the Land: Experiments in the Eastern United States," Women's National Farm and Garden Association Monthly Bulletin 4 (February 1918): 2.

9. *Ibid.*, 1.

10. *Ibid.*, 1, 3.

11. Maurine Weiner Greenwald, Women, War, and Work: The Impact of World War I on Women Workers in the United States

(Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), 32, 93; Leslie Woodcock Tentler, Wage-Earning Women: Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States, 1900-1930 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 17-18; C. E. Knoepfel, Women in Industry (New York: C. E. Knoepfel, 1918).

12. "Advisory Council of the Women's Land Army of America," Women's National Farm and Garden Association Monthly Bulletin 4 (February 1918): 6.

13. Ibid., 6-7.

14. Ibid., 7; Women on the Land, 6.

15. "Advisory Council of the Women's Land Army of America," 7-8.

16. Voorhees, "Over Here: The Women's Land Army," 22; Cockerell, "War Work of College Women in the West," 702-03.

17. "Placing Women on the Land: Experiments in the Eastern United States," 4.

18. Ibid., 4-5.

19. Farmerette, December 1918, 1.

20. Ida H. Ogilvie, "The Spirit of the Land Army," Farmerette, December 1918, 1.

21. Farmerette, January 1919, 1.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.; Farmerette, May 1920, 1; Gerald D. Nash, The Great Depression and World War II: Organizing America, 1933-45 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 131-32.

24. Katherine Jellison, Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology, 1913-1963 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), chapters 1 and 2; James H. Shideler, Farm Crisis, 1919-1923 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957); A. B. Genung, The Agricultural Depression Following World War I and its Political Consequences: An Account of the Deflation Episode, 1921-1934 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Northeast Farm Foundation, 1954).

25. R. Douglas Hurt, American Agriculture: A Brief History (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994), 320-21; Murray R. Benedict, Farm Policies of the United States, 1790-1950: A Study of their Origins and Development (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1953), 402-30. The initial measure in

1941 established a parity rate for some agricultural products. Corn, rice, wheat, cotton, and tobacco prices were set at 85 percent parity. After the United States entered World War II, another measure is adopted to set crop prices. Considered friendly to farmers, the Price Control Act protected agriculturalists from depression by keeping prices at a certain level. The final measure passed in October 1942, worked to curb inflation and discourage hoarding. Farmers were paid incentives for the production of some items, including hemp. During World War II farmers had been encouraged to produce more foodstuffs and grains, while decreasing their cotton acreage. During the course of the war, and the years following, farm prices remained high, and in most cases above 90 or 100 percent of parity.

26. For the New Deal, see John Braeman, Robert H. Bremner, and David Brody, eds., The New Deal: The National Level, vol. 1 (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1975); Lawrence E. Gelfand and Robert J. Neymeyer, eds., The New Deal: Viewed from Fifty Years: Papers Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Launching of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal in 1933 (Iowa City, Ia.: The Center for the Study of Recent History of the United States, 1983); William E. Leuchtenburg, The FDR Years: On Roosevelt and His Legacy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); William E. Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940 (New York: Harper and Row, 1963); Robert S. McElvaine, The Great Depression: America, 1929-1941 (New York: Times Books, 1984); Theodore Saloutos, The American Farmer and the New Deal (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1982).

27. Arthur Root, Report on the Volunteer Land Corps, Summer 1942, n.d., 1-3, Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont, Burlington.

28. Gelfand and Neymeyer, The New Deal Viewed from Fifty Years, vii-viii.

29. Nash, The Great Depression and World War II, 104, 106-109.

30. See, Joel Davidson, "Building for War, Preparing for Peace: World War II and the Military-Industrial Complex," in World War II and the American Dream: How Wartime Building Changed a Nation (Washington, D.C.: National Building Museum; Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1995), 184-229; Gregory Hooks, Forging the Military-Industrial Complex: World War II's Battle of the Potomac (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Gregory Hooks, "The Weakness of Strong Theories: The U.S. State's Dominance of the World War II Investment Process," American Sociological Review 58 (February 1993): 37-53; Paul A. C. Koistinen, The

Military-Industrial Complex: A Historical Perspective (New York: Praeger, 1980); Brian Waddell, "The Dimensions of the Military Ascendancy During U.S. Industrial Mobilization for World War II," Journal of Political and Military Sociology 23 (Summer 1995): 81-98; War Business, and American Society: Historical Perspectives on the Military-Industrial Complex (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1977).

31. Chester W. Gregory, Women in Defense Work during World War II: An Analysis of the Labor Problem and Women's Rights (New York: Exposition Press, 1974), 3-17; Karen Anderson, Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 4-6.

32. Nash, The Great Depression and World War II, 129-31.

33. Litoff and Smith, "'To the Rescue of the Crops,'" 349.

## CHAPTER 3. ON THE FARM: PRECEDENTS TO THE WLA

The path toward WLA development was further enhanced with the presence of several successful state-run labor initiatives in place in the years prior to 1943. In the early days of World War II, several states moved quickly to establish land armies. Based on labor-relief programs utilized during World War I and the 1930s, and from other countries, several states recruited and placed workers in agriculture as early as 1941. Through the use of a non-traditional labor source, these states and nations successfully combatted their labor shortage during World War II as they organized work programs. Foreign programs, such as those in Australia, Canada, Great Britain, and New Zealand, illustrated the important roles that governmental agricultural labor programs could play as countries prepared for war. Thus, the presence of state-run initiatives and foreign labor programs brought the development of an American labor program to greater focus, as farmers waited for this country to enact a similar national program. The success of these early state initiatives, along with promotional materials from the national media, agricultural and women's journals, and some agencies of the federal government, convinced President Roosevelt, Secretary Of Agriculture Claude R. Wickard, and the USDA of the usefulness of the WLA to agriculture during the Second World War.

The influence of state-run initiatives and their importance to the creation of the WLA cannot be minimized. Several states in the early days of war embarked on efforts to provide labor relief to farmers. State and local governments worked with civic organizations, farmers, and the public to provide agricultural labor and, in turn, services for the women workers. States on both coasts planned and executed programs that recruited, trained, and placed women on farms, especially in those locales that desperately needed additional farm labor.



Local initiatives, utilized for the 1941-1942 crop season in California, New York, Vermont, and other states provided the national government with workable models for a federal emergency farm program in 1943. Farm labor shortages in 1941 and 1942 caused states to search for a method in which to bring relief to their farmers. Through private land armies and labor programs, these states harvested their crops and achieved success. Farmers benefitted from female agricultural labor, making use of farm, rural, town, and urban women for their dairy, fruit, poultry, and truck-crop operations. States without labor programs encountered angry and frustrated farmers as crops rotted, spoiled, or were ruined by the weather because they did not have sufficient harvest workers.

In New England, the Vermont Volunteer Land Corps (VLC) organized by Dorothy Thompson utilized nonfarm labor for agricultural work in 1942. Thompson, a newspaper columnist and radio personality, recruited students for the "voluntary land corps," or Volunteer Land Corps, prior to the establishment of a federal program. Acknowledging that the federal government needed to be in charge of such a labor program, Thompson and the VLC administration understood, however, that with the absence of a national program, it had been necessary for states and private citizens to provide farm labor. In this vein, Thompson had organized her labor program. While some initial opposition to the VLC occurred, from agricultural leaders, biased farmers, and farmer organizations, most of the state's farmers found that the VLC laborers were reliable and capable of handling the assigned agricultural work. For many, the use of women benefitted their production and operation in 1942, and women would, therefore, be in demand for 1943 and beyond. Being what arguably has been called the best example of a workable farm labor program in the years prior to the establishment of the WLA, the VLC had still been termed an "experiment." Nonetheless, this "experiment" successfully recruited urban

youths to work on farms, and expected, at some later date, to demonstrate its program to other states. The organization's goals were summarized by Arthur Root, "As a private group, working and concentrating on a limited project, we [Volunteer Land Corps] hoped to accumulate experience in sound techniques which could be of use in later expansion."<sup>1</sup>

During its first year of operation the VLC received 2500 applications for service. Recruitment efforts were assisted by the publication of Thompson's regular newspaper column and Reader's Digest articles. Additionally, staff members traveled to northeastern private secondary schools, universities, and colleges to interest students in the program. The majority of applications had come from New York, New York and Boston, Massachusetts; in all, twenty-six states had been represented. It became the job of Thompson and her staff to select the most qualified and able-bodied from the individuals who applied.<sup>2</sup>

The VLC had a regimented process for selection which included an age limit, physical ability and fitness, parental consent, and "character." The last condition interested the VLC administration, and for the most part, became the most important of an individual's application. In terms of the age limitation, the VLC recruited men over sixteen years of age and women over eighteen. To determine a recruit's physical fitness, each person "was required to present a signed statement from a physician saying that the applicant had been examined by him and was in good health, capable of performing hard physical labor such as required on a farm." This health statement became necessary for federal farm workers as well. For those applicants who had been minors, the VLC required parental/guardian consent. And, finally, the issue of "character." In most cases, the VLC treated this selection criterion as the most telling for each recruit. At every person's interview, their character would be evaluated and used to further or hinder their application for service. As

part of their annual report, the VLC stated the following in terms of determining an applicant's "character."

This intangible was the most important, perhaps, and the most difficult to determine. In the pamphlet describing the purpose and organization of the Corps it was stated: "The Volunteer Land Corps welcomes young men and women who agree with the purposes of the Corps, who are willing to undergo the disciplines and rigors of hard manual labor, and who are ready to adapt themselves to the ways of living and the points of view of the farm people whose helpers they will be and whose daily life they will share." The chief purpose of letters of reference and of interviews was to find out who were reliable, conscientious, sincere; who had stamina; who were emotionally stable, and adaptable to new conditions of living.<sup>3</sup>

Of all of this process, for the VLC, the interview proved to be the most important. It was there that the interviewer and interviewee could acquire the information needed to make an informed decision. The applicant's "character" was determined by those who interviewed him or her, and the interviewee had the opportunity to ascertain specific requirements of the work expected. In all cases, the VLC staff hoped to discourage those applicants who wanted to treat their service as a vacation. Therefore, each recruit received an explanation regarding work, in efforts to prevent workers from assuming that anyone who went to a farm "would work six hours per day, get time and a half for overtime, go swimming in the evening, and have the weekend off." Even so, not every candidate would be interviewed. Those who lived out of the northeast and had no means to travel for the interview were accepted on the basis of their application and references alone.<sup>4</sup>

With the application and interview process completed, more than six hundred students joined the VLC for its first year of operation. Not highly paid, these high school and college students joined the VLC under the wings of patriotism, as their positions did not pay high wages. In the 1942 crop season 626 males and females worked on farms in Vermont and New Hampshire. Only twenty-four workers were placed in New Hampshire; thus the land corps can be "treated as having operated only in Vermont."<sup>5</sup>

Just as VLC workers had been chosen through elaborate means, the farmers who participated also endured a screening process. The VLC and Vermont state agencies worked together to find farms suited to nonfarm labor. Additionally, the U.S. Employment Service and Extension Service agents located farmers who requested workers, and placed laborers with them. But the final selection of farmers for the program rested with VLC field representatives who had been placed in each county. In the process of selecting farmers, the VLC representatives determined the farm family's "decent"ness. By identifying their ability to deal with inexperienced urban labor, and the environment of their operation, farmers were chosen to participate. While some farmers had been enthusiastic about the VLC and the service of nonfarm individuals, others refused to participate and accept VLC volunteers. The refusal of some farmers to accept the urban labor did not hamper the organization as the VLC easily placed its first year's recruits. Upon placement, VLC representatives checked each student and farmer to determine whether their work arrangement had been satisfactory.<sup>6</sup>

Initially, the VLC administration had been prepared to pay each laborer, at the minimum, twenty-one dollars per month plus room and board. This rate had been determined from other war service and equalled the wage paid to privates in the military. However, by the time the volunteers had been placed on farms, policy dictated that farmers "pay the recruit

whatever he might be worth as a helper in that locality, providing it was not less than \$21 a month." Additionally, farmers paid a ten dollar premium for accident insurance per worker for the three-month period of 1942 employment.

Laborers were assigned to individual farms, or in groups employed together on community projects. In general, these volunteers fulfilled their labor requirement on a dairy farm, spending two or three months on the job. In some cases, these laborers worked for a full year. A Smith College student worked on a dairy farm in Randolph, Vermont. Without the presence of family members to assist in the work, the student provided the necessary labor for the farmer. She "had been the sole staff on which he [farmer] can lean and she has kept him from ruin and despair by her work in the house and fields. 'She's the finest girl I've ever known,' he says. 'I don't know what I'd do without her.'" <sup>7</sup> That attitude prevailed among farmers, once VLC members learned their jobs and duties.

Although the Vermont program had been smaller than those established in other states, its organization and success of placements gained it recognition by Extension Director, M. L. Wilson, in 1943. Described by Wilson during congressional hearings concerning the feasibility and funding of a land army program, the Vermont initiative reached levels of success that guaranteed at least 80 percent of the farmers who used urban labor in 1942 would do so again in 1943. This high rate of continuity and success was due to Thompson and her commitment to develop a good program. Also, Thompson, as well as Wilson, saw the involvement within the land corps as educational, and one that would provide a great life and democratic experience for each participant. <sup>8</sup>

In Maine, the Women's Emergency Farm Service (WEFS), led by Katherine Potter, worked to bring in harvests, and supplied labor year-round on dairy farms. The biggest concern, aside from labor needs, that Potter and her organization encountered in 1942 regarded housing for the workers. In communities

without adequate housing that would enable women to commute to their farm jobs, the state staff encountered gasoline and tire rationing problems. To alleviate rationing, farmers were asked to house as many women on farms as possible. By attacking housing shortages in that manner, Potter and the WEFs then turned to the issue of labor. In 1942, workers were needed for several agricultural commodities, including dairy and potatoes. To support dairy as a necessary product for the nation and our Allies, the WEFs and Katherine Potter sought to provide all needed labor for that industry.<sup>9</sup>

Still, dairy did not pose the only opportunity by which Maine women worked on farms. Historically, women had assisted with the state's crop harvests; during war, however, their numbers increased. In Aroostook County, farmers employed women to harvest the potato crop each fall. As reported by the Maine Agricultural Experiment Station, the harvest of potatoes is a crucial time for the farmer. "Labor at harvest time is one of the most important items in the management of a potato farm. The period of time for harvesting the crop is relatively short normally and unfavorable weather conditions may shorten it even more." During the 1941 season, 1,708 workers harvested the potato crop in Aroostook County; of this number almost 40 percent had been women. The remaining were high school students between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, as well as men not yet enrolled in the military or defense industries. Not just farm and unemployed women, the women employed by the Maine potato producers in the first years of war held office and professional positions in addition to their stint at farm work.<sup>10</sup> Working women joined the harvests, taking breaks from their full-time employment. Later, the WLA would recruit women in the same manner, encourage them to join the organization during vacation periods from their full-time jobs. This short work period is in direct contrast to the situation that developed in Vermont. Thompson and the VLC recruited workers for two to three month

stints, while, in Maine, laborers worked only during the harvest season--filling positions as seasonal labor. The successful use of women and students as farm labor in the 1941 harvest established a practice that would continue with the organization of the WLA and other World War II labor programs.

In addition to the New England states in the Northeast, the state of New York also established a labor program during the early war years. In New York, workers were recruited from urban areas and placed on upstate or Long Island farms. The New York program, referred at times as "Farm for Freedom," was organized by Mrs. Frank Washburn, and actively used women as farm labor in numerous areas around the state. Additionally, women worked as cow testers for dairy herd improvement associations. The Farm Placement Office of the U.S. Employment Service assisted in the recruitment and placement of women on New York farms. In 1942, the Employment Service assisted more than one hundred Hudson River valley farmers who requested labor assistance from the government. Women and college students spent their summer months on these farms accomplishing whatever tasks given to them.<sup>11</sup>

Farmers who owned various truck-crop farms in the Hudson River valley, New Jersey, and on Long Island readily employed women from New York City to work during the cultivation and harvest months. The New York Times printed many stories and columns recruiting women to work on farms in Nassau and Suffolk counties on Long Island, upstate New York, and New Jersey. Farmers who needed labor in upstate New York and on Long Island, wrote of the employment opportunities for New York City's college women and Chinese nationals. In the Hudson River valley farmers used women to pick fruits and vegetables and to cultivate vegetable fields. College women made ideal employees due to summer break from class work; on the other hand, Chinese nationals also made excellent farm laborers. Many had been farmers before emigrating to the United States and therefore would qualify as experienced

labor. With living quarters provided, the Chinese would receive fifty cents per hour, a better wage than the inexperienced college women. In Columbia County, New York, women were paid the average rate of thirty cents per hour, with the cost of their room and board deducted from their wages.<sup>12</sup>

Each state in the Union, of course, desired to successfully harvest its crops during the war years. This, however, did not always occur because regions as well as states resisted the use of women as farm labor in the years prior to as well as after the creation of the WLA. Conflict occurred when one county accepted female farm workers, while other counties adamantly opposed this source of labor. New York provided a prime example of this situation in 1942. The New York Times discussed the agricultural situation in that state in 1942, and described the state's desire to better address state labor issues for the next crop year. Reported to have let fruit and vegetables rot on the ground in 1942, due to farmers' perceived notions regarding the lack of acceptable labor, in 1943 the state prepared for a better season and harvest. Although female farm workers had been accepted in some counties of New York in 1942, widespread approval had not occurred. Western United States' farmers were more receptive to the use of female agricultural labor than their counterparts in the Northeast. One reason for this would be the removal of western Japanese labor early during the war, thus causing the Northwest to rely on other sources of labor. Therefore, in states like California, Oregon, and Washington, nonfarm women had been active in crop harvests for some time prior to the official creation of the WLA.<sup>13</sup>

With increased military and domestic build-ups after Pearl Harbor in December 1941 and bumper crops in many areas of the country, most American farmers realized the need for additional labor in early 1942. In the years before WLA establishment, any effort made to recruit labor for



agriculture had been a result of the U.S. Employment Service. In the West, that agency had been called upon to provide workers for California growers. Without the monetary or structural means to adequately recruit a labor force, the Employment Service utilized all available public resources to raise workers. In this manner, the Employment Service contacted the press services, Departments of Agriculture, YMCA, YWCA, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, community chambers of commerce, and "harvest councils" to promote the labor drive. In general, day laborers were widely desired, and these individuals gave up other commitments to harvest crops. Professionals worked weekends and vacations, while students left school to provide agricultural labor where needed.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the Employment Service, other state agencies recruited labor for farmers. In 1942, the American Women's Voluntary Services organized the Agricultural Committee that consulted governmental agencies, chambers of commerce, and other state labor groups to determine the best labor plan for California. The Agricultural Committee recruited and placed women eighteen years and older on farms for the 1942 crop harvest. If adequate housing was not located, the American Women's Voluntary Services (AWVS) provided work camps for the women, as well as transportation to and from the work site. The success of this program, through the AWVS and the Employment Service emphasized the necessity of labor for California, and hence, the nation, during World War II.<sup>15</sup>

The end of the regular 1942 crop season did not mean the end of labor problems for California. While most of the nation allowed a respite from labor worries over the winter months, in California, growers continued their agricultural practices. In December 1942 and January 1943, while the rest of the country relaxed and organized for the next crop season, California producers remained in operation. California citrus crops, especially lemons, were picked throughout the year,

while other crops such as almonds, beans, beets, lettuce, oranges, tomatoes, and walnuts, were harvested seasonally. Women replaced those who had been employed previously as seasonal labor, mainly interned Japanese laborers and men who had chosen to go to war or defense industries. However, even with the assistance of women, California did not have enough labor to harvest the entire state's lemon crop, and, therefore, the state instituted a program that allowed high school students to pick in the fields and orchards in the afternoons, while attending school only in the mornings.<sup>16</sup> In this case, the use of women and youths in California emphasized the importance and necessity of a federal program to assist the nation's farmers. Clearly, California demonstrated states' needs for the development of a land army as it employed any available person, young, old, native, or foreign, to gather the harvest.

In Oregon, women picked fruit, hoed hops, thinned beets, and drove tractors, as well as conducted other jobs that generally had not been done by women previously. In March 1942, the publication Independent Woman reported about a survey to be used in Oregon that would determine that state's female commitment to the war effort. The state organization, administered by Sadie Orr Dunbar conducted a comprehensive survey that addressed several labor concerns. The state-wide, house-to-house study of "womenpower" occurred in the spring and summer months of 1942. Reaching more than 300,000 women, the survey addressed issues concerning the use of women in defense and farm work; specifically, whether women had the skills needed to replace "manpower" within the state; if Oregon women would provide enough labor to harvest the state's crops; and whether the state could depend on "voluntary enlistments" of women, or whether they would need a "national compulsory registration" for women. These questions and others made up the Oregon defense survey that many "housewives, business and professional women, debutantes,

teachers, farm women, and all the rest of the female citizens and non-citizens above high school age" would answer. The results were to be filed with local and state offices of the United States Employment Service, until such a labor need arose. Mary Anderson, chief of the United States Women's Bureau, observed the results of the survey and determined that as a model for other states the Oregon survey "set the pace for a nationwide survey of feminine skills."<sup>17</sup>

As a result of the labor survey, Oregon requested all women who were available, as well as inclined, to work on farms during the 1942 crop season. Women who answered the call for labor would work in either unskilled or semi-skilled positions. In the previous season, with an absence of migratory labor for agricultural work, Oregon's office of the U.S. Employment Service had accepted any Oregon woman or child who volunteered to work in the state's fields. The reliance on "the home folks" continued in 1942, as the Employment Service publicized the need for "every man, woman, and youth" to join the Oregon farm labor force. Although no structured farm labor force existed in 1942, through the "press, radio, and from public platforms," state residents knew of the agricultural worker shortage. Subsequently, thousands of women workers joined the work program that year.<sup>18</sup>

In 1942, Oregon's farm work included the harvest of apples, beans, cherries, hops, lettuce, peaches, pears, peas, potatoes, prunes, strawberries, sugar beets, and walnuts. Anderson as a Labor Department official expressed agency policy that women be paid similar wages to men, in order to establish equality among farm men and women. In 1942, women would receive the same pay as men doing the same work; that rate, however, was not discussed. Harvest pay reportedly had been "unusually high" in Oregon for 1942. Regardless of the unusual high pay involved, harvest work was still "regarded as a patriotic service, even though well paid."<sup>19</sup> In this instance, Oregon workers received better wages than most

harvest workers prior to the creation of the WLA, as well as women employed after 1943. In other locales, once farm labor had been equated as "patriotic service," workers could anticipate low wages. In some cases, workers wages had been so low that expenses were higher than the amount of money received for their labor.

The success of state labor initiatives during the 1942 crop season helped increase agricultural production. Due to agricultural improvements and good weather, the 1942 crop and livestock harvest had been 26 percent more than the period from 1935-1939 allowing farmers to obtain America's "Food-for-Freedom" goals. During that crop year, American farmers increased acreage and production for many agricultural commodities, including peanuts, soybean, flax, milk, eggs, and garden vegetables. Generally farmers raised their efforts for all "strategic foods, fibers, and drugs." To accomplish their new production goals and acquire suitable labor, farmers turned to women for assistance. In April 1942, about 14 percent of the farm workers in the United States were women, compared to just 1.5 percent two years before. The 14 percent represents an average of the agricultural workers in this country because states such as Florida, North Carolina, North Dakota, and South Carolina, reported women holding at least 20 percent of the farm jobs, while Iowa reported only 8 percent of its farm force to be women. The 1942 crop year's higher production levels occurred even with the presence of less experienced farm labor in the fields and barns as men left the farms for better opportunities. Replacement of these men by women and youths clearly did not affect the capability of the nation to continually produce wartime levels of goods and products.<sup>20</sup>

American farmers' ability to accomplish production increases with local nontraditional forces of labor forced the federal government to examine the feasibility of a federal farm labor program for the country. However, regardless of

the success found in state initiatives and farmers' productive efforts, the federal government still withheld its support for the establishment of a national program. In 1941, several sources had addressed the concerns and issues involved with the lack of farm labor available in the country. With the advancement of the crop season, announcements from Washington, D.C. concerned the necessity of hiring others to work in the fields. One agency that undertook the hiring of farm laborers was the Works Progress Administration. Under this agency, workers would be recruited to work on farms in areas where needs had become "critical." In Agriculture and National Defense the need for farm labor for the country was expressed in several issues at the end of 1941. In September and November, the publication described the need for national agricultural labor, as well as the need for a possible program that would provide farm labor in the coming months. And, in 1942, agriculture and defense officials, concerned by the rate which people left farms for defense jobs, described the expected conditions for that year as "definitely serious." Still, the federal government did not establish a labor program.<sup>21</sup>

The absence of a federal program did not stop governmental agencies from establishing guidelines for the hiring of agricultural labor. By issuing certain guidelines, agencies assisted states in creating and maintaining programs to implement state-run "land armies." In the U.S. Women's Bureau's publication entitled, "Guidelines for Wartime Use of Women on Farms," the agency examined the current state of agricultural labor. By addressing the diminishing use of migratory labor due to their inability to follow the crops during harvest periods, the Women's Bureau advocated other labor sources to assist those farmers in need of agricultural workers. The agency suggested that farmers hire women to assist them in 1942. Further, the farmers should hire women not previously employed by the war industry, essentially

guaranteeing the employment of farm and rural women who had not left homes to enter manufacturing in the cities. In that case, the Women's Bureau assumed that the majority of women available for agricultural labor would be farm-raised or familiar with farm life, and need little, if any, work training.<sup>22</sup>

By assuming that most farm labor would be "farm-raised" and familiar with agricultural practices, the Women's Bureau kept farmers from realizing the full potential of American labor. While East and West coast states still utilized all available labor sources, states in the Midwest and South did not. In that regard, although the programs in eastern and western states were important to the future farm labor program, they did not represent the dominant attitude of the time, but rather a more radical expression of the use of women during the Second World War. These states, including California, Oregon, and Vermont; Maryland and Virginia, where women picked berries and milked cows; and Illinois, where women detasseled fields of corn, represented the ideal of farm solutions for the country during the war. These early initiatives established the concept that all women made ideal agricultural labor, and a federally-legislated farm labor program would work to bring about that end.<sup>23</sup>

The remainder of the nation, in light of the Women's Bureau's suggestion regarding the suitability of certain women as farm labor, used members of the farm family as labor in 1942. As sons went to war or the defense factory, daughters were "recalled" from their jobs in town to return to the farm, and take over where their brothers had left off. In 1941, one-quarter of the nation's farm women were doing farm chores both in the barn and in the field; by 1942, that figure had doubled to one-half of the nation's farm women and girls. In the Midwest, this trend is easily identified. As a region that resisted early state-run initiatives and nonfarm labor, midwestern farmers utilized female family members as

agricultural workers. This trend is shown in table 1, where statistics for specific states illustrated the increased use of women on family farms in 1941 and 1942. Thus, in the Middle West, daughters wore the overalls, drove the tractors, fed the stock, and assisted with the grain harvest.<sup>24</sup>

Table 1. Estimated percentage of farm women performing field work and operating machinery, 1941 and 1942

States	Field work		Operating machinery	
	1941	1942	1941	1942
Iowa	10	35	5	40
Kansas	14	32	8	26
Minnesota	22	38	12	28
North Dakota	5	10	5	25
South Dakota	5	20	8	30

source: Katherine Jellison, Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology, 1913-1963 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 140.

Throughout the Midwest, situations developed with the coming of war that brought farm women and girls back to the fields. Wives returned to the fields to assist husbands, daughters to help fathers, or sisters to lend a hand to brothers. In some cases, families asked for the return of a farm daughter from her job in town. One Iowa woman did just that. In response to the absence of labor on his farm, John Jenkins of Griswold, Iowa told his daughter in 1942, "Annette, . . . it's time for you to quit that job in town, get into some overalls and give me some help around here." As her story is retold in Country Gentleman, Jenkins explained that she did not feel she had made much of a sacrifice to return home to the farm, as she could assist the war effort in her own way by producing crops and assisting her parents. Annette had left her off-farm position to return home when her

brothers left for military and defense work. Competent as any of her brothers, Annette Jenkins returned to the farm in February 1942, and worked as any hired hand might.<sup>25</sup> Annette Jenkins' attitude was common in the Midwest, as families recalled daughters from town to address their labor needs. For the most part, farm daughters, and farm women, had been viewed as more appropriate labor than nonfarm women. In Iowa officials estimated that 90 percent of the farm labor present in 1943 had been furnished by the farmer and his family; in 1941 that figure had been 75 percent. With the absence of hired labor, family workers became more common, and the use of women and children increased from 13 percent to 36 percent.<sup>26</sup>

Other Iowans expressed ideas similar to those of the Jenkinses. In terms of a labor shortage, Iowa farm men and women had been more comfortable with the presence of farm and town women, although not immediate family members, than with urban women. In queries and letters to the editor, farm women told Farm Journal and Farmer's Wife that they held doubts regarding the use of nonfarm women on farms.<sup>27</sup> The efforts put forth by Farm Journal to address the issue of nonfarm women as farm labor is helpful in understanding the dichotomy between farm and urban life. Attitudes of farmers and their families were important to the overall success of a land army project. By posing specific questions to its female readers concerning the use of town and city women on farms, Farm Journal could extrapolate, in its opinion, whether farm families would accept women workers. In most cases, farm women explained that the use of town women would be acceptable, provided the women had some experience, available time, and flexibility to handle all types of farm or house chores. On the use of city women, however, the respondents were just as sure that they could not be employable on farms. Many believed that city women would only be interested in romantic adventure or a vacation, and therefore would not prove useful on the farm. Mrs. William H. Dreier of Iowa wrote, "if we can get city



women and girls who can live two weeks without bathrooms and nail polish, who can pump and carry water and use it carefully, who can work on a hot range all day, who can eat at a table with sweaty men in dirty overalls, who can take directions from a housewife as graciously as they can from a man in the office, who can work until 10 p.m. if the job isn't finished, and who can feel as patriotic doing all of this as a soldier earning \$1.30 a day, we can use them in our homes." Few farm women, however, expected to get that sort of commitment from a "city girl." Some doubted that the city women could handle the physical labor of farm work, nor would they be accustomed to the hard life of the farm; most agreed, however, that city women would be acceptable to harvest truck crops such as fruits and vegetables.<sup>28</sup>

The attitude present in the Midwest regarding the use of women on farms was not unique to that region. In the South, farm families also relied more heavily on farm wives and daughters than nonfarm women in the period before the WLA. In many cases, wives and daughters took over the care of farms, as husbands built army camps, worked in factories, or enlisted in the military. McCall's magazine covered this aspect of the home front in its May 1942 issue. In Arkansas, a wife and daughter maintained their 185-acre farm during the absence of men. They cared for the numerous livestock on the farm, planted, cultivated, and harvested their crops, and processed crops for home consumption. But in contrast to Farm Journal, McCall's magazine portrayed farm life as relaxing and prideful, an experience that any women would enjoy and be proud to have participated. The Arkansas women's lives are summed up in the following manner: "There is always time to watch the sun dip over the far blue hills, to play with the twin lambs, and to pat the faithful dog who brings in the cows; and always there is time to be thankful that they belong to the army of American women fighting shoulder to shoulder with their men for the safety and health of their country."<sup>29</sup>

In much the same manner that the nation had called upon others to participate, McCall's, and other publications, played upon women's sympathies and patriotic spirit to join the effort to assist the country's farmers.

Clearly, different publications in early 1942 addressed the farm labor issue in different ways. While the agricultural publication, Farm Journal and Farmer's Wife had not advocated the employment of urban women as farm workers, McCall's magazine called for all women to join the "army of American women" needed to bring in the crops. Subsequent articles in popular magazines such as McCall's and Time, farm publications such as Country Gentleman and Farm Journal, and national and local newspapers, further enhanced the position of women as suitable farm labor. Additionally, national organizations also advocated the use of women in agriculture, mainly through the revitalization of the World War I land army. The Women's National Farm and Garden Association, in its own publication, discussed the merits of American farm labor precedents and programs in other countries and their influence on the creation and organization of a similar group in the United States.

Following the scarcity of farm workers in some regions during 1941, several publications began to debate the use of women as agricultural labor. Early in 1942, Time magazine called the public's attention to the role of farm women in the war. By reporting a meeting held by farm women in Chicago during the first week of January, the magazine recognized their efforts to assist the country during a time of war. And although, the farm women had not openly discussed the reinstatement of the WLA for World War II, they recognized the need for additional labor programs. These farm women urged the country's rural women and youths to join the war effort by providing assistance whenever warranted.<sup>30</sup> The women in attendance, clearly, did not embrace nor advocate the use of all women on the nation's farms; they did not suggest the

recruitment of urban women.

Other national publications also addressed the issue of farm labor in the early months of 1942. In an article by Esther M. Colvin in its April issue, Independent Woman, questioned the commitment of Secretary of Agriculture Claude R. Wickard to the revitalization of a national "land army." Wickard speaking for the federal government advised women to fulfill their patriotic duty by registering with their local War Boards and awaiting "further instructions," which he expected to come during the 1943 crop season. Colvin argued, as did others, that 1943 would be too late for organization. She saw the current year as the time for the revitalization of the WLA, and thus, brought to national attention the efforts by states to use women as farm labor. As an example, Colvin's presented Oregon and its success regarding the harvest of its "bumper string bean crop" in 1941. Calling Oregon's efforts the start of the mobilization process, Colvin advocated a similar national program. In addition to Oregon, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Vermont, and Virginia had also recruited women and reported labor successes for the 1942 crop year.<sup>31</sup>

Colvin was not the only person calling for the mobilization of women as farm labor. Announcements in the Denver Post called for the use of women in that state's fields. And although Colorado had first discussed the employment of youths in the fields, Colorado State College representative, R. W. Roskelly, advocated the use of women as labor. "Women will have to help . . . it's very common for women to work eight hours in the field. Some of them are even spending eight hours a day on tractors."<sup>32</sup> Other articles in the newspaper during May also called for the use of women in the fields. In a message from the United States Employment Service, Colorado, as well as other western states, had been told to "solve their own labor supply problems." The manner by which Colorado and the western states accomplished this was

to use all available labor, including women, in their fields. Initially, Colorado hoped to solve its labor shortage with its own residents and to avoid any assistance from Japanese Americans brought to the region. But that plan proved impossible as the war continued.<sup>33</sup> Finally, the same publication attempted to show the glamorous side of farming with its portrayal of women working in eastern fields. Caught by the camera applying her make-up, Jean Kelly of New York worked on a Long Island farm as part of the land army forces present in the East coast. In later years of World War II, Kelly's photograph and others like it printed in national publications would be held against the WLA. Individuals against the WLA argued that the photos depicted WLA workers and nonfarm women desirous only of a vacation and not interested in assisting the war effort. Additionally, these women would corrupt the rural population with their sophisticated manners.<sup>34</sup>

These first articles of 1942 led the way for others, and publications began in earnest to demand the institution of a land army for the country. Country Gentleman, Farm Journal and Farmer's Wife, and The Saturday Evening Post printed articles that described the use of women in the nation's fields during the summer. And their desire to see a program fully developed by the federal government in the near future. The Saturday Evening Post addressed the situation faced by farm women who moved into the fields in 1942. Comprising a labor force larger than that of England's Land Girls, this American "land army" worked to support the nation's farmers. Although the use of women as agricultural labor had declined steadily in the decades prior to World War II, during 1942, the percentage of working women on farms had increased. Additionally, the Saturday Evening Post described, as well, the use of nonfarm women as agricultural labor. And although used only in labor emergencies, the employment of such women would lead to the successful implementation of the WLA in

1943.<sup>35</sup>

The Denver Post and Saturday Evening Post were not the only newspapers to discuss the use of nonfarm women as agricultural labor. Articles in and letters to the New York Times also advocated the creation of a land army. Charlotte Goodwin described her 1942 farming experience in that forum. "We can drive tractors. We can milk cows. We want to join up quickly in the farm production army. We are waiting to go. But we will not wait long, because there is too much to be done and we will find farms for ourselves. Let us get together and organize a Women's Land Army. Let us get together right away."<sup>36</sup> These sentiments, and others that advocated the establishment of an agricultural labor program were common throughout 1942 and appeared in several publications.

In Country Gentleman, articles recognized the labor need that women filled in 1942. In words of one author, society realized that "new sources of labor" were being used, and "soft white hands that used to pound the typewriter, wrap packages, wash dishes and make change are earning patriotic calluses this season pulling weeds, swinging hoes, steering tractors."<sup>37</sup> The call for the implementation of a land army came mostly through newspapers, magazines, and women's journals, and with the possible exception of Country Gentleman, in all probability, did not reach a large agricultural audience.

All that changed, however, with the publication of articles during the fall harvest in September. In that month, several journals began a serious call for the use of women as agricultural labor for the harvest in 1942 and future crop seasons. In that month's issue of Independent Woman, an article by Elizabeth Spence entitled "War Time Harvest" appeared. As a propaganda piece, this article furthered the efforts to gain a land army for 1943. In Spence's words, "America's 1942 Food-for-Freedom campaign would be incomplete

without special mention of the gallant service of women--a service which may well be the decisive factor in America's food production campaign." Continuing that discussion, Spence reported the women's successes in the nation's fields, including the work they did, the positions held, and the number of women employed in agriculture during that particular year. As a result of women's involvement in the 1942 crop season, the nation produced a record harvest of its crops, thus illustrating the usefulness and suitability of women as agricultural laborers.<sup>38</sup>

The call for labor continued in the nation's agricultural publications. The September 1942 issue of Farm Journal and Farmer's Wife also advocated the use of women as agricultural labor. In "Sighted Goals; Met Same," the author discussed the conditions present in the country at the time of journal publication. By expressing the success that agriculture had experienced for the year: 9 percent production increase over 1941 and 25 percent higher than the period from 1934 to 1939; yields higher and acreage smaller than 1919; and accomplished with 75 percent of the labor available Farm Journal proposed the recruitment of available people to the war effort. Regional stories were retold, as the publication illustrated the wonders that occurred in agriculture with fewer workers, higher yields, and somewhat fewer acres in production. In the words of this article, "Sighted Goals; Met Same," tells the "story of America's harvest victory."<sup>39</sup>

Regardless of the promotional material in print, it would be naive to assume that every American farmer became enamored of the thought of female farm workers because the national media expressed the desire for farmers to do so. And, while several thousand farmers would become tolerant of the use of nonfarm women as labor, the attitude of midwestern farmers did not immediately accept urban women as agricultural workers. In 1942, midwestern farmers implied through national and regional publications that urban women would be acceptable

only to harvest truck-crops, especially fruit and vegetable operations on the East and West coasts. As these attitudes became part of the written record, and distributed across the country in numerous national publications, it is important to decide whether midwestern biases against nonfarm women had expanded to other areas of the country. It is conceivable that midwestern attitudes influenced farmers of other regions. This proved, however, not to be the case. In most cases, attitudes against the use of nonfarm women remained, for the most part in the Midwest. And, although farmers in all regions of the nation had qualms about nonfarm women as agricultural workers, no attitude developed as strongly as that held by midwestern farmers. With the exception of the South, where the issue involved race and class, the rest of the nation's farmers generally accepted the use of women as farm labor for the period from 1943 to 1945.

Perhaps the most fervently worded support for the use of women as agricultural labor can be found in the Christian Science Monitor in January 1943. For the citrus growers in California, the use of women to pick their harvests was highly acceptable and welcome. In a state that is flooded with crops at harvest time, farmers appreciated the presence of women in their fields as they mourned the loss of their traditional sources of labor; "the Japanese are gone, and the men and boys are in camps, in ships, in airplanes, and overseas"; also missing was the migratory labor that had previously traveled the state moving from harvest-to-harvest. In terms of replacement for the labor sources lost, California farmers welcomed the arrival of women in their labor force: "California women are donning slacks and overalls in ever-increasing numbers to help save the State's bumper crops. Lemons, walnuts, almonds, beans, and tomatoes, not to mention beets and lettuce and, of course, oranges, acres and acres of them--all to be harvested!" California growers did not turn away the efforts of women who picked crops during that state's

harvest period.<sup>40</sup>

Thus the midwestern farmer who suggested that urban women would be acceptable labor for truck-crop farms, need only look at California and its harvest record to determine the wisdom in that statement. But, with all its success and advertisement for the use of women as labor, California agriculture did not operate on the same scale as farmers in the East. Therefore programs that had worked in the West did not immediately transpose to other regions. With large commercial operations, Californian farmers needed labor desperately to pick their crops, and in this case recognized this fact sooner than the federal government, and worked to bring about that end. The farmers discovered that the use of women was necessary and acceptable to California farms. Thus, while many publications worked to portray the use of all women as acceptable labor in the period prior to the establishment of the WLA, some agricultural publications described a regional farmer bias against the presence of nonfarm women on farms and their ineffectiveness as agricultural labor.

The federal government not only had the examples of state initiatives or the influence of the media to assist in their development of a national farm labor plan, but the actions of other countries also illustrated the success acquired through the use of women as agricultural labor. Recognized as significant in the United States' efforts to establish a labor program, the Women's National Farm and Garden Association promoted the efforts of other nation's, such as Australia, Canada, Great Britain, and New Zealand, to the federal government. The British had mobilized their domestic forces more thoroughly than other countries. Influenced by their action taken during World War I regarding the use of a land army, Great Britain recognized the need for a similar program in the months before World War II began. The mobilization efforts for World War II occurred more timely than those of World War I, when the British government, like the United



States, did not recruit farm labor until 1917. However, regardless of its late start and smaller national population, the British land army outperformed the American WLAA by enrolling more than twenty-three thousand women in the period from 1917 to 1919. These women worked on dairy farms, in fields, as tractor drivers and plowmen, and as shepherds. Thus, as the escalation toward war occurred in the late 1930s, Great Britain made plans to establish an agricultural labor policy. Therefore, the British Land Army had been organized months before the actual outbreak of war in 1939.<sup>41</sup>

Gearing up for World War II, Britain recognized the need for additional farm labor in the late 1930s. British foresight in acknowledging worker need allowed the government to adequately prepare for labor shortages. Described by W. E. Shewell-Cooper, the government's efforts to organize the British Land Army allowed for the recruitment and placement of women who would perform farm work in the absence of men. Britain requested nonfarm women to join the WLA as "Land Girls" and assist farm women in their efforts to bring about successful harvests. Under the labor program, the British government recruited women under forty years of age to assist the war effort. However, in some fashion British farmers possessed the same prejudices and reluctances to employ women as other nations. Initially, the response to the use of women as farm labor had been slow; as more men joined the military, however, this attitude changed. By the time of the United States involvement in World War II, the British Land Army numbered more than forty thousand women, and the demand for women continued. Additionally, the country worked to produce more foodstuffs, and in this effort needed more labor, thus the call for women for the British WLA became great.<sup>42</sup>

With forty thousand strong in 1941, the British WLA took to the fields and brought in the harvests. In a manner that differed from the American WLA, the British organization required that Land Girls work full-time for the WLA, and only

those women who made that full-time commitment were accepted. In the United States, most nonfarm members of the WLA worked during vacations from their full-time employment positions, or on weekends; in some cases women worked during the entire growing season, or stayed year-round on dairy farms.<sup>43</sup> While the concept of year-round enrollment for the length of the war did not become part of the operation of the American WLA, it did not cause much concern over the establishment of the land army in the United States. The Women's National Farm and Garden Association continued to issue calls for a land army for the United States that drew on all the examples available to it, especially that of state-run initiatives and the Land Girls in Great Britain. In general, the eventual organization and development of the American WLA took over many new ideas and issues in the hope to create a successful, necessary, and helpful organization for the war effort.

Britain, however, did not prove to be the only foreign example influencing American officials during the period prior to the creation of the WLA. Canada also developed its own farm labor relief program. The situation that developed in Canada was not unlike that of the United States. The rural population had been decreasing steadily since the early twentieth century, a fact that affected Canadian agriculture as citizens became involved in the national war effort. And, in actions that clearly echoed the United States during World War II, men and women left Canadian farms for service in the military or to join the defense industry. By April 1941, movement from the farm and other lesser important labor positions had been in full force, as more and more men and women joined the war effort. By that time almost 50 percent of the population over the age of fourteen had joined the armed forces or were employed in some position. By the end of the war, more than 56 percent of the adult population (those over fourteen years of age) were gainfully employed or in the military. However, after 1943, the number engaged in war

manufacturing had decreased to about 10 percent of the adult population; while those engaged in "civilian industry" increased after 1943, as did the number of employers and farmers who joined the work force.<sup>44</sup>

The proportion of the civilian labor force engaged in agriculture during World War II represented about one-quarter of the total employed work force. Starting from a high point of about 30 percent in 1939, the proportion of those engaged in farming during the course of the war declined to less than 25 percent in 1943, and then crept back up to just over 25 percent by the end of the war. The low figure of those working in agriculture in 1943 corresponded to the sharp increase of industry and military employment during the war. As fewer and fewer people remained in agriculture, farmers in central Canada, especially those engaged in dairy and livestock farming, severely felt the need for assistance. In March 1942, the Canadian government instituted a policy that would control labor during the war, keep agriculturalists from leaving their farms and entering other employment, as well as postpone their military service. In latter years, the only way that an individual would be allowed out of his commitment to agriculture was by active duty in the military or seasonal employment in other outdoors employment, such as "lumbering, logging, forestry, fishing, or trapping." This policy enacted by the national Canadian government, brought the importance of domestic labor, especially agricultural, to the political forefront, as the nation examined the necessity of keeping help on the farms. All this was done with the thought of obtaining agricultural production goals for each crop year.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to keeping labor on the farms, the Canadian government also made provisions to furnish additional labor to those areas that needed it. So, in the manner of other nations and other farm labor programs, Canada instituted a labor plan that incorporated local and provincial control. Under the War Measures and National Resources Mobilization

Acts, the Minister of Labour had the right to enter into labor agreements within provinces that recruited labor and transported recruits to other locales. With this legislation, the Canadian government paid for inter-province transportation, and shared with each province the cost of recruitment, placement, and intra-province travel. Local committees, backed by provincial officers, organized and planned the local work groups, and arranged for the "effective use of agricultural labor" in each region. Functions of these local committees were "to stimulate agricultural production, to assure the most effective use of local labor and equipment, and to recruit farm personnel for other essential work when not needed on the farms." In accomplishment of these provisions, the government recruited and utilized the first groups of laborers during the 1942 harvest; workers were used "on an emergency basis, when weather and a shortage of manpower for the harvest fields threatened destruction to one of the bounteous crops of wheat and coarse grains in Canadian history." On that occasion, more than 5,000 farm workers had been sent from eastern Canada to Saskatchewan and Alberta to assist in the wheat harvest. Other examples of inter-province travel included the transportation of women and girls from the Prairie to Ontario to work in haying fields, and the movement of laborers from the East to British Columbia to participate in berry and fruit harvests.<sup>46</sup>

Regardless of the administrative structure in place, Canadian newspapers and publications also assisted in the effort to recruit an acceptable labor force during World War II. In the 22 January 1942 issue of Farmer's Advocate, the call for farm workers was extended. The request asked for volunteers to the land army, including high school students and women. Canadian farmers welcomed the labor that assisted them in the previous harvest, and expected similar results for the 1942 crop year. Other issues of the publication concentrated on women's contribution to farm labor in Canada,

by examining their use on numerous farms in several provinces and region. Specifically, Farmer's Advocate reported on the women's success, as they assisted in saving various fruit and food crops throughout the nation.<sup>47</sup>

In other efforts that echoed those of the United States, the Canadian government made use of a wide variety of people to assist in the nation's harvest. In general, these groups resembled their counterparts in America: "Canadian Japanese, Indians, prisoners of war, and men, women, and students residing in towns and cities." Military men were also available for farm work, due to the Farm Duty Plan, which allowed furloughs for planting and harvest seasons. In many provinces, women and girls were used to pick fruit and vegetables during the summer and autumn months after the federal provision in 1942 enacted Canada's labor program.<sup>48</sup>

On the other side of the world, two island nations also affected the creation of a labor program in the United States. Wartime efforts in Australia did not differ much from other nations; farm population decreased as military and other employment increased during the early years of war. In areas of munitions factories and other defense industries, such as the states of New South Wales and South Australia, rural population decreased as defense build-up increased. By June 1942, the adult male population of the rural area had decreased to 80 percent of the 1939 level, while the temporary male portion of the population fell even lower, to about 60 percent of the 1939 level; and by mid-1943, the temporary or seasonal male population had decreased to 44 percent of the 1939 level. And, conversely, with the loss of men within the region, the number of women engaged in agriculture, by mid-1943, had almost doubled since 1939. This figure would remain constant to the end of the war. By the end of January 1942, legislation had been enacted that would ensure the regulation of labor forces in Australia. The National Security (Manpower) Regulations gave authority to the Manpower

Directorate "to ensure 'that the resources of manpower and womanpower in Australia shall be organised and applied in the best possible way to meet the requirements of the defence forces and the needs of industry in the production of munitions and the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the life of the community.'"<sup>49</sup>

Thus, no one could be dismissed from service without governmental approval, especially in the area of industrial and defense work. In terms of agricultural production, other conditions developed. In contrast to the patriotic feelings invoked in the United States and Canada, farmers in Australia were reluctant to embark on increased programs of production without the guarantee of additional farm labor. Labor shortages developed on vegetable and dairy farms, a situation that would not affect dairy or vegetable farmers if they entered into government contracts; as hired labor would be protected from wartime "call-up." Farmer participation in government contracts allowed agricultural workers to remain on both vegetable and dairy farms to provide the necessary labor for increased production levels. Even so, this effort to provide farmers with workers did not completely combat the labor issues of World War II in Australia.<sup>50</sup>

Additional means had been needed. The answer came in July 1942, as the government established the Australian Women's Land Army. However, its establishment and placement of women on farms did not occur overnight. Farm families did not immediately embrace the idea of women working as farm labor, and in that case did not utilize the women immediately upon creation of the Australian WLA. And, although the organization never reached numbers in excess of four thousand women, the Australia WLA did, along with other nations, provide a precedent for the American land army at its time of organization. The Australian organization gave relief for farmers during harvest, as the women employed in the Australian WLA worked in seasonal and unskilled harvest

positions. In addition to the WLA, other sources of labor existed for the Australian farmers. Prisoners of war, high school students, military personnel, and others assisted in the nation's efforts to bring in their harvest on time.<sup>51</sup>

By mid-1943, the Australian government, recognized the importance of food and crop production, and requested the return of labor to the agricultural sector of society. Because of this, the government released a revision to the nation's manpower policy, in which, by June 1944, men would be released from the military to enter rural and farm positions. Eleven thousand of the fifteen thousand released would be used in the dairy industry. Others would be placed in munitions factory positions and other defense industries. And while these provisions existed to assist agriculture and other rural industries, the war department was slow to return workers to domestic employment; once men returned to rural industries, those who entered dairy work did not reach the numbers anticipated. In an effort to alleviate the labor problems and control the distribution of workers to agriculture, the government enacted other legislation in 1944. Manpower was distributed from farm-to-farm in an effort to balance labor needs and demands.<sup>52</sup>

Still, these efforts did not solely alleviate labor problems that developed, and more men were released from the military in 1944. This occurrence, mid-way through the year represented a redistribution of labor throughout Australia, as the country prepared for postwar economy and society. At this time, the government and military released the men who had been requested by the dairy industry, as well as made other efforts to alleviate the farm labor problem.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to Australia, other Pacific nations also exerted efforts to combine their domestic and defense economies, as well as find relief labor for the agricultural sector of their society. In New Zealand, the situation that developed was different than the other industrialized nations.

As a predominantly agricultural nation, New Zealand did not have the heavy industrial manufacturing base that the United States or Britain had in 1940. Relying chiefly on agriculture for its commercial industry, farm labor became the most common form of defense labor during the war. And as men left farms for other employment opportunities or the military, the nation's women remained behind and replaced men as the chief source of farm labor. Unlike other nations during wartime, New Zealand did not recruit women for defense manufacturing positions, instead relied on their labor for agriculture. In the occurrence of manufacturing positions for women, specifically in clothing or food manufacturing/processing, jobs were gender-specific and no more than menial tasks. The circumstance of war did not change women's role in industry; positions were not created for women, they remained in their subservient jobs of the past. To address wartime concerns, the national government concentrated on those areas of the New Zealand economy that required the women's assistance.<sup>54</sup> Thus, due to stereotypes and biases against women as war workers during World War II, New Zealand women found themselves placed in agricultural service as their contribution to the war effort.

New Zealand farms were owned and operated by families. Historically, New Zealanders did not commonly use hired labor on family farms, except on larger dairy farms and sheep stations. Because all family members participated and assisted in the operation of the farm, it was not unusual for women to work the farm along with the men. In most cases, the loss of a family member to the war effort meant a reduction of the number of livestock raised, cows milked, or crops grown. Many farmers lost their family labor early in the war, with labor shortages occurring from 1941 to 1945. During those crop years, farmers who requested assistance and received labor from the New Zealand government accepted furloughed military personnel. Known as the Army Harvesting Scheme, this



measure was enacted, in 1941, purely as a way to provide the New Zealand farmers with harvest labor--"a stop-gap measure"--not permanent labor. Farmers took advantage of this program, and through it, soldiers assisted the nation in producing acceptable harvests for the years during World War II.<sup>55</sup>

With the threat of Japanese invasion in 1942, and more military enlistments in the following years, the question quickly became whether New Zealand farmers could provide the necessary agricultural produce needed in the nation, and whether they could increase production as war needs dictated. And although it would have been possible to farmers to plant and cultivate, as well as care for their milch cows and sheep, the real issue during war became whether farmers would be able to accomplish all their production demands without hired labor. Short of decreasing the number of men sent for military duty, New Zealand searched for answers concerning the status of agricultural production and labor in the nation during the war.<sup>56</sup>

Although New Zealand farmers saw men as the capable people to take care of agriculture for the nation, they were willing to try other labor forms. Farmers grudgingly accepted women as a relief form of labor, thus, farm and nonfarm women worked full-time on farms. And, while the number of men employed on farms decreased dramatically during the war, the number of women did not; with more than 6,000 women employed in farming in the late 1930s, the nation boasted almost eleven thousand women engaged in agriculture by the end of the war. The organization of the Women's Land Corps in late 1941 brought legitimacy to the use of women on the nation's farms. In efforts to assist family members, as well as work on dairy farms and sheep stations, these women provided an assistance to New Zealand agriculture not unseen in other nations. And while success cannot be measured in exact figures, the importance of the New Zealand Women's Land Army reached the United States as it strove to establish a similar organization

mid-way through the war.<sup>57</sup>

Although the experiences in Australia and New Zealand did not lead to a resounding call for the organization of a women's land army in the United States, they brought forth a message that women were an acceptable form of farm labor. These experiences, along with the British Land Girls organization and state-run initiatives in the United States, illustrated the possibility and necessity of a similar organization in the United States during World War II. Positive images of farm and nonfarm women as agricultural labor in the United States and foreign nations, as portrayed in national publications, allowed the federal government to cautiously approach the issue of a land army in the latter part of 1942. Bombarded by a media campaign from women's, national, and agricultural publications prior to 1943 convinced the national government of the importance of a land army to the agricultural community, as well as the public's resolve to bring about its incorporation.

In the years of war before the establishment of the WLA, the federal government received some of its strongest pressure to create a labor program that included a land army in the spirit of World War I, and in accordance with the decentralized administration of New Deal programs. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the government faced additional influences from individual states, foreign countries, and national media. These forces worked effectively to convince the federal government of the necessity of using women as farm labor during World War II. Although some individuals, organizations, and states did not embrace the concept of the WLA and the employment of nonfarm women, they did not remain hostile to the concept either. Regardless of every individual's personal preference concerning the establishment of a land army and farm labor program, media exposure for this possibility raised the public's and government's awareness of this necessity. As a result, in late 1942 the USDA began to

lead the way for the establishment of a national agricultural labor policy for the war effort.

## Notes

1. Frances W. Valentine, "Successful Practices in the Employment of Nonfarm Women on Farms in the Northeastern States, 1943," Bulletin No. 199, U.S. Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, 1944, 4; Arthur Root, Report on the Volunteer Land Corps, Summer 1942, n.d., 1, Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont, Burlington; Esther M. Colvin, "Another Women's Land Army?" Independent Woman 21 (April 1942): 104; House, Committee on Appropriations, Farm Labor Program, 1943: Hearings before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943, 208-211.
2. Root, Report on the Volunteer Land Corps, 5-6.
3. Ibid., 6-7.
4. Ibid., 7.
5. Ibid., 1-4.
6. Ibid., 8-13.
7. Colvin, "Another Women's Land Army?" 104; House, Farm Labor Program, 1943, 208-211; Root, Report on the Volunteer Land Corps, Summer 1942; Mary Steele Ross, American Women in Uniform (Garden City, N.J.: Garden City Publishing, 1943), 54. By the end of the 1942 crop season wages paid to workers ranged from twenty-one dollars per month to fifty dollars per month.
8. House, Farm Labor Program, 1943, 208-211.
9. Katherine L. Potter, "Women's Farm Service of the State of Maine," 12 September 1942, folder Agriculture 1942, box 200, Women Workers in World War II, 1940-1945, Division of Research, Records of the U.S. Women's Bureau, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter NARG 86).
10. "Report of Progress for the Year Ending June 30, 1942," Bulletin No. 411, Maine Agricultural Experiment Station, Orono, University of Maine, June 1942, 319-20; "Potato-Harvest Labor in Aroostook County, Maine, 1941," Miscellaneous Publication No. 568, Maine Agricultural Experiment Station, Orono, University of Maine, March 1942, 9, 17.
11. New York Times, 12 April 1943; "Women Workers Help in Harvesting Crops," Labor Information Bulletin 9 (October 1942): 4-5; John Bird, "New Hands for Our Farms," Country

Gentleman 112 (September 1942): 44; Valentine, "Successful Practices in the Employment of Nonfarm Women on Farms in the Northeastern States," 4.

12. New York Times, 12 and 24 April and 9 July 1943; "Women Workers Help in Harvesting Crops," 4-5.

13. Ibid., 5 July and 18 August 1943; New York Times Magazine, 4 July 1943.

14. Frances W. Valentine, "Women's Emergency Farm Service on the Pacific Coast in 1943," Bulletin No. 204, U.S. Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, 1945, 3-4.

15. Ibid, 4-6.

16. Christian Science Monitor, 9 January 1943.

17. Bird, "New Hands for Our Farms," 44; Victoria Case, "Oregon Checks Womanpower," Independent Woman 21 (March 1942): 78, 91.

18. Valentine, "Women's Emergency Farm Service on the Pacific Coast in 1943," 20-21.

19. Case, "Oregon Checks Womanpower," 91.

20. Elizabeth Spence, "War Time Harvest," Independent Woman 21 (September 1942): 270-271; Rainer Schickele, "Manpower in Agriculture," Pamphlet No. 3, Wartime Farm and Farm Policy Series (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1943), 9; Margaret G. Reid, "Food Strategy," Pamphlet No. 1, Wartime Farm and Food Policy Series (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1943), 36, 38-39.

21. "Need for Farm Labor," Agriculture and National Defense, Office of Information, USDA, 27 September 1941; "OADR Shaping Up Farm Labor Program," Agriculture and National Defense, Office of Information, USDA, 22 November 1941; Denver Post, 8 June 1941.

22. "Guidelines for Wartime Use of Women on Farms," Special Bulletin No. 8, U.S. Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, 1942, 1. As reported in this publication, the shortage of rubber tires, caused by rationing, severely hurt migratory labor. Without the ability to follow the harvest, migratory labor experienced rough times as community groups and farmers realized that they would have to find another source of power.

23. Colvin, "Another Women's Land Army?" 103-104; "Sighted Goals; Met Same," Farm Journal and Farmer's Wife, September 1942, 13-15; "Fighting the Battle on the Land," Extension Service Review, December 1942, 182.
24. "Fighting the Battle on the Land," 182; Katherine Jellison, Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology, 1913-1963 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 139-40. Jellison included statistics that addressed the increase of farm women performing farm chores by midwestern states.
25. Hickman Powell, "Sister Pitches In," Country Gentleman 112 (July 1942): 14, 59.
26. "Iowa, State Extension Farm Labor Program Annual Report, 1943," box 3, Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports of Extension and Other Workers Under the Farm Labor Program, 1943-1947, Records of the U.S. Extension Service, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter AR, NARG 33).
27. Carroll P. Streeter, "Can Town and City Women Help?" Farm Journal and Farmer's Wife, July 1942, 32-33, 43.
28. Ibid.
29. Toni Taylor, "Women on the Home Front," McCall's, May 1942, 64-65.
30. "Women: Without Fuss or Feathers," Time, 12 January 1942, 16.
31. Colvin, "Another Women's Land Army?"
32. Denver Post, 10 April 1942.
33. Ibid., 21 and 27 May 1942.
34. Ibid., 18 May 1942.
35. Saturday Evening Post, 25 July 1942. This article reported that 13 percent of the farm labor force had been women, while the figure reported by Elizabeth Spence in "War Time Harvest," (note 15) is noted to be "approximately 14" percent. In all probability these figures represent the same value.
36. Judith Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, "'To the Rescue of the Crops': The Women's Land Army during World War II," Prologue 25 (Winter 1993): 351. Litoff and Smith attribute Goodwin's quote to a letter to the editor, New York Times, for 24 October 1942.

37. Bird, "New Hands for Our Farms," 9.
38. Spence, "War Time Harvest," 270-71; Reid, "Food Strategy," 36.
39. "Sighted Goals; Met Same," 13-15.
40. Christian Science Monitor, 9 January 1943.
41. Lady Denman, "Foreword," in W. E. Shewell-Cooper, Land Girl: A Manual for Volunteers in the Women's Land Army (London: English Universities Press, 1941), iii-iv; Dame Meriel Talbot, "The Women's Land Army in the Great War, 1914-18," in W. E. Shewell-Cooper, Land Girl: A Manual for Volunteers in the Women's Land Army (London: English Universities Press, 1941), 7-13. The title cited above is on the cover of the volume, while the title page lists the following: Land Girl: A Handbook for the Women's Land Army.
42. Lady Denman, "Foreword," iii-iv; W. E. Shewell-Cooper, Land Girl: A Manual for Volunteers in the Women's Land Army (London: English Universities Press, 1941), 14-18; Jackson J. Spielvogel, Western Civilization, volume 2, 2nd edition (St. Paul, Minn.: West Publishing Company, 1994), 993. By mid-1944, over fifty percent of the British population wore military uniforms or were engaged in civilian defense work.
43. Shewell-Cooper, Land Girl, 19.
44. George E. Britnell and Vernon C. Fowke, Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace, 1935-50 (Stanford: Stanford University, 1962), 171-75.
45. Ibid., 176-79.
46. Ibid., 180-81.
47. "Land Army Recruits Thousands," Farmer's Advocate, 22 January 1942, 36, 43. Farmer's Advocate published several articles in reference to the Canadian land army and its recruitment of labor and the success of women as farm workers, other issues included: 26 June 1941, 14 May 1942, 28 May 1942, 27 August 1942, 26 November 1942.
48. Britnell and Fowke, Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace, 182-83.
49. J. G. Crawford et al., "Wartime Agriculture in Australia, 1939-50," in Wartime Agriculture in Australia and New Zealand, 1939-50 (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 91-94, 96, 100.

50. Ibid., 94-95.
51. Ibid., 100-101.
52. Ibid., 97-99.
53. Ibid., 99-100.
54. Deborah Montgomerie, "Men's Jobs and Women's Work: The New Zealand Women's Land Service in World War II," Agricultural History 63 (Summer 1989): 1-13.
55. A. A. Ross, "Wartime Agriculture in New Zealand, 1939-50," in Wartime Agriculture in Australia and New Zealand, 1939-50 (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 293-94.
56. Ibid., 294.
57. Ibid., 295-97; Montgomerie, "Men's Jobs and Women's Work."



## CHAPTER 4. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND THE WLA

The influence of World War I and the New Deal on the formulation of World War II farm labor programs is important to the general development of wartime measures. However, these two events do not provide the only influences for the WLA. Other influences existed as well, specifically, early state-run programs; other countries' policies; and public media sources; all which assisted in establishing the WLA during World War II. In terms of the federal government, its action had been slower. Confined initially to agency reports and subcommittee and committee hearings, the federal government did not initiate formal proceedings to create the WLA until early 1943. Then the actions by Secretary of Agriculture, Claude R. Wickard, brought the jurisdiction and influence of the Emergency Farm Labor Program within the USDA and Extension Service. Still, however, Congress struggled with the necessity of a land army, and the reasons to establish the program. But, while the federal government had been ensnared in congressional committees, hearings, and testimonies, the American public demanded and requested a viable farm labor program. In regard to the nation's request for agricultural labor during World War II, Congress had little choice but to provide it. Thus, in its action to initiate the Emergency Farm Labor Plan (Public Law 45), the federal government created the Women's Land Army with the other labor programs.

Aside from the technological, and production-based improvements that occurred in agriculture during World War II, its structure changed as well. As men and women left the farm under the guise of patriotism and suggestion of economic improvement to enter defense industries and military service, those who remained discovered that patriotic duty led to severe labor shortages on the farms. Between April 1940 and July 1942 more than two million men left the farm, and by the

end of the war, the agricultural population had decreased by six million.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the nation's farmers called for federal measures to provide labor and assistance for the production of their crops. Initially, the federal government did not address these concerns directly, but left any action to local or state officials, or farmers. However, by late 1942 the federal government initiated action concerning the farm labor situation in the country and worked to alleviate the problem as well as assist the nation's farmers. Through the work of committees, subcommittees, and congressional hearings, the federal government enacted a wartime agricultural labor plan that would provide necessary workers to needy areas. Decisions to create such a program, as well as the passage of legislation that initiated the plan, did not automatically bring change to federal agricultural policy but did establish a basis from which to start. Upon these decisions and legislation, the government and the USDA faced the difficult task of securing funding and support for a federal emergency agricultural labor program.

Federal agencies discussed the revival of a women's land army. Specifically, the United States Department of Agriculture, Extension Service, and Women's Bureau explored the possibility of such an organization in 1941 and 1942. The USDA, which included the Extension Service, held several committee and subcommittee meetings and hearings in which legislators debated the issue of farm labor and the presence of women within that work force. Throughout the two years as USDA and Extension Service officials discussed the agricultural labor and production situation that had developed within the nation, these officials did not, for the most part, reach a solution to the labor question. The Women's Bureau took their efforts further, and in 1942 supplied to interested state and federal employees, guidelines regarding the employment, placement, and care of women who were engaged as agricultural labor during the war. The publication,

"Guidelines for Wartime Use of Women on Farms," advocated the placement of women on the nation's farms. At that time, the Women's Bureau expressed an opinion that had not been widely accepted by the federal government to date. Further, its choice to include women as farm workers grew from the problem that developed for migratory labor. With the country's rationing of tires and gasoline after Pearl Harbor, interstate laborers would be limited in their travels; thus, farmers would depend on local sources of labor. Therefore, the Women's Bureau suggested the hiring of local rural and farm women for labor. It advocated the placement of farm women on their own or a neighbor's farm, the use of rural women, and only in "extreme emergencies" the use of urban women.<sup>2</sup>

In an effort to meet their goals, the Women's Bureau made recommendations concerning the recruitment of farm labor for 1942. The agency suggested that women be recruited in those areas that desperately needed additional labor, only women capable of doing hard physical labor should be considered, and that farmers or communities needed to provide the women with good living and working conditions. By recruiting only in areas that desperately needed workers and only women capable of doing hard physical work, communities had been assured of an acceptable labor force. And, while the Women's Bureau did not set a standard wage for agricultural labor, it advised farmers to pay the women at a rate comparable to other war industries, at least the equivalent of those employed in canneries--thirty cents per hour, as well as give the women one day per week free.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, the farmer, or community, needed to provide the women with transportation to and from their home or with suitable housing. The nationally imposed tire rationing affected transportation for women to the fields in the same way that migratory labor had been forced to suspend their practice of following the harvest. To this end, it would be to the farmer's or community's benefit to house the women

close to the labor area. For some areas, however, the issue of gas and tire rationing did not pose a major problem. New York state's ration board allowed extra gas and tires to those transporting farm workers to the fields. Lodging, however, posed a major problem. Determined to house World War II farm workers in better dwellings than migrant workers of the 1930s, the federal government discussed the way to construct or provide suitable housing. Still, some labor projects had to be abandoned when acceptable housing, as determined by the Women's Bureau, could not be located.<sup>4</sup>

Housing for female agricultural workers needed to be, as recommended by the Women's Bureau, clean with adequate and sanitary toilet facilities, protect from weather conditions, possess clean and comfortable beds, as well as provide pure and safe water for drinking and bathing. Even though the Women's Bureau made these recommendations it realized that individual communities or farmers would not have been able to follow each guideline "to the letter," but hoped the guidelines would be taken as minimum standards for housing. In that regard women would be housed in farm houses, community country clubs, dormitories, school buildings, temporary buildings, tents, or camps established for the specific purpose of housing female agricultural labor. The use of camps to house farm workers had been previously utilized in World War I and for relief workers in the 1930s. Camps served the purpose of housing large numbers of seasonal labor during harvest time. Those employed in year-round positions either stayed with the farm family or was transported to and from their home to the farm.<sup>5</sup>

These guidelines established by the Women's Bureau would influence housing and other regulations created within the WLA and other labor programs in 1943. As part of government policy, standardized services would be required for farm workers as members of the United States Crop Corps. But that did not occur until 1943. In the years prior to the passage

of Public Law 45, the federal government did not legislate any policy that affected housing and other issues necessary for safe and healthy conditions for those Americans who joined the agricultural front.

In addition to the Women's Bureau, the USDA also acted to bring about a plan for agricultural labor. Although not confined to the utilization of women as farm workers, USDA subcommittees and committees met throughout 1941 and 1942 in efforts to define an acceptable labor program. Influenced by successes seen in other federal agencies, and local and state government initiatives, the USDA searched for a way in which to provide the necessary labor on a national scale. Even so, the initial reluctance by the USDA to address the labor issue placed the agency at a disadvantage. Several states had established programs of labor use, including imported, migratory, military, and seasonal sources of labor, while the USDA had no such plan in place. However, no state operation had the breadth of wide-spread scale that a national agricultural labor problem would possess, and therefore the country still called for that policy. Additionally, the need for more labor during the early 1940s brought more pressure to states and federal agencies to provide all the necessary assistance. Demands for farmers and states forced the federal government to adopt an effort to initiate a federal farm labor plan.

Beginning in February 1941, federal agencies suggested to the USDA the possibility of a labor shortage, as well as the means by which to address this issue. The Interbureau Coordinating Committee subcommittee considered the possibility of labor shortage that month. And, although, committee members did not visualize an immediate lack of farm workers, they did recognize several concerns regarding the condition of the national labor source at the time. As a group, the subcommittee wrote, "the supply of farm labor in the United States for planting and harvesting the 1941 crop would be

adequate to maintain production." However, they recommended the necessity of moving agricultural workers to places of obvious and peak need. To combat regional needs, the subcommittee members suggested the use of unskilled workers and "older" men on farms. Additionally, they recognized the importance and necessity to keep conflict between workers and owners at a minimum, to develop cooperation between groups, and to provide work camps for employed farm laborers. These recommendations were part of an effort to adequately address production concerns and quotas present during the 1941 crop year. In terms of future years, the subcommittee suggested that the USDA examine the nation's youth as a possible farm labor source. Finally, it had been suggested by this subcommittee that the labor situation of the nation's farms be monitored and watched to determine the severity of labor shortages in the future.<sup>6</sup> Without a direct and immediate threat of war, or labor shortage, this subcommittee had not found it necessary to staunchly commit to a federal agricultural program.

Just a month later, in March 1941, the USDA announced reorganization efforts to "take aggressive steps to meet any situation which may develop promptly and effectively, and to cooperate with other agencies in a position to contribute to a solution" regarding the issue of farm labor. Thus, the USDA Labor Committee, under the leadership of chairman Roy Hendrickson, USDA Director of Personnel, included numerous administrators from several agricultural agencies such as the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Agricultural Marketing Service, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Commodity Credit Corporation, Extension Service, and Farm Security Administration. The committee had been expanded in June, but by October had been replaced with another agencies. Therefore, no distinctive effort had been taken by the Labor Committee to alleviate farm labor concerns in 1941.<sup>7</sup>

In August 1941, a subcommittee of the United States

Department of Agriculture's Labor Committee recommended the use of women as labor. They suggested that to ensure a successful harvest and adequate food supply and labor during the 1942 crop season, women should be recruited to work in the fields. The subcommittee focused primarily on the use of urban women, who would be used to plant, cultivate, and harvest fruit and vegetable crops, as well as provide necessary labor for processing plants.<sup>8</sup> Clearly, however, urban women had not been their only concern, because the subcommittee expressed the desire for any available women to be recruited as agricultural labor. Echoing earlier arguments regarding the use of women in the nation's fields, this federal subcommittee openly stated the necessity of women as farm labor during World War II. Women, however, were not immediately incorporated into federal agricultural policy; the inclusion of women within the farm labor force required additional meetings and reports before they became part of federal farm labor legislation and policy.

Throughout 1941, as the country prepared for wartime build-up and domestic industrialization, agricultural agencies searched for answers to the nation's farm work problem. The USDA's Labor Committee, by the formation and eventual expansion of their committee and written report, addressed labor concerns evident in the United States. Ill-equipped to handle all labor issues, the USDA replaced its Labor Committee with an "interbureau planning committee on farm labor" on 20 October 1941. Seen as more encompassing as the previous labor committee, this interbureau agency addressed several issues. Under the jurisdiction of Raymond C. Smith from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, the Interbureau Planning Committee developed "plans for the utilization of farm labor in such a way as to make it most effective in contributing to the accomplishment of agricultural production goals," as well as promoted the "welfare of farm laborers."<sup>9</sup> At the same time, the office of Agricultural Defense Relations established a

committee to examine the labor issue. The Division of Labor and Rural Industries was granted a mission by the office of Agricultural Defense Relations that seemed to be more wide-reaching than the USDA's subcommittees and interbureau organization. In its plans to coordinate farm labor, the Division of Labor and Rural Industries, under the leadership of W. J. Rogers, worked to "facilitate the coordination of operations related to defense farm labor problems carried on by the various agencies of the Department; to serve as a clearinghouse to bring into common focus the consideration of farm labor problems as they relate to the defense program . . . and to assist in the planning of farm labor programs in order to meet defense needs." This new committee seemed to overshadow and encumber the purpose of the USDA's newly formed interbureau, thus, it became prudent for the two organizations to join forces. In late October 1941, the USDA's interbureau was absorbed by the Division of Labor and Rural Industries in an attempt to coordinate all efforts to examine the problem of farm labor in the United States during World War II.<sup>10</sup>

With the combination of these two organizations it appeared that USDA had moved toward a coordinated effort regarding farm labor. This, however, did not occur. Any advancements or efforts made by the Division of Labor and Rural Industries were further hampered by the attitudes of several key administrators within the USDA, especially Secretary Claude R. Wickard. In the move to reorganize the USDA's Labor Committee in March 1941, Wickard expressed his opinion concerning the federal government's involvement in farm labor. Wickard recommended that state "Land-Use Planning Committees appoint farm labor subcommittees to 'develop plans for dealing with the problems of farm labor shortages on the State and Local levels, and to coordinate the necessary action to this end'" in place of federal intervention and action. Additionally, the land-use planning committees would work with the United States Employment Service to determine the labor



problems present in the country, and establish a plan in which to correct those problems. The organization of the state committees, and their involvement with the Employment Service excluded the USDA from any direct contact concerning the labor problem at that time. By the end of 1941, no one agency within the USDA had control of the farm labor problem; responsibility of labor had been divided among several agencies, including: Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Division of Labor and Rural Industries, Farm Security Administration (Sugar Section), as well as the land-use planning committees instituted on the federal, state, and local levels.<sup>11</sup>

This fragmentary approach to farm labor seen in the years prior to passage of Public Law 45 does not suggest a viable agricultural program for the nation's farmers by late 1942. And although efforts had been made to streamline and coordinate department efforts and programs, the USDA and the federal government would not achieve this until the passage of labor legislation. In part, this delay can be attributed to Secretary Wickard's desire to place responsibility of farm labor within the Employment Service, rather than in the USDA, as well as his announcement that possible labor sources, such as women, should register with their local war boards and wait to be called for service. By taking this reactive, rather than proactive, position regarding farm labor, Wickard did not instill confidence in the nation's farmers regarding their use of an unorthodox labor source, such as urban women. Without a positive response from farmers concerning the use of women as farm labor, government officials disregarded the effectiveness of women in 1942 and for 1943. Thus, once the established federal plan was announced in 1943, agricultural organizations and farm individuals demonstrated their opposition to the use of women as farm labor by speaking against female farm participation to the public, the media, and Congress. With the secretary of the USDA not supportive of female

agricultural workers, many within the farm community would not be either.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout 1942, agencies in Washington, D.C. continued their efforts to create an acceptable farm labor program. In that year, the War Power Commission directed the USDA and its secretary to make every available effort to provide agricultural workers as needed. However, even in these directives no mention of gender implied that the presence of women as farm workers had not been widely accepted. It had been the mandate of the War Power Commission that the USDA provide adequate housing and transportation for workers, as well as health and welfare services, farm deferments for some individuals, and liveable wages. However, even through the USDA received directives regarding the status of farm labor, for most purposes, the Employment Service and other agencies handled the hiring and placement of workers on the nation's farms. This would change, however, when in January 1943, the War Power Commission passed the control of farm labor management from the Employment Service to the USDA.<sup>13</sup>

Until then, however, congressional committees and subcommittees met to debate the issues regarding farm labor. One such committee, the House Committee on Agriculture held hearings in late September and early October 1942 that addressed farm labor and production. Discussion included the lack of available farm implements, due to the industrial manufacture of defense machines and weapons, as well as those who had remained on the farm to assist in production, and the status of military personnel. Further, although the USDA did not have responsibility for the farm labor problem in 1942, Wickard described efforts that his agency had taken to that point; which included the placement of Mexican nationals and domestic labor in "vital war crop areas," use of Japanese American internees as farm labor, and attempts to defer farm personnel from military service.<sup>14</sup>

Although USDA labor sources did not meet the total needs

of farmers in 1942, the agency had transported workers to needy regions around the country, as well as offered training courses for those engaged in year-round and seasonal work. In transport efforts similar to the Bracero Program, the federal government requested funds to move surplus labor to "critical areas." In the words of Secretary Wickard, "By using this transportation program, the fullest possible use will be made of our migrant labor force, and workers who might otherwise lose a great deal of time wandering from one place to another will be transported at once from one job to another and put to work where they are needed with the least possible delay." Additionally, training of inexperienced labor would "take several forms." Just one method involved programs that placed urban labor on farms under the guidance of experienced farm personnel.<sup>15</sup>

Even with these methods in place, the transportation of labor and training programs for workers, the USDA and Wickard recognized the possibility of more labor needed as the war progressed. Thus, to Congress, Secretary Wickard discussed alternate sources of farm labor, sources that included "large numbers of women and young people." In the years before the establishment of a federal labor policy, farm women and youths had taken over many farm duties, but even they would not provide enough agricultural labor as the war progressed. Consequently, Wickard discussed the necessity for urbanites to join the war effort. But, even though Wickard expressed the idea and concern of urban women as farm labor, he immediately qualified his suggestion. Wickard described the current efforts at national labor recruitment for both agriculture and industry, stating that these efforts should be altered to allow urban labor sources to enter the defense and manufacturing plants, while farm women, youths, and men should remain on the nation's farms. Thus, with experienced labor on farms, agricultural production goals could be reached and surpassed.<sup>16</sup>

Wickard had not been the only administrator to testify before Congress regarding "farm labor and production." Others also appeared before the House Committee on Agriculture in September and October 1942. One was Lieutenant Colonel Francis V. Keesling, Jr. with the Selective Service System. Keesling also discussed the issue of farm labor, especially in terms of military deferments and wages paid to workers. In general farm men and boys had been given six month deferment periods, with the ability to extend the time another six months. And while, Keesling agreed with most, that agricultural men belonged on their farms, he also stated that any available, "physically qualified," and reliable farm man or youth should be placed in the army if they could be successfully replaced on the farm by someone else. As long as another body could be used in their place, then farm individuals should be drafted for service.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the issue of deferments and farm production, Keesling discussed other concerns, one of these being the rate of pay received by those involved in the war effort during the 1940s. With the comparison of industrial labor available, those who worked on farms could easily determine their lack of parity and buying power with other war workers, and, thus, moved from the farm to join the industrial defense forces. Congressman Reid F. Murray from Wisconsin discussed the disparity between farm and industrial workers this way, "Take the boys who have gone into the shops and are getting 5, 10, or 20 dollars a day; after the war they will be able to tell their children what good fellows they were, but the farm fellow has to take the ridicule of all the others, and if we are not careful we will put him in that difficulty." The federal government, in efforts to stop mass migration from the farms, insisted that it was patriotic to be employed as farm labor during World War II as well as established minimum wage rates per hour or per day for farm workers. Minimum wages had still been low, however, and in most cases, would

not pay a worker's expenses.<sup>18</sup> This effort to portray farm work as patriotic war work was used as women joined the WLA to justify the low wages paid, especially in those regions where the average pay had been less than fifty cents per hour.

Others who testified followed, such as General Lewis B. Hershey, director of Selective Service, who spent his time before the committee discussing the role, or lack thereof, that the Secretary of Agriculture played in the nation's defense. Hershey, along with others of the Committee on Agriculture, discussed the timeliness that the USDA and Wickard had reacted to implementation of defense efforts for the nation. W. R. Poage of Texas and Orville Zimmerman of Missouri agreed with Hershey concerning the absence of effort exhibited by Wickard and the USDA in combatting the farm labor problem. As vocal critics, these men questioned the actions of Wickard and the slow progress that had been made in the effort to find an acceptable farm labor source.<sup>19</sup> Clearly to those who testified and made up the Committee on Agriculture, the actions taken thus far by the USDA and Wickard to alleviate the farm labor problem had not been adequate to the national war effort.

Throughout the autumn hearings of the House Committee on Agriculture, the continuing theme regarded the lack of effort by Wickard and the USDA in resolving the agricultural labor problem. And, while most agreed that the secretary had been overworked and busy on many projects and that labor had not been a priority in the previous years, in the future the committee wanted labor to be an important concern for the USDA and other federal agencies. The committee also gathered the opinions of the Selective Service, War Manpower Commission, and War Production Board and addressed their concerns regarding the status of agricultural labor in the nation.<sup>20</sup>

Regardless of USDA positions concerning female farm labor, the agency did not abandon the examination of the labor issue in 1942. Throughout October, Extension and USDA

officials met to discuss possible labor sources for the coming crop year. As a result, and through the information provided by journalist Dorothy Thompson, the Committee on Extension Organization and Policy of the Land-Grant College Association "recommended that the Extension Service encourage the use of urban youths and women as farm labor in 1943." During October 1942, Thompson convinced Extension and USDA policy-makers of a necessary farm labor plan that utilized the urban population. As a newspaper columnist and radio personality, Thompson utilized the media to discuss publicly the advantages of employing teenagers and women as farm workers during the crop season in locales that needed labor. As her example, Thompson discussed the Volunteer Land Corps. Through this program, Thompson had, in the summer months of 1942, organized an effective labor supply program for northeastern farmers. The Volunteer Land Corps placed urban youths on Vermont and New Hampshire farms. As administrator she recognized the necessity and suitability of this program to Vermont, and on a larger scale, to the nation. Further, she urged the Extension Service, and thus the USDA, to assume the responsibility for recruitment and placement of national labor for the next crop year.<sup>21</sup>

As a result of Thompson's actions and editorials, USDA Secretary Wickard appointed another committee to recommend a course of action for the problems associated with agricultural labor in the nation during World War II. Headed by Extension Director M. L. Wilson, this committee included J. W. Coddington, Agricultural Conservation and Adjustment Administration; James S. Heizer, Farm Security Administration; Otis E. Mulliken, Office of Agricultural War Relations; and Perry A. Thompson, Forest Service. These men incorporated ideas proposed by earlier committees and discussed the use, on a national scale, of urban youths as farm labor and the creation a women's land army as a separate organization. However, the committee, in its final report dated 11 November

1942, made no recommendation for or against the creation of a women's land army, instead saw the influence of the Volunteer Land Corps to the creation of a "nationwide city youth organization" that contributed to the wartime farm labor effort. Thus, the USDA made no formal plans to establish a women's land army in November 1942.<sup>22</sup>

Although presented with several labor recommendations, no decisive governmental policy had been established concerning farm labor by 1943. Thus, farmers had been advised to "make do" with the labor that they had, and to use all available local labor sources. In the case of farm women, they were advised to remain on their farms, and provide labor where it was most needed.<sup>23</sup> By the end of 1942, different government agencies had examined the farm labor problem and presented their recommendations to the USDA secretary. With pressure coming from several fronts, such as numerous federal committees and subcommittees, Extension Service, Women's Bureau, and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt in January 1943, Wickard looked for a quick answer to the nation's farm labor problem.

Even though no formal action had been taken, the federal government appeared resigned to the fact that a program to assist the nation's farmers was needed. In late 1942, Extension director, M. L. Wilson had assigned the chief administrator of the Division of Field Studies and Training to prepare estimates for funding and other requirements to establish "a national youth farm labor program and a Women's Land Army" for the country's farmers. Along with Meredith C. Wilson, Extension Director M. L. Wilson also named Grace E. Frysinger, Florence Hall, and Mary Rokahr to discuss the use of nonfarm women on the nation's farms. Their recommendations regarding the placement of women on farms, and Meredith C. Wilson's budgetary estimates for a proposed labor program provided Secretary Wickard and the USDA with information that forced them to consider the establishment of such a program to

assist the nation's farmers in their search for adequate labor.<sup>24</sup>

By January 1943, in an effort to answer and relieve some of the pressure, the USDA made provisions to create a national program for agriculture. At meetings conducted in January, Secretary Wickard requested that state extension services and others consider and plan for the use of nonfarm labor, including women, for the year's crops. On January 8 and 9, he broached these topics with representatives from twenty farm and women's organizations. Meeting in New York City, Wickard outlined the ideas to be used to create a land army for benefit to the country's farmers. With this action and the subsequent federal farm labor plan, Wickard, the Extension Service, and the USDA had established a manner by which to mobilize a force for labor in 1943. In doing so, they precipitated the War Manpower Commission Directive XVII of 23 January 1943, which placed "responsibility for mobilization of farm labor in the Department of Agriculture."<sup>25</sup>

With Directive XVII, the War Manpower Commission removed the responsibility of hiring farm labor from the Employment Service and placed it with the USDA. This directive authorized the USDA to recruit, place, and train agricultural workers for the nation's farmers. Even though the USDA now had the responsibility to develop the farm labor program, it did so under the directive of the War Manpower Commission, and it needed to operate according to Commission standards. Additionally, the use of imported farm labor could occur only after the country had exhausted all domestic labor sources, and only with the War Manpower Commission's permission and approval. Under these conditions, the Extension Service received the jurisdiction of the proposed labor forces. Mobilization of forces became the key issue discussed at Extension meetings in late January 1943. Held in Chicago and Washington, D.C. with state extension agencies and the Extension War Advisory Committee, respectively, these meetings



announced the USDA's intention to mobilize farm labor forces for the 1943 crop year. In February, all state extension agencies were advised of their expected part in labor mobilization, and the utilization of American nonfarm youths and women as well as local forces for agricultural work.<sup>26</sup>

In the process of securing funding and support, the federal government moved through various stages of development and comprehension regarding the severity of the labor issue. On 17 February 1943, the federal government announced its intention to organize a farm labor program and granted authorization to the Extension Service to mobilize nonfarm labor, including women, for the nation's farms. The creation of the Emergency Farm Labor Program gave the Extension Service jurisdiction over agricultural workers, including the WLA. In that manner, the Extension Service would be responsible for the "Development and supervision of a program for the organized recruitment and utilization of non-farm women for the appropriate types of farm work wherever practicable; also for cooperation with and rendering appropriate assistance to other groups sponsoring and organizing activities along these lines." In terms of the importance of the WLA in the 1943 war effort, the Extension Service originally estimated that the program would recruit 10,000 women for year-round labor and 50,000 women for seasonal work, one month or more in duration. Another 300,000 women were to be hired for short-term emergency work. The agency would discover rather quickly that more labor would be needed to sustain the country in 1943, and most certainly, through the war.<sup>27</sup> And while other labor programs contributed to the overall effort, the participation of women in the WLA, and thus World War II, multiplied tenfold over Extension Service 1943 estimates.

With the structure in place to establish the farm labor program, the process to do so progressed much faster than it had previously. Almost immediately measures were taken to create three distinct units within the Extension Service.

"Nonfarm youths," "Nonfarm women," and "Labor placement" units were initially set up in February, with Meredith C. Wilson installed as the head of these units. She held this post through the remainder of the war.<sup>28</sup>

Legislation and mobilization for the farm labor program established the physical structure of the United States Crop Corps. And, while the structure of each organization needed to be determined at its inception, other issues were also addressed before the full-scale recruitment or labor occurred. In this case, the issue of appropriations or funding for the labor programs needed to be resolved. In efforts to acquire appropriations for the Emergency Farm Labor Program, Secretary Wickard sat before a subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations in the House of Representatives in February 1943. In these sessions Wickard described the status of domestic agriculture for the war, and the problems that the USDA expected for 1943. Among those problems, Wickard believed that labor would prove to be the most difficult to solve, and therefore required the appropriation of funding almost immediately to meet all national needs. And in announcements that echoed the documentation of the Emergency Farm Labor Program, Secretary Wickard discussed ways in which the labor situation would be met. To this subcommittee, Wickard described the type of persons that would be used as farm labor through the legislated farm supply program, labor that included military deferments for men employed on dairy, livestock, or poultry farms; urban and rural seasonal workers (at least 3.5 million); Mexicans nationals (50,000 of the 3.5 million); African Americans; and women.<sup>29</sup> The use of women as farm labor during the war warranted last place on Wickard's list of acceptable persons, and in most cases, that is the position that Congress also viewed the women.

In his testimony before the House of Representatives' subcommittee, Wickard described the status of American agriculture during the early 1940s. Clearly the war had

affected the labor needs for farms, as there were 200,000 less farm workers in 1943 than the previous year. By citing this statistic, Wickard told committeemen that his, and the department's, request for additional farm labor sources was justified. Further, Wickard described the types of farm laborers who would be recruited for work in the nation's fields in 1943. The majority of those recruited for agricultural work would include nonfarm students and others available for seasonal field work. This group of laborers, at least three and one-half million strong, would not be concerned with low wages, but would work due to a strong sense of national defense, patriotism, and pride. Therefore, it would be necessary to appeal to their sense of loyalty to the United States in these efforts to save the crops.<sup>30</sup>

Others employed by the federal government, as described by Wickard, included Mexican nationals imported to the United States specifically for farm work. Guaranteed at least three dollars per day, the Mexicans and other imported labor sources became the responsibility of the local communities to provide them with basic necessities, such as housing. Wickard further described the minimum housing standard established for the imported workers. In terms that were reminiscent of the U.S. Women's Bureau standards established in 1942, these dwellings needed to be weather-proof; possessed a supply of fresh water for drinking, bathing, and laundry; provisions made for waste disposal and sanitary toilets; and relatively uncrowded (four people or fewer per shelter). Further, urban and/or out-of-state workers would be brought to a specific location for field work if need dictated. Paid an initial wage similar to the contractual Mexican laborers, these intra- and inter-state workers received more money per day if the average wage of the region was higher. Although the gender of these additional workers is not mentioned in Wickard's testimony, he had referred only to the use of men as farm labor.<sup>31</sup>

Throughout Wickard's comments concerning the structure of

the farm labor program, as well as his description of the status of American agriculture and its labor needs, he frequently described the use of men as farm labor, without regard for the nation's women, or the importance of the WLA to Public Law 45. Clearly, while the official stance of the USDA and Extension Service supported the use of women as farm labor, at least in publicized statements, many officials involved in congressional appropriation hearings did not. By not strongly advocating the use of women as farm labor, Wickard's comments can be compared and aligned with those issued by most of the national agricultural establishment, including farm organization and state officials who did not believe that the use of female workers on farms would assist the war effort.

Leaders of the American Farm Bureau Federation, National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, and National Grange expressed their opinion regarding the federal government's position concerning American agriculture during World War II. Testifying before the House subcommittee Ezra T. Benson of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, read a prepared statement by the three organizations that described their position pertaining to the farm labor program. For these groups, their efforts centered on a fundamental change within federal policy structure rather than a concerted effort to recruit the largest labor force for farmers. The statement presented the means by which Benson and his colleagues sought to "solve this farm manpower crisis" and alter agricultural administration. To begin, the groups suggested that agriculture be recognized as a war industry and receive the benefits of this classification. Thus, farmers and farm laborers would acquire deferments from military service until replacements had been found, especially those farmers engaged in an "essential agricultural occupation." Additionally, the government should adjust price ceilings on commodities in an effort to provide "adequate allowance for farmers' increased

costs, including farm labor, thus enabling agriculture to keep a supply of labor to maintain adequate production." This action would, as believed by the American Farm Bureau Federation, National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, and National Grange "carry out the intent and purpose of the Price Control Act." Finally, to ensure an acceptable level of labor, these groups asked that "all bureaucratic, unworkable regulations and controls, including fixing of minimum wages and regulating maximum hours and conditions of employment of agricultural workers, be eliminated." Benson and his colleagues theorized that through these proposed structural governmental changes Congress would address the labor issue without "bureaucratic regimentation" but by "democratic methods."<sup>32</sup>

This attempt to sway Congress to change governmental policy allowed the Farm Bureau, Farmer Cooperatives, and national Grange to express their reluctance to employ non-traditional labor sources on farms. In their prepared statement, the groups did not mention the use of women or other non-traditional labor sources as agricultural workers, but assumed that the "farm manpower problem" would be "adequately [met] through democratic methods, without resort to bureaucratic regimentation and compulsion." In terms of women and high school students as labor forces, Benson continued, "the food shortage cannot be averted merely by putting on a campaign to recruit townspeople, high-school students, and urban women for seasonal farm work. It is essential to defer necessary workers who are now on the farms and to adjust price ceilings and price supports on agricultural commodities at levels which will enable farmers to pay sufficient wages to get back on the farms some of the labor which has gone to the cities because of higher wages." The way to accomplish these goals and suggestions, according to Benson would be to place a "competent agency" in charge of the labor program. Further, these three groups would advocate

a restrictionless agreement regarding the hiring and placement of Mexican nationals on American farms.<sup>33</sup>

For three farm organizations, the efforts by the federal government to enact an acceptable farm labor program had not occurred as they wished. Intent on the change of federal pricing structure rather than initiation of new labor legislation, these groups led the opposition to the use of non-traditional farm labor, i.e. women, during World War II. Men had still been viewed as the prominent farm labor source, and therefore would have been better suited to agricultural work. With the attitudes of the nation's farm organizations and state officials clearly against the use of women as farm labor, it required much promotion and good will from the WLA, U.S. Crop Corps, and women to convince these men that the presence of women in the agricultural war effort was essential.

Throughout the appropriations hearings, representatives of numerous farm organizations presented their concerns regarding the agricultural labor situation. Farm organizations discussed their ideas separately, and in general, they were in complete agreement. Albert S. Goss, master of the National Grange, and Earl Smith, president of the Illinois Agricultural Association and vice president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, agreed that labor posed the most serious problem for agriculture; they refused to endorse, however, the use of women as possible workers. W. R. Ogg, director of research for the American Farm Bureau Federation, stated that the labor problem should be solved through the use of farm boys, either via military deferments or permissible furloughs in which they returned home during crucial production periods. Representative Jed Johnson from Oklahoma saw this idea as a hassle that involved too much "red tape" to guarantee the return of farm men and boys as the need arose. Therefore, he disregarded the use of farm boys as the agricultural labor supply in the nation.<sup>34</sup>

While farm organizations attempted to dissuade the government from using women as farm workers, state extension service employees discussed the benefits that might be found with women workers. L. R. S. Simons, director of the Extension Service in New York described that state's success with the creation of a single council that administered the state's work program on the local level. Started in 1940, New York's plan proved to be a success in the years before the official federal creation of the Emergency Farm labor Program. Simons indicated that New York state had recognized that a labor problem existed in agriculture long before the federal government acted on the issue. And while each state's situation was different, Simons described the success experienced in New York. Their state-wide council, made up of representatives from the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, 4-H, Dairymen's League, Farm Bureau, Farm Credit Administration and Soil Conservation, G. L. S. Exchange, Grange, Home Bureau, Horticultural Society, State Poultry Council, and Vegetable Growers Society worked effectively to combat the labor problem in New York. Their workers consisted of high school students, urban dwellers, and women. In order to house the thousands of workers used in the state during the years prior to 1943, communities utilized work camps, country clubs, and schools. Simons saw advantages for the federal government, and, subsequently, the states, to adopt New York's plan.<sup>35</sup>

The philosophy of the New York extension director can be understood by examining the success that the state had with its early initiative to provide labor to farmers. Female agricultural labor had been badly needed on dairy and poultry farms, in fruit orchards, and on truck farms in New York. Eastern states recognized the benefit of female agricultural labor, making use of farm and nonfarm women in the years prior to 1943. In New York and other eastern states public and private groups established early programs that set the

precedent for other states, and, ultimately, the federal government in organizing a land army. Eastern states openly accepted female agricultural labor in the years prior to the establishment of the WLA. Mrs. Joseph Alsop (Connecticut), Katherine Potter (Maine), Dorothy Thompson (Vermont), and Mrs. Frank Washburn (New York) each established and ran successful state programs before the WLA. While some initial opposition occurred, most farmers found the women to be reliable and capable the work as assigned.<sup>36</sup> The establishment of a federal program in 1943 only increased the use of women in eastern states.

Simons did not provide the only positive statement regarding women as agricultural workers, as another federal employee concurred. T. O. Davis, director of the Extension Service at Alabama Polytechnic Institute in Auburn also advocated the placement of non-traditional labor on farms. Davis drew on the British example and recommended the creation of a land army for the United States on that basis. By comparing the initial reaction of British farmers to that of American farmers in general, extension agents in Alabama discovered that farmers had not been eager to use women as laborers. However, by educating the farmer on the best possible use of women labor, as well as utilization of unused school buildings and buses for housing and transportation, extension agents and other federal agency officials convinced farmers of the viability of a women's program.<sup>37</sup>

Throughout the course of the House appropriations hearings, Vermont had been cited as the best example of a workable farm labor program. For the most part, this distinction resulted from Dorothy Thompson's ability to recruit for and promote her program, not the actual number of participants. Further, Thompson's vision of the land corps experience as one of democracy, education, and patriotism impressed the national legislators, Wickard, and M. L. Wilson. With a promised wage of twenty-one dollars per month, the VLC



recruited its workers under the guise of patriotism, as they would not make them much money as farm laborers. In this regard, VLC volunteers fit the first criteria for Wickard's proposed sources of labor; the use of local youths and students who would work for little money and remain patriotic and devoted to the war effort.<sup>38</sup> Regardless of the organization's recognition by federal officials, the Vermont program did not employ a large portion of farm labor in 1942. While, the VLC had been successful, other state initiatives also demonstrated the ability of states to organize a labor program and recruit workers. However, federal appropriations hearings did not recognize other states' activities in 1942, instead choosing to concentrate on a program operated by a national personality. This absence of information regarding other state labor initiatives did not present a complete picture to Congress regarding the use of women as workers, possibly hampering the results of the appropriations hearings and limiting WLA funding.

Along with the appropriation hearings conducted by the House of Representatives in February and March 1943, the Senate also held hearings for the purpose of funding the farm labor program in 1943. Beginning in late March 1943, the Senate hearings contained much of the same information and testimony as in the House of Representatives appropriation hearings. A statement of the issues, followed with remarks by Secretary Wickard and testimony from various federal and agricultural agency individuals did not vary much from the focus of hearings in the House earlier in the year. The only difference between the hearings was the amount of money each legislative body had been willing to offer to the USDA and its Emergency Farm Labor Program.

Beginning 22 March 1943, the United States Senate began its own appropriations hearings concerning farm labor in the nation. This subcommittee was composed of eleven men, with Senator Richard B. Russell presiding. The resolution passed

by the House of Representatives addressed the structure of the farm labor program, including the need for appropriations to recruit, train, and place "workers needed for the production and harvesting of agricultural commodities essential to the prosecution of the war." The Senate accepted this resolution, although the two houses differed on the amount of money that should be appropriated for the program, the importance of such a program for the nation's farmers could not be understated.<sup>39</sup>

Secretary Wickard's testimony before the Senate committee mirrored many of the statements that had been given to the House of Representatives hearings earlier in 1943. At the Senate hearing, Wickard was accompanied by Wayne H. Darrow, director, Agricultural Labor Administration; M. L. Wilson, director, Extension Service; R. Lyle Webster, assistant to the secretary, USDA; and R. W. Maycock, assistant director of finance, USDA. Wickard's testimony included discussion of USDA estimates regarding funding for the 1943 calendar year; USDA's acquisition of the farm labor program from the U.S. Employment Service; administration, establishment, and organization of the Agricultural Labor Administration on behalf of the national farm labor problem; timeliness with the USDA's efforts to enact a farm labor program; sources of farm labor, as well as the methods used to recruit, train, place, and pay the workers; establishment of a "junior army," which would include youths aged fourteen to eighteen years; and the use of Native Americans as farm labor. Within each of these issues, other concerns had also been discussed, including the farm situations in numerous locations around the nation, rate of pay for individuals, and the use of unskilled seasonal labor including youths and women. In terms of the creation of the WLA, Wickard's testimony did not indicate any great involvement on his part to utilize women as farm labor during the war. "We expect to use older girls and younger boys and girls from 14 to 18," he said, "I don't know whether it is possible or not."<sup>40</sup>

Secretary Wickard's statement, along with the USDA's reluctance and slow efforts to establish a workable farm labor program underscored the lack of commitment to such a program. And, while the presence of migratory and imported labor had been common prior to 1943, any new sources of labor, which by default would be youths and women, did not appear to have been a high priority of the USDA or the secretary until forced to act by Congress. And even then, it is apparent by the USDA officials' testimonies that they had concentrated on hiring the nation's youth to provide the necessary labor, rather than both American women and youths as possible farm labor sources. For, in addition to the bill to enact the "junior army," the USDA and Extension Service had drawn up a measure that would create, establish, and organize the Victory Farm Volunteers (VFV).<sup>41</sup> At the time, it had appeared feasible to place more emphasis on the youth program as the government expected millions of participants in the VFV, while only an initial sixty thousand in the WLA. To that end, the USDA and Wickard would be proven wrong, as the WLA numbered in the millions, becoming the largest agricultural labor group during World War II.

With the completion of Wickard's testimony, the Senate turned its attention to others. At that time, representatives of the nation's agricultural organizations addressed the Senate and shared their concerns and recommendations regarding the issue of farm labor for the country. Once again, as with the hearings before the House of Representatives, Edward A. O'Neal, president, American Farm Bureau Federation, and W. R. Ogg, director of research at the Farm Bureau, addressed their comments to an appropriation subcommittee. The necessity for a federal farm program and organization within the Extension Service was central to their comments. In that regard, they saw no need to delay further, but would endorse the plan established by the House of Representatives, and urged the Senate to follow that program. Senators had been concerned

with the issue of responsibility between the U.S. Employment Service and the Extension Service pertaining to the farm labor program. This point seemed a problem for those who engaged in the discussion, be it Senators or those testifying. Other concerns included the use of Mexicans and migratory individuals as farm labor, as well as the wages to be paid to all farm workers.<sup>42</sup>

The other individuals who testified before the Senate in March 1943 included L. R. Simons of New York, P. O. Davis of Alabama, and C. E. Brehm of Tennessee. Each of these individuals had been responsible for the Extension Service and its programs in their states, and therefore, also important in the establishment of a state labor program. Simons and Davis offer similar statements to their testimonies before the House, again calling for additional sources of labor for the country. Brehm reiterated the farm labor problem for his state, and described characteristics particular to Tennessee. In that state the agricultural concerns regarded the possibility of not enough labor for harvest, especially as farmers prepare to plant more land than in the past in an effort to capitalize on high wartime prices. As labor sources, Brehm welcomed the "junior army" of high school students and 4-H members, but he made no mention of women as a possible labor source in Tennessee.<sup>43</sup> Men like Simons and Davis provided the best-case scenario regarding WLA acceptance in states, while the reality of the 1940s implied that most male state Extension directors echoed the sentiments of USDA Secretary Wickard.

Others also testified before the Senate subcommittee in March 1943, including H. L. Mitchell, who served as the general secretary of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU) in Memphis, Tennessee. Representing the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Missouri, this organization had also been concerned with farm labor during the war years. In regard to the national labor crisis, the STFU sent labor to

other states to assist in harvests; workers went to Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas to pick cotton and to Florida to assist on vegetable farms. Additionally, others were ready to travel and cultivate and harvest as long as the transportation could be provided. In these cases, Mitchell stated that many southerners could travel to other regions of the country to assist in farming efforts without upsetting southern farming operations. And, in most instances this available labor force was "white people who live[d] in the poor or hill sections of the country, and people who drift[ed] into the Delta plantations sections to pick cotton in the fall." Mitchell argued that his region of the country had several thousand unemployed men who routinely looked for seasonal agricultural work, and would benefit by participating in a federal labor program.<sup>44</sup>

Mitchell did, however, note problems with proposed federal farm legislation, specifically the efforts to place the farm labor program under the jurisdiction of the Extension Service. Mitchell, and one must assume the STFU, had been opposed to any action taken by the federal and state Extension Service agencies in placement of farm labor, linking that organization with the Farm Bureau and problems associated with the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, AAA checks, and Farm Bureau membership dues.<sup>45</sup>

A second witness from the STFU also discussed the use of migratory labor. In this case, F. R. Betton described the southern practice of "labor exchange." A prevalent action among African Americans, Betton illustrates the success of such a program. In this case, he described the agricultural situation experienced by African American seasonal farm workers in the South. In November 1942, once their responsibilities to their cotton employers had been met, blacks in Cotton Plant, Arkansas, traveled to Arizona to assist in the long-staple cotton harvest. All 380 men and women who had labored as day workers in Arkansas went to

Arizona. Others traveled to Florida to assist in the vegetable crop. Finally, these men and women returned to Arkansas to begin the cotton season in 1943.<sup>46</sup> The presence of both men and women in the cotton fields is not as unique as the presence of urban white women in the nation's fields, and in most cases, the distinction regards race and class. In hearings before the House of Representatives and the Senate subcommittees, these issues had been avoided. The presence of African American women in southern fields was a time honored tradition, and unlike conditions in the North, where white woman had been removed from the fields as the family moved to the city or approached a higher economic class.

Robert Handschin of the National Farmers Union also spoke before the Senate subcommittee in March 1943, and addressed the main issues regarding farm labor. In addition to the available and necessary funding for agriculture, the Farmers Union also had been interested in issues that concerned the amount of labor required for the year, as well as the most needy locations, programs in place to "recruit, and transport and mobilize" labor, and the jurisdiction for a farm labor program. And while the STFU had been opposed to the Extension Service being in charge of a labor program, Handschin and the Farmers Union had no such prejudice. The Farmers Union saw the Extension Service as necessary to help organize migratory labor that would be useful across the country. Additionally, other sources of labor, such as nationals from the Bahamas, Mexico, and Puerto Rico, and struggling American farmers, would be utilized to assist the migratory labor force. According to Handschin, these groups would provide the assistance needed for the nation's farms during the war. He made these statements without concern for gender or age, in general implying the American and foreign men would make up the balance of the agricultural labor force.<sup>47</sup>

Further testimony before the subcommittee brought a representative of the governor of California. Charles C.

Teague, who held positions within the California Fruit Growers' Exchange, the California Walnut Growers' Association, and the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, spoke to the senators on 25 March 1943. His concerns regarded the status of agricultural production in California, and the state's dependence on seasonal labor, especially at times of harvest for its many specialty crops. The absence of farm labor in California resulted in lost agricultural commodities in 1942, and the growers did not want the same losses in 1943. Thus, the presence of Teague before the Senate subcommittee demonstrated the farming interests of a successful agricultural state in a federally sponsored labor program. And, although, the presence of large corporate farms would have influenced the action taken by California, they did not represent the entire agricultural population of the state. Family-owned operations suffered the same labor fate as many of the large corporate farms, and therefore the state, as a whole, needed a way to combat its labor problems.<sup>48</sup> And while Vermont provided the best example of a workable program according to federal officials, California agriculturalists represented the best example of a state in drastic need of labor. Even as it utilized all available labor in 1942, including closing schools and using students as labor, California still lost crops; therefore, additional labor had been needed for 1943.

Teague continued his testimony by examining one practice that had been used in California. In addition to the use of Mexican and migratory labor, the Farm Security Administration had instituted a state labor program, but that effort had not been effective for California. Likening those farmers who participated in relief programs to "serf[s] of the Government," Teague denounced the actions of the FSA and the government's methods of paying subsidies to farmers. Instead, Teague asked the government to expend more effort, energy, and money to provide labor and equipment to farmers. To

accomplish these goals, he suggested that additional labor be imported from Mexico, responsibility for a labor program placed within the Extension Service, farm workers be properly trained, and labor placed in regions where it had been severely needed.<sup>49</sup> These suggestions would provide more support than any FSA or other agricultural program to date in California.

Then, Ivan G. McDaniel, as a representative of the California Agricultural Producers' Labor Committee, reiterated many of the points stated by Teague. McDaniel also addressed the issues regarding the use of Mexican nationals as farm labor in California, as well as in other areas of the Southwest. Discussion continued and examined the status of migratory labor, the structure of the agricultural program within the USDA and Extension Service, and the proposed expenditures for the importation of Mexicans to California under different proposals.<sup>50</sup> McDaniel's statement, as with much of the testimony before the Senate, centered around the issue regarding the use of imported labor, specifically that from Mexico. Without mention of the gender of farm workers, these hearings before the Senate appropriation subcommittee differed greatly from those hearings before the House subcommittee which examined the use of women as farm labor.

Final testimony by the administrator of food production and distribution, Chester C. Davis, reiterated most of the preceding statements. By advocating control of the farm labor program to the Extension Service, Davis laid the groundwork for discussion of anticipated sources of labor, implementation and mobilization of an accepted program with county and state extension agents, and organization of a "land army." Unfortunately, the term, "land army," as part of Davis' testimony does not distinguish between gender in its definition and explanation. He did, however, allude to the creation of the VFV, with the use of high school students as farm labor, but again, no mention of women in his or others'



statements regarding the use of a land army for agriculture.<sup>51</sup> The exclusion of "women" from all but one of the Senate subcommittee testimonies indicates the inability of those before the Senate to accept the presence of white women as farm labor. And, while the House of Representatives subcommittee hearings spent more time discussing the presence of women within agriculture, those who testified still had been opposed to their use as labor. Only those involved with farmers at the state and local level, such as extension agents, were enthusiastic regarding the presence of women as seasonal farm workers during World War II.

Regardless of the results of the testimony before Congress regarding the presence of women as farm labor, the main purpose for the subcommittee hearings had been for agricultural appropriations. And in that regard, the USDA and its wartime labor program experienced success. In specific reference to Public Law 45, the USDA had requested sixty-five million dollars for the period from March 1943 to December 1943. This request had been made in addition to the funds that had been requested in 1942 and early 1943 (approximately four million dollars), to effectively operate labor programs for 1943. Of the 65 million dollars, only 150,000 dollars had been suggested for the WLA. The total expenditures requested for the mobilization of nonfarm women and youth and local labor forces for the period from March to December 1943, which included recruitment and placement, totaled just over six million dollars.<sup>52</sup>

Although criticized by several agricultural organizations, such as the American Farm Bureau Federation, National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, and National Grange at the appropriation hearings, the Emergency Farm Labor Program was successful in receiving funding. Each of the criticizing agencies had also been given the opportunity to express their own ideas concerning labor relief, as well as debate the appropriation of funds. Recommendations to the

House of Representatives proposed that only twenty-six million dollars be given to the USDA for the farm labor program; while the Senate increased the funding amount to forty million dollars. Still, the eventual appropriation for the Emergency Farm Labor Program stood at twenty-six million dollars, the original House of Representatives figure. Funding was divided among state Extension offices and other governmental offices that provided hired labor within states, between states, and from overseas.<sup>53</sup>

With the funding and organizational structure in place for the farm labor program, Wickard prepared an administration for that program in mid-March 1943. The creation of the Emergency Farm Labor Program, under Public Law 45, brought about the development of several organizations as part of the nation's agricultural defense plan. The employment of convicts, imported persons, military personnel, prisoners of war, women, and youths successfully met the needs of American farmers in the last three years of war. Under the farm labor legislation, the United States Crop Corps became the umbrella organization for all federally employed farm workers. In terms of imported labor, the presence of Mexican nationals in the country imitated a similar plan in place during World War I. The Bracero Program imported contractual Mexican farm labor to the western United States between 1942 and 1947.<sup>54</sup> Military personnel and prisoners of war were also utilized as farm labor. In terms of the use of military personnel, the debate centered around the manner by which the men would be used. Generally, during 1943, troop units were employed on farms; in North Dakota, 5600 men joined the grain harvest, in South Dakota, 350 soldiers labored, and in Maine, about 700 servicemen assisted in the potato harvest. And although the U.S. Crop Corps successfully placed servicemen on farms in 1943, they would be replaced by others during the latter years of war, including prisoners of war, women, and youths.<sup>55</sup>

Other labor programs in force under the Emergency Farm

Labor Program include the inclusion of conscientious objectors and Japanese internees. Present within the federal government since early in 1941, conscientious objectors were housed in thirty camps across the nation, and engaged in several different agricultural or environmental positions. The internment of Japanese Americans, however, represented a different situation. Perceived as a threat, most Japanese Americans residing in the West were removed from their homes and placed in camps. There, they worked and lived out the war years. Residing in ten "relocation centers" throughout the western states, these Americans were treated as prisoners. In many cases, the internees assisted farmers within their relocated area or worked on other farms of the region.<sup>56</sup> These farm labor groups mentioned here are only a few of those that were active during the war.

While 1943 proved the most difficult year for the USDA and Extension Service to acquire funding and organize a successful labor program, the following years would be challenging as well. In late 1943 and early 1944, the USDA faced the task of applying for appropriations to sustain the labor programs for a second year. Needing funds for the 1944 calendar year, the USDA requested money from Congress for its different agencies and programs, including the Emergency Farm Labor Program. In hearings before the House of Representatives' subcommittee regarding agricultural appropriations, administrators requested monies for several farm labor programs. For the 1944 year, the Emergency Farm Labor Program requested almost forty million dollars to operate the numerous programs within its operation. Of that figure, the WLA requested \$624,550 from the House of Representatives appropriations subcommittee. An increase from the amount requested and received in 1943, this figure would be utilized to further WLA "recruitment, training, placement, and supervision." Again, the WLA appeared to have been short changed from the monies reserved for labor programs; the VFV

requested \$1,380,600.<sup>57</sup>

As with the hearings for the 1943 calendar year, those who testified in favor of the federal labor program had not openly discussed or advocated the WLA as a viable labor organization. And, even though, the WLA had recruited several hundred thousand women its first year of operation, its place within federal policy had not been proven. According to House of Representatives testimonies, the WLA placed more than two hundred thousand women on farms in 1943, and hoped to recruit four hundred thousand for 1944. These figures are considerably lower than the actual number of women involved in farm labor in the country for either year. Regardless of whose figure you use for 1943, WLA or Extension Service, the reported number of women recruited had been six hundred thousand or more than four hundred thousand, respectively. Of course, these numbers are less than the total 1943 participation due to the inaction by farm women to register with the Extension Service or WLA. Because of the lack of farm women in the WLA, USDA officials presented to Congress a severely lowered figure of women recruited for the WLA and who worked on farms in 1943.<sup>58</sup>

For the 1944 calendar year, the WLA administration accounted for its distribution of the requested \$624,550. Unlike the hearings for the previous year's labor, which did not break up expenditures, the request before the House of Representatives for 1944 needed money for its state and county supervisors, training centers and courses, equipment, transportation, and supplies.<sup>59</sup> The Senate also heard testimony regarding the structure of the federal labor program. And, unlike the House of Representatives, the Senate did not take time to discuss or hear testimony regarding the use of women farm workers or the WLA for 1944, or the results of the organization's first year of operation.

In early 1944, the Senate met to discuss the appropriations to be granted to the Emergency Farm Labor

Program. Like the House of Representatives this legislative house listened to testimony of numerous USDA and Extension Service officials regarding possible funding for the federal labor plan and its work programs. Without explicitly listing each expenditure as the House hearings had done, the Senate accepted the amount requested by the Extension Service for its labor program. While the Senate and House agreed on the total amount to spend for the program, the Senate did not, in any manner, discuss the use of women on the nation's farms. Without mention of their success in 1943, or their continued use in 1944, it is impossible to determine the amount of money the Senate would have appropriated for the organization. The WLA had not been alone, however, as the Senate did not discuss the VFV either.<sup>60</sup>

The final decision regarding the labor program's funding occurred 14 February 1944 with the passage of Public Law 229. At that time, the accepted measure appropriated thirty million dollars for 1944, with remaining funds from 1943 added to the total. In that case, the total appropriations for the 1944 calendar year for the Emergency Farm labor Program had been about thirty-five million dollars. Without a more substantial breakdown, it is assumed that the amount of funding requested during the House of Representative hearings for the WLA would have remained consistent with the actual appropriation granted. For the 1945 calendar year, an appropriation of twenty million dollars had been added to the remainder from 1944, eight million dollars. The federal government, perhaps realizing the end of the war had been near, had not seen the need for high appropriations for 1945. Thus Public Law 529, passed 22 December 1944 authorized farm labor appropriations for the 1945 calendar year.<sup>61</sup>

Appropriation hearings for later years did not entertain the same witnesses as the first year of the Emergency Farm Labor Program operation. Testimony contained within the 1944 and 1945 hearings addressed the administration of the program,

as well as the manner by which certain issues were addressed. Specific concerns, especially the use of women or youths as farm labor, did not occupy much time in the House of Representatives or Senate hearings in the remaining two years of war. Instead, congressmen and senators discussed foreign and migrant labor; worker service centers; transportation of labor; program administration; regional/state requests for labor, wages, and housing; and regional/state successes or failures. States described labor situations and accomplishments along with the crops produced each year. Clearly, legislators had been interested far more in the operation of the program and the manner by which the money had been spent, than the individuals performing the work during the previous year. The use of women and youths had not been viewed as a large part of the Emergency Farm Labor Program, and therefore had not been addressed at length.

This omission by the congressional subcommittees regarding the WLA and VFV is unfortunate. The two organizations established the validity of the Farm Labor Program as they numbered more than 5.5 million workers during the period from 1943 to 1945. By involving farm and nonfarm women, the WLA entered the war effort and work force, and provided farmers with acceptable agricultural workers. Influenced by governmental actions of the 1910s and 1930s, foreign labor programs, and early state initiatives, such as those in Vermont, New York, and California, the development of the VFV and WLA established a viable manner by which the nation received farm workers in 1943. It is these early programs and initiatives, as well as federal agency, committee, and subcommittee actions that persisted in creating a national labor program in 1943. The influence of USDA, Extension Service, and Women's Bureau personnel in these efforts to establish a farm worker program assisted in the eventual passage of Public Law 45 in February 1943. Clearly, these initiatives prior to February helped the government to

create a federal program. Thus, regardless of the opinions of several federal administrators and farm organization personnel, Congress, by Public Law 45, legislated for the inclusion of women and the WLA within the Emergency Farm Labor Program.

The administrative creation of the Emergency Farm Labor Program represented only the beginning of the national effort to recruit, train, and place labor. The development of the WLA as a viable organization in 1943, and its continuation into 1945 are of importance and significance in the overall study of the Women's Land Army during World War II. As part of the U.S. Crop Corps and the Emergency Farm Labor Program, the WLA represented the greatest agricultural group participation during the war. Accounting for 3.5 million workers, the WLA became an important component of the American home front during World War II.

## Notes

1. In 1940, 30.5 million people lived on farms, this corresponds to roughly 23 percent of the population; a statistic that caused Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace to state that there were 1.6 million too many people engaged in farming in the country. However, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE) stated in 1939 that a reduction of that number would not allow the country to sustain its high level of agricultural output. The efforts of farmers and those placed to work on farms would prove both Wallace and the BAE wrong. As the agricultural population would decrease more than 6 million during the war, agricultural production and output would increase more than 30 percent over the years preceding the war.

2. Esther M. Colvin, "Another Women's Land Army?" Independent Woman 21 (April 1942): 102; Wayne D. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program, 1943-1947," Agricultural Monograph No. 13, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, USDA, September 1951, 137; "Guidelines for Wartime Use of Women on Farms," Special Bulletin No. 8, U.S. Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, 1942, 1.

3. "Guidelines for Wartime Use of Women on Farms," 2-7.

4. "Women Workers Help in Harvesting Crops," Labor Information Bulletin 9 (October 1942): 4-5; Backgrounds of the War Farm Labor Problem, Bureau of Agricultural Economics and Farm Security Administration, USDA, May 1942, 77. The report by the BAE and FSA quoted the conditions that existed for migrant labor in the 1930s. "Some families . . . have the worst living conditions of any group in the United States. Usually they have no homes except temporary roadside or ditch-bank camps, often without any kind of sanitary facilities or even a decent water supply." The report continued, "housing on the road consists of a tent or trailer, a low-rent tourist cabin, or merely the shelter of the family car or truck, parked by the roadside." While regional differences occurred, most housing was not sanitary.

5. "Guidelines for Wartime Use of Women on Farms," 7.

6. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," 14-15.

7. *Ibid.*, 15-16.

8. *Ibid.*, 16, 137.

9. *Ibid.*, 16.



10. Ibid., 16-17.

11. Ibid., 17-18, 23.

12. These conclusions can be made through the examination of congressional hearings and documents published by the USDA at the time in question. And, although, the federal government had looked for all answers to the labor question, the absence of women from discussion and policy leads one to theorize regarding the position of women within the American war-time society.

13. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," 24-29. Early placements on farms by the Employment Service and the Farm Security Administration included sixty farmers from Kentucky who received training to work on dairy farms in Ohio. These farmers replaced men who had left to go to the war industries or into military service.

14. House, Committee on Agriculture, Farm Labor and Production: Hearings before the Committee on Agriculture, 77th Cong., 2nd sess., 1942.

15. Ibid., 17-18.

16. Ibid., 18.

17. Ibid., 40-43, 53.

18. Ibid., 48-50.

19. Ibid., 72, 75.

20. Ibid., 104. However, even after the government had passed Public Law 45 and the Emergency Farm Labor Program had been created, Wickard was accused of showing minimal support for the program. In March 1943, John O. Walker, named by Wickard to administer and recruit for a land army, resigned his post. Walker cited a lack of USDA support for his initial efforts in filling positions within his administration. Washington Evening Star, 2 March 1943.

21. Lowell K. Dyson, "The Women's Land Army of World War II," paper presented at Missouri Valley History Conference, Omaha, Nebraska, March 1991, 3-4; Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," 37; "Organization and Administration, Extension Farm Labor Program: A Chronicle of the Administrative and Organization Problems Connected with the Establishment and Operation of the Emergency Farm Labor Program, April 1943 to December 1947," USDA, December 1947, 7, box 2, Recruiting and Placement Division, Divisional Histories and other Records Summarizing the Program, 1943-1948, Records

concerning the Farm Labor Program, Records of the U.S. Extension Service, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter DH, NARG 33).

22. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," 37, 137; Judith Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, "'To the Rescue of the Crops': The Women's Land Army during World War II," Prologue 25 (Winter 1993): 351; "Organization and Administration, Extension Farm Labor Program," 7-8, DH, NARG 33.

23. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," 137; Dyson, "The Women's Land Army of World War II," 2-3; Litoff and Smith, "'To the Rescue of the Crops,'" 349.

24. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," 37-38; "Organization and Administration, Extension Farm Labor Program," 8-9, DH, NARG 33.

25. *Ibid.*, 34, 38; Litoff and Smith, "'To the Rescue of the Crops,'" 351.

26. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," 34, 38.

27. *Ibid.*, 138; New York Times, 18 April 1943. The 300,00 women were initially designated as members of the US Crop Crops.

28. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," 38.

29. House, Committee on Appropriations, Farm Labor Program, 1943: Hearings before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943, 2-40.

30. *Ibid.*, 6-8.

31. *Ibid.*, 7-16.

32. *Ibid.*, 87-89.

33. *Ibid.*, 89.

34. *Ibid.*, 139-41.

35. *Ibid.*, 146-49.

36. New York Times, 16 August 1943; Frances W. Valentine, "Successful Practices in the Employment of Nonfarm Women on

Farms in the Northeastern States, 1943," Bulletin No. 199, U.S. Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, 1944, 1, 4.

37. House, Farm Labor Program, 1943, 150-157.

38. Ibid., 208-11; Colvin, "Another Women's Land Army?" 104.

39. Senate, Committee on Appropriations, Farm Labor Program, 1943, Hearings before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, 78th Cong., 1st. sess., 1943, 1-2.

40. Ibid., 3-27.

41. Ibid., 25-33; New York Times, 13 April 1943.

42. Senate, Farm Labor Program, 1943, 59-91.

43. Ibid., 91-105. L. R. Simons is the same individual who testified before the House appropriations subcommittee. In that document, however, his name was listed as L. R. S. Simons. The same can be state regarding P. O. Davis. In the House subcommittee hearings T. O. Davis testified. The author has made assumptions, in both cases, that the same people testified before the United States Senate and House of Representatives.

44. Ibid., 117-19.

45. Ibid., 120-32. In this instance, Mitchell cited numerous occasions where southern farmers had been pressured to join the Farm Bureau in order to receive their government checks. Relating conflicts of interest as his main concern, Mitchell described the tactics taken by Extension and AAA agents who cashed checks for farmers and deducted the Farm Bureau's membership fees at the same time. This practice was not appreciated by his organization or the farmers.

46. Ibid., 245, 247.

47. Ibid., 133-39.

48. Ibid., 151-55.

49. Ibid., 156-69.

50. Ibid., 169-200.

51. Ibid., 259-66.

52. House, Farm Labor Program, 1943, 1-2, 37-38, 63.

53. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," 41-45; New York Times, 17 April 1943.

54. Through an initial agreement, thousands of Mexican nationals were brought to western states to work on farms. For information concerning the Bracero Program in the United States during World War II, see Erasmo Gamboa, "Braceros in the Pacific Northwest: Laborers on the Domestic Front, 1942-1947," Pacific Historical Review 56 (1987): 378-98; Erasmo Gamboa, Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942-1947 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990); Erasmo Gamboa, "Mexican Migration into Washington State: A History, 1940-1950," Pacific Northwest Quarterly 72 (July 1981): 121-31.

55. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," 94-99.

56. *Ibid.*, 99-103.

57. *Ibid.*, 46; House, Committee on Appropriations, Farm Labor Program, 1944: Hearings before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943, 1-5, 87.

58. House, Farm Labor Program, 1944, 3-5, 74, 87. The hearings placed lesser emphasis on the VFV as well, by down playing its number of recruits.

59. *Ibid.*, 87-89.

60. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," 47-48; Senate, Committee of Appropriations, Farm Labor Program, 1944: Hearings before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, 78th Cong., 2d sess., 1944.

61. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," 48-50.

## CHAPTER 5. MONEY, CLOTHING, HEALTH, AND HOME

The establishment of the Women's Land Army as well as the placement of women on farms could not occur without an organized structure. To accomplish this, the U.S. Extension Service created an effective administration, suggested a workable wage, designed a uniform, prescribed safety precautions, and procured housing for the women workers. These actions allowed the WLA administration to organize an effective national agency that would be efficient on the federal, state, and county levels. With the close of congressional hearings for appropriations, it became necessary to establish the federal and state offices by which the WLA would operate. As a central administrative agency, the WLA Division of the Emergency Farm Labor Program supplied state organizations with essential information and coordinated efforts between the WLA and organizations interested in women and farm labor. In order to effectively administer and create a viable farm labor program, the Extension Service and WLA administrators drew upon the assistance of other federal agencies and individuals to place the WLA at the top of the wartime farm labor plan.<sup>1</sup>

Although, initially, the WLA did not appear to have been a feasible or viable part of the Emergency Farm Labor Program, with only 60,000 women requested for recruitment. However, the organization's first year of operation changed that erroneous perception. Assuming that the WLA would be able to recruit only a small labor force of women to provide seasonal labor during 1943, the federal officials did not visualize the WLA as a being an important part of the government's labor program. Instead, first year appropriations and administrative assistance focused on other components of the farm labor policy rather than the WLA. The WLA, however, would prove the government wrong as the organization recruited more than 600,000 women for its first year of operation. Much

of the credit for this accomplishment can be traced to the individual who became the WLA administrator in April 1943. Responsible for national media and recruitment campaigns, as well as overseeing state and local WLA organizations, the administrator needed to be an individual who understood the importance of all women being utilized for farm labor.

Florence L. Hall had been chosen by the USDA to head the federal WLA program. A senior home economist with the Extension Service, Hall grew up on a Michigan farm, earned degrees in home economics, and worked as an agricultural agent during World War I. She represented the image that many within the USDA and Extension Service hoped to promote as labor was recruited for the war effort. By merging her rural background with her urban education and career, Hall epitomized the vision of the perfect WLA experience as prescribed by the Extension Service in 1943. In efforts to forge a comparable likeness for most of the women joining the WLA, the program administration hoped to entice urban working women into the nation's fields and onto the farms. With the merger of city and farm lives, cooperation would be fostered among participants and farm families as everyone labored and toiled to produce the bountiful harvests needed during World War II. Thus, Hall emphasized the cooperation and merger of rural and urban lives that the WLA hoped to accomplish by placing urban women on farms.<sup>2</sup>

Before her stint as the WLA administrator, Hall worked in the USDA's Dairy Bureau, and then as a senior home economist from 1928 to 1943. With that position, Hall became the chief spokesperson for the WLA, and an effective recruiting tool. With an acknowledgement of the work expected, Hall's initial statements to the press concerned the work that women should be prepared to endure. "The work is hard and long . . . and applicants must be physically fit." Although that statement, along with the list of attributes women should possess, "dexterity, speed, accuracy, patient, interest, curiosity,

rivalry, and patriotism," did not appear to have popularized the WLA to the general public, women rushed to join the organization. Through numerous propaganda articles and materials, Hall and the WLA administration announced how women would participate in the organization and provide labor to farmers. Functioning as a decentralized organization the national WLA encouraged women to deal directly with local or state WLA offices, or county Extension agents rather than the national organization.<sup>3</sup>

Under the direction of the federal WLA administration, state and local offices administered the work program. State Extension Services controlled organizational and work aspects of the WLA within its state. Through the WLA organizational structure developed by congressional legislation and implemented by the Emergency Farm Labor Program, as well as the money appropriated for the program, states were able to employ a full- or part-time WLA supervisor. This individual worked with county Extension agents to recruit and place women on farms. During the first year of operation, thirteen states had full-time WLA supervisors, while thirty states had part-time supervisors.<sup>4</sup> This individual, in most cases a woman, held the title of "Assistant State Farm Labor Supervisor, Women's Land Army." Each state WLA supervisor was responsible for the operation of the program, and to her superiors regarding the WLA's success in the state. The state WLA official maintained a relationship with the federal organization, and represented the state in regional and national labor conferences, as well as "prepared information, publicity, and recruiting material for State use." WLA state supervisors held positions of tremendous responsibility and importance to maintain and operate effective organizations. Successful state supervisors had been described within the WLA literature as "a person of initiative, resourcefulness, and imagination," and able to "fit," the WLA, "into the overall farm labor program." This person also "plans special

recruitment campaigns, camps for women workers, training courses, child care centers, etc." Additionally, the state supervisor examined farmer and worker opinion in an effort to judge the effectiveness of the WLA in a given area. Through these efforts, the state supervisor formulated an educational and publicity program to influence given attitudes, or to change attitude regarding the placement of women on farms.<sup>5</sup>

With these expectations, state WLA supervisors recognized their need to effectively organize and successfully administrate their programs. But not every state had the advantage of a WLA supervisor, and without the presence of such an individual, a member of the state's farm labor program would administrate a "women's program." The lack of a state WLA organization was not common, but it did occur, especially in areas that resisted the use of women as farm labor. In these states, farm labor supervisors split their time between programs. Locations throughout the Middle West, South, and Southwest that had not been able to overcome the opposition toward women as farm labors did not organize a viable state program that hired women for farm labor. And while many women worked in agriculture within these states, the absence of a formal organization bastardized their importance to farm labor efforts. Without their recognition as members of the WLA, the presence of women in these fields would be overlooked and trivialized.<sup>6</sup>

The influence exerted by the WLA supervisor over the state's labor program depended on the position and role of the WLA within the state. In some cases, state WLA administrators recruited and placed labor, while in other states, that responsibility had been assumed by county extension agents and county WLA personnel. The organization of county WLA administrations were guided by the USDA publication, "Outline of Suggestions for Developing a County Plan." This plan established a procedure for the creation of a county WLA office, and its relationship to the larger farm labor program.



Once in place, county officials recruited women from local sources, and cooperated with women's and civic groups in an effort to sign up as many women as possible. To accomplish their recruitment goals, county agents were advised about program improvements and disseminated information to local farm groups. In states with large WLA programs, the addition of county-level administrators or state assistant supervisors, placed the state WLA supervisor in a position of advisor rather than administrator.<sup>7</sup>

Through these efforts, the WLA organized an effective federal- and state-based structure to implement its program. And with this administrative structure in place, Hall and her staff turned to issues regarding the actual working conditions endured by the workers. Thus, in addition to recruitment campaigns and work completed, WLA administrators had also been concerned regarding each program participants' wages, dress, safety, and housing. For those who had entered farm work before the creation of the WLA, they had been dependent on conditions given by the employer, or in some cases, conditions demanded by a state agricultural council or federal agency. However, with the organization of the federal labor program, workers were guaranteed certain services and conditions before they started their WLA service. Hall and her administration worked to assure WLA participants that they received these benefits.

In the years prior to the established federal wartime farm labor program, farmers had been able to set their own pay rate for their workers. Although some states, such as Vermont, set a minimum wage, most states left the decision of pay to each farmer. With the stipulation to pay the average wage for the area, farmers could set any pay scale. The federal government did issue wage standards and suggestions for the female farm workers; the most prevalent being the "thirty cents per hour" in 1942 quoted by the Women's Bureau and Department of Labor. Still, these figures represent an

average rate of pay, and in many cases, women were paid more or less than the average national or regional figure. In Vermont, the minimum wage in the VLC was reported to be the equivalent of a private in the military, or twenty-one dollars plus room and board per month; in New York state, farm workers received thirty to fifty cents per hour, dependent on experience and other criteria; and in California, women were paid for piece work or on an hourly basis. In many cases, the California rate of pay had been dependent on the type of work completed. In 1942, women who picked apricots received little more than three dollars per day, while those who picked grapes in the San Joaquin valley received sixty-five cents per hour, or just more than thirty-five dollars for a week's work.<sup>8</sup> Clearly, the rate of pay across the country in the years prior to the establishment of the farm labor program, had been dependent on supply, location, and demand.

With the official creation of the WLA, the initial decision regarding wage rates had been left to area farmers. However, within months of the organization of the WLA, the federal government instituted "county farm wage boards" whose responsibility was to establish the prevailing wage for a given area.<sup>9</sup> Thus, WLA wages were established in the summer of 1943, which would provide the women with money to compensate them for their patriotism, but not necessarily for their time, as low wages were common. The ability for the WLA to set a prevailing wage, had been a result of Farm Security Administration action in February 1943. The agency had established "effective prevailing wages as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture within the particular area of employment," which were not to be "less than 30 cents per hour or its equivalent in piece-work rates." Thus, prior to the creation of the Emergency Farm Labor Program and the WLA, two government agencies, Farm Security Administration and Women's Bureau, had advocated thirty cents per hour as a minimum wage for farm workers.<sup>10</sup> With this guideline in place, wage boards

could set a prevailing wage for their region.

Initially, without a wage control, eastern states, New York specifically, had set low wages. However, as time passed, and the "women's value" had been appreciated, minimum wages increased. New York established a minimum of forty cents per hour as a wage in 1943, having raised the minimum average hourly rate from twenty-five cents. This increase alone indicated that women's value in agriculture had been clearly underestimated. In Maine, the labor organization guaranteed a higher wage. At thirty dollars a month plus board, these workers had been given rates similar to those used in Vermont with the VLC. For the most part, WLA hourly or piece wages in the East for 1943 barely paid a worker's room and board, let alone any other expenses. Thus, women found themselves dependent on family members for their living expenses. As reported by Frances W. Valentine, the average rates of pay in eastern states had been between twenty-five and forty cents per hour, in some cases, as high as fifty cents. However, if paid a guaranteed weekly or monthly wage, eastern WLA workers found themselves in a better economic situation.<sup>11</sup>

To avoid low wages in the following crop years and to encourage the continuation of women as agricultural laborers, Valentine suggested that female farm workers be paid the same wage as men in similar jobs. She further insinuated that these women were not migratory workers and should not be treated as such.

Women who go into farm work are not out after 'big money.' They realize that, come what may, America and the families and children of her allies must have food. They are willing to work for moderate pay. But they cannot be recruited, for harvest or for long-season farm work, on the old basis of migratory workers who are expected to come when wanted, to work and be paid only

for such days or hours as they are needed and to sit around in idleness the rest of the time. They must earn sufficient to pay their board and expenses and something over. If the women do the given job as well as men, they should have the same pay.

Even though she advocated higher hourly and piece-work wages, Valentine still recommended that women workers be paid a guaranteed salary for their service. In that way, laborers and farmers acknowledged a standardized rate of pay, and both understood the responsibilities and duties necessary to receive the wage.<sup>12</sup>

In the West, agricultural laborers were paid either for piece work or by the hour. For inexperienced farm workers, piece work was not profitable; however, for experienced workers, piece work had been preferred over an hourly wage. The disparity between inexperience and experience is noticed when one compares the amount of fruit picked and money received for the work. In hourly rates, the average for California in 1943 had been between sixty and seventy cents per hour; for piece work, however, the rate depended on the crop. Women made, from piece work, two dollars to eleven dollars per day; the average being about four dollars per day. In Oregon, the hourly rate extended from sixty to ninety-five cents, and in Washington, the hourly rates had been higher. Generally, experienced farm labor in Washington worked at hourly rates of sixty cents to one dollar, but inexperienced female labor had been paid less, and usually by piece work.<sup>13</sup>

The rates paid for farm labor in California, and other western states were higher than most of the rates paid in the East. At the time of WLA organization, wages paid to women farm workers followed this trend. Reported, as of 1 April 1943, in the Pacific states region the average rate of pay for agricultural laborers had been as high as 105 dollars per month with board, while the lowest wage was in the East South

Central region, where the rate of 29 dollars per month with board had been paid. The national monthly average in April 1943 had been 57 dollars with board or 67 dollars without board for farm workers. By the end of the 1943 crop year, however, wage increases, although slight, had occurred for all agricultural laborers. It is easy to argue that this happened due to the quality of work accomplished, and that farm labor had become a precious commodity. Subsequently, by October 1943, the average monthly wage in the nation had increased accordingly as shown in table 2.<sup>14</sup>

Table 2. Average farm wages, October 1943

Region	Per Month with board	Per Month without board
New England	\$ 70	\$104
Middle Atlantic	60	90
Middle West	62	83
Southeast	31	42
Southwest	43	59
Mountain	80	108
Pacific	113	148

source: Louis J. Ducoff, "Wages of Agricultural Labor in the United States," Technical Bulletin No. 895, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, USDA, 1945, 32.

Still, women farm workers did not receive equivalent pay as men in the same positions. Even though Frances Valentine had suggested sufficient pay increases for 1944, not all states had been inclined to offer equal pay. And, while exceptions did exist, such as Oregon, for the most part women's wages and pay did little more than meet the bare necessities, and in some cases did not cover those.

Regardless, American women continued to labor in the nation's fields. They did, however, demand to be recognized

as war workers. One way that the women's patriotic service would be acknowledged by the general public involved the design and manufacture of a WLA uniform. Designed by the Bureau of Home Economics and extension clothing specialists from Maryland, New York, and Wisconsin, the WLA outfit was described as a "comfortable 'sloppy but swagger' blue denim uniform." The uniform combined blue denim overalls with "tailored powder-blue sports shirt," blue jacket, and cap. All but the jacket was required for 1943; the women could purchase the three-piece uniform for \$6.20. The jacket cost an additional \$2.50 and another shirt could be purchased for \$1.35. For \$10.05 women could purchase a complete set of WLA clothing. Additional items such as gloves and shoes were optional, but recommended. As women underwent recruitment and placement during the first crop season, they had been advised to purchase the uniform. For the most part, the request to buy the clothing gave women laborers the opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty and patriotism and to proudly show their service to the national defense effort. However, several problems developed that hampered WLA workers from wearing their uniform in 1943. First, many women did not receive enough money in wages to cover necessities, let alone the cost of the uniform. Consequently, many women opted to go without the WLA uniform and "made do" with their own clothing in 1943. However, regardless of their personal decision concerning the uniform, WLA workers did not get the opportunity to purchase uniforms during the first year of WLA participation.<sup>15</sup>

The discussion concerning the purchase and use of the WLA uniform in 1943 turned out to be for naught. While the official announcement of Hall's appointment and the need for uniforms had been made in April, by May 1943 it had become clear that uniform manufacturers did not have the supplies on hand to turn out the expected number of WLA uniforms for the year. In an effort to aid defense and military operations,

cloth manufacturers had converted from denim production to twill and other fabrics used for tents and military supplies, while the surplus of denim was sent overseas for the lend-lease program. Additionally, because of the high level of participation in 1943, uniform manufacturers would not have been prepared for the number of workers who exceeded the government's initial estimate of 50,000 women. As a result, in 1943 WLA workers made do with what they already had for clothing, and instead purchased the uniform when it became available. Thus, in the absence of a uniform, women received instruction on the type of clothing to wear to protect themselves as they worked; overalls or slacks, cotton shirt, straw hat, and low-heeled shoes with thick soles. Safety precautions required that workers wear comfortable clothing without bows, frills, or strings. Nothing that could catch in farm machinery.<sup>16</sup>

By the second WLA crop year, the controversy regarding the manufacture for WLA workers' uniform had diminished. For the most part, women had the opportunity to purchase a uniform and did so. According to the 1944 North Dakota annual WLA labor report, the cost of a complete uniform, including cap, two shirts, jacket, and overalls, had remained at ten dollars. However, as of 24 July 1944, the Commodity Credit Corporation in North Dakota authorized a reduction in the uniform price. As an incentive for women to buy the WLA clothing or to deplete the stock on hand, this decrease in price allowed women to purchase a complete uniform for \$7.65. If women purchased the three-piece uniform as required in 1943, then the discounted 1944 price had been \$4.70. Without collaboration from other sources, it is not possible to indicate whether this "sale" of WLA uniforms occurred throughout the country, or was a situation in North Dakota.<sup>17</sup> Regardless, it seems that in 1944, even with an abundant supply of WLA uniforms, workers did not rush to buy the official uniform; instead it appeared they preferred to use

their own clothing.

WLA workers who did not purchase the WLA uniform received instruction and advice concerning acceptable substitute clothing for farm labor. For the most part, the safety of the worker had been the WLA's first concern, and her clothing reflected that. Thus, to protect against injury and accident, state supervisors and home demonstration agents addressed the issue regarding women's farm clothing. The agents assisted the farm workers in making their clothing safer and themselves more productive on the farm. In Oklahoma, "clothing demonstrations include[d] practical, comfortable, and safe working clothing" that were also considered "attractive." Other states also used home demonstration agents and their programs to advise women on proper clothing for farm work. To press these points, Kansas agents presented farm-safe clothing for female agricultural workers at home demonstration meetings across the state. The WLA in Louisiana did not design a new outfit for its women farm workers, but redesigned existing outfits. Louisiana clothing specialists assisted women in altering clothes left by absent men and boys, "to make them comfortable for women."<sup>18</sup> The failure of the federal WLA administration to provide a uniform affordable and available for all workers did not, however, in any way hamper the women's ability to successfully complete their work assignments.

The confusion surrounding the WLA-uniform production is reminiscent of 1930s programs and the federal government and its agencies and administrators whom had not always appeared informed of happenings in Washington. Without an analysis of materials available, the WLA administration and USDA had promoted the existence of the uniform. Once the situation regarding the unavailability of the uniform had become known, WLA workers who had been prepared to buy the clothing found themselves without proper dress. The WLA administration stating the presence of a work uniform when one had not been



available, gave the public the impression that the federal government had not been aware of activity within its administration.

The lack of a uniform became just one problem with which the administrators of the WLA contended during its first official year of operation. On the national scene, the WLA administration worked to better working conditions for women. Proper training and conditioning for heavy work, sanitary facilities, and planned recreational activities were adopted. Safety issues had also been a concern for farmers and workers as women took over jobs unfamiliar to them. In order to prepare those involved in agricultural labor (farmers and workers) for conditions on farms, the Extension Service produced several informational brochures that described farm environments and situations. Some were aimed at all farm workers, while others were specifically written for the WLA.

In March 1943, following the official announcement regarding the existence of the WLA, the Extension Service produced "Safety Check List for Women and Girls Doing Farm Work." This pamphlet contained a checklist for women who conducted work on farms. Questions regarding the way in which workers handled agricultural implements, dressed for work, cared for their health, handled farm animals, and consumed nutritious food were asked. Additionally, the brochure discussed the need for women to get adequate sleep, so that they would not be too tired to properly perform their jobs.<sup>19</sup> From the start, the WLA and Extension Service administrations strove to protect and guide the women laborers. Farm safety regarding all aspects of their lives became an important aspect of each worker's service to agriculture.

While the Extension Service and WLA had been the governing bodies associated with the employment of women on the nation's farms, these agencies were not the only ones to offer advice to "women and girls doing farm work." As part of its Food Information Series, the Office of Information, USDA,

discussed women's safety in its media release scheduled for 31 July 1943. Information concerning the way that women "get into condition for farm work," comprised part of the publication. Additionally, issues that had been addressed in earlier publications were also included; women were instructed regarding "safe working habits," acceptable work clothing, farm implements and machinery, care of animals, and care for their personal health. In most cases, women were advised to "conserve energy" rather than rush into every job. This announcement described the proper way to lift as well as the amount of weight a woman could manage. In all cases, the safety message urged caution rather than extreme exertion; women needed to lift objects properly and should not lift weights of thirty-five pounds or more for an extended time. Weight limits were established for WLA workers: an "average girl or woman in good condition can lift or carry 25 pounds without difficulty . . . 25 to 35 pounds without fear of doing herself injury." Further, these precautions state the possible damage to women if they continuously lifted more than thirty-five pounds.<sup>20</sup>

For its part, this Food Information Series publication also described both appropriate and inappropriate clothing; "Do not wear shorts and halters. They are unsuitable from every angle." It appears that safety had not been the only issue discussed within USDA brochures. These phrases imply a much more complicated issue than safety, one that implied the morality and innocence of farm families and WLA participants. Farmers expressed a common fear that urban women would be successful in corrupting farm family members. However, moral corruption had not been the only concern expressed by the Office of Information, because its literature also discussed sunburn and sunstroke; cuts, blisters, and bites; dehydration; and lack of proper rest. Sunburn, one of the most frequent maladies associated with the WLA, was discussed in the following manner: "Everyone agrees that prevention of sunburn

should be sought rather than treatment. Women and girls should be warned not to work, especially for the first few days, with short sleeves, or with too thin shirts, or with jersey shirts cut low in the neck, and not to go without hats even if they 'always do' in their ordinary occupation." Additional suggestions included the use of sunscreen and creams. Even so, women still sunburned. Thus, treatments for the burn were also included, along with care for other farm "injuries," such as bee stings, cuts, insect bites, and poison ivy. In all, while most safety pamphlets discussed the same conditions and protected the workers against the same problems, the Office of Information included more gender-specific concerns than the other publications from the USDA.<sup>21</sup>

The USDA not only printed brochures to safeguard the women's safety, but also produced publications for all groups under the U.S. Crop Corps. In the first months of the farm labor program, the USDA in conjunction with the Department of Labor, National Safety Council, and Office of Education, offered recommendations for worker safety. In the following examples, safety information was presented in two different formats. "Going to the Farm Front?: Safety Tips to the U. S. Crop Corps," repeated much of the survey in the WLA-focused publication, but presented the material in a different format. This publication addressed issues in a manner that all workers could read and understand. Workers' health needed to be in good condition, and proper care taken in case of cuts, scraps, or bruises. Proper clothing, both as protection from farm machinery and the sun was also required. Familiarity of farm implements and animals would allow the worker to be secure and relaxed, and therefore, less likely to cause himself/herself injury. Above, all, it seemed that the overall message of this brochure was "Take no chances." Additionally, this publication included the "farm safety pledge," which required a signature to express the worker's serious intent toward safety.<sup>22</sup>

Signed by participants in the farm labor program, the farm safety pledge protected both the worker and the farmer in case of any problem during employment. In all instances, the pledge required that the farm worker be responsible for their own actions and safety, and to determine their ability to perform specific jobs. By signing his/her name to the pledge, the agricultural laborer acknowledged the responsibility to remain conscientious while performing prescribed duties. While much of the pledge appeared to have been general farm safety information, the Extension Service assumed that urban workers, who had no experience with agriculture, would not have been accustomed to conditions that farmers took for granted. For example, the Crop Corps participant pledged not to smoke in the barn or fields, and not around gasoline; also the worker needed to seek approval regarding his/her farm work. Thus, each farmer apprised his hired laborer(s) of the job done, all in an effort to impeded misunderstandings and foster cooperation between employee and employer.

In performing my patriotic duties as a member of the U.S. Crop Corps, I pledge to do my work on the farm in the way safest to myself, to my fellow workers, and to the livestock and equipment I use.

I will recognize that farm work represents the learning of a large number of separate skills. I will ask the farmer how to do my job, to demonstrate the exact procedure to me, and then I will do it immediately under his supervision. I will ask him to inspect my work regularly to be sure I am doing it properly and safely.

I recognize that it is particularly important that I receive proper instruction in the handling of livestock and equipment.

I will familiarize myself with the rules of safe tractor and equipment operation.

I will safeguard children.

I will be on the lookout for accident hazards and help to remove them.

I will not smoke in the barn, around gasoline, or in ripe grain or hay fields.

I know that serious injuries result from horseplay, "fooling," and so-called practical jokes, so I will not indulge in these forms of amusement.<sup>23</sup>

A second publication published by the USDA addressed issues more explicitly. The May 1943 pamphlet, "Safety for the US Crop Corps," while composed of similar topics, addressed safety descriptions and information in a more complete manner than other brochures. By expanding on each topic, this pamphlet discussed important issues for the farm worker. In "Safety for the US Crop Corps" a discussion of "Clothing" follows.

Farm work calls for wearing clothing as nearly fitted for the job as possible. Because of the ease with which they're always catching in something, floppy, loose-fitting clothes are out of order. Women, particularly, must be careful on this score. House dresses aren't as suitable for most types of farm work as special work slacks and coveralls. It is important that you wear a suitable hat or other head covering as protection against the sun. Wear comfortable, low-heeled shoes. Open-toed shoes aren't suitable for women doing farm work. Neither is jewelry. That caution also applies to men in the habit of wearing rings.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to the discussion concerning safety on the farm, the publication discussed the necessity for all to be patriotic in the war effort, and to assist that effort in any way possible. In the first safety publication, "Going to the

Farm Front?: Safety Tips to the U. S. Crop Corps," the discussion regarding suitable clothing was brief and to the point. "Farm work clothes must provide freedom of action, but loose, floppy clothes are entirely out of order; they're always catching in something. Wear the right kind of hat to protect you from the sun." This pamphlet did not discuss suitable shoes or boots, nor did it include warnings regarding improper clothing and other safety issues.<sup>25</sup>

Regardless of the precautions given to wartime farm workers in the first year of federal operation, accidents and problems occurred. Reports published in 1944 reported that the majority of job hazards that occurred in 1943 had been sunburn and poison ivy. Viewed as preventable, these two ailments did not qualify as serious injury to the agricultural worker, but more of a nuisance.<sup>26</sup> However, not all ailments in 1943 had been as simple as sunburn and poison ivy. To cover against serious injury or loss of life, the USDA issued insurance for its agricultural workers. Publications from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE) discussed the need for insurance and the policy that provided coverage for farm workers. Just as the Emergency Farm Labor Program contained several organizations, insurance policies differed to cover each type of worker. For WLA workers, an insurance policy could be purchased for one- or three-month increments. For the 1943 crop year, insurance coverage included \$250 for accident, \$500 for loss of life, and as much as \$1000 for "dismemberments or loss of sight." A cost of \$4 for the first three months, with additional monthly coverage purchased for \$1.50. The premium covered the insured twenty-four hours a day and was not restricted to farm accidents.<sup>27</sup>

During 1943, sixty-five insurance agencies had been given the opportunity to sell policies to farm workers. And, while the government had reports from thirty of these companies, the number of policies written for members of the WLA was almost nonexistent. A lack of policies for WLA members could be a

result of several factors. Specifically, the cost of protection may have thwarted some women from purchasing the accident policy. With low wages paid, women found it difficult to continually purchase items outside their basic necessities. Therefore, goods and services, such as insurance and uniforms, were not considered essential. Also, the BAE report written by Ralph R. Botts included information about thirty of the sixty-five companies that offered insurance to farm workers; the remaining did not file reports with the federal government regarding farm workers covered. Possibly, the remaining companies insured more WLA than VFV members. Of the 434 policies covered by the thirty reporting companies, only 2 belonged to members of the WLA. Because of this, no distinctions are made between the WLA and VFV in the BAE report for 1943.<sup>28</sup> Consequently, it is impossible to determine the rate by which the WLA had accidents during 1943, or at least the rate by which insurance claims had been filed for medical expenses.

A subsequent report from the BAE dated April 1944, examined the number of claims made and paid for the previous year. And, as stated in the report, "relatively few policies were written in 1943," mainly because the insurance policy had not been properly advertised and discussed with the workers. Due to the lateness of the operation in 1943, several who might have purchased policies or filed claims did not, and therefore were not protected under the insurance plan. For the 1944 crop year, and any future years, the federal government planned to be better prepared and ready for accidents as they occurred. In terms of coverage, they did not alter the policy that had been in place the previous year. The levels of coverage remained the same, as did the amount for the one- and three-month policies. Additionally, workmen's compensation and liability insurance were the responsibility of each farmer who employed workers. However, in many cases, farmers did not insure against compensation for

short-term emergency workers, thus leaving themselves unprotected in the case of an accident. Specific coverage was offered for VFV workers and for those housed within work camps. Clearly the responsibility for each worker was dependent on the condition within which they lived and worked.<sup>29</sup>

The safety tips and insurance provided to each worker were consistent with other industries and defense work during World War II. In terms of industrial defense workers, women in those industries also received information regarding their safety on the job, and ways in which to care for themselves and their families. The National Safety Council released in its pamphlet, "Women in Industry," guidelines by which defense workers should care for themselves. In all situations it became necessary "to establish good working conditions." And in the case of defense work, it became necessary for the women to understand all that would be required of their job.<sup>30</sup>

With the development of the Emergency Farm Labor Program, the USDA and the federal government faced the burden of providing facilities and services for its workers. Along with the necessity of establishing a liveable wage, uniform for service, and safety and insurance measures, the government also held the responsibility for supplying farm workers with suitable housing. While farm women stayed in their own homes to complete their WLA service, town and urban women needed housing. Once all available sources had been exhausted, the federal government established its own housing structures for agricultural laborers. For the most part, WLA workers preferred to reside within organized housing rather than their employer's home. According to the publication Independent Woman, WLA members "chose the group residence unit--probably because it left them free, after their day's work was done, to follow their own devices, whereas, in the farm home, they were under the necessity of conforming to the family life."<sup>31</sup> Due to these considerations, public housing became a popular way



to keep farm workers housed during the war. And, in communities where existing housing did not fulfill all quartering requests, local, state, and the federal government provided an alternative.

Initially the WLA and other farm labor groups did not request government housing units, but relied on local sources. During the course of the war, communities addressed this problem differently. While some housed their workers in private homes, others placed the women in vacant schools and dormitories, community facilities, and country clubs. Still, these structures did not meet all housing needs in areas where hundreds or thousands worked, and temporary lodging was built.<sup>32</sup> For the most part, WLA workers were housed in farm homes, or in a locale convenient to their work. Women who worked year-round on dairy and poultry farms resided with the farm family, and spent their time on the farm living as a member of the family, but these women made up only a small portion of the total WLA workers employed in the nation during the period from 1943 to 1945. For the rest, state and local WLA organizations, farm organizations, and farmers worked together to provide acceptable housing for the millions of short-term, seasonal laborers utilized during the war.<sup>33</sup>

In the Northeast, communities and farmers were creative in their search for housing. In New York, communities used all available domiciles and community buildings to billet urban labor in upstate farm counties and on Long Island. School buildings and buses were used as housing and transportation during the summer months to provide adequate help for large truck-crop farms. Country clubs, Grange halls, summer cottages, and other community facilities also provided housing for New York workers. Women transported from New York City had the advantage of knowing that services would be available to them if they traveled to upstate New York, New Jersey, or New England to work in vegetable and fruit fields. In order to acquire labor for the 1944 crop year, farmers in

the community of Newburgh, New York, worked to provide better facilities for its female workers, everything from more recreational activities to varied food to improved housing.<sup>34</sup>

In the Midwest, organizations worked to establish acceptable housing for harvest workers. In Allegan, Michigan, women had been hired to pick snap beans, the Red Cross and numerous church groups provided the women with meals, and the American Legion hall became their home. Additionally, a WLA camp had been established along Allegan Lake west of the community. This camp housed one hundred workers who participated in bean and fruit harvests. In Illinois, hybrid seed corn producers had been unable to recruit sufficient local labor in 1944. Thus, they chose to establish four "camps" for the women recruited from nearby urban areas. Operated by the seed corn producers, these camps were set up in a high school gymnasium, fraternity house, college dormitories, and a private school. In 1945, Ohio also used existing buildings and facilities to house its WLA labor.<sup>35</sup>

In areas of intense agricultural work, mainly the northeastern and western United States, communities relied on local, state, and federal governments to provide group housing for agricultural workers. Temporary and seasonal work camps became one way that communities housed their influx of agricultural workers; another was the construction of temporary or permanent housing structures. Constructed as single- or multiple-family homes, many of these structures remained in use long after the war. Relying on the precedents established by World War I and the New Deal, as well as federal legislation passed during the 1930s and early 1940s, the federal government had the authority to construct and provide housing for agricultural workers during World War II. In areas where existing buildings did not adequately house workers, temporary camps and housing made up the difference for agricultural laborers.

World War II work camps housed a large number of women

(or other farm laborers) for a short period of time, specifically for seasonal work. Located in rural areas away from large population centers, these camps effectively brought a large group of workers to cultivate and harvest the area's main crop. Prior to action from the federal government, several states established camps as soon as the need for agricultural labor became apparent. Thus, in addition to early worker initiatives, states also established camps to house these pre-WLA labor forces. In New York and West coast states, labor camps existed from the beginning of the war, and certainly before the official establishment of the federal farm labor program. While New York camps housed its seasonal labor force recruited from urban locales, western camps were home to the thousands of migratory farm labor used throughout the region to harvest various crops. Over the course of the war, California erected numerous work camps for the migratory and seasonal workers employed in the state. In 1943, seven camps had been erected for the WLA, eight in 1944, and four in 1945. Farmers benefitted from camp housing as well. By billeting workers together, the grower could economically transport workers to the location for the day's labor. In addition to California and New York, fifteen other states established camps to house WLA workers. The camps provided homes not just for their own residents but for interstate workers as well. For example, Maine and Ohio recruited women from other locations. Women traveled to Maine from eighteen states, Washington, D.C., and several countries.<sup>36</sup>

The efforts by local and state governments, community groups, and individual farmers to provide housing for their farm workers did not prove to be adequate after the organization of the Emergency Farm Labor Program. Thus, with the millions of additional agricultural laborers present in the country during the war, the federal government also became involved with construction of housing for workers. In 1943, with the development of the national farm labor program,

agricultural workers became defense workers, and thus, entitled to federal-defense housing. Although initially federal housing had been requested for food and meat processing plant employees, by 1944 housing requests included locations that used the WLA and other farm labor. Guaranteed the same benefits that industrial workers received, farm laborers acquired low-cost, federally constructed housing. Although agricultural workers did not number the majority of those that received defense housing, they did, as part of the national defense program, warrant the aid that federally constructed houses provided. As agricultural laborers, these workers received less per month than the average industrial workers, subsequently much of their income would be spent on housing and other expenses. The benefit of defense housing allowed the farm laborers to reside within town and city areas without the need to locate adequate and affordable housing.

The precedent for war housing can be traced to the New Deal. Agencies such as the Farm Home Administration, the Federal Housing Authority, and, in some regards, the Resettlement Administration provided new housing for Americans, either through relocation or renovation, and provided jobs for unemployed men. During that time, legislation had been passed that established a national housing measure. The Wagner Housing Act, also known as the Wagner-Steagall or National Housing Act, became law on 1 September 1937. The National Housing Act replaced an earlier smaller program established by the National Recovery Administration, which also supplied money for slum clearance and constructed low-income housing. This measure provided "Financial assistance to the States and political subdivisions thereof for the elimination of unsafe and insanitary housing conditions, for the eradication of slums, for the provision of decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings for families of low income, and for the reduction of unemployment and the stimulation of business activity, to create a United States

Housing Authority, and for other purposes." This legislation became the predecessor to wartime housing measures.<sup>37</sup>

As created by the National Housing Act, the Housing Authority had the ability to make loans available to public-housing agencies that assisted in low-rent-housing and slum-clearance projects. Thus, contributions and grants made to public-housing agencies and individuals to maintain the "low-rent character" of housing projects allowed for the construction and maintenance of projects, as well as provided rent subsidies. As part of the Department of Interior, the United States Housing Authority, with five hundred million dollars in funding, directed these activities in its efforts to bring about the stipulations laid down by this legislation.<sup>38</sup>

Following the use of low-income housing during the New Deal, the government used the same idea to establish low-cost temporary or permanent housing for war workers in the 1940s. Beginning in the industrial sector, the government found that it needed more housing for the increased number of workers in defense plants in urban areas. Individual locations could not meet the growing need for housing around industrial manufacturing centers, and, therefore, depended on the federal government to rectify the situation. By 1940, the federal government began the process that would provide low-cost housing, facilities, and services in communities where defense and war industries existed. Using the National Housing Act as a precedent, Congress adopted the Lanham Act. While the National Housing Act of 1937 had provided urban public housing during a time of national depression, its administrative structure did not prove adequate for wartime. Conducted on a scale acceptable to the time, the National Housing Act became obsolete with the arrival of war and defense measures of the early 1940s. Thus, Congress legislated a wartime measure that possessed the resources needed to adequately handle the volume of housing requested.<sup>39</sup>

Passed 14 October 1940, the Lanham Act included provisions for those employed in the war industries. Introduced by Representative Fritz G. Lanham of Texas, this measure provided services to low-income families and workers in industry. Created to "expedite the provision of housing in connection with national defense, and for other purposes," the Lanham Act established housing that would be built in locations that needed additional domiciles to meet wartime labor demands.<sup>40</sup> In 1940, the individuals who could participate and use the government's defense housing included enlisted men in military service, employees of war and navy departments assigned to duty at military posts and bases, and workers engaged in defense industries. At that time, the legislation did not include agricultural laborers or migratory farm workers. In the 21 January 1942 amendment to the Lanham Act, an additional class of individuals was included within the groups of those eligible for defense housing; "Officers of the Army and Marine Corps not above the grade of captain, and officers of the Navy and Coast Guard, not above the grade of lieutenant, senior grade," who were stationed at military bases and posts or had assignments in defense industries could receive housing. Still no mention of farm workers. And while it is possible to argue that the federal farm labor program did not yet exist, the presence of migratory agricultural labor is not as easily dismissed.<sup>41</sup>

Additionally, limits had been placed on federal housing construction. In the continental United States the average cost per government built family dwelling unit in 1940 was legislated to be \$3000, not to exceed \$3950, elsewhere the median cost was set at \$4000, not to exceed \$4750 per family dwelling unit. These figures represented the cost of construction; fees for utilities, land purchase, and community facilities were not included. Within months the Lanham Act had been amended to change its language, as well as to increase the money requested for appropriations and the limits

of housing costs. In April 1941, the average cost of a housing unit in the continental United States was to be \$3500, with measures taken to ensure that construction be economical, and that no "moveable equipment" installed in any units. In January 1942, the average cost figure was increased to \$3750, not to exceed \$4500. Outside the continental United States, the average cost per unit became \$4250, not to exceed \$4750, excluding the territory of Alaska. In Alaska the cost per family dwelling unit should not exceed \$7500. In most cases these structures were to be permanent, however, in areas of the country where the housing administrator did not deem a lasting need for additional housing, temporary structures were to be constructed. Further, the housing administrator, who worked through the Federal Works Agency, set appropriate and reasonable rents for each housing unit, as well as worked with federal, state and local governments to exist within guidelines, laws, and municipality regulations.<sup>42</sup>

With the administration of the housing division in place, the federal government went into the construction business. Federal housing administrator Abner H. Ferguson received from the president a listing of locations in need of additional housing. Dated 8 April 1941, locations in thirty-six states, as well as Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, and Washington, D.C. required housing for war industry workers. Within one month additional needy locations had been identified, a pattern that would continue throughout the war. As the months passed, new locations would require additional housing, and thus become part of the wartime effort to provide affordable housing to workers.<sup>43</sup> Correspondence between Roosevelt, Ferguson, and defense housing coordinator, C. F. Palmer, had discussed the number of housing units needed and those to be constructed, as well as the type of work done in various locations. During the period prior to the official declaration of war, Ferguson recommended numerous locations for the construction of housing units. This information was

passed onto Palmer, and once approved, forwarded to Roosevelt. These early requests for defense housing were in locations that contained military bases and schools, as well as defense industry manufacturing plants. In June 1941, construction had been suggested for 4925 housing units in seventeen states and the territory of Alaska, averaging 275 units per state or territory. This practice continued during the early days of war, as both Ferguson and Palmer requested additional housing units for military bases and industrial manufacturing plants.<sup>44</sup>

Interstate agricultural workers needed housing as much as defense and war-manufacturing industrial workers who also worked far from home. Urban women in the WLA, depended on the farmer, farm community, or government to provide their housing. While those women employed by individual farmers, such as dairy and midwestern crop farmers, lived with the farm family, women employed by large-scale intensive-labor operations did not. And, while farmers in the East and West utilized community and private buildings, as well as temporary work camps to house their workers, additional sources of housing would be necessary before the end of the war. Thus, while not initially available for agricultural laborers, the housing provision of the Lanham Act became necessary for the continuation of the federal Emergency Farm Labor Program.

While agricultural laborers did not account for the majority of the nation's wartime work, they too participated in federal programs. However, not until 19 November 1942 did the first mention of agricultural workers appear in government correspondence between the president and the administrator of the National Housing Agency, John B. Blandford Jr. In a letter to the president, Blandford recommended that housing units be constructed in Columbus, Ohio, for dairy workers.<sup>45</sup> Although it is not clear whether these are dairy-farm workers or dairy-processing-plant workers, this request does occur before the formal organization of the Emergency Farm Labor Program. It was not until July of the following year,



however, after creation of the national farm labor program, that the next mention of housing for agricultural-related labor occurred. At that time, the request recommended additional housing units for food processing and production plant workers in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Imlay, Michigan.<sup>46</sup>

The first mention of housing for agricultural labor involved solely with farming occurred on 26 August 1943. In a letter to the president, Blandford requested housing units for Winchester, Virginia, to be used for those employed as crop harvesters.<sup>47</sup> From that date, the rate of additional housing units being constructed for agricultural workers increased. In 1943, housing needs were seen for workers employed in jobs such as crop harvesting, creamery production, food processing, and food and meat packing.<sup>48</sup> As a large employer of farm workers, the WLA should have received an disproportionate amount of housing units, however, without mention of gender on the defense housing reports, it is not possible to assert this hypothesis without further analysis.

WLA workers in the Northeast, for the most part, were housed in private buildings and homes, community facilities, and state camps. Their demand for defense housing had been small, and, therefore, the Northeast, as a region, did not have an overwhelming need for defense housing and thus did not request such. Other areas of the country, however, did not have the same conditions regarding housing. In the South and West, states requested defense housing for their farm workers, in part because of the number of laborers engaged in the state and the lack of acceptable housing present at the time. Arizona, Oregon, and Virginia, from September to December 1943, requested defense housing units for farm workers. Virginia's request asked for housing units to be erected for harvest workers in the community of Timberville, in Rockingham County. Located between the Appalachian and Blue Ridge Mountains, this small town requested assistance in providing housing for seasonal laborers in September 1943. While women

had not proven successful for full-time agricultural work in Virginia, they did participate as seasonal harvest workers in Rockingham County. According to Virginia's 1943 annual report for the farm labor program, the WLA proved "satisfactory for certain types of seasonal work. Washington vacationists, including various departmental secretaries, helped harvest tomato, peach, and other crops in Rockingham county. These workers were housed in the Timberville farm labor camp."<sup>49</sup> Thus it is possible to conclude that at least in Timberville, Virginia, women farm workers lived in defense housing in 1943.

In Oregon, the situation evolved differently. There, the use of women as agricultural labor had been in force since 1942. Work programs established by the state allowed recruitment and training sessions to be offered in early 1943. In that year, 25,513 women worked as seasonal labor, and 274 women worked in full-time positions on dairy, livestock, and general farms in Oregon. The request for defense housing came from Wasco county, where the greatest number of female seasonal workers had been hired in June 1943. These housing units would have been used for women who worked as seasonal labor, on general livestock farms, or in preparation for the next crop year.<sup>50</sup>

Not every request for agricultural housing in 1943 can be automatically linked to the WLA, nor that the organization would make use of the structures. Such is the case in Arizona. There, the situation is different, as the state made wide use of Mexican nationals and other male farm laborers to harvest cotton. Women who worked in the state's fields did so as part of a family unit not as members of the WLA. Without a viable WLA organization in the state it is difficult to determine the exact benefits for women war workers regarding defense housing. Still, Arizona requested housing for its cotton harvesters, and as part of family groups women stayed in the structures. But, for the most part, defense housing requested and built for Arizona in 1943 did not greatly affect

WLA workers.<sup>51</sup>

While only three requests for agricultural housing transpired in 1943, the government did not discount the importance of housing for all war workers. In 1944, housing units needed for agricultural workers increased, as did the variety of work for which the units had been requested. Further, the locations of requests also varied. From the first report of the year to the end of 1944, agricultural work, including food and meat production, processing, packing, and canning, creamery, fruit picking, and general agriculture, became a standard item on most reports from the National Housing Agency to the president concerning defense housing. In California, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, Texas, and Wyoming, housing units were requested for those directly involved in farm work. These states, as well as several additional states, required housing units for all agricultural laborers, including those employed in processing/packing plants.<sup>52</sup>

With several states requesting housing for agricultural labor, it is possible to discover the extent by which the Emergency Farm Labor Program and defense housing legislation affected the nation's employment and housing pools. In Texas, the National Housing Agency made requests for housing units in locations engaged in "agriculture, farming, and ranching." In that state, Mexican nationals and Americans worked the fields. The reinstatement of the Bracero Program in 1942 and the use of Mexican nationals as farm laborers reduced the number of Americans utilized for agricultural work in the state. Even so, Texas registered more than seventy-five thousand women who worked in fields during 1943, and more than fifty thousand each year after. Thus, it is highly likely that defense housing constructed for "agriculture, farming, and ranching" would have sheltered women as well. However, without an organized WLA organization in Texas during World War II it is difficult to determine the extent of women's influence within

the state.<sup>53</sup>

Texas was not the only state to request federal housing for its agricultural workers in 1944. In Nebraska, the communities of Columbus and North Platte also needed housing units for its farm workers; and like Texas it is difficult to assume that the WLA would have been actively engaged in agriculture in that state. As part of the Middle West, Nebraska farmers, like others in the region, had difficulty accepting the use of women as farm labor, and therefore, in most cases, did not readily use the WLA as agricultural workers during the war. According to the state's emergency farm labor program annual reports, Nebraska farmers preferred to use Mexican American, Mexican nationals, and prisoners of war as agricultural labor in 1944.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, it is not likely that defense housing in use during 1944 would have been reserved solely for the WLA.

In Thermopolis, Wyoming, housing units had been requested for those employed on livestock farms. According to the annual report for the Wyoming farm labor program in 1944, few women had been employed on such operations because livestock ranches generally, employed men. Regardless, the number of women employed on farms in Wyoming had been greater than the other emergency farm labor groups combined. In the 1945 annual report for Wyoming's labor program, at least 6000 women assisted in agriculture in some aspect or another. These women were engaged in all types of agricultural pursuits, including employment on ranches and livestock establishments. It is conceivable that some of the WLA participants would have benefitted by the use of federal housing.<sup>55</sup>

Minnesota also requested housing in 1944. In the community of Marshall in Lyon county, housing units had been requested for its dairy and poultry farm workers. During 1944, 96 emergency farm labor program workers (including men, women, and youths) had been placed in Lyon county; in 1945, the number of farm workers increased to 555. With the request

for housing units occurring at the end of October 1944, farm workers would have utilized the units in late 1944 and 1945. In full-time or year-round positions women would have been employed on dairy or poultry farms, and would have benefitted from these housing structures. However, due to women's lack of acceptance as farm labor by Minnesota farmers, few worked on dairy or poultry farms during the war. And, therefore, female farm laborers would not have used these units. For the most part, Minnesota women were acceptable for seasonal work such as detasseling corn and picking apples. And while camps had been established for seasonal workers, such as WLA members recruited from urban areas, defense housing had not been constructed for those workers involved in short-term positions, but rather for those who worked year-round.<sup>56</sup>

In 1944, southern states also requested housing units for their farm workers. In a region that did not generally employ white women to work on farms, the case of Mississippi represents an exception for female agricultural labor in 1944. The state's annual report for the Emergency Farm Labor Program did not discuss in detail the location and placement of the thousands of women who participated in the WLA, as well as those who traveled to North Dakota and South Dakota to assist the harvests there. However, housing had been requested for agricultural workers in Natchez, Mississippi, and possibly served women employed in agriculture at that locale.<sup>57</sup>

Blandford made his last request for the year in December 1944. In that month, the request came from California for housing to be constructed in Shafter. Although Shafter is not mentioned in the California annual report, clearly the state of California used work camps and government housing for its seasonal and migratory laborers; most of the WLA workers employed in California worked as seasonal workers, few (less than one thousand) worked year-round. More than 169,000 women worked as agricultural labor in the state during the period from 1943 through 1945; these women utilized defense housing

in locales across the state.<sup>58</sup> Regardless of the actual numbers of WLA workers placed in defense housing throughout the country during the war, women in several states, who did not join the WLA, still participated in farm labor, and in some cases, would have utilized defense housing at some point in their service.

In 1945, the requests for additional housing units to be constructed by the National Housing Agency slowed considerably. With four requests from January to mid-March, only one of these requested housing units for workers engaged in agricultural production. In Salem, Oregon, a formal request had been made for additional housing units for those working in a food processing plant.<sup>59</sup> Considered women's work, food processing plants or canneries hired thousands of women throughout the nation, and it is conceivable that this operation in Salem employed women who required housing in 1945. This last request for war housing for agricultural workers, which did not immediately benefit members of the WLA, illustrated the peripheral position that the organization held as part of the farm labor program. Considered not a significant part of the farm labor program by some within the federal government, the WLA and its workers found themselves distanced from other defense workers during the war. With its slow start, and reluctance by senior USDA officials to endorse the WLA or the use of women as agricultural laborers, the infrequent requests for agricultural defense housing demonstrated the lack of commitment by many in the government to further provide for the American farmer during the war. Although farmers met their production quotas as required by the federal government, it did not seem necessary for the government to reciprocate and provide every service desired by farmers and their workers. Clearly the placement of urban or interstate laborers required housing, and in many locales available housing did not exist. And, while states, counties, and individual communities constructed camps and utilized

civic buildings, the addition of federal dwellings would have supplemented housing shortages. However, throughout the operation of federal wartime housing construction, requests for farm laborer units remained few and a minority of the overall defense requests. Additionally, although housing requests had been present in several locales where women worked as agricultural labor, it is not possible to wholeheartedly propose that housing construction had been for the benefit of the women. Without mention of gender, the government does not allow a glimpse to the occupants of wartime defense construction utilized in the nation during World War II.

However, at least one example, as presented above, did demonstrate that WLA laborers utilized federal defense structures in some manner. Timberville, Virginia illustrated a clear issue of WLA defense housing. As one of the early requests regarding defense housing for agricultural workers, Timberville emphasized the manner by which the Lanham Act had been intended--to assist all that needed housing during the Second World War. It is also plausible that other locations around the country that constructed defense housing also housed women farm laborers during World War II. But, these instances are few compared to the housing requested for industrial war workers. Throughout the war years, almost every state and territory, as well as some overseas possessions received requests from administrators of the Defense Housing Agency, Federal Housing Administration, and National Housing Agency to construct additional housing units in locations involved in defense and war work. Of these, by far, the majority of units constructed benefitted those involved in industry, however, those employed in agricultural positions were not wholly excluded. In states where farming and agricultural canning, packing, processing, and production were important those workers took part and benefitted from defense housing measures just as those employed in defense and

war manufacturing industries.

As a service to war workers, federal housing units gave laborers the advantage of not worrying about locating housing if they relocated as a condition of their work. This benefit, in addition to standardized wages, safety regulations, accident insurance, and a WLA uniform gave women farm workers a basic foundation to their war service. By providing these items to each worker, or at least making them available, the Extension Service and WLA administrations hoped to provide the basis for a successful program. By providing a safe and suitable environment for work, the WLA administration had been confident of the success of their program. Through this environment, administrators protected their workers even as these laborers were placed in new situations and locations. With the above mentioned services in place, the WLA administration could return to issues that had been deemed important for its survival--recruitment and placement.



## Notes

1. Wayne D. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program, 1943-1947," Agricultural Monograph No. 13, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, USDA, September 1951, 139-41. Organizations involved on the periphery of the issue include: U.S. Women's Bureau, state extension services, National Advisory Committee, and General Federation of Women's Clubs.
2. New York Times, 13 and 18 April 1943.
3. Ibid.
4. Women's Land Army: Extension Farm Labor Program, 1943-1944-1945 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1945), 1; Women Farm Workers: The 1943 Story of the Women's Land Army of the U.S. Crop Corps, War Food Administration, Extension Service, USDA, October 1943, 2.
5. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," 141-42; "Some of the Responsibilities of a State Women's Land Army Supervisor," January 1944, Women's Land Army Records, USDA, History Collection, Special Collections, National Agricultural Library, Beltsville, Maryland (hereafter WLA Records).
6. "Some of the Responsibilities of a State Women's Land Army Supervisor," WLA Records.
7. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," 141-42; "Some of the Responsibilities of a State Women's Land Army Supervisor," WLA Records; "Outline of Suggestions for Developing a County Plan," Emergency Farm Labor Program, Extension Service, USDA, n.d., WLA Records.
8. Esther M. Colvin, "Another Women's Land Army?" Independent Woman 21 (April 1942): 104; Arthur Root, Report on the Volunteer Land Corps, Summer 1942, n.d., 1, Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont, Burlington; New York Times, 24 April 1943; Frances W. Valentine, "Women's Emergency Farm Service on the Pacific Coast in 1943," Bulletin No. 204, U.S. Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, 1945, 5-6. These figures represent a sample of wages paid in the period prior to the official creation of the WLA. Some workers would have received more or less than the rate listed.
9. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," 173-74; Samuel Liss, "The Concept and Determination of Prevailing Wages in Agriculture During World

War II," Agricultural History 24 (January 1950): 4-18; Samuel Liss, "Farm Wage Boards Under the Cooperative Extension Service During World War II," Agricultural History 27 (July 1953): 103-108; Samuel Liss, "Farm Wage Boards Under the Wage Stabilization Program During World War II," Agricultural History 30 (July 1956): 128-37.

10. Liss, "The Concept and Determination of Prevailing Wages in Agriculture," 6.

11. Frances W. Valentine, "Successful Practices in the Employment of Nonfarm Women on Farms in the Northeastern States, 1943," Bulletin No. 199, U.S. Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, 1944, 18-21; New York Times, 5 March 1944; "Women Prove Helpful in Meeting Nation's Food Crisis," Labor Information Bulletin 11 (March 1944): 4.

12. Valentine, "Successful Practices in the Employment of Nonfarm Women on Farms in the Northeastern States," 36-37; New York Times, 5 March 1944.

13. Valentine, "Women's Emergency Farm Service on the Pacific Coast in 1943," 14-15, 26, 31-32.

14. New York Times, 18 April 1943; Louis J. Ducoff, "Wages of Agricultural Labor in the United States," Technical Bulletin No. 895, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, USDA, 1945, 31-35.

15. Pitch In and Help: The Women's Land Army Calls 800,000 Women to the Farm in 1944, Extension Service, USDA, May 1944; Women's Land Army of the U.S. Crop Corps Needs Workers, Extension Service, USDA, July 1943; New York Times, 13 and 18 April 1943, 13 May 1943.

16. Pitch In and Help; New York Times, 13 May 1943.

17. "North Dakota, Annual Report, 1944," box 17, Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports of Extension and Other Workers under the Farm Labor Program, 1943-1947, Records of the U.S. Extension Service, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter AR, NARG 33).

18. Florence L. Hall to Women's Land Army Supervisor, 15 May 1945, Extension Service, USDA, WLA Records.

19. "Safety Check List for Women and Girls Doing Farm Work," Extension Service, USDA, March 1943.

20. "Advice for Women and Girls doing Farm Work," Food Information Series No. 47, Office of Information, USDA, 31 July 1943.

21. Ibid.
22. "Going to the Farm Front?: Safety Tips to the U. S. Crop Corps," USDA, May 1943.
23. Ibid.
24. "Safety for the US Crop Corps," USDA, May 1943.
25. "Going to the Farm Front?"
26. New York Times, 5 March 1944.
27. Ralph R. Botts, "Experience of 30 Reporting Companies with the Victory Farm Volunteers and Women's Land Army Accident Policy in 1943," Bureau of Agricultural Economics, USDA, 9 March 1944.
28. Ibid.
29. "Insurance: Emergency Farm Labor Program," BAE, USDA, April 1944, WLA Records.
30. Chester W. Gregory, Women in Defense Work during World War II: An Analysis of the Labor Problem and Women's Rights (New York: Exposition Press, 1974), 55-56.
31. "To the Rescue of the Crops," Independent Woman 23 (May 1944): 154.
32. "Guidelines for Wartime Use of Women on Farms," Special Bulletin No. 8, U.S. Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, 1942, 7; House, Committee on Appropriations, Farm Labor Program, 1943: Hearings before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943, 146-55.
33. Valentine, "Successful Practices in the Employment of Nonfarm Women on Farms in the Northeastern States," 12-14; "To the Rescue of the Crops," 155.
34. New York Times, 5 March and 1 May 1944; "To the Rescue of the Crops," 155.
35. Grand Rapids Herald, 3 August 1943; "Illinois 1944 Annual Narrative Report, Emergency Farm Labor Program," box 13, AR, NARG 33; "Michigan Emergency Farm labor Program Annual Report, 1943," box 5, AR, NARG 33; "Ohio Farm Labor Supervisors Annual Report, 1945," box 28, AR, NARG 33.
36. The fifteen states that established work camps during the war included: Colorado, Connecticut, Maine, Maryland,

Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington. Camps referred to existing buildings and/or the construction of new structures. State reports did not always distinguish which type of structure was utilized. New York Times, 18 August 1943; Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," 146; "Michigan State Supervisor Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1943," AR, NARG 33; "Ohio Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," AR, NARG 33; "California Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 22, AR, NARG 33; "Colorado 1944 Annual Narrative Report, Emergency Farm Labor Program," box 12, AR, NARG 33; "Colorado Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 22, AR, NARG 33; "Maine State Supervisor Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1943," box 5, AR, NARG 33; "Maine State Supervisor Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1944," box 14, AR, NARG 33; "Maine Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 25, AR, NARG 33; "Maryland State Supervisor Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1943," box 5, AR, NARG 33; "Massachusetts State Supervisor Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1943," box 5, AR, NARG 33; "Massachusetts State Supervisor Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1944," box 14, AR, NARG 33; "Massachusetts Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 25, AR, NARG 33; "Michigan Annual Report, 1944," box 15, AR, NARG 33; "Michigan Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 25, AR, NARG 33; "Minnesota 1943 Annual Farm Labor Report," box 5, AR, NARG 33; "Minnesota Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 26, AR, NARG 33; "New Jersey 1943," box 7, AR, NARG 33; "Farm Placements, New York State, 1945," box 27, AR, NARG 33; "Ohio State Supervisor Emergency Farm Labor Annual Narrative Report, 1943," box 7, AR, NARG 33; "Ohio Annual Report, 1944," box 17, AR, NARG 33; "Oregon State Supervisor Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1943," box 8, AR, NARG 33; "Oregon Annual Report, 1944," box 18, AR, NARG 33; "Oregon Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 29, AR, NARG 33; "South Carolina Annual Report State Extension Farm Labor Program, 1943," box 8, AR, NARG 33; "South Carolina Annual Narrative Report Emergency Farm Labor Program, 1944," box 19, AR, NARG 33; "South Carolina Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 30, AR, NARG 33; "Vermont State Supervisor Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1943," box 10, AR, NARG 33; "Vermont Annual Report 1944," box 20, AR, NARG 33; "Virginia Annual Report Emergency Farm Labor Program, 1943," box 10, AR, NARG 33; "Virginia Annual Narrative Report, 1944," box 20, AR, NARG 33; "Virginia Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 31, AR, NARG 33; "Washington Annual Report Emergency Farm Labor Program, 1943," box 10, AR, NARG 33; "Washington Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 31, AR, NARG 33; "Vacation Work with the Shade Tobacco Growers Agricultural Association, Inc. and Connecticut Agricultural Extension Service," report, Shade Tobacco Growers Agricultural Association, Inc., 1945, WLA Records.

37. U.S. Statutes at Large, vol. 50, 888.

38. Ibid. According to the legislation, terms within the Act had the following meanings: "'low-rent housing' means decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings within the financial reach of families of low income, and developed and administered to promote serviceability, efficiency, economy, and stability . . . dwellings in low-rent housing as defined in this Act shall be available solely for families whose net income at the time of admission does not exceed five times the rental . . . 'families of low income' means families who are in the lowest income group and who cannot afford to pay enough to cause private enterprise . . . to build an adequate supply of decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings for their use. . . . 'slum' means any area where dwellings predominate which, by reason of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement or design, lack of ventilation, light or sanitation facilities, or any combination of these factors, are detrimental to safety, health, or morals."

39. Minnie Wiener, comp., War Public Works: A Compilation of Statutes, Executive Orders, Regulations, and Other Documents Relating to the Construction, Financing, Operation, and Maintenance of Community Facilities Under the Lanham Act, as Amended, Federal Works Agency, Office of General Counsel, 1943.

40. Ibid., 14-17.

41. Ibid., 1-13. In June 1941, Title II, regarding defense housing, had been added to the Lanham Act of 1940. This section allowed for the acquisition and provision of community facilities for those engaged in defense work, specifically schools, waterworks, sewers and sewage, garbage and refuse disposal, sanitation, water purity, hospitals, recreational facilities, and streets. Also in the same amendment, "Title III, General Provisions," had been inserted. In this section, the role of the Federal Works Agency, and its administrator, was replaced by the National Housing Agency, and its administrator, in the nation's states. In a proviso added 7 July 1943, the National Housing Agency became one of the federal agencies involved with defense housing.

42. Ibid., 2-3.

43. Franklin D. Roosevelt to Abner H. Ferguson, 8 April 1941 and 14 May 1941, folder January-July 1941 (Defense), box 7, Official File 63-Housing, Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York (hereafter FDR Papers).

44. C. F. Palmer to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 14 June 1941, folder January-July 1941 (Defense), box 7, Official File 63-Housing, FDR Papers. In the early days of the war, the federal housing administrator and defense coordinator worked separately, however, with Executive Order 9070, 24 February 1942, the president consolidated several agencies in the National Housing Agency. Thus, the Federal Housing Administration, U.S. Housing Authority, and defense housing division of the Federal Works Administration, along with other organizations formed the National Housing Agency.

45. John B. Blandford Jr. to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 19 November 1942, folder June-December 1942 (Defense), box 7, Official File 63-Housing, FDR Papers.

46. John B. Blandford Jr. to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 17 July 1943, folder July-December 1943 (Defense), box 8, Official File 63-Housing, FDR Papers.

47. John B. Blandford Jr. to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 26 August 1943, folder July-December 1943 (Defense), box 8, Official File 63-Housing, FDR Papers.

48. John B. Blandford Jr. to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 6 September 1943, 29 September 1943, 26 and 29 October 1943, 30 November 1943, 27 December 1943, folder July - December 1943 (Defense), box 8, Official File 63-Housing, FDR Papers.

49. Blandford to Roosevelt, 29 September 1943, FDR Papers; "Virginia, Annual Report, Emergency Farm Labor Program, 1943," AR, NARG 33. In terms of full-time WLA labor in Virginia, urban women had not readily enrolled for that term of employment. Of the eight women placed on dairy and poultry farms in 1943, only one remained for the full year; most urban women who worked on Virginia farms in 1943 did so as seasonal labor.

50. Blandford to Roosevelt, 30 November 1943, FDR Papers; "Oregon, Annual Report, Emergency Farm Labor Program, 1943," AR, NARG 33; "Oregon, Annual Report, Emergency Farm Labor Program, 1944," AR, NARG 33.

51. Blandford to Roosevelt, 27 December 1943, FDR Papers; "Arizona, Annual Report, Emergency Farm Labor Program, 1945," box 21, AR, NARG 33.

52. John B. Blandford Jr. to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 12 January 1944, 10 February 1944, 21 March 1944, 24 March 1944, 19 April 1944, 8 May 1944, 3 June 1944, 21 July 1944, 28 August 1944, 1 September 1944, 15 September 1944, 30 October 1944, 14 November 1944, 13 December 1944, n.d. 1944, folder 1944 (Defense), box 8, Official File 63-Housing, FDR Papers;

Philip M. Klutznick, acting administrator to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 28 February 1944, 29 February 1944, folder 1944 (Defense), box 8, Official File 63-Housing, FDR Papers. The following requested housing for all agricultural production/processing workers: California, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, and Washington, and the territory of Alaska.

53. Hon. Richard W. Kleberg, Congressman, notes, 10 June 1941, folder 1941, box 1, Official File 146-Mexico, FDR Papers; Klutznick to Roosevelt, 28 February 1944, FDR Papers; Blandford to Roosevelt, 21 March 1944, 30 October 1944, FDR Papers. As early as 10 June 1941, the Texas Farm Bureau Federation and county agricultural associations requested the need for additional labor to harvest the state's cotton.

54. Klutznick to Roosevelt, 29 February 1944, FDR Papers; Blandford to Roosevelt, 30 October 1944, FDR Papers; "Nebraska Report: Farm Labor, World War II," box 11, Publicity, General and Other Correspondence and Related Records, 1943-1948, Records concerning the Farm Labor Program, Records of the U.S. Extension Service, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter PUB, NARG 33).

55. "Wyoming Annual Report, 1944," box 21, AR, NARG 33; "Wyoming Annual Report, Farm Labor Supervisor, 1945," box 32, AR, NARG 33. In the 1945 report, yearly total for "out-of-state" workers were recorded.

	<u>1943</u>	<u>1944</u>	<u>1945</u>
Mexican nationals	575	1440	990
Jamaicans	--	--	110
Japanese Evacuees	255	100	--
Oklahomans	366	356	350
Navajos	--	200	200
<u>POWs</u>	<u>784</u>	<u>1800</u>	<u>2900</u>
Totals	1980	3896	4550

56. "Report of the Minnesota Farm Labor Program, 1944," University Farm, St. Paul, Agricultural Extension Service, University of Minnesota, USDA, folder farm labor 1944, box 7 (Specialists Annual Reports), ALD6.1, University of Minnesota, Agricultural Extension Service Papers, 1914-1976/1977, University Archives, Walter Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis (hereafter Minnesota Papers); "Report of the Minnesota Farm Labor Program, 1945," University Farm, St. Paul, Agricultural Extension Service, University of Minnesota, USDA, folder farm labor 1945, box 8 (Specialists Annual Reports), Minnesota Papers.

57. "Mississippi 1944 Annual Narrative Report Emergency Farm Labor Program," box 15, AR, NARG 33.

58. "California Farm labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," AR, NARG 33. Work camps and defense housing had been constructed in Kern County, California during the war, in the communities of Arvin and Sierra Vista.

59. John B. Blandford Jr. to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 14 March 1945, folder 1945 (Defense), box 8, Official File 63-Housing, FDR Papers.



CHAPTER 6. "PITCH IN AND HELP":  
THE WLA CALLS WOMEN TO THE FARMS

The 1943 crop year became the proving ground for the Women's Land Army in the United States during World War II. After concerns regarding wages, insurance, and federal housing had been considered, the WLA began its main reason for being-- to recruit, train, and place women on the nation's farms as agricultural labor. However, because of the WLA's late start in 1943, due to administrative appointments and appropriations hearings, many states did not recruit their labor until late spring or summer 1943. Unless individual states had recruited their labor in the first months of 1943, programs such as the WLA did not place their workers early enough in the year to assist with farmers' plantings.<sup>1</sup> In the case of the WLA this delay doubly affected its organization. In areas of farmer prejudice against the presence of nonfarm women on farms, a delay in recruitment and placement resulted in further reluctance of some farmers to utilize women as agricultural labor in World War II. In most cases, however, the time table of federal recruitment did not overtly affect the status of the WLA. This can be seen by the number of women who participated each year. With initial recruitment set at 60,000 women, the WLA increased its expectation to 300,000 by July, and by December had counted more than 600,000 women who worked on farms during the year. To reach this point, however, it would be necessary for the WLA to survive its first year of operation with its small federal appropriation, a slow recruitment plan, as well as adequately meet the labor needs of farmers. The organization had been prepared to do just that.<sup>2</sup>

With the official organization of the WLA completed, appointment of its administrator and her staff made, distribution of appropriations concluded, worker service established, and state organizations in place, recruitment for

the first WLA crop season proceeded. Almost immediately, the Extension Service, along with the WLA administration and several state supervisors, realized that the 60,000 women to be recruited for the WLA would not accommodate the acute labor shortage experienced by the nation in 1943. Clearly, the WLA needed to adjust its demands for the country's women, and make a conscious effort to recruit any and all available farm, rural, town, and urban women for agricultural work. These recruitment efforts were directed and resulted from the work of WLA administrator, Florence L. Hall. Hall provided support for state recruitment programs through conferences, informational programs, letters, and national propaganda campaigns.

Florence Hall's experience as a senior home economist with the Extension Service prepared her well to recruit labor for the WLA, and she possessed the skill and expertise required to conduct the large recruitment efforts needed for the organization. She had the opportunity to assist farm women in their effort to provide for their families during the depression and war. In the early 1940s, Hall organized lectures and slide films that addressed farm women's activities. Hall's presentations depicted women in numerous farm jobs, such as preparing and processing food, constructing clothing, and performing wartime community activities. By describing women's efforts on the nation's farms, Hall advocated the position of women as workers to the public and federal government. The commitment made by farm women to assist the nation during the wartime crisis did much to further the cause for the creation of a land army in 1943. The main message from Hall and Extension Service demonstration agents was the ability of women to assist and adapt to the war situation.<sup>3</sup>

Hall was not the only USDA official to describe the action needed by farm women to assist the war effort prior to the creation of the WLA. To further enhance agricultural

production and bring a prosperity to American farmers, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Grover B. Hill also described "the farm women's part in war." In this speech given in October 1942, Hill proposed that farm women continue their work on farms, and assist in wartime production. Stating Secretary Wickard's praise for the labor that "rural women" provided, Hill echoed the sentiments. In 1942, agriculturalists had been asked to produce additional beans, corn, eggs, and milk to assist the nation and its allies. These increases in 1942 included production quotas at least 13 percent higher for beans, 8 percent for corn, and 7 percent for milk, as well as 472 million dozen more eggs, and 10 million more hogs over 1941. American farmers responded by meeting these production goals. Even so, farmers did so at tremendous cost. By acknowledging that 1942 production quotas placed many farmers at disadvantages in terms of absent labor, Hill recognized the work that "farm women and girls" provided to harvest crops. Women left the houses and entered the fields to assist in terms of planting, cultivation, and harvest. And by doing so, as stated by Hill, women helped the war situation and would continue to do so, as women worked in the fields.<sup>4</sup>

Even so, labor performed by farm women was not the same as work done by urban women. While the agricultural community readily accepted the presence of their own in the fields, several issues would become evident once the WLA began to place urban women in fields and on farms. For the most part, hesitation and reluctance would develop as many states did not easily accept urban women as agricultural labor. However, in regions where state and local initiatives had been in place prior to 1943, states quickly recruited and placed women with farmers in the spring of 1943.

States, with previous state- or local-run and/or private labor programs did not wait for official action from the federal government, but made plans to recruit their labor

force as early as possible. New York, anxious to continue its labor program begun in previous years, recruited workers for the crop season in the first months of 1943. With recruitment in January, February, and March, New York offered training courses for workers in April and May, with immediate placement on farms. This schedule allowed the state to adequately provide crop labor for its farmers in 1943. The presence of a viable labor source placed New York ahead of most states, in terms of recruitment and placement. In actions continued from previous years, New York farm labor had been recruited from New York City for work in the Hudson River valley, Long Island, and other northeastern states. New York used state media, schools, and personnel departments of private businesses to promote the WLA and recruit labor. Specialized training for the women took place on Long Island at the Farmingdale Institute of Agriculture. The institution's four-week course offered instruction in most farming practices, to prepare urban women for agricultural work. Training sessions at Farmingdale included films that demonstrated farm work, as well as sessions held by state staff that discussed agricultural work for the inexperienced workers. In New York, as with most other states, training courses had been conducted for those women filling year-round positions; thus, in this case, stipulations for completing the course required that women make a six-month commitment to agricultural work. By 1944 and 1945, the Farmingdale training course had been shortened to two weeks, and the commitment for farm work to three months. Even with these time commitments, the state organization still found it possible to adequately fill all labor requests.<sup>5</sup> The state's ability to fulfill its labor needs along with its training requirement of workers is an exception to most WLA programs during World War II. For the most part, states found it necessary to relax the time commitment women worked on farms, and in almost all cases, to remove the training program from its requirements.

Professional and full-time working women had only limited time to spend in agriculture, and therefore did not desire to fulfill their WLA service in a training session. Thus, by 1945, few women employed participated in classes.

New York did not provide the only example of early action in 1943. On the West Coast, states had also been effective in labor recruitment and placement for several years. In Oregon, state and local officials began planning for the 1943 crop season in December 1942. Confident with their own state programs, Oregon officials did not initially welcome any interference from Washington, D.C. and the federal government. However, by mid-year, these same state officials had aligned their programs with that of the federal government in an effort to adequately provide labor for the state's farmers.<sup>6</sup> In California, the use of women and high school students to pick the state's citrus crop in the years preceding 1943, clearly demonstrated efforts to harvest its crop with all available labor. As early as Winter 1941-1942 crop season, growers recognized the necessity of thousands of laborers for the state's truck-crop fields.<sup>7</sup> The success of these programs, as well as other early state-run labor initiatives brought about a smooth transition for the implementation of the federal Emergency Farm Labor Program. The continuation of these early initiatives demonstrated that it had not been necessary for some states to wait for federal funding; they recruited labor as needed, and for the most part, adapted their programs to that of the federal government.

These states are part of the exception, however, as most of America, without the benefit of previous state organization, waited for the official creation of and appropriations to the Women's Land Army before recruiting a female labor force. Distribution of the federal monies assured states that they had the means to recruit farm labor. Never viewed as a high USDA priority, the WLA received only \$150,000 of federal money and an initial requirement to

recruit 60,000 women for the 1943 crop year. Administrator Hall and her staff, uncertain of their success, expected to be flexible concerning the actual participation rates of women nationwide; "We are off to a good start . . . but these figures can be raised or lowered according to demand." Demand would dictate, and by July 1943, Hall requested additional labor sources that would add 300,000 women to the roles of short-time emergency work. All told, more than 600,000 women would answer the government's call to agricultural labor and joined the WLA in 1943; 250,000 of these were placed by county extension agents. As part of an uncounted figure, thousands of farm women continued to work on their own or a neighbor's farm. By mid-summer 1943 thousands of women picked beans in Maryland, fruit in Maine, peaches in Ohio, and strawberries in Connecticut; pitched hay in South Dakota, detasselled corn in Illinois, and cultivated onions and picked strawberries in Michigan.<sup>8</sup>

The goal of the national WLA program had been to enroll as many women as possible, extracting a commitment of one month of service to the organization. And while the WLA and other labor programs had found it possible to recruit more workers than originally estimated, it had not been as easy to collect the commitment of one month service from each farm worker. For the most part, urban participants worked only during their one- or two-week vacation from their full-time jobs, and had not the means or inclination to spend a summer "down on the farm." Not all states, however, allowed a loose interpretation of the time requirements; but instead some enforced the one-month enrollment period as strict criterion for membership within the WLA. In Michigan, the term of one month service guaranteed female workers an official place within the WLA, allowing them to wear the organization's insignia and uniform. Those who worked for shorter periods, while identified as members of the WLA, did not wear the insignia. For the 1944 and 1945 crop years, the one-month

enrollment period would be removed. Administrators had recognized that the required period of WLA employment in 1943 had not been realistic for working women. For them, a period of "1 or even 2 weeks of the well-earned vacation," would be appropriate in seasonal farm labor positions. With this relaxation of regulations, even more store clerks, telephone operators, clerks, secretaries, and other women joined the WLA ranks in 1944, working alongside housewives, students, and teachers.<sup>9</sup>

Women joined the WLA through the efforts of recruitment materials published and distributed by the WLA administration, Extension Service, and USDA. Further, federal and state recruitment materials had been distributed to media sources, county agents, and local civic boards; local governments maintained a list of farmers who needed labor assistance. For example, in Illinois, state and local agencies used the following methods during 1943 to guarantee an acceptable number of workers: educational promotional materials, including articles, pamphlets and reports; movie and filmstrips; and weekly publicity, both in the press and on the radio. Each of these methods stressed the importance of the WLA to the general public. Feature stories in the national and popular presses, as well as the presence of weekly radio programs, assisted in the promotion of the WLA.<sup>10</sup>

Recruitment of WLA workers resulted from activities of several organizations throughout the war. The Extension Service made the greatest effort to recruit workers for farm labor. The Extension Service issued several types of promotional materials in the effort to acquire enough labor for each crop year. Initially, the agency suggested that recruitment should be conducted "in cooperation with interested voluntary organizations." This statement by the Emergency Farm Labor Program in March 1943 continued,

Local recruitment campaigns will be conducted to obtain a

desired number of enrollees to work in specified farm areas. Suitable procedures will be outlined by the cooperative Extension Service of each State for reviewing applications and accepting those with necessary qualifications for year-round or crop season work as the case may be. Suggested basic qualifications for women accepted for membership in the Women's Land Army will be outlined nationally. Each State will be expected to modify this pattern to fit State needs and conditions. National publicity will help in developing interest and otherwise facilitating recruitment by local agencies.<sup>11</sup>

In this manner the Extension Service would promote its labor programs and actively recruit the necessary labor.

Extension Service recruitment efforts included writings by several individuals within the agency. For example, M. L. Wilson, at the request of Harold W. Herman, secretary for the national Junior Chamber of Commerce, expressed the government's position concerning recruitment and farm labor in "Mobilizing the Community for Emergency Farm Labor." First, the nation's defense position, food sources, and status of agriculture were important issues to Wilson's discussion, as well as individual participation and community action that provided assistance as needed to win the war. By playing on the nation's sense of patriotism and civic pride, Wilson expressed the position thus: "Everyone knows that America at war is not merely the Army or Navy or some other Government agency. . . . It is all of us together. It is every man, woman, and child. It is every community in the United States of America." His further comments related to the action that civic groups such as the Junior Chamber of Commerce, could accomplish by assisting in the war effort. "What can the leadership of the local community do to help farmers with their labor difficulties - to help the community assure enough food next fall and winter? Opportunities are many." The



"opportunities" in this instance referred to civic programs, like the Victory Gardens, and individual volunteerism, such as service within one of the federal farm labor programs.<sup>12</sup>

Concentrating on the issue of individual volunteerism and labor service, Wilson continued to discuss the advantages of wartime service. As a result of his and other recruitment action, "millions of men, women, boys, and girls" were employed as agricultural laborers to assist farmers during World War II. Prospective workers were, according to Wilson, acceptable "for straight-out farm work if they are strong and able to do hard work; for help in harvesting fruits and vegetables; and in canning and processing plants." From the basis of Wilson's writings, the Extension Service gathered its resources and began an extensive recruitment campaign for the several labor programs under its jurisdiction, including the WLA.<sup>13</sup>

Extension Service recruitment publications in 1943 needed to be effective to place thousands of workers in the nation's fields. However, few Extension Service publications reached the public in the first year of WLA operation, as the organization, instead, relied on the nation press to promote the program. In the brochures, however, the message urged women to join the WLA. By issuing circulars that described the labor and crop needs for the nation, the Extension Service illustrated the need of farms for labor from all parts of American society. With recruitment and placement of women occurring after the official organization of the WLA in April, by July the federal government realized the tremendous need for farm workers and stepped up efforts to recruit additional labor. More than the original 60,000 women requested would be required, and to improve recruitment, the Extension Service printed additional materials. In all, the message had been that any available women should join the WLA and assist in the nation's war effort.<sup>14</sup>

By the end of 1943, WLA promotional materials had become

introspective, as the national WLA administration and Extension Service reviewed the crop year and the successes achieved by the organization. Regional and state-by-state descriptions filled these writings as each reporting agency stated the triumphs accomplished. Further by printing comments from farmers and workers, the Extension Service illustrated the program's success among both farmers and workers. In this manner, these late 1943 publications assisted in recruitment efforts for the next year. Echoes of "She is the best 'hired man' I've ever had," were present in several states around the country, as farmers congratulated the WLA on a job well done. And for the women, they too enjoyed their time spent as agricultural laborers. An unidentified WLA worker reported to the national office, "Work on a farm has afforded me the most unique, educational, and thoroughly worth-while summer I have ever had." Many of the worker comments during the first year of operation reiterated the above comment, concluding with "Many of us are already talking about returning next year." These comments are just samples of the letters and statements received from farmers and workers by late 1943; even so, they exemplified the position of both groups as they prepared for the next year; "I do hope if the war does go on next year a lot of such groups as ours can be organized, so that others may have the grand experience . . . I did."<sup>15</sup>

As each year of the war passed, the WLA's and Extension Service's efforts to raise a work force became more intense. With the experience of the previous year, WLA administrations began planning for 1944 as soon as the 1943 crop season's harvest ended. With labor expectations and needs demanding more women than 1943, the Extension Service and WLA realized the necessity of a more forceful recruitment campaign and began planning immediately. Special attention was given to states in the Midwest and South that had resisted the use of women as farm labor in earlier years. Extension agents worked

with 4-H and home demonstration clubs to promote the WLA to farmers. Recruitment efforts expanded to reach larger and more diverse groups of women. A full-scale national media blitz was used to increase member participation, while also gathering nationwide acceptance of the WLA. To accomplish their efforts, Extension agents, state officials, and WLA supervisors coordinated activities and recruitment drives to better their venture. Extension Service and WLA administration planned new materials, pamphlets, and posters to use for recruitment. And although the basic message of the Extension Service brochure remained the same, the manner by which the information had been presented changed. The 1944 message of these publications became the women's need to "pitch in and help" the war effort.<sup>16</sup>

In the 1945 crop year the Extension Service called for any available time that women could spare to assist the nation's farmers. While the WLA administration still requested women for year-round and months-long stints, it also asked urban women to work during their vacations and on the weekends. One Extension Service pamphlet stated it this way: "*If you work on the swing shift perhaps you can organize a group to put in a few hours each day until the crop is in. Such an army of 'spare timers' often means the difference between food wasted and food saved.*" By appealing to all American women, the WLA administration hoped they could meet all requested agricultural labor needs in the country.<sup>17</sup>

State extension services also publicized the success of the WLA. In addition to federal brochures and information, states produced their own informative materials. Although not present in every state, many issued publications through their own extension offices. Colorado, Maine, Maryland, and Minnesota, along with a host of other states, combined federal extension and WLA recruitment efforts with those of their state. In the state publications, general information regarding the WLA was repeated from the federal materials. In

the Colorado circular readers learned how women were eligible for the WLA, how they applied and insured themselves, how and where they worked and lived, and how WLA workers acquired the organization's uniform. In the Minnesota publication similar questions had been addressed. However, in Minnesota the greater emphasis had been placed on the women's ability to do the work, rather than guidelines of WLA membership.<sup>18</sup>

For the most part, the Extension Service provided the majority of promotional materials used by the state WLA agencies. Each year of WLA operation, the Extension Service gathered brochures and other materials to form "recruitment kits" for state and county organizations.<sup>19</sup> In addition to promotional brochures, these kits also included examples of radio and media spots, presentations that could be adapted to any county, area, or state of the nation. Short spots that quickly described the farm labor situation, provided the local location for recruitment, and suggested that all women in "sound health" should consider their part in the war effort. Longer radio spots of three minutes included an interview with the county agent. Specifically, these scripted radio spots passed along information that described the number of laborers needed, location of work, and amount of time needed for the job. The following examples illustrate the sample spots included within recruitment kits.

The shortage of farm help is much more serious than it was last year.....and their success or failure in meeting their record food goals will be largely determined by whether or not they get help at the right time. So, you see.....even if you can give just a month of your time.....the job you can do will be truly vital.

If you're in sound health, think it over. You'll be trained right on the job, and paid prevailing farm figures. The work isn't easy, but judging by the experience of women who enrolled last year and are coming

back for more this year, you'll like it fine.

For further information about the Women's Land Army, I suggest you go or write to the county extension office . . . There's a place for you in the Women's Land Army this year--a place where you can help yourself, and your country, too.<sup>20</sup>

In the scripted radio spot that ran for three minutes, the radio announcer interviewed the county agent. In this case, more information is released to the public, including a description of WLA administration and structure of the organization.

ANNOUNCER: 750,000 of the emergency workers needed on farms this year will be women--many of whom enlist in the U.S. Crop Corps as members of the Women's Land Army. For an important message about the Women's Land Army, let's listen to \_\_\_\_\_, agricultural agent for \_\_\_\_\_ County. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_.

COUNTY AGENT: Thank you. Friends.....last year thousands of women from all walks of life--teachers, housewives, college girls and office workers--did emergency farm work on a part-time or full-time basis. Most of those women had never worked on a farm before. But, they were eager to learn. And when the story of last summer was written--well, they'd really done a job. America's farmers must have thought they were pretty good--because this year there's a need for 750,000 women.

Our special farm labor problems in \_\_\_\_\_ County this year include an urgent need for (insert special local needs here). The peak season for these crops can be expected around (approximate time). When that peak season arrives, the farm people in \_\_\_\_\_ County are going to face a major crisis.<sup>21</sup>

Similar announcements appeared in local and county newspapers, in an effort to bring large-scale participation to the agricultural war effort. Regardless of the media used, each spot or article played on the reader's conscience to support farm labor. Patriotism, benefits of good health, and "monetary rewards" from their labor became the focus used by the federal government in their efforts to raise the desired farm labor force for World War II.<sup>22</sup> Radio spots, along with educational materials published by the USDA and articles that appeared in national publications, greatly assisted in the effort by the WLA and other farm labor programs to recruit labor during the war. The success of these efforts can be determined through the labor increases seen each year after 1943.

The use of radio had been an effective tool for the recruitment of labor in each crop year. In addition to its use by state WLA supervisors and county agents to promote female agricultural labor, others also participated. In 1944, it became common for women agricultural workers to describe their current or past experiences in an effort to bring greater exposure, and thus numbers, to the WLA. For example, the dramatization of diaries assisted in promoting and popularizing the WLA. In Montana, the state WLA organization utilized several stories/diaries in one press (radio or print) release rather than concentrate on one individual. By doing so, the WLA presented a picture of an organization that accepted all labor and found an assortment of positions for the labor. Of these dramatizations Hall wrote of the, "vivid presentation of the hard work and satisfactions involved in the life of a woman farm worker." Of their presence on radio, Hall noted, "that radio is proving most effective in recruiting. Every WLA broadcast on the network brings to this office a brand new crop of inquiries."<sup>23</sup>

In New York, radio stations interviewed participants regarding their experience and enjoyment of the WLA. A

continual theme had been farm and physical safety for the worker; an important issue for the urban women who worked as farm labor, for the most part, inexperienced and unfamiliar. And, in 1945, in addition to the use of radio for recruitment, the WLA had been featured on national television. CBS and NBC each showed WLA workers in various job settings, as well as described the work completed by the participants and the success that they reached with the WLA program.<sup>24</sup> These televised promotions, along with the thousands of radio spots conducted during the war coordinated with Extension publications to provide an effective method to recruit the land army. However, even with radio and WLA brochures, the federal program administration realized its need to reach more people, thus, the use of additional media sources, such as the popular and national presses, assisted the WLA's efforts.

In addition to agency pamphlets and radio, the use of the national media to publicize the program worked well for the WLA. The agricultural journal, Country Gentleman, has been cited as the preferred publication for recruitment by the Extension Service; other journals, however, also performed this function. News articles enticed Americans to show their patriotic spirit and participate in the war effort as state organizations raised labor for the nation's farms.<sup>25</sup>

In these publications the federal government and Florence Hall discussed the labor situation within the country, and the needs faced for 1943. Part of these recruitment efforts described the type of person who should consider employment within the WLA. To be employed, women needed to be "eighteen years of age and have doctor's certificate as to their physical fitness for hard farm work. . . . Some will be placed on farms for summer season and do general farm work, living with farm family. Others will do special jobs in cultivation and harvesting . . . living at home or in camps." Throughout the tenure of the WLA, Hall wrote publicity articles that appeared in a variety of national magazines. By describing

the organization and its recruitment, training, and placement activities for each year, Hall advocated the use of women on the nation's farms.<sup>26</sup>

The use of the national press for recruitment purposes did not change after 1943, and the WLA continued to use these publications through the end of the war. With the example of 1943, and its timetable for recruitment and placement behind them, the WLA began recruitment efforts earlier for the 1944 crop year. By February, the federal WLA administration had initiated a national recruiting campaign. Media exposure in several national publications brought success to the WLA's efforts. Publications such as House and Garden, Independent Woman, Ladies Home Journal, and Victory carried stories regarding the WLA and states' efforts in March 1944. Engaging stories, along with several action photos, were included in each article. The main focus and goal for the media campaign had been to inform the public, while encouraging all available women to volunteer and join the WLA. These articles continued through 1945, as recruitment efforts remained strong during the course of the war. Articles portrayed the WLA in a positive light, as well as lauded its benefits for wartime harvests. For the most part, these writings showed that the presence of women in the nation's fields had become a viable part of American agriculture in the early 1940s, and a tradition that needed to be continued, at least, through the end of war.<sup>27</sup>

In most cases, the material contained within these articles had been factual and described the situation in a given locale, state, or region of the country. However, on occasion, authors published promotional pieces that emphasized the importance of the WLA and other labor programs. In July 1944, women's magazines published a guest editorial written by novelist Gladys Hasty Carroll regarding the women's responsibility and work in the WLA. The following is an excerpt from Carroll's editorial, entitled "Strength in the



Land."

A time comes each year, when, if we are wise, we take a vacation. What is a vacation for a woman who is well, who is tired from the year's routine, but whose conscience is as active as ever? It must be a change, an escape for the too-familiar; it should be passed as much as possible outdoors. But who can lie in hammocks this year, or sleep on beaches, or rock on porches, unless they are ill or very old? We want, need, must have our vacations, but we shall not find they have restored us unless these weeks are of value to others beside ourselves and have produced more than what we can carry back with us, within our own bodies, to next year's work.

The Women's Land Army is our opportunity. The city woman who spends her vacation this summer on an American farm will find a complete change, a true escape, and a mental and spiritual renewal. She will go back, when it is over, tanned, rested in the real sense, and with the invigorating knowledge that she has stored up meat and eggs and milk and fruit and vegetables for Americans at home and overseas, to see us all through the winter ahead. And not only this. She will have strengthened her own contact with the land she loves, by working in its earth and among its plants, and she will have come to know and share a way of life which is the foundation of our country, the record of its growth and history, the source of its literature. She will have been very close to our past; she will have seen the depth and strength of American roots; she will have put down roots of her own in a fertile place; she will see the future clearly and face it bravely.

She will be not only a more respected and wiser but a better American than when she went away.

It is so great and so personally rewarding an

opportunity for service that surely it will not be missed or sacrificed for any sort of vacation with less permanent results.<sup>28</sup>

Other efforts, in addition to media articles, would enhance recruitment programs while bringing available women to the WLA. In order to double the level of participation over the 1943 figure, the WLA did not rely solely on published efforts. Word-of-mouth among participants, and attitude adjustment by states, local organizations, and farmers also assisted in bringing the success of the WLA to the forefront of the wartime emergency farm labor program. In Ohio, administrators discovered that one of the best sources for recruitment was the women themselves. Ohio labor supervisors advised the national WLA administration of the success that state experienced when participants wrote or spoke to colleagues, friends, and relatives and influenced women to join the WLA.<sup>29</sup>

Recruiters in New York used the same methods for its recruitment efforts in 1944. Determined to provide better housing, varied meals, and more recreation for its women farm laborers, New York needed assistance in its effort to recruit an additional 10,000 women for a total of 30,000 women for the 1944 crop season. Recruiting in New York City, women assisted the efforts of the state organization. By holding a reunion of 1943 workers, WLA workers encouraged new women to join the organization as well as invited farmers to attend and hire women for the crop season. In this manner, Hudson River valley employers, such as actor Will Geer, hired WLA workers to harvest their crops. So, during the spring of 1944, women enrolled themselves, recruited friends and relatives, distributed promotional WLA materials at places of business, and addressed social and religious organizations, all in efforts to further the WLA's appeal for labor.<sup>30</sup> With its plans and efforts to improve working conditions, New York

would prove itself successful in its endeavors to recruit more women in 1944 than in the year previous. On the national level, such efforts provided additional labor to many state organizations, as women rushed to further their program and ensure its continuation into the next crop year.

For the 1944 crop season, Hall and the WLA administration had announced their intention of recruiting 800,000 women for the program. Following this announcement, letters and requests arrived from women throughout the country who requested recruitment information. As part of the 1944 labor force, the women would fill similar seasonal positions as in 1943, as well as year-round jobs on some farms. College faculty and students, as well as working women and homemakers contacted the WLA and "expressed a patriotic desire to perform war service by helping to harvest food." From Michigan a student wrote, "I would like to be one of the 800,000 women needed this summer to work on our Nation's farms . . . I would be able to work from July 15 through October." This college student's desire to work longer than one month illustrated that some women had been willing to work for more than one or two weeks; however, in all likelihood it proved difficult to locate an adequate number of women willing to do so. The student's further desire to join the WLA as a patriotic gesture is also recorded as she likened her activity to replacing the life lost by her fiance killed by war.<sup>31</sup>

The presence of this college student in the Michigan WLA program emphasized the hope that college and university students from around the nation would rush to join the WLA in 1944 and 1945. With summer vacation, faculty members, as well as students, would be free to participate in labor programs, and the WLA hoped to employ all those who had been eligible and willing. In some states, teachers had been asked to supervise VFV workers rather than perform actual farm work. With the arrival of the 1945 crop year, federal and state WLA administrators had planned to aggressively recruit students

and faculty for the summer crop season, but in many cases, these individuals approached the farm labor programs first. A letter from a California woman expressed her desire in the following way, "I am a college girl 21 years old who wants to work all summer on a farm."<sup>32</sup>

The desire expressed in these students' letters, as well as their sense of patriotic duty, is an attitude that can be found throughout the country in all years of operation. Women's participation in a "victory vacation" enabled American farmers to harvest their crops each year. The term, "victory vacation," had been used nationally to describe the service that Americans gave to farmers, however, in Michigan, agricultural service took a new connotation in 1944. Prior to mid-1944, Michigan officials referred to labor served as a "victory vacation". However, by July 1944, Michigan urged workers to participate, not in the "victory vacation," but in the "fruit furlough." In Michigan this term, "fruit furlough," clearly indicated the type of work to be completed.<sup>33</sup>

For the most part, urban women who joined the WLA did so solely to participate in the war effort. From University City, Missouri a woman wrote, "I have a knack of learning things like farming rather quickly. My fiance was shipped across, and I'm rather desperate for something to do."<sup>34</sup> And, even though recruitment materials and state supervisor reports and letters continued to use patriotism as the means to raise the greatest number of workers for the WLA, it had been just a means to an end. Beneath all the publicity, WLA officials advocated WLA employment as an enjoyable and worthwhile experience, something every young woman should try. In Michigan, Ruth Peck told the Consumers League, "Expect sore muscles and an aching back the first few days, but a grand feeling in the conscience department, following a vacation spent doing farm work . . . You will have a stimulating, healthful, experience in addition to making a high-ranking

contribution to the war effort." WLA literature and the national press furthered the attitude and ideal that women joined the labor program for the good of the country.<sup>35</sup>

Speeches given before groups offered WLA supervisors and other members of the local, state, and federal groups a way to properly present their program, as well as place the significance of the WLA within the farm labor program. In addition to themes of patriotism, discussions concerning the WLA, before groups, approached the topic of recruitment and female participation in agriculture from several angles. In the Middle West, WLA supervisors found that they needed to approach the use of women as farm labor from different viewpoints. In that region of the country it had been important to recognize the reluctance of farmers to use nonfarm women as labor, as well as to describe the benefits of this labor source. It became necessary to describe the "valuable contribution" that urban and town women would provide to agriculture, along with the tolerance needed by farm women in accepting this labor. Farm women, along with WLA participants, needed to make attitude adjustments as the nation adapted its available labor source to the jobs.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to printed and oral recruitment pieces, slide presentations had also been seen as effective in the national effort to persuade women to join the WLA. The WLA slide presentation entitled, "Help Wanted!" had been available to state offices from the federal WLA organization. With an informal script, this presentation portrayed women in all types of farm work, and, in Hall's opinion would enhance recruitment, participation, and enthusiasm for the WLA. "Help Wanted!" demonstrated a medium that became a successful tool by which to present the WLA nationally.<sup>37</sup>

In October 1944, an exhibit of the national WLA was on display in New York City. As part of the New York Herald Tribune Forum held at New York City's Waldorf Astoria hotel, from 16 to 18 October 1944, this exhibit consisted of a large

(forty inch by sixty inch) photograph of a WLA worker. Within the photograph were other pictures of workers from around the nation, each completing a specific task and farm job. The exhibit remained in New York until the federal WLA administration transported the display around the nation to use as a recruitment tool. Seen in the southern and western United States, this display assisted in the efforts faced by state supervisors to recruit an adequate supply of labor for each crop year. Other 1944 photograph collections also illustrated the work completed by WLA workers and assisted in future recruitment efforts. These collections were part of the "USDA's Extension Information Division"; photographs were available for state use, in any promotional effort made to recruit labor.<sup>38</sup> The use of alternate recruitment materials, other than printed literature, became important tools in areas where the WLA had not been wholly accepted.

Still, even with all the recruitment and promotional materials available, the WLA needed a strong federal administration to remain viable within the federal government. To achieve that, as well as remain strong for its organization, the WLA administrators needed to understand and know the activities of its program. Hall and her staff accomplished this by keeping in touch with state supervisors through letters and meetings. Thus, in addition to Extension publications, national press, and individual experience, Hall and the WLA administration utilized its own organizational structure to keep in touch and present information to state supervisors. To keep state and county administrators involved and informed, the WLA published a newsletter which distributed its news across the nation. Addressed to WLA supervisors or assistant supervisors, these "letters" discussed issues that had been current and important in the overall successful operation of the WLA.

In 1943, WLA newsletters discussed recruitment, placement, and training efforts in use across the nation.

While the general concepts of each of these activities remained the same, due to regional differences regarding agricultural production, farmer attitude, and labor needs situations differed from state-to-state.<sup>39</sup> States reported their successes, which allowed other areas to use similar methods to address concerns. In this way, state organizations passed information around the country as each WLA program worked to establish a viable and significant wartime measure. Successful recruitment efforts resulted in unprecedented numbers of women entering agricultural work. And, very quickly the question became, what to do with the thousands of women who volunteered for the WLA. For the most part, recruitment and placement procedures were the responsibility of each state organization; thereby assuring state action to be dependent on the labor program structure present.

The WLA recruitment process included, among propaganda materials, an effort by state, county, and local WLA and Extension officials to register all available and able women for service. By registering through local WLA or home demonstration agents, farm and nonfarm women became part of a community of women anxious to perform their wartime duties. Working alone or as part of a crew, those who joined the WLA in 1943 had been prepared to spend one month "down on the farm." Women who gave more than one month service to the organization had been placed in different positions. With the flexibility of a few women who worked for the entire crop season or year, state WLA officials were able to fill labor requests from farmers who needed more than short-gap emergency service workers. Thus, placement followed closely behind recruitment efforts as labor program staff worked closely with local officials to place women as adequately as possible.<sup>40</sup>

In terms of worker placement, most WLA laborers toiled in seasonal positions. As seasonal or harvest labor, women lived at home, in work camps, or with farm families. Transportation to and from the field or farm had been dependent on the

housing situation. WLA workers used the transportation service available to them, which included car-pools, school buses, or farm trucks. In communities where many workers participated farmers instituted car pools or utilized out-of-session school buses to bring their laborers from urban to rural areas. Other farmers transported their WLA workers back and forth with trucks. Still, in some cases, WLA workers used public transportation to and from their site of work. By doing so, this expense would have become a necessary drain on already low wages. In terms of expense, WLA volunteers who lived with the farm family or stayed in their own homes and did not require transportation to and from the farm would have been preferred over non-local women. The necessary expense of transportation, paid either by the worker or farmer put additional strain on money received for hours worked or from profit.<sup>41</sup>

These experiences regarding recruitment and placement became part of the first year of WLA operation, and for the most part were related through the agency's newsletters. These actions along with stories of the women's accomplishments filled the 1943 newsletters. But, without previous experiences to draw from, the 1943 WLA newsletters relayed only common information to states, while in latter years, the newsletters drew on previous incidents to determine a new or different course of action. Specific examples reported by women workers and farmers were recounted and discussed. To that end, several issues were addressed before the start of the 1944 crop year, mostly concerns and problems that had been encountered during the previous season, and needed to be alleviated for 1944. To accomplish this, state WLA supervisors met throughout November and December 1943 to discuss the successes and failures of the first WLA crop year. Four regional conferences were attended by forty-one women from thirty-seven states. Topics under review included length of service, physical examinations, and age limits for each



worker. Additionally, these women described the situations that developed in each state, and the reaction to the WLA.<sup>42</sup>

For the most part, problems involved the recruitment of labor and farmer attitude. In terms of recruitment, in 1943, WLA state and county supervisors had found it difficult to recruit an acceptable number of women to work on a year-round basis. Because of this, dairy and poultry operations had not received their required and necessary labor. In addition to the organization's inability to adequately recruit an acceptable number of year-round workers, the WLA also made concessions regarding their inability to guarantee that a worker would commit to one-month of service. Thus, in 1944 the national WLA administration decided that any woman, farm or nonfarm, who made a contribution to agriculture during the course of the war, for any length of time, would be considered a member of the WLA. To distribute this message across the country, Hall placed the announcement of shortened labor service in the agency newsletter, thus effectively broadcasting the information to all state and county WLA administrators. In some cases, such as Michigan, where women needed to work one month to be considered a member of the WLA, this new policy regarding length of service affected how states recorded their yearly participation.<sup>43</sup>

Other changes within the organization included the abandonment of a physical exam for every seasonal worker. In 1943, a physical exam had been required of every worker. Because of the nature of farm work, good health was desirable of every WLA laborer. Thus, to assure their condition women provided farmers with a "doctor's certificate of physical fitness and freedom from communicable disease." However, due to the nature of seasonal, short-time, emergency work, many women had neither the time nor the need to receive an exam for the few days or weeks they would work in 1944 or 1945. Those employed in year-round positions, however, continued to receive physical examinations upon hire. Another issue

regarded the age of WLA workers. The minimum age established for a member of the WLA had been eighteen years. However, in some cases, women aged seventeen were accepted as WLA workers, decided on a case-by-case basis. The same principle applied to women aged eighteen years who wished to join the VFV rather than the WLA. These issues reflected changes made in WLA recruitment procedures for 1944. In terms of farmer attitude, several reasons can be attributed to their biases. For the most part, some farmers had difficulty visualizing the use of women as full-time farm laborers.<sup>44</sup> These farmers' reactions to the use of women as labor stemmed from their distrust of and presumed unreliability of urban women.

In most issues of the WLA newsletter, Hall addressed recruitment efforts. Descriptions of successful state practices demonstrated the WLA's action to acquire the necessary and needed labor. Recruitment, however, did not occupy the organization's complete attention, and by early 1944, the newsletters illustrated other issues as well. Hall and her staff along with the USDA and federal government addressed the need and expectation of farmers to meet production quotas. Additionally, the WLA questioned its ability to raise an adequate number of workers for farmer demand during each crop year. Connected to the WLA's efforts to recruit an acceptable labor force, governmental officials worried, that farmers would restrict their production to meet an assumed inadequate labor supply. Thus, the government feared that 1944 crop yields would "fall short" of government goals, regardless of the number of workers recruited for farm labor. It became the aim of the WLA, and other wartime farm-labor programs, to assure and prepare farmers that an acceptable and adequate labor force would exist, so that the country's agriculturalists did not limit production, but worked to exceed production expectations.<sup>45</sup>

The production of fruit in the nation exemplified American farmers' ability to exceed production quotas during

the war, and the ability of the WLA to provide the necessary labor for harvests. The national experience and placement of women on fruit farms and in orchards had proven to be advantageous for 1943 and would be for the following years. Hall wrote, "Our WLA experience has proved that women do especially good work in picking, packing, and grading fruit, so their work will count in this large fruit harvest." In 1944, several states recorded record fruit harvests. In terms of overall production, the crops of several fruits, including apples, cherries, peaches, had been expected to have been 20 percent larger than the previous year's crop, thus more labor would be necessary in 1944. This assumption would be repeated in 1945, as fruit-producing states demanded more labor than previous years. Subsequently, state WLA organizers and recruiters actively campaigned to encourage urban and town women to join the WLA's fruit furlough and participate in the nation's war effort.<sup>46</sup>

By the 1945 crop year federal and state WLA administrations had discovered several programs within the organizational structure that worked effectively. For the most part, many of the policies put into action had been effective. Plans for recruitment, placement, and work completed had been discussed and those that had been the most successful were continued in 1945. Programs such as car pools, friend-to-friend recruiting, and lunch wagons returned in 1945. Additional plans, such as the presence of women's organizations as work crews and recruitment of women to cook for these crews, brought further success to the program. States reported their successes to the federal WLA administration, who in turn, addressed these issues in their monthly newsletters. By this exposure, states would benefit from the success reached in a few states.<sup>47</sup>

Throughout each crop year, the WLA newsletters presented information that described the labor that women as members of the WLA had completed. Tractor-training courses and other

training courses offered by land-grant colleges and extension agents, cultivation and harvest of truck-farm crops, and types of seasonal positions were described in each newsletter. The women who participated in the WLA clearly out-performed any expectation assumed by farmers at the time. The success of the WLA during its operation is evident from the information and plans found in each monthly issue of the WLA newsletter. Still, even as each crop year progressed, Hall and the federal administration continued their efforts to recruit women for participation by reminding the state supervisors of the necessity of female workers, as well as continually sending recruitment materials to state offices.<sup>48</sup>

Throughout the WLA newsletters other issues regarding women farm workers had also been discussed. Not only had the federal government been interested in worker recruitment and experience, but the WLA had followed other concerns as well. The success of the WLA can be seen with the 1945 crop year. On the whole, the need for farm laborers had been greater in 1945 than earlier years. Florence Hall reported that the number of women engaged in farm work had increased more than 70 percent since 1940. Included within this figure had been the millions of farm, rural, and urban women who left their homes and positions to join the ranks within the country's fields. In addition, for each month that the women of the WLA worked on farms, their numbers in comparison to the previous year, were significantly higher. In some locations in the early months of 1945, the number of women participating in farm labor increased more than 80 percent for the same period in the previous year; the national average, however, had been recorded at about 40 percent. Each year of operation for the WLA led to higher and higher numbers of women participating in the government program. As members of a worthwhile organization, WLA workers recognized their value to the war effort. In the words of one recruit, "No matter how heavy the hay we pitched, how our backs ached from weeding, or how

stubborn the team we were driving, we always had the secret joy that we were helping the war effort."<sup>49</sup>

None of these program successes would have been possible without the administrative structure established by the federal government. The appointment of Florence L. Hall as administrator, as well as the establishment of state organizations assisted in country-wide efforts to recruit female labor for farm work. The national WLA administration created recruiting guidelines from which to operate, however, for the most part, state and local WLA and Extension officials worked independently to place as many women as possible on farms. Although the federal WLA administration provided promotional materials and was quoted extensively in newspapers, it was the work of the state and local officials who filled labor requests and recruited women. By organizing recruitment drives and training programs, local WLA and extension agents successfully met their area's labor needs. Recognition by the general public of the WLA had been important for the success of the organization, thus, promotional literature, public forums, speeches, media exposure, and testimony of the women themselves all assisted in the national effort to raise a labor force in the period from 1943 to 1945. The work accomplished by the labor officials, as well as the women themselves, led to the establishment of the premier labor organization during World War II--the Women's Land Army.

## Notes

1. "Organization and Administration, Extension Farm Labor Program: A Chronicle of the Administrative and Organization Problems Connected with the Establishment and Operation of the Emergency Farm Labor Program, April 1943 to December 1947," USDA, December 1947, 18, box 2, Recruiting and Placement Division, Divisional Histories and other Records Summarizing the Program, 1943-1948, Records concerning the Farm Labor Program, Records of the U.S. Extension Service, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter DH, NARG 33).

2. Women's Land Army: Extension Farm Labor Program, 1943-1944-1945 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1945), 1. The Extension Service placed 250,000 women farm workers of farms in the country between April 29 and November 1, 1943. Most worked for less than one month, 50,000 worked for more than one month, and 6,000 worked in year-round jobs; Women Farm Workers: The 1943 Story of the Women's Land Army of the U.S. Crop Corps, War Food Administration, Extension Service, USDA, October 1943.

3. Florence L. Hall, "Farm Women in Wartime," Lecture for Slidefilm no. 629, June 1942, Box A-1617, M. L. Wilson, director, Records of the Extension Service, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter NARG 287).

4. Grover B. Hill, "The Farm Woman's Part in War," speech, October 1942, Box A-380, NARG 287.

5. House, Committee on Appropriations, Farm Labor Program, 1943: Hearings before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943, 208-09; "Farm Placements, New York State, 1945," box 27, Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports of Extension and Other Workers under the Farm Labor Program, 1943-1947, Records of the U.S. Extension Service, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter AR, NARG 33).

6. The Washington Post, 21 March 1943.

7. Christian Science Monitor, 9 January 1943.

8. Wayne D. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program, 1943-1947," Agricultural Monograph No. 13, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, USDA, September 1951, 138; House, Farm Labor Program, 1943, 63, 208-209; New York Times, 5 July 1943, 17 May 1944; "Women Prove Helpful in Meeting Nation's Food Crisis," Labor Information Bulletin 11 (March 1944): 3; "800,000 Women Farm Workers Needed This Year," Labor Information Bulletin 11 (March 1944): 5. In

1943, 3.5 million seasonal workers had been requested to work on the nation's farms. And while the Extension Service indicated that 600,000 women participated in the WLA in 1943, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics estimated that 3 million women worked as farm laborers in June 1943.

9. Women Farm Workers, 3-4; Florence L. Hall to Women's Land Army Supervisor, 30 April 1945, 15 May 1945, Extension Service, USDA, Women's Land Army Records, USDA, History Collection, Special Collections, National Agricultural Library, Beltsville, Maryland (hereafter WLA Records); "Michigan, Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1943," box 5, AR, NARG 33.

10. "Information Workshop Report, November 11-12-13, 1943," Extension Service, USDA, box 7, DH, NARG 33.

11. "Women's Land Army Workshop Report, November 11-12-13, 1943," Extension Service, USDA, box 7, DH, NARG 33; "Suggested Procedure to be Followed in the Development of a Women's Land Army Program for the Use of Nonfarm Women on Farms for Wartime Food Production," Emergency Farm Labor Program, Extension Service, USDA, March 1943, box 7, DH, NARG 33.

12. Lester A. Schlup to Harold W. Herman, 17 March 1943, M. L. Wilson, "Mobilizing the Community for Emergency Farm Labor," 3, box 7, DH, NARG 33.

13. Wilson, "Mobilizing the Community for Emergency Farm Labor," DH, NARG 33.

14. "Farm Labor Needs," Circular No. 406, Extension Service, USDA, April 1943; Women's Land Army of the U.S. Crop Corps Needs Workers, Extension Service, USDA, July 1943.

15. Women Farm Workers; "Women Prove their Mettle," Extension Service Review, November 1943, 164-65.

16. Pitch In and Help: The Women's Land Army Calls 800,000 Women to the Farm in 1944, Extension Service, USDA, May 1944; Florence L. Hall to Women's Land Army Supervisor, 9 February 1944, 4 August 1944, Extension Service, USDA, WLA Records. As the end result of the 1944 recruitment campaign, the WLA wanted to place twice as many women on nation's farms than had been in the previous crop year. Thus, extra efforts would be made by agents in the Midwest and South to enhance recruitment efforts for the WLA in these regions.

17. A Call to Farms for Women of America, Extension Service, USDA, March 1945.

18. Women's Land Army: Extension Farm Labor Program, 1943, 1944, 1945, 10; "Here's your Girl . . . Mr. and Mrs. Farmer," 1944 Food Production Program Series, Agricultural Extension Service, University of Minnesota, April 1944, box 10, Publicity, General and other Correspondence and Related Records, 1943-1948, Records Concerning the Farm Labor Program, Records of the U.S. Extension Service, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter PUB, NARG 33); "Join the Women's Land Army of the U.S. Crop Corps," Circular No. 1, Extension Service, Colorado State College, April 1944, box 9, PUB, NARG 33; T. L. Wheeler, "Ohio's Farm Labor Program in 1944," Agricultural Extension Service, Ohio State University, box 11, PUB, NARG 33.

19. Sound the Call to Farms!: Helps for Recruiting Local Farm Workers in 1945, War Advising Council, USDA, n.d.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. "Montana Annual Report Extension Farm Labor Program, 1943," box 6, AR, NARG 33; Florence L. Hall to Women's Land Army Supervisor, 17 June 1944, Extension Service, USDA, WLA Records.

24. Florence L. Hall to Women's Land Army Supervisor, 21 March 1945, Extension Service, USDA, WLA Records; Hall to WLA Supervisor, 30 April 1945, WLA Records.

25. Numerous articles concerning the WLA and other labor programs appeared in Country Gentleman in the years prior to the WLA and then during its first year of operation. A sample includes: "City Girl Answers Call to Farms," Country Gentleman 113 (June 1943): 73; Ruth Hogeland, "The Girl Who Stayed," Country Gentleman 113 (June 1943): 72; Ruth Hogeland, "They Don't Know How to Say Quit!," Country Gentleman 113 (November 1943): 74, 76; "New Hands for Our Farms," Country Gentleman 112 (September 1942): 8-9, 43-44, 77-78, 80; Jean Patterson, "Hayseed in My Hair," Country Gentleman 113 (September 1943): 77, 84-85. Other early articles that included WLA promotional and propaganda information can be found in the following agricultural publications: Farm Journal, Hoard's Dairyman, Ice Cream Review, Milk Plant Monthly, The Nation's Agriculture, Successful Farming, and Wallaces' Farmer. Popular magazines also carried stories that were promotional in nature, and were effective in exciting the population to volunteer for farm labor; These include: Coronet, House and Garden, Independent Woman, Liberty, McCall's, Reader's Digest, Victory, and Woman's Home Companion. Finally, newspapers, such as the



Christian Science Monitor, New York Times, Washington Post, and many local papers rounded out the work of the national presses in rousting public opinion and patriotism in joining a farm labor program.

26. L. A. Schlup, publicity statement to Reader's Digest, Extension Service, USDA, 19 March 1943, box 7, PUB, NARG 33; Ralph M. Fulghum, statement concerning article to be sent to Coronet, 19 May 1943, box 7, PUB, NARG 33; Florence L. Hall, "The Nation's Crops Need You," Independent Woman 24 (July 1945): 187, 203; Florence L. Hall, "They're Getting in the Crops," Independent Woman 22 (July 1943): 194-96, 216; Florence L. Hall, "Yes, Town Women Can Help," Farm Journal and Farmer's Wife, August 1944, 33.

27. Florence L. Hall to Assistant State Supervisor, Women's Land Army, 15 April 1944, Extension Service, USDA, WLA Records; Florence L. Hall to Women's Land Army Supervisor, 10 May 1944, 20 May 1944, 27 May 1944, 12 July 1944, 7 June 1945, 2 July 1945, 17 July 1945, Extension Service, USDA, WLA Records; Hall to WLA Supervisor, 9 February 1944, 17 June 1944, 4 August 1944, 30 April 1945, 15 May 1945, WLA Records. According to the WLA newsletters, publications that included 1994 and 1945 articles regarding the WLA included: Christian Science Monitor, Collier's, Country Gentleman, Extension Service Review, The Family Circle, The Farmers' Daughters, Farms and Women, Harper's Bazaar, Mademoiselle, McCall's, National Magazine of Home Economics Student Clubs, Nation's Business, New Yorker, Saturday Evening Post, Southern Agriculturalist, and Summer on the Farm.

28. Hall to WLA Supervisor, 12 July 1944, WLA Records.

29. Hall to WLA Supervisor, 30 April 1945, WLA Records.

30. New York Times, 11 March 1944, 1 and 29 May 1944; Judith Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, "'To the Rescue of the Crops': The Women's Land Army during World War II," Prologue 25 (Winter 1993): 355. New York had noticed an initial reluctance for women to step forward, and thus, began an aggressive recruiting campaign. Fewer recruits in May 1944 had been blamed on the situation within agriculture at that time; women did not realize that harvests required more labor than planting or cultivation. By harvest time, the need for the additional 10,000 workers would be apparent. With the one-month work requirement removed, women had been able to work for two-week periods. In 1945, New York state would request as many as 50,000 women for work within the state. New York Times, 11 April 1945.

31. Florence L. Hall to Assistant State Supervisor, Women's Land Army, 25 March 1944, Extension Service, USDA, WLA Records; New York Times, 17 May 1944.

32. Further examples of university and college faculty and students involved in the WLA can be seen in WLA newsletters from the following dates: 25 March 1944, 27 May 1944, 17 January 1945, and 30 April 1945, WLA Records.

33. Hall to WLA Supervisor, 12 July 1944, WLA Records.

34. New York Times, 17 May 1944.

35. Florence L. Hall to Women's Land Army Supervisor, 27 April 1944, Extension Service, USDA, WLA Records.

36. Hall to WLA Supervisor, 20 May 1944, WLA Records.

37. Ibid.

38. Florence L. Hall to Women's Land Army Supervisor, 12 October 1944, 19 December 1944, Extension Service, USDA, WLA Records; Hall to WLA Supervisor, 20 May 1944, 15 May 1945, WLA Records. The photographs within the collections had been of real women working on farms, rather than posed publicity shots of models.

39. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," 143.

40. Ibid., 142-45.

41. Ibid., 145.

42. Florence L. Hall to Women's Land Army Supervisor, 17 December 1943, Extension Service, USDA, WLA Records.

43. Ibid.; Florence L. Hall to Women's Land Army Supervisor, 27 September 1943, Extension Service, USDA, WLA Records.

44. Hall to WLA Supervisor, 17 December 1943, WLA Records; "Women Prove Helpful in Meeting Nation's Food Crisis," 4.

45. Hall to Assistant State Supervisor, WLA, 25 March 1944, WLA Records.

46. Hall to WLA Supervisor, 12 July 1944, 7 June 1945, WLA Records; New York Times, 18 July 1944.

47. Hall to WLA Supervisor, 30 April 1945, 15 May 1945, WLA Records. The following states are attributed with the examples given in this paragraph: California, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ohio, and Oregon.

48. Florence L. Hall to Assistant State Supervisor, Women's Land Army, 4 April 1944, Extension Service, USDA, WLA Records; Hall to WLA Supervisor, 21 March 1945, 30 April 1945, 15 May 1945, 17 July 1945, WLA Records.

49. Florence L. Hall to Women's Land Army Supervisor, 14 February 1945, Extension Service, USDA, WLA Records; Hall to WLA Supervisor, 30 April 1945, 7 June 1945, 17 July 1945; New York Times, 10 January 1945; Litoff and Smith, "'To the Rescue of the Crops,'" 358. Percentage increases of female farm labor had been given to Hall and the WLA administration from the BAE, Bureau of the Census, and Department of Commerce. The increase can be attributed to the work accomplished by the WLA and their efforts to aggressively recruit labor for agricultural work during the war.

CHAPTER 7. REGULAR FARM GIRLS: WOMEN IN SERVICE  
ON THE COASTS

The official organization of the WLA established the required guidelines and structures needed to administer a successful work program. With appropriation hearings, creation of state WLA administrations, and recruitment procedures initiated, each state began its effort to assist its farmers and provide the necessary labor in the period from 1943 to 1945. However, even with these structures, it had not been possible for anyone, WLA administration included, to predict the success of the labor program or the reaction of states and their residents to such a program. Thus, for the WLA to be successful after its creation, the federal government and the WLA needed to place great faith in the ability of the states to establish an effective program. And, for the most part, states created successful programs. In locales that boasted state-run labor initiatives prior to the WLA, the triumph of the WLA had been assured, while the rest of the nation needed time to adjust to the presence of women in its fields and on its farms. The WLA state programs that grew from earlier state initiatives had several advantages over programs that had been created at the time of the Emergency Farm Labor Program legislation. For the most part, advantages included a precedent for using women in fields, a working model for a successful labor program in place, and acceptance by farmers of the women's presence in their fields and on their farms.

All in all, the states that had early state- or private-run agricultural worker initiatives had fared well in the national effort to recruit labor during World War II. Eastern and western states such as California, New York, Oregon, and Vermont established models for other states, and demonstrated a smooth transition from private or state organization to federal control. Women farm workers continued in the jobs

that they had done for the previous years, the federal organization of labor did little to change job responsibilities. For the most part, as members of the WLA, with the exception of those employed year-round on dairy or poultry operations, women worked in seasonal farm labor positions. And differences in the farm experiences of the WLA participants were dependent on location.

Regardless of the jobs given to women and the region in which they lived and worked, female agricultural workers who joined the WLA spent their wartime service as members of a special organization. As part of wartime defense efforts, the WLA created a labor program that became one of the largest women's groups of the war. With more than three million women enrolled, the WLA stretched across the nation and assisted in producing the products necessary for victory.

In the northeastern United States the early initiatives in New England and New York had set the precedent for other state-labor programs, as well as serving as the model for the WLA and federal labor programs in 1943. In the tri-state area of Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York, farmers readily employed women from New York City, and other urban locales for truck-crop field work. The New York Times published numerous stories to aid the placement of women for farms on Long Island and in upstate New York and New Jersey. In particular, farmers sought experienced non-Caucasian women as laborers. Not representing the entire New York labor force, other WLA members included thousands of college women, homemakers, and working women. In New York state, these women worked on dairy and poultry farms, planted and cultivated flowers, cultivated vegetable fields, and picked fruits and vegetables. For the most part, a large portion of those employed on New York's farms were farm women, however, 58 percent of the urban women who participated in the WLA in 1945 had been students, the remaining portion, professional and working women. In New Jersey, urban women employed as seasonal labor, worked on

fruit and vegetable farms, especially during the harvest period that lasted from mid-July to early-September.<sup>1</sup>

In New England, several states continued programs that had been in existence earlier. Vermont, Maine, and Connecticut had established state- and/or private-run organizations as early as 1941; the emergence of the federal labor program did little to change these organizations, except to alter the source of funding and agency control. The presence of women in fields before 1943 laid the ground work for the success of the WLA in these states. Although the fulfillment of each state's labor demands were met, the placement of enough WLA workers in year-round positions, at times, proved difficult. This difficulty did not hamper the overall recruitment of women as the number of those who worked on farms in year-round positions had been relatively small.<sup>2</sup>

Northeastern dairy and poultry farmers, who had year-round labor positions, readily requested female farm workers for the jobs. In the words of one dairy farmer, women had the ability "to operate all the dairy machinery and their conscientiousness in following instructions exactly" freed the farmer from much responsibility and work. Confident of the women's ability, New England dairy farmers left much of the day-to-day business to the WLA workers. New England farmers discovered that women workers were gentler with the cows than male employees, resulting in more milk and greater production. Poultry farms also required year-round labor. On these operations WLA workers completed all jobs, including, collection and grading of eggs, packing the eggs for sale, and dressing birds for market. In both cases, dairy and poultry operations did not have a harvest season, but required labor for every day of the year.<sup>3</sup>

Even with women being requested for year-round work, by far, the greatest call for labor in New England had been for seasonal work. Cultivation and harvest of seasonal crops filled the majority of requests for this region, as

recruitment began in the spring of 1943. In Connecticut, women worked on tobacco farms, harvesting and processing tobacco leaves for cigarette and cigar production.<sup>4</sup> In Maine, agricultural workers dug potatoes and picked fruits and vegetables during World War II. The successful potato and other crop harvests in Maine demonstrated a firmly entrenched WLA program within the state. Under the supervision of Katherine L. Potter, the WEFS (Women's Emergency Farm Service) of Maine, as part of the WLA, worked on all types of farms. Committed for two-weeks or one-year of service, women worked on "dairy, poultry, truck gardening, fruit production, [and] general" farms. Each prospective farm laborer had to provide references for employment and certification of good health. At which point, hired workers were "placed on individual farms or in camps" and expected to provide farmers with a "maximum of efficiency." WEFS participants had left their full-time positions as artists, homemakers, professional/business women, students, and teachers to participate in the war effort. The successful placement of women in Maine the first year of WLA operation assured the state's farmers that the WEFS/WLA would be available for the next crop year as well.<sup>5</sup>

Maine discovered, as had other states, that a successful recruitment effort did not necessarily provide all needed labor for the state's farms. The farm labor program in Maine recruited urban and rural women from the state, as well as out-of-state workers to assist with crop harvests. Maine also imported labor from other nations for its harvest season. In 1944, women arrived from California, Florida, and Kentucky to participate in the work program for the year. These women assisted in the potato and apple harvests, two crops that had been produced in abundance during 1944. In terms of the apple harvest, it had been difficult to recruit enough local labor; thus, a work camp had been established in Kennebec County. Because of the state's and county's inability to raise enough local labor, they looked farther afield, in this case out of

the state. These women arrived at their jobs via Portland, where they waited for their agricultural postings, and then in most cases were sent to individual farms or labor camps. In some outlying locales it had become necessary to establish labor camps that housed interstate and international workers.<sup>6</sup>

While, the necessary labor had been present in Maine during the first year of WLA operation, subsequent crop years worried WLA planners. State organizations had been concerned regarding their ability to maintain high levels of recruitment each year. This concern transferred to farmers as they prepared for subsequent crop years. Fearful of an absence of suitable laborers in the later years of war, some farmers maximized their efforts and decreased their annual production to avoid the use of nonfarm women as agricultural laborers. To guard against this action by the nation's farmers, Hall and others within the WLA and USDA administrations worked to project an image of competence while requesting that farmers continue to utilize women as workers. To convey her message Hall used the 25 March 1944 issue of the WLA newsletter to address this issue. By informing state and local WLA and Extension officials, Hall and the organization assured farmers that recruitment efforts would meet all national demands for labor. Thus, state WLA organizations continued their high levels of recruitment, and continuously operated their labor programs. Unfortunately in Maine, renewed and vigorous efforts toward 1944 recruitment only brought a labor surplus to the state. The year's harvests had not been as large as expected, due to bad weather and late killing frosts. As a result, surplus labor performed agricultural jobs other than harvesting apples and potatoes. Workers assisted farmers with haying and other seasonal farm jobs, while the women also enlisted as full-time employment on dairy and poultry farms, in food and dairy processing plants, as vegetable and fruit salespeople and delivery personnel, and as work-camp cooks.<sup>7</sup>

In 1945, Maine continued a successful program that had



been present in earlier years. Efforts taken by some Maine farmers in 1944 to reduce production and avoid the assistance of female farm labor did not adversely affect the labor program in the state. Women continued to join the harvest efforts to effectively bring in all the state's produce and crops.<sup>8</sup> Other New England states experienced similar success with their WLA programs as well. In general, women worked as harvest labor for specialized-agriculture operations, truck-crop farms, and fruit orchards, while some worked full-time on dairy and poultry farms. Still, a few women had been employed as herd testers for state dairy associations. Regardless of the circumstance, the employment of women as farm workers increased over time, as farmers replaced their initial resistance and reluctance with tolerance and acceptance of the WLA as agricultural laborers.

In Vermont, the use of the WLA had been met with success due to the presence of the Volunteer Land Corps under the direction of Dorothy Thompson prior to 1943. Women worked full-time on dairy and poultry farms, as well as picked apples and other seasonal crops throughout the state. The state reported that many of their summer workers returned to Vermont for subsequent summers to continue their farm work; one worker wrote "I haven't any complaints and only wish we could all come back next year." Still, other laborers changed their course of study to include agriculture, including several out-of-state workers. "One Brooklyn College student has returned for the second season and plans to do post-graduate study in agriculture at Cornell." Additionally, Vermont WLA members returned home after their farm experience and successfully recruited workers for the next crop year: "One Women's Land Army member worked for one year on a Vermont farm. She went back home to Stamford, Connecticut and recruited four girls and four boys for Vermont farms." Farmers, as well, were impressed with the work accomplished by the women who joined the WLA in Vermont. In several instances, unidentified

Vermont farmers continually requested women for work each summer, stating their ability to successfully handle the jobs given to them.<sup>9</sup> The Vermont WLA, like its northern New England neighbors, continued a long tradition of organized agricultural programs within the state, and at the behest of the state farmers established a successful labor policy for World War II.

In Massachusetts, WLA workers were employed on vegetable, tobacco, and fruit operations as seasonal labor, as well as some full-time positions on dairy farms. Since, the main fruit industry for the state was cranberries, women joined other sources of labor in many of the bogs on Cape Cod. Another seasonal crop that employed large numbers of women was tobacco. Like Connecticut, Massachusetts used emergency farm labor for its tobacco operations. But, while Connecticut hired high school students for its tobacco production, Massachusetts preferred the work of women and college students. The Consolidated Cigar Company utilized high school students in 1943, and although their labor was acceptable, the company announced that it would "hire college girls next year, instead of girls of the high school age." The U.S. Women's Bureau reported that a group of Smith College workers worked well on farms. The administrator recognized the ability of older women to "outwork" the younger girls; "It is not probable . . . that a group of urban girls 14 to 16 could possibly have done the work that this whole group did. What has been seen of younger groups working indicates that, except for special individuals, the younger girls are not physically up to nearly the same amount of work as the girls 18 to 21 or over, nor should they work such long hours."<sup>10</sup>

If Massachusetts farmers had any reservations concerning the use of women as farm labor at the beginning of the 1943 season, that attitude had been changed by the end of the harvest. A Massachusetts dairy farmer reported that "his girls were the best of the lot," a statement that was repeated

•

throughout Massachusetts after the first WLA crop season. "Most farmers agreed that women and especially college girls had done a far better job than was anticipated, and many girls have been asked to come back next year." The state, in an "experiment," chose to actively recruit college women to work on farms during 1943. As a result of the state government to request farmers to dramatically increase food production for 1943, the Extension Service reacted by enrolling all available labor within its programs. Thus, college women, and others of the WLA became clear choices for the state's farmers. And while not all farmers would have openly accepted the college women as labor in 1943, in 1944, that source of labor had been firmly entrenched in the state's fields. In many cases, college students had been viewed as more mature and better able to handle the work as given. The acceptance by state farmers as well as the enthusiasm of the women farm workers brought large number of recruits and 1943 repeats to farms in 1944. In 1944, the types of labor that the women were employed in duplicated that of 1943, however, in 1945, the number of women employed as farm labor in the state declined, due to several factors. An unwillingness by some farmers together with the availability of better-paid industrial positions led many women away from agriculture in the last year of the war.<sup>11</sup>

Others in New England also welcomed the use of the WLA as farm labor. In New Hampshire, WLA workers were employed on poultry farms and had "been found to be generally more satisfactory than men for handling chicks, grading, and packing eggs, and keeping records." In general, farmers reported the WLA workers possessed the ability to keep poultry facilities clean and neat, a skill that had not been present with male hired hands. Also, the "fact that women are apt to be more exacting and thorough has caused some complications on farms where both men and women are employed." However, other work on poultry farms, such as cleaning and moving pens, and

work on dairy farms had been "considered too heavy work for the average woman." This attitude changed quickly, as WLA members demonstrated their ability to accomplish most farm jobs. Additional work completed by women in the first year of operation in New Hampshire included the feed and care of livestock; planting, cultivating, and harvesting of truck crops; milk and care of dairy cows; delivery of milk; and milk testing for the Dairy Herd Improvement Association (D.H.I.A.). New Hampshire farmers had initially expressed reservations concerning the employment of women on farms, but by the end of 1943, they clearly recognized the necessity and importance of this source of labor. "Women are more conscientious, do a more thorough piece of work, and are more dependable. . . . [each] farmer has greater assurance of women sticking to their tasks until completed." This improved attitude by farmers led to greater participation, both by New Hampshire farmers and WLA members, for the following crop years.<sup>12</sup>

The trend toward the use of women as seasonal and full-time labor on New England's farms would be repeated across the nation with the organization of the WLA. States in the mid-Atlantic region such as Delaware and Pennsylvania, utilized urban and rural women as well as college students to work on the states' agricultural operations.<sup>13</sup> In Pennsylvania women worked to harvest grains. A Mount Holyoke student wrote of her experience on a Pennsylvania farm in August 1943.

If you have never threshed you don't know what hard physical labor is! Down by the barn they had a great machine that looked like a hideous, eternally greedy insect, run with a long belt attached to a tractor. . . . A wagon piled with bundles of barley is drawn up beside the platform. Two people toss the bundles with pitchforks to the man who pitches them into the monster's gaping jaws. . . . I helped load 100-pound sacks of barley into wagons. . . . [Later], instead of pitching, I

stood on the wagon and placed the bundles as they were pitched up. I like that job much better. There are drawbacks--you have to look out for the pitchforks and it is the filthiest job I ever encountered. . . . But that job doesn't give you blisters, it isn't so muscle-wearing. And it is a job of skill. You have to keep moving, and put the bundles in the right places so that they won't fall off when the load gets eight feet high. There is an art to it. On the first wagon I worked with Bernie. . . . Topping a load is tricky and Bernie told me I was smart and learning how to do it fast--regular farm girl I was.<sup>14</sup>

The development and placement of the WLA in the northern states had been affected by the attitudes expressed by the region's farmers concerning the use of urban women on farms, as well as the precedents established by earlier state- or private run labor initiatives. For the most part, these women had been accepted as farm workers by northeastern farmers, a situation that would be repeated across the country on the West Coast. There, farmers readily accepted the labor that women provided to their agricultural operations. As early as 1941, western states had women for harvest labor, which allowed women to contribute to the war effort. Organized programs in California and Oregon established precedents for the region that demonstrated, much like the early initiatives in the East, the ability and suitability of women as farm laborers.

Agriculture in the American West developed differently than that in the Northeast. With the presence of large corporate farms in the Far West and livestock operations on the western fringes of the Great Plains, western states' demands for labor in World War II had been different than other regions of the nation. In the region of western Plains and northern Rocky Mountain states, these operations needed

labor for livestock and sugar beet establishments. This fact did not automatically mean that states needed female labor and in many cases would not use the assistance of the WLA. However, the presence of women in agriculture in these states had still been a viable source toward the total labor needs of each state during wartime.

In Montana, livestock ranches and large wheat and sugar beet operations required labor during World War II. Farm women and others were recruited to work on these operations. The WLA did not recruit urban women for its first year of operation in Montana. And while some positions were available for women to pursue, the majority of recruited farm labor in 1943 had been males. Mexican nationals, prisoners of war, military troops, and migrant workers made up most of the labor on Montana farms and ranches in the first year of the Emergency Farm Labor Program. Still, WLA supervisor, Margaret H. Tuller observed that "Montana farms do have many jobs that can be done equally as well by women as by men." Thus, farm and rural town women assumed jobs "they had never done before." Although, urban women had not been utilized as farm labor, the "groundwork" had been laid that would allow them access to farming in 1944.<sup>15</sup>

While several thousand women were employed on Montana farms during 1943, only thirteen women registered as full-time members of the WLA. This figure of thirteen women does not represent the complete picture of the situation in the state. All told, according to the 1943 WLA annual report for the state, almost six thousand women had been employed on farms. Recruited as a result of actions by the WLA or Extension Service these women assisted with "food production other than the home garden or home poultry flock." Specifically, fifty-nine women worked as farm labor on thriving livestock and sugar beet operations. These women accomplished all farm jobs, such as, drove motorized equipment; branded, cared for, and herded livestock; milked cows; delivered milk to houses

and creameries; blocked, thinned, and topped beets; cultivated and harvested fruits and vegetables; hayed; and fixed fences. In Richland County, Montana, women such as Mrs. Clarence Sather worked as a "regular hired hand wherever her help was needed. She shocked grain for Evan Ler, stacked hay for Alva Sharbono on shares, and ran tractor seeding [her] own grain." In Stillwater County, women also performed a variety of agricultural jobs. Mrs. George Wimsett "started her farm labor job with lambing and in helping with new calves and pigs. She helped plant, cultivate and harvest the potato crop, shocked grain and helped thresh alfalfa seed. At times this fall she has herded sheep." Another women in the county, Mrs. Robert Wegner, who also worked as farm labor commented, "We all helped with the farm work and as a result we'll be able to buy more War Bonds to help end this war." According to several state annual reports, the idea that farm service constituted women's patriotic effort to the war had never been far from anyone's mind.<sup>16</sup>

The one issue that had not been addressed fully in the 1943 WLA report involved the reluctance of county extension agents to advocate the use of women as farm labor. According to county agent reports for 1943, "agents were not convinced that women should be recruited for farm labor, even in areas where there was a labor shortage" and "women, both urban and rural, were eligible for membership in the Women's Land Army but were not asked by the agents to enroll in the WLA." Even though this had been the prevailing attitude among Montana agents, the program reached a certain level of success for 1943. "Almost every agent observed during the production season the fine contributions made by women workers and reported favorably on work the women did." How then had the extension agents justified their reluctance to keep women from the WLA? Clearly, that activity had not continued, as membership in the program increased dramatically in the remaining war years.<sup>17</sup>

By 1944, Tuller's comments in the annual farm labor report indicated that it had been necessary during the interim between the 1943 and 1944 crop seasons to convince Montana extension agents of the benefits of using the WLA as farm labor. The report did not indicate any reluctance on the side of the state's farmers, but rather, the agents themselves needed to be educated concerning the use of women for farm/ranch work. The acceptance of women as farm labor brought 550 nonfarm women to the state's farms as workers in 1944. And, while the 1943 report did not indicate whether the thirteen women enrolled in the WLA had been farm or nonfarm women, an increase of enrollees to 550 indicates a significant jump. Women's labor in 1944 continued in much the same vein as 1943, with women participating on all aspects of Montana agriculture. In Richland County, Mrs. Bob Seeve did "a man's work on their farm all the past year. She does all types of farm work including driving the tractor, hauling grain, cutting hay and general farm chores." In Flathead County, nonfarm women had been recruited to harvest cherries. Still, however, Montana continued to recruit other sources of labor, therefore the number of men and youths on Montana agricultural operations outnumbered the few thousand farm women who participated as members of the WLA.<sup>18</sup>

One reason that men and youths outnumbered the women who worked on farms was related to the presence of several large corporate farming operations in the state. Thus, in addition to the reluctance of extension agents to foster the use of women as agricultural labor, large-scale agricultural companies, including American Crystal Sugar Company, Great Northern Railway, Great Western Sugar Company, Holly Sugar Corporation, and Northern Pacific Railway Company, did not place importance on the idea of women as agricultural war workers. These companies, along with the Montana Committee on Farm Labor, examined ways to alleviate the farm labor issue. As a state committee, this organization advocated several



sources of labor to be used during the war; the labor of women, however, did not seem important or necessary. Although not advocated by the state's corporate interests or labor committee, women's participation as part of the state's cherry harvest was reported at the 15 September 1944 Montana Committee on Farm Labor meeting. While deemed necessary to the successful harvest of the crop, women's presence in the fields was seen as superfluous by these men. The agricultural companies and state labor committee continued to request Mexican nationals, prisoners of war, and others for farm labor in Montana.<sup>19</sup>

In Wyoming, the state used both farm and nonfarm women for agricultural labor. However, for the most part, the type of agriculture present in Wyoming, like Montana, did not yield to town and urban female labor. As reported by the state labor supervisor, Ellen R. Lindstrom, "The main agricultural enterprises, sugar beets, hay, range cattle and sheep do not adapt themselves to inexperienced labor. Wyoming was fortunate to have had the use of Mexican nationals and Italian prisoners of war for these crops." Regardless of this attitude at the time, women still worked on farms during the war and offered their labor assistance to needy farmers. Dividing the women into two groups, Wyoming officials placed farm and nonfarm workers in different positions. Nonfarm women were utilized in potato, beet, and bean fields as well as placed year-round on dairy operations. These women worked only in areas of extreme need. The use of farm women could be found on several different types of farms, including, livestock (cattle, poultry, and sheep), grain, and truck crop operations.<sup>20</sup>

County extension agents and WLA labor officials described the work accomplished by women in Wyoming during the war years. In Carbon County, agent Nels Dalquist reported: "In many instances in the county, women worked during the haying season in the hay field. Two ranchers in the Elk Mountain

Community used a hay crew composed of women entirely and reported that this crew did an excellent job. Also on the dairy farms in the county, the women were taking the place of men trying to solve the labor shortage." However, the general attitude regarding the use of women in the Wyoming fields had not been totally acceptable. Suited to house or garden work, the use of nonfarm women in farm fields did not occur as regularly as nonfarm youth recruited through the VFV. Exceptions existed throughout the state of course, and in Lingle, Wyoming farm and nonfarm women joined the ranks of the WLA to run tractors and agricultural implements and cultivate and harvest the area's crops.<sup>21</sup>

In Colorado, no attempt had been made in 1943 to organize a WLA program within the state. The Extension Service did, however, recruit four thousand women to work on farms, these urban women assisted in the fields of truck-crop operations, cultivating and picking at harvest time. In addition, farm women assisted on their own or another farm in the state. Ranchers opted for men as sources of farm labor, the majority being those who had been deferred for some reason from military duty. In the next year, however, Colorado organized a WLA program and set out to actively recruit and place women on farms. Even with the presence of the WLA within the state in 1944, no change occurred with the work completed in 1943 or 1944. Women continued to work on truck-crop farms as seasonal labor; a few were employed year-round on dairy farms. To a lesser extent, Colorado women had also been employed on livestock and grain operations.<sup>22</sup>

From the start of the federal farm labor program, women had competed with others for their position or acceptance on Colorado farms and ranches. Specifically, more acceptable labor sources included men who had been kept from military service, Mexican nationals, and prisoners of war in the state; later, relocated Japanese American internees would be preferred over women. Still, regardless of this bias against

the use of women, state organizations worked to effectively recruit and place women as labor on farms. In order to accomplish this Colorado officials established farm work categories for the women and the requirements needed to be accepted. Beginning with the "farm woman," who was seen as the "virile robust type. . . . She is the type who assists her husband in taking a man's place." Expected to work in the fields, this woman had been widely accepted by the state's agriculturalists. One unidentified WLA worker in Rio Grande County, Colorado clearly emphasized the "virile robust" women described by the state's annual labor report. This woman "drove a tractor, raked, burned, and leveled 38 acres of land, drilled, irrigated, and sorted potatoes" as she assisted her husband on their farm. Other women included in the structure of Colorado's work system included: urban disadvantaged women, possibly of Spanish American background; Native Americans; migratory labor from Arkansas, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas; professional and working women; college students; and homemakers.<sup>23</sup> For the most part, this system of categorizing the women laborers is unique to Colorado. Although other states may have expressed efforts to recruit a type of person, no one state explicitly described those characteristics.

In the manner of other states, Colorado farmers' attitudes regarding women in agriculture changed over time to an acceptance of their work and pleasure at their accomplishment of farm tasks. For the most part, farmers in Colorado did not differ from those in the East or South regarding their experiences with the members of the WLA and other female farm workers. The success of the program in 1944 had been regarded as favorable so that in the 1945 crop year women continued to assist Colorado farmers.<sup>24</sup> Other states of the West, however, had not been so hesitant to institute the WLA in their borders. In Idaho, its state organization established a women's program in 1943 which worked to recognize "all women presently employed, or who have worked or

who will work in some type of agricultural activity, either on a farm, in a food processing plant, or replacing a man for work in agriculture." By doing so, Idaho planned to "mobilize all available women for work in seasonal agricultural work . . . [and] for year-round work on dairy and poultry farms." The state accomplished this by surveying women in a "house-to-house canvass." This survey and placement of seasonal workers, had been successful, while the search for year-round workers proved more difficult. With the local survey, state WLA staff canvassed prospective laborers and asked their preference of farm work. Agricultural jobs such as fruit and vegetable harvesting were the principal type of employment along with year-round work on dairy and poultry operations. Additionally, the women had been given the time frame that each job would occupy, allowing conscious decisions to be made regarding their WLA commitment. In the years following 1943, however, the use of women in Idaho's fields decreased. Due in part to the better jobs available through the industrial sector, women left the fields for better wages and working conditions.<sup>25</sup>

In Utah, although no formal WLA existed, hundreds of farm and nonfarm women assisted on a seasonal basis to cultivate and harvest the numerous crops of the state. Drawn to agriculture through farmer and corporate labor requests, women worked on farms and in canneries.<sup>26</sup> Without a structured WLA program in Utah, women did not receive the advantages that other WLA workers had obtained, mainly the guarantee of protection and service under the auspice of the Emergency Farm Labor Program and United States Crop Corps. This absence of a WLA program in Utah is not unique in the West, as other states did not organize a WLA program. Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona did not initially, if at all, organize a WLA organization within their boundaries. Farmers in these states, with the assistance of Mexican nationals, prisoners of war, Japanese American internees, and other sources of male

labor did not consider women or the WLA for their labor needs during the war. That is not to say that women did not work as agriculture laborers in these states; some did. However, they were not recruited by the WLA, and instead fell into other demographic categories, such as Mexican nationals, Spanish Americans, migrant labor, or farm women.<sup>27</sup>

In Arizona, for example, the employment of white middle-class women to harvest cotton had not occurred, due to the perception that picking cotton was suitable only for men or those families of a lower economic class. As stated in Arizona's annual farm labor report, "A certain percentage of women have always been employed in hoeing, cotton picking and vegetable work in Arizona. These are generally people who work as a family unit with income going to the support of the family unit." Further, the report stated that recruitment among these women had never been needed or necessary. It continued by reporting on seasonal labor and the use, or non-use, of women. "The use of women for supplemental work in peak seasons was rendered difficult in several ways. In the first place, peak requirements were primarily in cotton picking and in vegetable work. Cotton picking is not ordinarily done by local women and stoop labor in vegetables is extremely hard on women and done primarily by Spanish-American or poorer classes."<sup>28</sup> Finally, the report implied that local white middle-class women would not have found the conditions for agricultural laborers in Arizona acceptable. Even so the WLA recognized the danger of excluding all women from joining the organization. As stated in 1945 by the state labor supervisor, "if the loss of a crop had appeared imminent, women would have been recruited as needed." The assumption being, white middle class women. However, with the use of other sources of labor in Arizona the presence of the WLA or nonfarm women had been deemed unnecessary during World War II.

Several far western states developed early labor

programs, which allowed for successful transitions to the WLA in each state. In California, women picked lemons throughout the year, and other crops such as almonds, beans, beets, lettuce, oranges, tomatoes, and walnuts, seasonally. In a state that needed all available harvest labor, women had entered the fields during the 1941-1942 crop year, replacing relocated Japanese American laborers and men who had donned the war uniform.<sup>29</sup> After the creation of the WLA, the continued use of women on farms brought about successful harvests and large crops. Women continued to assist in seasonal positions, especially in areas of large vegetable and fruit operations. With tens of thousands of women recruited as seasonal labor and hundreds for year-round work, the California state WLA represented one of the largest employers of women for the Extension Service labor program. Reported in that state, "the placement of women workers in California represented 10% of the total placements of the Farm Labor project during this period." Unfortunately, the report did not indicate a time frame for this statement, although it is probable that "period" referred to the 1945 crop year. All told, California farmers employed more than 169,000 women in its agricultural operations during the emergency labor period (1943-1945).<sup>30</sup>

The thousands of women who entered California farm labor as members of the WLA had the advantage of earlier state programs to bridge the way for those laborers who came later. Farmers who used female farm labor in 1942, would do so again in 1943 and for the remainder of war. Those farmers who had not hired women as farm workers previously would find other sources of labor in 1943. However, by the end of the war, the biased farmers, as well, recruited women for farm labor. By the end of the 1943 crop year, many California farmers recognized the usefulness of female labor, as well as the women's ability to successfully accomplish farm tasks. In many cases, farmers throughout California described their

reluctance to use female labor in 1942 and related their loss in crop. In 1943, most did not take the same chance, but hired competent labor. From Contra Costa County, California, "Due to the shortage of labor last year, we lost \$15,000 on our walnut crop. This year we will not lose any of the crop. The women are picking cleaner than any group that ever worked for us. The spirit of the women is excellent. I am sure you sent us the choicest women. We sincerely appreciate their help." And, in the state's wine region, producers lauded the work accomplished by the women each year. A vineyard foreman when asked about the work done by women, replied, "I hate to admit it, but they do a better job than the men did." He continued, "They were paid exactly the same wages as men, given the same excellent food, lodged in comfortable quarters with a good camp director." Believing that the employment of women had been beneficial to his business, this wine-grape producer provided the women with the same services as male workers. And by doing so, he hoped for good, conscientious workers.<sup>31</sup>

The success that the WLA experienced in California did not exist within a vacuum, as other western states also established effective organizations. Similar to California, the success of the Oregon WLA hinged on the earlier program established by the state as well as the state's traditional source of seasonal farm labor. Historically, Oregon farmers and producers had long depended on women workers to harvest seasonal crops. Therefore, in general, the attitude seen by Oregon farmers had been welcoming and accepting of the female labor, which included farm, rural, and urban women. With the greatest need for labor seen in the western portion of the state and an absence of men for full-time positions, Oregon farmers continued to utilize women as seasonal labor and began to place them in full-time/year-round jobs as well.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, with the need for labor established, and the precedent set for the use of women as farm labor, Oregon labor

officials did not wait for the federal organization and appropriation of funds for the WLA in mid-1943, but began labor recruitment earlier that year. Due to the timing of Oregon crops, that state, like New York, began recruitment efforts in early 1943. Seasonal labor began by 1 June of each year, with the peak of the season in late August and early September. This time frame allowed university and college students and faculty to work during the harvest period. Jobs performed by those women who worked seasonally was classified into four categories: "Berries," "Tree Fruits," "Cultivating and Training," and "Vegetables." Women were used to harvest fruits and vegetables, as well as labor as full-time employees on numerous agricultural operations. Women worked year-round on dairy, livestock, and general farms, with the greatest need during the war being dairy farms. Women were also hired to pick beans and other seasonal crops. In 1943, 25,513 women worked as seasonal labor, and 274 worked in full-time positions on dairy, livestock, and general farms in Oregon. And, while, the initial request for women workers had been higher, the use of Mexican nationals and youths in the VFV affected and decreased the number of women used as farm labor. For those women who needed to participate in training courses at the state agricultural college, the recruitment schedule established by Oregon officials in early 1943 became beneficial. Those women who attended the training course were then placed in their year-round dairy positions on farms in Tillamook and Coos counties.<sup>33</sup>

During the 1943 crop year, the Oregon WLA established successful county programs across the state. Marion County, Oregon alone, demanded more than 10,000 women to assist in cultivation and harvest of its farm crops. Employed from June through October, the women worked on a variety of agricultural operations, including fruits, vegetables, and hops. The service of women in Marion County continued through the war, as several thousand women joined the WLA each year and worked



as part of the "Housewife Special." This service transported homemakers daily from their homes to the fields, returning them at the end of the work day. These women routinely assisted in the cultivation and harvest of the county's bean crop. In this county, and across the state, housewives made up a large portion of the state's labor force.<sup>34</sup>

In the remaining years of war, farm labor in Oregon, continued an earlier established pattern. Because of the success of pre-WLA labor programs, the use of extensive recruitment plans had not been necessary in Oregon. In many locales throughout the state, farm and nonfarm women eagerly volunteered for service. The success of the WLA in Oregon is due to the tremendous need by farmers to harvest their crops during wartime. An unidentified Oregon grower commented on the work accomplished by his crew of thirteen women, "They are the best crew I've ever had but they work too hard. They are paid by the hour (75¢) and they just won't stop to rest." However, even in a state such as Oregon that welcomed female agricultural labor, it had been understood that if a man had been available for a full-time job, he would be better suited than a woman for the position. During the operation of the Emergency Farm Labor Program, the WLA would place more than seventy-eight thousand women on farms in the state from 1943 through 1945. This figure, along with an uncounted number of farm women placed on farms, added to the number of female farm workers in California and Washington, indicates the success that western states' WLA programs had compared with other regions of the country.<sup>35</sup>

The state of Washington, in definition similar to Oregon, had been separated into agricultural zones. Divided into three distinct areas, the state contained the following farming operations--western Washington: truck-crops and dairy and poultry farms; central Washington: fruit orchards; and eastern Washington: grains. As was common in all states, each of these agricultural operation would have its own labor

needs. Seasonal crops, mainly fruits and vegetables, would require labor to cultivate and pick the harvest; while, some year-round positions were present on dairy, livestock, and poultry operations. Recognizing the state's need for farm labor early in 1943, Washington officials estimated that approximately eighty-two thousand seasonal workers would be required to successfully harvest the 1943 crop; of this figure, at least twenty-five thousand would be women. Additional women would be hired for year-round positions.<sup>36</sup>

Recruitment, training, and placement efforts by Washington WLA and Extension staff did not deviate from actions taken by other states. For the most part, the state saw its biggest efforts devoted to raising an effective labor force, one that included all available women, and the need to overcome any farmer bias against the use of nonfarm women as agricultural workers. In the state's efforts to recruit all available women, the WLA approached women's and civic groups to interest local women, used the media to promote the program, and held informational meetings regarding the organization. These actions were successful for the 1943 crop year, as more than 25,000 women worked as farm laborers in that year. Training and placement followed recruitment. In Washington, as with most states, training courses existed for those women employed in year-round positions, usually on dairy or poultry operations. Fluctuating from one to four week length, courses instructed farm and nonfarm women on duties that were not familiar. Women employed in seasonal positions received "on-the-job" training. The placement of the WLA volunteers had been the responsibility of Extension and WLA staff; these officials matched prospective workers with needy farmers.<sup>37</sup>

In the first year of the WLA in Washington, the state had been able to meet its quota of women. During the 1943 crop year, about twenty-five thousand women participated. They picked seasonal crops, including apples, asparagus,

strawberries, and a host of other fruits and vegetables. Farm, rural, and urban women participated, and, in general, worked as seasonal labor. The few women who worked on a year-round basis did so on poultry and dairy operations. Additionally, two women worked as D.H.I.A. testers. The acceptance of women by Washington farmers followed the same patterns as other West Coast states. Farmers throughout the state reported on the success of the women in their fields. In Pierce County, Washington a farmer wrote, "The women and children have been a great help in harvesting my raspberry crop," in Mason County, "Women and children were a great help in harvesting loganberries. As the young folks were in school at the time of our grape harvest, adult women were asked for the picking work," and in Chelan County "The women are excellent workers, steady, dependable, and get the job done. Many teachers have helped me this year and worked along with the high school girls. I'll take women and girls any time in preference to boys." The praise continued throughout the state for the work accomplished by Washington women in 1943. The activity of the women continued through the war years as women were hired to cultivate and harvest seasonal crops, as well as work year-round on some farms. The number of women and placements remained somewhat consistent over the course of the war, with slightly fewer placed in 1945 than previous years.<sup>38</sup>

As the war progressed, it became common for women and youth to enroll in farm labor programs to assist the agricultural efforts in Washington. In Washington, as with Oregon and other states, farmers accepted the inexperienced nonfarm worker; however, given a choice between experience and novice, farmers generally chose the tested farm worker, which in most cases meant men. And, Washington farmers, contrary to some states, preferred the work of women over the youths in most farm positions. However, over the course of the war and in the absence of other labor, schools closed and students

worked whole days to complete crop harvests. Because of this action, farmers became confident of the youths' potential as farm laborers, and continued the employment of this group after the war. For the post-war period, Washington indicated that it did not view women as necessary farm labor in non-wartime, but did see high school students engaged in such work. Contrary to other locales where women proved themselves over time to farmers, in Washington it became the youth who proved themselves. While the state labor supervisor realized that men would return to their agricultural positions with the conclusion of war, this individual also stated, "It is very doubtful if women and youth will ever again be used as extensively on the farms and in the processing and packing plants as they have been used during the war years. They have made an excellent showing and their efforts have been greatly appreciated. But as soon as adult experienced labor is again available, the women and youth groups will no doubt be replaced. I personally think that more youth will be used in the fields now, because a great many farmers are satisfied that they can do the work." Washington State would increase the use of youth labor by instituting "long-time extensive educational and training program" for the students.<sup>39</sup> With this action, Washington state officials did not advocate the continued use of women on farms, only the students. This attitude exhibited by these state officials did not become the model for the rest of the nation in the post-war years. For the most part, more women entered agriculture after the war, than had been present previously.

The success of the federal WLA across the nation in its first year of operation, then, led to the continuation of the program for the remainder of World War II. During each growing season the WLA brought tremendous labor relief to the United States. And regardless of their background, farm or nonfarm, America's women worked to bring in the crops during the war. In the East and West coast regions of the country,

the presence of state-run early initiatives led to smooth transitions from state or private agencies to the federal WLA. The ability of these states to engage the federal program without much conflict presented their efforts as models to the remainder of the country in 1943. States such as Vermont, Maine, and California continued the efforts begun by their early labor initiators when the states organized state WLA programs in 1943.

During 1943 the goal of the national WLA program had been to enroll as many women as possible, while receiving a commitment of one month of work from each woman. The majority of these WLA women filled the nation's seasonal labor positions, and assisted farmers during planting, cultivating, and harvesting activities. And while farmers in the East and West had gladly accepted farm and nonfarm women as their agricultural labor source, farmers in the Midwest and South had not. Midwestern and southern farmers hesitated regarding the employment of nonfarm women on their agricultural operations; in the Midwest farmers were reluctant to hire nonfarm urban women, while in the South farmers held back due to the racial issues present. Even so, 1943 WLA enrollment had numbered at 600,000 members. At least that many farm women had also been part of their farm's labor, however, not as members of the WLA. Regardless, those women are included within the influence that the WLA held throughout the nation for that year, an important part of the farm labor program, and necessity in recruitment efforts for 1944. By enrolling more farm women and by initiating greater recruitment measures within urban and rural communities, the federal WLA administration hoped to increase its membership for 1944.

The 1944 crop year would be met with great anticipation for many, as several states anxiously awaited for the return of the female labor force. In view of larger food requirements for the nation, and the responsibilities of the federal government, the WLA made plans to recruit 800,000

women for agricultural service in 1944. The administrators counted on the success and popularity of the program among women, as well as the success that farmers experienced with their crops and harvests to bring about this higher recruitment figure. On the whole, farmers, nation-wide, had been more receptive of women as farm workers in 1944, and that point, alone, would assist in great recruitment figures. Some of this change in attitude can be attributed to the women themselves and their ability to competently complete the work assigned to them, as well as the manner in which they worked. Other changes represent an altering of attitude by several groups of farmers, for the most part, they became more accepting of women on their farms as the war progressed.<sup>40</sup>

Based on reports in the mass media and local press, it is apparent that the nation's farmers had come to appreciate the agricultural work of the WLA. In New York, farmers requested women to detassel corn, work in nurseries, harvest fruits and vegetables, and hoe and transplant tobacco; in Kansas women plowed, harrowed, and cultivated with tractors and machinery for the nation's grain crops; and in the South, women worked in fields chopping cotton.<sup>41</sup> These activities continued as the war progressed. From 1943 through the 1945 crop year, the WLA recruited farm and nonfarm labor for the nation's farms. The presence of women as agricultural laborers changed the structure of American agriculture, and the years following the war years demonstrated these changes.

## Notes

1. New York Times, 12 and 24 April 1943, 9 July 1943; "Women Workers Help in Harvesting Crops," Labor Information Bulletin 9 (October 1942): 4-5; "Farm Placements, New York State, 1945," box 27, Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports of Extension and Other Workers under the Farm Labor Program, 1943-1947, Records of the U.S. Extension Service, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter AR, NARG 33).
2. Frances W. Valentine, "Successful Practices in the Employment of Nonfarm Women on Farms in the Northeastern States, 1943," Bulletin No. 199, U.S. Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, 1944, 12-14. The presence of the WLA in Rhode Island during the war had been relatively small, due to the fact that almost no recruitment for the WLA had occurred in that state.
3. Valentine, "Successful Practices in the Employment of Nonfarm Women on Farms in the Northeastern States," 12-14.
4. "Vacation Work with the Shade Tobacco Growers Agricultural Association, Inc. and Connecticut Agricultural Extension Service," report, Shade Tobacco Growers Agricultural Association, Inc., 1945, Women's Land Army Records, USDA, History Collection, Special Collections, National Agricultural Library, Beltsville, Maryland (hereafter WLA Records).
5. "Maine State Supervisor Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1943," box 5, AR, NARG 33; "Maine State Supervisor Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1944," box 14, AR, NARG 33.
6. Fort Fairfield Review, 22 September 1943; "Maine State Supervisor Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1944," AR, NARG 33.
7. Ibid.; Florence L. Hall to Assistant State Supervisor, WLA, 25 March 1944, Extension Service, USDA, WLA Records.
8. "Maine Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 25, AR, NARG 33.
9. "Vermont State Supervisor Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1943," box 10, AR, NARG 33; "Vermont Annual Report 1944," box 20, AR, NARG 33.
10. "College Girls as Farm Workers: Administration of a Labor Unit in Massachusetts, 1943," U.S. Women's Bureau, March 1944, folder Agriculture, 1944, box 200, Women Workers in World War II, 1940-1945, Division of Research, Records of the

U.S. Women's Bureau, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter NARG 86); "Report on the Lowell Company Cranberry Bog at Carlisle, Massachusetts," 20 September 1943, NARG 86; "Massachusetts State Supervisor Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1943," box 5, AR, NARG 33; "Massachusetts State Supervisor Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1944," box 14, AR, NARG 33; "Massachusetts Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 25, AR, NARG 33.

11. "College Girls as Farm Workers," NARG 86; "Report on the Lowell Company Cranberry Bog at Carlisle, Massachusetts," NARG 86; "Massachusetts, Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1943," AR, NARG 33; "Massachusetts, Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1944," AR, NARG 33; "Massachusetts, Farm Labor Supervisors Annual Report, 1945," AR, NARG 33.

12. "New Hampshire, Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1943," box 7, AR, NARG 33; "New Hampshire, Annual Report, 1944," box 17, AR, NARG 33; "New Hampshire, Farm Labor Supervisors Annual Report, 1945," box 27, AR, NARG 33.

13. "Delaware, State Farm Labor Annual Report, 1943," box 2, AR, NARG 33; "Delaware, Emergency Farm Labor Annual Narrative Report, 1944," box 12, AR, NARG 33.

14. New York Times Magazine, 15 August 1943.

15. "Montana Annual Report Extension Farm Labor Program, 1943," box 6, AR, NARG 33.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. "Montana Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1944," box 16, AR, NARG 33; "Montana Farm Labor Supervisors Annual Report, 1945," box 26, AR, NARG 33.

19. Charles E. Jarrett to E. B. Duncan, 25 July 1945, folder farm labour--prison camps, 1943-July 1945, box 28, Great Northern Railway Company Records, Minnesota State Archives, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul (hereafter Great Northern Records; "Tentative Farm Labor Program," Montana Committee on Farm Labor at Helena, Montana, meeting minutes, 22 December 1943 and 15 September 1944, folder farm labour--Montana, December 1943-1956, box 28, Great Northern Records.

20. "Wyoming Annual Report, 1944," box 21, AR, NARG 33; "Wyoming Annual Report, Farm Labor Supervisor, 1945," box 32, AR, NARG 33.



21. "Wyoming Annual Report, 1944," AR, NARG 33.
22. Anne Webb to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 29 June 1943, XYZ file, folder 1937-1945, box 4, Official file 227a (Farm Matters), Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York (hereafter FDR Papers); "Colorado Annual Report State Extension Farm Labor Program, 1943," box 2, AR, NARG 33; "Colorado 1944 Annual Narrative Report, Emergency Farm Labor Program," box 12, AR, NARG 33; "Colorado Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 22, AR, NARG 33.
23. Webb to Roosevelt, 29 June 1943, FDR Papers; "Colorado Annual Report State Extension Farm Labor Program, 1943," AR, NARG 33; "Colorado 1944 Annual Narrative Report"; "Colorado Farm labor Supervisors Annual Report, 1945," AR, NARG 33.
24. "Colorado 1944 Annual Narrative Report," AR, NARG 33; "Colorado Farm labor Supervisors Annual Report, 1945," AR, NARG 33.
25. "Idaho Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1943," box 2, AR, NARG 33; "Idaho Emergency Farm Labor Annual Narrative Report, 1944," box 13, AR, NARG 33. These women, from 15 communities worked only for the harvest months of August, September, and October.
26. "Utah Emergency Farm Labor Annual Narrative Report, 1943," box 10, AR, NARG 33; "Utah Annual Narrative Report, Farm Labor Program, 1944," box 20, AR, NARG 33.
27. Robert F. Patterson, Acting Secretary of War, memo, 1 March 1943, folder 1943-1945, box 2, Official File 227 (Farm Matters), FDR Papers; Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War, memo, 16 February 1943, folder 1943-1945, box 2, Official File 227 (Farm Matters), FDR Papers; "Arizona Farm Labor Supervisors Annual Report, 1945," box 21, AR, NARG 33; "New Mexico Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1943," box 7, AR, NARG 33; "New Mexico Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1944," box 16, AR, NARG 33; "New Mexico Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 27, AR, NARG 33. In New Mexico, women assisted with cotton cultivation and harvest, truck crop harvests, and livestock work.
28. "Arizona, Annual Report, Emergency Farm Labor Program, 1945," AR, NARG 33.
29. Christian Science Monitor, 9 January 1943.
30. "California Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 22, AR, NARG 33. The figure given here represents

the number of women hired through the WLA and extension programs, as well as those hired through private sources.

31. Frances W. Valentine, "Women's Emergency Farm Service on the Pacific Coast in 1943," Bulletin No. 204, U.S. Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, 1945, 13, 19.

32. "Oregon State Supervisor Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1943," box 8, AR, NARG 33; "Oregon Annual Report, 1944," box 18, AR, NARG 33; "Oregon Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 29, AR, NARG 33.

33. "Oregon Trains Women Farm Dairy Workers," Milk Plant Monthly 33 (July 1944): 46; "Oregon State Supervisor Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1943," AR, NARG 33; "Oregon Annual Report, 1944," AR, NARG 33; "Oregon Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," AR, NARG 33.

34. "Oregon State Supervisor Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1943," AR, NARG 33; "Oregon Annual Report, 1944," AR, NARG 33; Judith Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, "'To the Rescue of the Crops': The Women's Land Army during World War II," Prologue 25 (Winter 1993): 356.

35. "Oregon Annual Report, 1944," AR, NARG 33; "Oregon Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," AR, NARG 33.

36. "Washington Annual Report Emergency Farm Labor Program, 1943," box 10, AR, NARG 33; "Washington Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 31, AR, NARG 33.

37. "Washington Annual Report Emergency Farm Labor Program, 1943," AR, NARG 33.

38. Ibid.; "Washington Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," AR, NARG 33. In these western states, the number of high school students who participated under the VFV program equalled or exceeded the number of WLA placements.

39. "Washington Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," AR, NARG 33.

40. New York Times, 17 May 1944; The Women's Land Army of the US Crop Corps, 1944, War Food Administration, Extension Service, USDA, May 1944, 3-4.

41. New York Times, 18 July 1944, 29 May 1944, 17 May 1944.

CHAPTER 8. WOMEN IN SERVICE, THE MIDWEST: IN THE HOUSE  
OR IN THE FIELDS, THE DEBATE REGARDING NONFARM WOMEN

While the success achieved during the WLA's first year of operation was not deniable, it did not occur uniformly across the United States. During the 1943 crop year, several states demonstrated a biased opposition to the WLA. Over the course of the war, however, this opposition diminished and by the end of the war, few farmers had reservations regarding the use of women as farm labor. The greatest concern held by agriculturalists during the war resulted from the federal government's desire to use nonfarm urban women as labor. The acceptance of nonfarm women by farmers in eastern and western states did not overwhelmingly influence the rest of the country to hire a similar labor force. By far, the most pronounced opposition to the WLA and its source of nonfarm labor was present in the Midwest.

In the Midwest, farmers had been reluctant to hire nonfarm urban women on their farms. Farmers and their families viewed these women as corrupt and immoral, thus not an appropriate influence or presence on their property. Additionally, midwestern farmers believed that nonfarm women were not capable of handling agricultural implements or machinery. During the first year of WLA operation, these prejudices interrupted the federal government's efforts to place available women on farms. For the most part, these attitudes existed in the years prior to the creation of the WLA and in 1943. However, by the 1944 harvest, even if this attitude had not dissipated, farmers accepted the presence of nontraditional labor on their farms.

In the first year of program operation, several midwestern states did not recognize the importance of the WLA to their state's agricultural goals, and therefore did not establish state agencies. Without this organization women who wished to join the WLA, as well as local farmers who wanted to

hire female labor, did not have the advantage of an established agency to administer the program. Over time, states in the Midwest recognized the necessity of a state WLA organization, and by using program models from the East and West coasts, established their own agencies. However, even without an established program in place, farm and nonfarm women worked on farms throughout the war years. In many locales, a considerable number of women, especially farm women, participated in agriculture without benefit of WLA membership; over time farm women also joined the organization. Thus, when the 1944 crop season finished, membership in the WLA included farm and nonfarm women and most states had organized a state program to provide labor to farmers. By the end of the war, the negative feelings and concerns expressed by midwestern farmers in 1943 had given way to a more positive regard for women on farms. For farmers, the realization that the WLA brought advantages to their operations assisted in the acceptance of women as agricultural labor.

Therefore, the WLA had not been completely unproductive in the Midwest during the Second World War. Although relatively few women were placed by the WLA or Extension Service in 1943, that did not preclude women from working in agriculture, as thousands were employed on farms, but not as WLA members. To rectify this imbalance of participation among regions, the federal and state WLA offices increased recruitment efforts in prejudiced locales to improve WLA enrollment. This action, although effective for furthering recruitment, did not bring enrollment figures for the Midwest to similar levels throughout the nation. In areas of great controversy and bias toward the WLA, it is important to note that farmers had different reasons for their reluctance to hire women as farm labor. In many instances, these reasons differed greatly within states, regions, and the nation.

Compared to the truck and fruit farms of the East and West coasts, agriculture differed in the Middle West. Large-

scale operations and flat treeless land brought different farming techniques to the prairie and plains. Corn, wheat, and livestock dominated the region's farms. The corn and wheat belts that had developed and then dominated the region remained into the 1940s. For the most part, the crops planted, cultivated, and harvested depended on technology and heavy machinery. Over time, this area had transformed from a region that had depended on men and man-hours to one that became dependent on combines and other agricultural implements. The use of machinery on the farm allowed farm owners to refrain from hiring full-time, or in some cases, part-time, help. With the assistance of family members, midwestern farmers were able to plant, cultivate, harvest, and process their crops and agricultural products accordingly. This ability to maintain independent production brought changes to the midwestern farm structure.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout this transformation from hand-labor to machinery in the early twentieth century, midwestern farm families endured changes in their homes and on their farms. Midwestern farm women became viewed as "reserve labor," to be used in the fields during a time of crisis or emergency, or when no other source of labor had been available. While the men ran the machinery and worked the fields, women remained in the house and were not needed or used, to a great extent, in the fields.<sup>2</sup> This midwestern gender division of labor is clearly reflected by farmer, community, and state attitudes that are exhibited in the first year the WLA existed.

In the Middle West, farmers had distinct ideas regarding the use of women on farms. Katherine Jellison reported in her study, Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology, 1913-1963, that "according to a Gallup poll conducted in 1943, only 28 percent of midwestern farmers approved of women as wartime hired labor." Midwestern farmers had spent decades without women working in their fields, and at a time of crisis would have accepted family members before nonfarm women.

Additionally, Jellison theorized that midwestern farmers had viewed white nonfarm women as out of place on a farm. Not the usual female agricultural worker of the country, not African American, Hispanic, or Asian, white women would have contradicted social norms of the nation. Still, even the midwestern farmers who accepted nonfarm women as labor did so only as help to the farm woman in the home or barn. Farmers did not readily allow the nonfarm women in the fields. According to Gallup, nonfarm women were "satisfactory for some of the smaller chores or tasks around the farm, but for the heavy work of harvesting, planting, or caring for livestock, women only 'get in the way.'"<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, it is not surprising that midwestern states had not welcomed the WLA overwhelmingly within their borders. Specifically, the farm population in Iowa, Minnesota, and Nebraska expressed reluctance to use nonfarm women as hired help. Nebraska represented the negative extreme of farmer attitude with women making up less than 4 percent of the farm labor force placed by the Emergency Farm Labor Program.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, Iowa, as reported by anthropologist Deborah Fink, placed farm women in the fields where they assisted with farm work, and accomplished more work than they had during peacetime. The presence of nonfarm women on farms, however, had not been accepted or tolerated in the early years of war. For many Iowa farmers, men remained the labor force of choice; and, "across Iowa, war prisoners, Menomoni Indians, Mexicans, Japanese-Americans, Haitians, and conscientious objectors" were the workers of choice.<sup>5</sup> At the other extreme, Michigan's successful labor program used both farm and nonfarm women. As a group, Midwesterners held presumptions regarding the unsuitability of nonfarm women to agricultural labor for 1943 and part of 1944. However, by the 1944 harvest season, and then the crop year of 1945, these farmers had accepted women as agricultural labor.

Regardless of the personal attitudes held by midwestern

farmers during the war, the need for labor existed. In an effort to determine the acceptance of nonfarm labor within the region in 1943, Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead surveyed its readership. Printing the results in the June 1943 issue, the journal reported on the thoughts of farmers and their families concerning the use of nonfarm women during World War II. In their survey, farmers and their wives indicated that they assumed that nonfarm women would be more useful in the kitchen than the field, but the majority of male responses could not visualize any use for town women on farms. Farm women described the anticipated urban women's inability to operate machinery. A Washington County, Iowa woman remarked, "It doesn't require any mechanical training to wash and wipe dishes or scrub the floors, but I think these 'land army' women would have had a hard time running a tractor." And, in Jones County, Iowa, "If I have to have a woman helping me in the field, I want my wife, not some green city girl." A farm woman in the same county wrote, "A farm wife naturally understands more about the farm and how things should be done, while housekeeping is done pretty much the same all over." The harshest comment reported by Wallaces' Farmer came from a farmer in Clarke County, Iowa, "Leave her in town. She'd not be worth a whoop in the field, and if you put her in the kitchen, we'd starve to death."<sup>6</sup>

The results of the Wallaces' Farmer questionnaire indicated the thoughts and attitudes of Iowa and midwestern farmers. Clearly, this group did not advocate the use of nonfarm women on their farms. And, while these farmers openly discouraged the use of nonfarm women on their farms in 1943, did that attitude continue in later years? In 1943, the presence of nonfarm women in Iowa fields accounted for 11 percent of the registered work force. Although not a large number of workers, these women, along with farm and rural women greatly assisted the state's effort at production in 1943. In Iowa, the presence of agricultural implements and

heavy machinery had removed women from the fields, rather than assisting their efforts. For the most part, Iowa farm women had been relegated to the dairy and poultry operations within a farm; with the occurrence of war, however, they reentered mainstream agricultural production. In general, female farm work in Iowa duplicated the effort made in midwestern states during the war; women detasseled corn, cultivated and harvested fruits and vegetables, harvested grain, and worked on general farms.<sup>7</sup>

In 1943, Iowa officials made no effort to organize a state WLA program, but depended on other sources for their farm labor. However, about one thousand women registered themselves as members of the organization, and worked on farms in that capacity. Within the state, all but twenty-three of the ninety-nine counties used nonfarm female agricultural laborers in 1943. For the 1944 crop year, recruitment efforts by county extension agents and WLA officials occurred as the need for farm labor exceeded previous levels. In order to recruit an acceptable number of women for the state's farms, it became necessary for Iowa WLA and extension officials to present the use of nonfarm women in a favorable light, and to use the media to further their labor goals for the year. Radio and local print sources were utilized regularly in an effort to enhance the Iowa WLA. Articles regarding the WLA and the role of women in agriculture appeared in college newspapers to encourage students to join the organization for the summer months. Additionally, radio spots included discussions regarding the work completed, and the position that women held as members of the WLA. To reach their recruitment goals, WLA and Extension Service propaganda illustrated the reliability and usefulness of women as farm labor. Officials deemed this approach necessary to combat the previous practice of Iowa farmers who preferred the state's youth as agricultural workers.<sup>8</sup>

Much of the attitude expressed in Iowa had been present



in other states as well. Iowa's northern neighbor, Minnesota, expressed a similar opinion regarding female farm laborers. Before the official organization of the WLA, the agricultural structure within Minnesota did not openly accept the presence of women in the state's agricultural community. In 1942, E. M. Freeman, dean of the College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics at the University of Minnesota, answered a letter from Dorothy Walton Binder, of Highland Park, Illinois. In his response Freeman relayed his views concerning the employment possibilities for women in agriculture. As a concerned parent, Binder inquired about her daughter continuing her studies in the field of agriculture at the University of Minnesota. Binder explained that her daughter, while a student at Mt. Holyoke College, had discovered an interest in "agricultural pursuits other than Home Economics," and wished to explore her career options. Additionally, the younger Binder had organized a "Farmer's Aid Committee" of her fellow Mt. Holyoke students in 1942, and offered labor assistance to local farmers by harvesting crops, painting buildings, and caring for poultry. Her mother wrote, "she is working on a farm in Massachusetts, milking cows, harvesting asparagus etc. She had practically decided to enter Nursing School at Minnesota next semester. . . . But this was a desperate sort of decision after she had looked into the field for women at the Massachusetts State Agricultural College. . . . She originally wanted to take up animal husbandry but was told that it was closed to women. . . . I would appreciate very much your personal thought on this matter and your best advice."<sup>9</sup>

Freeman's response indicated the college's reluctance to accept women in agriculture. He wrote to persuade the younger Binder to consider a field of study other than agriculture. Freeman stated that other choices were available for Binder, including extension work, home economics, nursing, and physical education. However, employment within the

agricultural field, including farming, livestock breeding, and science, as well as academic teaching and research positions were closed to her as a woman. In reference to Binder's fondness for the outdoors and her attempt to choose a profession that fit her preferences, Freeman wrote, "Many of us who have had the same idea have discovered as we get older that our hobbies and our--so to speak--extracurricular activities in our professions enable us to get plenty of the outdoor contacts . . . to satisfy our desires for the out of doors." Thus, Binder should view her fondness for outside work as a hobby or an extracurricular activity and not a career choice. That statement, as well as his letter to the elder Binder, presented Freeman's views regarding the inappropriateness of women in the field of agriculture. In general, much of Minnesota's agricultural community agreed with Freeman, which hampered the organization of the WLA within the state. Thus, the Minnesota WLA did not enjoy the same success that it did in other regions of the country during the war. Most of the Minnesota farmers in need of labor in World War II agreed that women as agricultural workers would be better placed in other areas of the country.<sup>10</sup>

And although this correspondence between Binder and Freeman occurred in 1942, Minnesota's attitude regarding the use of women on the state's farms persisted throughout the war. In 1943, Minnesota farmers had been hesitant to use any inexperienced labor source for its farms, including men, women, and youths. However, in almost all cases, men and youths would be used for labor before farmers hired the state's women. Still, women did work on farms, but for the most part, these were farm women, and their experience did not stretch past their own properties. The use of rural and urban, farm and nonfarm high school students, however, proved favorable and popular with Minnesota farmers, and these individuals made up the majority of the emergency labor force in place during the war years. To place these workers, the

Minnesota Extension Service actively recruited and planned programs for its youth, while they neglected the WLA and considered it only an "experimental" program--one that would not be in existence the next year.<sup>11</sup>

Even though the state had not openly embraced the formation of the WLA or the employment of women on farms, nonetheless women did work in agriculture during the war. Granted, the number who worked on farms and other agricultural jobs in the war years had been few, Minnesota women filled positions as seasonal labor and dairy herd testers. Even though these women "proved their worth" after the first year of WLA operation, in general the state preferred the labor of youths rather than women. As members of the WLA, the Extension Service placed a few thousand women each year as seasonal or year-round labor, while, in terms of the VFV, tens of thousands of youths participated in the Extension labor programs in the years from 1943 to 1945. These figures represent a greater acceptance of high school students and other youths in agriculture, than the use of women in the same positions.<sup>12</sup>

By the end of the war, it is not possible to cite an overwhelmingly reversal of farmer attitude regarding the presence of nonfarm women in Minnesota's fields; however, those farmers who had hired women had been pleased with their work. "Louise has been with us for a year and a half now and we like her so well we want another girl to assist with the barn work." This comment came from a farmer with more than fifty cows, with whose care the women assisted. Other cases involved women who, having been hired for house-labor, worked much better in the fields and barns. "The homemaker said she couldn't keep Elvi in the house to help her for some of the men were always calling, 'Where's Elvi?' She drove all machinery from tractor to hay baler." Regardless of these favorable examples, the role that nonfarm women played in Minnesota agriculture was minimal and did not continue after

the war. According to the farm labor supervisor's annual report for 1945, "there will be no great need . . . for the recruitment and placement of women," on Minnesota farms.<sup>13</sup> Contrary to other states that used female labor after World War II, Minnesota officials decided against the practice. Due to the biased attitude present in Minnesota, farmers had not hired nonfarm female agricultural labor to any great extent during World War II. This reluctance to use nonfarm women as farm laborers emphasized the example of a midwestern state that clearly did not need nor desire its female population to assist its farmers.

Additional information regarding the preference for youth, and mainly male, labor in the state is illustrated by the type of labor and training programs established by the Minnesota agricultural colleges, experiment stations, and extension agents. In February 1943, several training sessions for "farm workers," had been established. Created for the training of youths, these courses attracted mostly high school-aged men. The importance and concern that Minnesota officials expressed regarding the status of the VFV and other youth-labor programs implied the significance that the state placed on the use of men and boys on farms. Over time, however, and regardless of the state's desire to use men for its labor, Minnesota also trained its female farm workers. Although not as prominent or popular, these courses were established to provide instruction for women who worked with heavy farm machinery. Tractor-driving and -training courses were conducted to provide safe working environments for all farm laborers during the war, women included.<sup>14</sup>

Other midwestern farmers also had negative feelings regarding the use of women in their fields. In Illinois, nonfarm women had not been expected to be useful or beneficial to the farm operation in 1943. Because of this, no separate WLA committee was formed in the state; rather the WLA supervisor split her time between that organization and home

economics extension. Still, Illinois farmers utilized female labor during the war. These farm and nonfarm women had been hired for full-time and seasonal work, in some areas of the state at rates greater than the available men. The sporadic regional demand for women farm workers was due to the work accomplished in the early years of the federal WLA organization. According to the state's 1944 labor report, "The superior work done by women the preceding season was responsible for this demand" in several counties. For the most part, however, the use of women in that state's agriculture had not been widely accepted by Illinois farmers.<sup>15</sup>

In Illinois, even though the prevailing attitude concerning the use of women as farm workers had been negative, the state still counted almost eight thousand female agricultural laborers in full-time and seasonal positions in 1943. As part of the farm labor program and the WLA, the women employed in seasonal positions picked and packed fruit, detasseled corn, and picked and packed vegetables. In 1943, and later years, the number of women employed on farms in Illinois had been greater than the WLA figure reported, due to farm women and others who had located their own employment. The state had instituted a training course for college students its first year of WLA operation; due to poor attendance, however, the course was deemed unsuccessful. Of those who participated in farm labor in 1943, only ten women enrolled for the course, mostly those women who worked year-round on farms. Seasonal workers found their training on the job.<sup>16</sup>

Farmers in Illinois had not immediately rushed to use nonfarm women on their operations. Farmers relayed the difficulties involved with training inexperienced women and dealing with the social and personal attitudes encountered with the employment of nonfarm women to other midwestern farmers.<sup>17</sup> Thus, although thousands of women participated in seasonal crop harvests farmers had not radically changed their

opinion regarding the use of women on farms. While some farmers had been pleasantly surprised regarding the expertise and skill demonstrated by Illinois women in terms of their ability to complete agricultural chores, most farmers in the state did not view the women as acceptable labor.

Illinois had not been alone. Other states had also resisted the presence of the WLA within their boundaries. In Nebraska, farmers had been "reluctant to hire town women, except in crews." Comfortable with other sources of labor, mainly prisoners of war, Mexican nationals, and "Texas-mexicans," Nebraska farmers did not routinely hire nonfarm women for field work. Farm daughters and wives were acceptable for any labor needed on Nebraska farms, but farmers did not consider nonfarm women to be enamored of farm life. Extension home agent Helen Suchy Nelson wrote,

The women of Dodge County did a remarkable job in helping to produce one of the largest crops in the county's history. While the actual enrollment in the Women's Land Army did not indicate a great deal of participation by the women, this figure can not be used as a guide. . . . [The farm women] in addition to her regular chores of taking care of the chickens and doing the milking, drove the tractor, drove the stacker team, drove the truck load of grain to the elevators, weeded soybean patches, detasseled hybrid corn, and finally put a finishing touch to her million jobs by picking corn. The farm woman is versatile--she can adapt herself to any kind of a job. . . . The program of enrolling town women and girls for farm work is not satisfactory, for the lights of the city and the higher wages obtainable have much more appeal than nature's great out of doors.

In most cases, farmers thought that the defense industry would be much more attractive to nonfarm women--better wages and

more "patriotic appeal." And for their part, the defense industries were blamed for drawing a large potential labor force away from the state's fields. Thus, recruitment for the Nebraska WLA had been difficult, both in securing workers and employment for the laborers. Further the lack of a full-time WLA supervisor indicates the state's inability to promote the necessity of a female labor force.<sup>18</sup>

The absence of a full-time WLA staff person hampered the state's ability to effectively recruit a female labor force for its farmers. Although such action might not have been realistic in Nebraska because its farmers would not have accepted such a labor force, it is impossible to totally accept the absence of female farm labor in the state. While some women did work on Nebraska farms, they were not in the majority of the state's domestic war effort. The women who worked on Nebraska farms had been employed by hybrid seed companies to detassel corn, and by farmers to cultivate and harvest seasonal crops. Homemakers, teachers, and students worked on farms "to save the day," especially in terms of the following crops: beans, beets, corn, fruits, grains, potatoes, and truck crops. While the use of women had not been common or in great numbers, farmers who used the labor had praise for the women. Albert Arnes of Green Acres Hybrid Seed Corn Company described his 1943 experience with women workers. "I had a crew of 38 women and 4 boys detasseling corn. The women did the best job any crew has ever done for me." Clearly, in some cases, Nebraska farmers recognized and appreciated the work completed by women laborers.<sup>19</sup>

County agents also supported the employment of women on the state's farms, and advertised their usefulness to their constituents. Buffalo County home agent Louise Epp reported, "Twenty-five women in Buffalo County enrolled in the Women's Land Army. . . . These women irrigated, cultivated crops, worked in potatoes and beets, did the chores besides feeding and clothing their families and doing a fine job of food

preservation and storage. About 10 of these women were town women who helped with peak labor in potato and sugar beets." Still, the reluctance of Nebraska farmers to use nonfarm women as agricultural labor can be determined from the state reports as county agents discussed the continued reluctance to hire the women.<sup>20</sup>

In South Dakota, the attitudes among farmers and other rural peoples were similar to those of its neighbors, Nebraska, Minnesota, and Iowa. The state's farmers used farm women as labor, but did not initially recruit other women for the WLA. Following the 1942 crop harvest, South Dakota farmers recognized the extent of their labor problem, and without an acceptable source of labor seen available for 1943, farmers voluntarily reduced their production and acreage. By doing so, South Dakota fell into a situation that the federal government had hoped to avoid. By not feeling secure and confident with the labor available, South Dakota farmers did not take advantage of wartime measures to provide themselves with workers; instead they chose to reduce their production levels. Because many South Dakota farmers reduced their production in 1944, more women applied for wartime farm labor service than jobs existed.<sup>21</sup>

During the 1944 crop year, state and local officials hoped for a change in South Dakota farmer attitude and advocated an increase in the number of women employed on farms. Through improved and larger recruitment efforts, South Dakota WLA used women's and civic groups to expose more women to the goals of the labor program. By doing so, greater participation from nonfarm women occurred in 1944 than previous years. Homemakers, college and university students and faculty, and working women joined farm women to participate in the war effort. Women worked in grain fields, on livestock, dairy, and poultry farms, and on truck crop farms across the state. By 1945, the number of women who worked on South Dakota farms would further increase. And,



while their work would not change, the demand for and attitude toward the employed women had altered dramatically over the course of the war. Still, the presence of farm women accounted for the majority of those who labored in the state's fields. And, even with increased recruitment efforts South Dakota did not contain enough labor to effectively harvest its crops; additional labor was brought to South Dakota from Arkansas, Mississippi, and Tennessee.<sup>22</sup> By the end of the war, the attitude among South Dakota farmers mirrored those other midwestern states; farmers accepted urban labor once women demonstrated their ability for agricultural work.

Other states within the Middle West had similar problems regarding the placement of nonfarm women on their farms. Although Kansas had a WLA operation in all counties and training courses were established at Kansas State Agricultural College and other state colleges, farmers did not readily accept nonfarm women as workers in 1943. Over the course of World War II and WLA operation in Kansas, the number of nonfarm women employed on farms steadily increased. Accounting for only 10 percent of the women involved in the WLA and local labor programs in 1943, nonfarm women's participation in farm labor increased to about 20 percent in 1945. Of these employed on the state's farms, 85 percent of the farm and nonfarm women operated heavy machinery during the first year of WLA organization. Scholar Caron Smith found in her study of Kansas that, for the most part, farmers used only farm women to operate heavy equipment, as farmers did not want nonfarm women to "handle their expensive machinery." Thus, the majority of farm work fell to the farm women. In this regard, women worked on grain, livestock, and other crop farms; they drove combines, tractors and trucks, fed livestock, milked cows, raked hay, and detasseled corn. As the years of war progressed, more farmers sought labor-saving devices to quicken their production time as well as save on hired labor. In addition, farm women exchanged labor with

neighbors to assist each other's farm and labor needs.<sup>23</sup>

During the war, the most frequent farm job performed by Kansas women had been hauling grain. Almost 30 percent of the women engaged in agricultural labor in the state accomplished this task for their employer or family member. The advantage that farm women possessed had been a knowledge of farm operations and equipment. Although the women would have been relegated to house and barn chores prior to 1940, they were not completely ignorant of farm operations. Mrs. Ray Sayler performed many male gender-specific jobs on her family's 200-acre farm near Manhattan after her son enlisted in the military in 1943. In addition to "her usual chores of gathering eggs and feeding and milking the cows," Mrs. Sayler also drove a "tractor and a horse-pulled mowing machine. . . . Besides those tasks, she had meals to prepare and a small child to care for." Mrs. Sayler's experience on her own farm is representative of most of Kansas's female farm labor during the war. While about 20 percent were nonfarm women by the end of 1945, clearly, most of the heavy farm work had been performed by farm women. The 1944 Kansas annual WLA report described the women who worked in the state's agriculture during the war as "first, the farmer's wife; second, the farmer's daughter; third, the daughter who 'is in business but who can get two weeks off to help her dad with the job she is somewhat familiar with'; fourth, the relative who 'likes to spend a short vacation on the farm'; fifth, friends of the family eager to help; and finally, those urban women who 'desire to help if they are accepted into the farm family.'"<sup>24</sup>

Still, not all midwestern states had been opposed to the use of nonfarm women as agricultural labor during World War II. In Oklahoma, farmers hired farm and nonfarm women without benefit of a WLA recruitment effort in 1943. County agents and labor supervisors organized recruitment drives through local media, letters, brochures, and civic organizations. Even without the structure of the WLA and its recruitment

procedures, Oklahoma placed more than eight thousand farm and nonfarm women in agriculture in 1943; almost twice that figure in 1944, and almost twenty thousand women in 1945.<sup>25</sup> In terms of service, farm and nonfarm women performed different chores during their employment. Nonfarm women drove tractors and cultivated and harvested several truck crops. Farm women drove tractors, trucks, and other vehicles, cared for livestock, harvested hay, and operated farm equipment. Although individual thoughts from farmers and workers were not included in this state's reports, WLA supervisor Venie Ann McDuffie commented on the acceptance of Oklahoma farmers regarding women farm workers, "Interviews with farmers in regard to the satisfaction of women's work on the farm reveals that they have worked conscientiously and efficiently in performing their duties." Conditions in Oklahoma continued through the end of World War II as farm and nonfarm remained in positions established in 1943.<sup>26</sup>

In Ohio, initial problems developed with the use of nonfarm and urban women as farm laborers in 1943. There, farmers assumed that nonfarm women would not be able to manage and complete strenuous work, other farmers would "ridicule them for employing women," and farm women would object "to having town women around for fear they might try to patronize them because of their mode of living on the farm or for other fancied reasons." Because of these and other reasons, most Ohio farmers in 1943 "wanted to exhaust all other sources of labor" before they used women for agricultural work. Thus Ohio farmers hired men, youths, and immigrant-urban women for field work. As part of a yearly trend, immigrant women picked beans and other truck crops.<sup>27</sup> In this instance, it is apparent that the place for urban immigrant women in Ohio had been much the same as the African American women in the South. This distinction of class and nativity echoed southern sentiment regarding the presence of urban white women in the fields there. In Ohio the presence of immigrant women on the

farm and in the fields had been accepted, while that of the urban, professional, white (native) women had not.

In 1943, the state used radio, Cleveland Plain Dealer and other newspapers, civic organizations, and universities to promote the WLA. This effort, regardless of farmer attitude concerning nonfarm women, resulted in more than 118,000 farm and nonfarm women employed during the 1943 Ohio harvest season. And while most of these had been farm women, almost 4,000 nonfarm women had also participated. These women cultivated and harvested truck crops, detasseled corn, and cared for poultry. While the state's farmers had not been widely receptive of nonfarm women as agricultural labor initially, state and extension officials convinced farmers of the women's benefits by the time of the first harvest. By that time, however, "town and city women were not particularly interested in working on farms," because they found suitable wartime employment elsewhere. In response to this lack of interest concerning farm work, extension and state officials in preparation for the 1944 crop season, worked to get a better start in labor recruitment of nonfarm women. By coordinating with home demonstration agents, the WLA and Extension Service within Ohio hoped to broaden their efforts to recruit women from a larger source of labor for 1944.<sup>28</sup>

In that regard, the state organization had been successful as recruiting brochures were distributed, feature stories printed in local and county newspapers, and radio addresses across Ohio publicized the wartime effort of women as farm workers. Promotion of the women's usefulness, availability, and ability as agricultural labor overcame previous bias held by farmers and the general public, and thus, as a result, Ohio farmers requested women to participate in work that demanded skill rather than brute strength. Recruitment efforts proved successful in 1944, as the state placed farm and nonfarm women in its fields. Regardless of state efforts and farmer acceptance, the number of women

employed in Ohio during the latter years of war decreased from 1943. In the last year of the war, the unpredictability of the weather caused several crop damages and therefore reduced the need for farm labor.<sup>29</sup>

Still, regardless of the year or situation, women who joined the WLA and worked on farms found the experience enjoyable and exciting. One worker, identified only as "P.J." expressed her thoughts about the WLA this way, "this has been the most enjoyable summer I've spent. Maybe it's because the great out-of-doors and the joy of working with the soil and growing things seemed to cast such a spell of happiness over me." P.J.'s positive experience within the WLA is repeated by other 1943 recruits, including "D.J.E." who commented, "There was never a dull moment from dawn to dark. Our work made us gay and gave us a good feeling inside which is indescribable." These cheerful illustrations of the Ohio WLA program assisted later recruitment efforts to entice other women to join the organization.<sup>30</sup>

Additionally, farmer reaction to the women and their ability to accomplish farm chores further enhanced the image of the WLA. A farmer in Erie County, Ohio, who hired WLA and foreign laborers had greater success with his female employees. "You can depend on them not running away, getting drunk, or smashing up the machinery." Many Ohio farmers described similar situations comparing WLA workers to other labor groups. In 1944, a cherry farmer lauded the work accomplished by women, placing their expertise and commitment above other workers, including "prisoners-of-war, Jamaicans and transients." Farmers across Ohio expressed satisfaction with the labor provided by the WLA participants. In Erie County farmers commented, "I could use a lot more like that group I used this summer"; "Mighty good for green hands"; and "If you can guarantee twice as much help as the kind of help you gave last summer, I'll put in more crops." Additionally, Erie County farmers reported that the women "had fewer

problems and took less of the [county] agents time than any other labor group." This attitude concerning women's labor in 1944 emphasized farmers' abilities to accept workers who previously had been viewed as unsuitable for agricultural labor. An unidentified farmer from Huron, Ohio put it best, "I thought the girls you provided last summer couldn't be beat, but watch those girls pile off that truck coming in and go to work preparing the vegetables they have picked for the market. Never a wasted motion!"<sup>31</sup>

This Huron, Ohio, farmer represented a view seldom seen in the Midwest during the war. His acceptance of the placement of nonfarm women on farms was contrary to public sentiment at the time. However, he was not alone in Ohio in World War II. There were farmers in the region who readily used female farm labor from the beginning of the WLA. Regarded by the general agricultural public as desperate and as people who would welcome any and all available sources of labor for their truck-crop operations, they were not considered "real" farmers. Whatever the reason behind the use of nonfarm female labor for farms brought some locales in direct favor with the national WLA organization. For example, Michigan and North Dakota farmers routinely hired nonfarm women for harvest labor. Their endorsement of women as agricultural workers from the start of the WLA allowed for successful harvests within each state without the danger of destroying crops or recruiting labor elsewhere.

In Michigan, for the 1943 crop harvest, all available women (farm and nonfarm) had been used. This feat of active recruitment occurred in a region that did not readily accept nonfarm labor, accomplished in a state that became an exception to the rest of the Midwest. The importance of the WLA to the state of Michigan and its harvests became known as farmers openly accepted the labor that the women provided. Recruitment efforts included the use of radio, lectures, letters, and meetings to promote the WLA organization to the

public. Local and state media efforts brought thousands of women to the labor-needy areas of the state, as women volunteered for any length of service. Farm, rural, town, and urban women participated in all field and farm activities. More than 8500 farm women signed up as WLA members; however, this represented only a small portion of the actual number of farm women at work in 1943 due to the fact that most did not see the immediate need to register as members of the WLA. For the most part, urban professionals and working women, college students, and housewives volunteered for the WLA in Michigan. Urban women were hired to pick cherries, strawberries, and other fruits, as well as vegetables and other crops. Their feelings for such actions can be explained by the desire to be patriotic, "out-of-doors," or a change from regular work.<sup>32</sup>

In 1943, the "first WLA crew to be placed [in Michigan] was a group of five women in Kalamazoo County who helped cut asparagus." And as worded in the state report, "not exactly an army but it's a start." And clearly it had been a start, as more than thirteen thousand women registered with the WLA and Extension Service for employment in 1943. This successful practice of recruitment would continue in 1944 and reach several thousand farm and nonfarm women as they joined the WLA. The women again harvested fruits and vegetables, as well as assisted on dairy and general farms. In some regions of the state, specific requests for the WLA occurred over the VFV. Ruth Peck, in her report for the WLA, explained why, "Women, being more mature, are more responsible and do not engage in so much horseplay in the fields. This was the reason why requests for camps this year were directed to the Women's Land Army section." The women's maturity brought another dimension to their employment as farmers found they worked more conscientiously than younger laborers.<sup>33</sup>

Through the war years, Michigan WLA organizers continued their efforts to provide an effective and worthy program to the federal labor program. Several county WLA administrators

were in place, and assisted with recruitment and placement efforts. The state organization utilized all sources of media available to them as recruitment spots appeared in local and county newspapers and radio stations. Angeline Gale, WLA county supervisor for Berrien County, Michigan, presented the WLA message over Chicago radio stations. Her discussion of the labor program and necessity for women volunteers covered the type of work to be completed in Michigan, in this case-- "fruit pickers", and "the need for workers not vacationists." By far, one of the greatest fears held by WLA administrators and farmers would be that women would join the WLA with the impression that they were on vacation. These fears were not unfounded, because early WLA publicity had advertised the labor program as a "vacation down on the farm."<sup>34</sup>

However, it is clear from the Michigan annual labor reports, that few, if any, WLA workers in that state treated their farm experience as a romantic vacation. Many workers termed their time on the farm as a "vacation," but it is obvious that they meant "working vacation." This sentiment is present in letters sent from WLA participants to Angeline Gale, WLA county supervisor for Berrien County, Michigan. Betty J. Coleman wrote, "After my safe arrival home in Minneapolis I still feel thrilled when I think of my eventful experience at cherry picking. Although the wind did blow and the trees rocked and the ladders wobbled on their legs while I stood on tiptoe to reach that biggest and reddest cherry of all away on top, I wouldn't have trade the adventure for anything. . . . As our good 'boss,' Mr. Teichmann would say, 'a good way to spend a patriotic vacation.'" This letter and others to the state WLA organization further illustrate the sentiments of workers as they completed their labor assignment, and to some received a "paid vacation."<sup>35</sup>

In North Dakota, farm and nonfarm women had been employed on farms from the start of the Emergency Farm Labor Program. Their presence had been accepted and used almost from the



beginning, due in part to the projected labor needs during the 1943 crop season. A severe labor shortage, along with a "bumper crop of grain", brought about arrangements to use any and all available labor. Due to these reasons, the use of women on the state's fields proved to be less of an issue than in other states of the Middle West. Women assisted in all aspects of grain production; in some cases as "one of several 'all female' harvest crews" present throughout the state. Women had also been employed on livestock and truck-crop operations. In Cass County, North Dakota, female work crews harvested potatoes. In one instance, six women picked almost 775,000 pounds of potatoes in 1944. In addition to harvesting truck crops, women also drove and operated farm machinery. Reminiscent of southern states where women had been welcomed for their ability to operate heavy machinery, or in the Northeast where women had worked well on poultry farms, in North Dakota, farmers favored the use of women in preference over men for most farm jobs. With the heavy state demand for labor, WLA and Extension Service officials did not spend their efforts on recruitment, but instead provided education and information for farm laborers and farm employers.<sup>36</sup>

The Midwest represented a region during the war that did not immediately accept nonfarm female agricultural labor. And while exceptions to this preconceived idea exist, for the most part, farmers held biased opinions regarding nonfarm women's ability to perform farm work. The following comments by a midwestern farmer in 1944, as reported by Frances Valentine, clearly noted the biases and prejudices of the region regarding the use of urban women as labor, as well as their changes of opinion regarding that labor.

Received your inquiry today about my experience with the Women's Land Army and decided to answer right away. If I delayed perhaps I would never get at it again. First I was in an awful jam or I would never have tried them.

Then I saw the article in the newspaper and decided to try anything once. Now I will say that they were eminently successful, and helped me get the job done. If I could have had them a month earlier, it would have helped a lot more as they could have harrowed or disked and I would have gotten my crop in earlier. . . . They drove tractors for me on side rake, pick-up baler, rotary hoe . . . and trucks to pick up hay in the field. One girl had never driven a car, but before she left she had driven all four tractors and three trucks of various manufacture. . . . The biggest factor to their success was their patriotic attitude. They came to help-rather than make a lot of money. . . . Of course there were many days when there was no tractor work, and they cut weeds, hoed weeds in the corn, helped in the garden, lawn, and house, etc. I imagine the novelty of the work was an aid to them too.

This passage emphasized the thoughts and ideas held by most midwestern farmers during the war regarding the use of the WLA as a labor source. And, as the passage indicates, farmers altered their attitude concerning nonfarm women as laborers as the war progressed.<sup>37</sup>

Midwestern farmers found as the war continued that they did not have a choice in their search for acceptable farm labor. They had to accept the use of women in the fields, as well as the presence of the WLA. And, for the most part, midwestern farmers had been able to do that. By 1945, several thousand members of state WLA organizations worked to bring in the crops. The acceptance of nonfarm women as agricultural labor in the Midwest mirrored the attitude held by other regions regarding the ability of women to perform farm work. Thus, by the end of the war, midwestern farmers, as well as others across the country, grudgingly accepted female farm labor. While midwestern farmers and their families had been

reluctant to hire urban women for farm work in 1943, their reluctance is tempered in latter years. Demands made by the federal government for crop and food production, as well as the popularity that developed regarding the WLA program, assisted in raising the participation levels of the WLA after 1943. Thus, by the 1944 and 1945 crop years, WLA volunteers in the midwestern United States included farm and nonfarm women as thousands took part in agricultural activities each crop year.

## Notes

1. R. Douglas Hurt, Agricultural Technology in the Twentieth Century (Manhattan, Kansas: Sunflower University Press, 1991), 45-52; Deborah Fink, Agrarian Women: Wives and Mothers in Rural Nebraska, 1880-1940 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992). Fink described the agricultural conditions that existed in the region, as well as the labor expected by the farmer of his wife and children. In terms of marginal farmers, the work output of family members increased, as the lines of "separate spheres" blurred as women and children performed farm jobs viewed as male-specific.

2. Cornelia Butler Flora and Jan L. Flora, "Structure of Agriculture and Women's Culture in the Great Plains," Great Plains Quarterly 8 (Fall 1988): 195-205; Mary Neth, "Gender and the Family Labor System: Defining Work in the Rural Midwest," Journal of Social History 27 (Spring 1994): 563-77; Fink, Agrarian Women, 43, 52-53, 60, 68. The attitudes of the Middle West are emphasized through the number of women employed through the Extension Service in 1943.

3. Katherine Jellison, Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology, 1913-1963 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 134.

4. Ibid., 135.

5. Deborah Fink, Open Country, Iowa: Rural Women, Tradition and Change (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1986), 103-34.

6. "When Town Girls Help," Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead, 19 June 1943, 1, 15; Jellison, Entitled to Power, 136. The following are the statistics that Wallaces' Farmer recorded concerning the need for non-farm labor on Iowa farms. Iowa farm men responded that 19 percent would use "land girls" in the fields, 38 percent would use them in the kitchen, while 43 percent felt that they would not have any use of the "land girls." Iowa farm women did not differ much in their estimate of the "land girls" capabilities for farm work. 10 percent of Iowa farm women would use the "land girls" in the fields, 59 percent would use them in the kitchen, and 31 percent admitted that they had no use for them.

7. "Iowa, State Extension Farm Labor Program Annual Report, 1943," box 3, Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports of Extension and Other Workers under the Farm Labor Program, 1943-1947, Records of the U.S. Extension Service, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter AR, NARG 33).

8. "Iowa, State Extension Farm Labor Program Annual Report, 1943," AR, NARG 33; "Iowa, Annual Report, 1944," box 13, AR, NARG 33.

9. Dorothy Walton Binder to E. M. Freeman, 19 June 1942, College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics Papers, University Archives, Walter Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis (hereafter College of Agriculture Papers).

10. E. M. Freeman to Dorothy Walton Binder, 25 June 1942, College of Agriculture Papers. Throughout the war years, the placement of men and non-farm youth on Minnesota farms occurred at much greater numbers than the placement of women on farms. The attitude of these farmers clearly did not see the need for women on their farms.

11. "Minnesota 1943 Annual Farm Labor Report," box 5, AR, NARG 33; "Report on the Minnesota Farm Labor Program, 1943," University Farm, St. Paul, Agricultural Extension Service, University of Minnesota, USDA, April 1944, folder farm labor 1943, box 7 (Specialists Annual Reports), ALD6.1, University of Minnesota, Agricultural Extension Service Papers, 1914-1976/1977, University Archives, Walter Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis (hereafter Minnesota Papers).

12. "Minnesota, 1943 Annual Farm Labor Report," AR, NARG 33; "Minnesota Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 26, AR, NARG 33; "Report on the Minnesota Farm Labor Program, 1943," Minnesota Papers; Wayne D. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program, 1943-1947," Agricultural Monograph No. 13, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, USDA, September 1951, 126-28, 148-49. The number of youths placed on Minnesota farms has been recorded as: 1943, 27,046; 1944, 19,401; 1945, 16,597. For those involved in the WLA in Minnesota, the numbers are considerable lower: 1943, 5616; 1944, 5107; 1945, 3700. Still, youths represented about 30 percent of the state labor force in 1943, while the women accounted for 5 percent. The remainder had been filled by men.

13. "Minnesota Farm Labor Supervisors Annual Report, 1945," AR, NARG 33.

14. "The Training of Farm Workers," Department of Education, Minnesota, February 1943, box 2, College of Agriculture Papers; "Report on the Minnesota Farm Labor Program, 1943," Minnesota Papers; "Report of the Minnesota Farm Labor Program, 1944," University Farm, St. Paul, Agricultural Extension Service, University of Minnesota, USDA, folder farm labor 1944, box 7 (Specialists Annual Reports), Minnesota Papers; "Report of the Minnesota Farm Labor Program, 1945," University Farm, St. Paul, Agricultural Extension

Service, University of Minnesota, USDA, folder farm labor 1945, box 8 (Specialists Annual Reports), Minnesota Papers; P. E. Miller to county extension agents, 15 June 1943, file 3b, section G, box 61, Minnesota Papers; Fred P. Frutchey to Paul E. Miller, 30 October 1943 and "Evaluation Study of the V.F.V. Program, Yellow Medicine County, Minnesota and the Minneapolis Training Program," 27-29 September 1943, folder farm labor/VFV, file 6, section G, box 66, Minnesota Papers; "A Report to the Superintendent on the Placement of Minneapolis Boys in Conjunction with the Farm Workers Training Program of the Minneapolis Public Schools," August 1945, folder farm labor/VFV, file 6, section G, box 66, Minnesota Papers; F. W. Lathrop to Paul E. Miller, 20 October 1943 and "Evaluation Study of the Victory Farm Volunteers in Conjunction with Big Stone County, Minnesota," 30 September 1943, folder farm labor/VFV, file 6, section G, box 66, Minnesota Papers; "Report, Victory Farm Volunteer Program, Minnesota, 1943," folder farm labor/VFV, file 6, section G, box 66, Minnesota Papers; Florence L. Hall to Women's Land Army Supervisor, 12 July 1944, Extension Service, USDA, Women's Land Army Records, USDA, History Collection, Special Collections, National Agricultural Library, Beltsville, Maryland (hereafter WLA Records).

15. "Illinois State Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1943," box 3, AR, NARG 33; "Illinois 1944 Annual Narrative Report, Emergency Farm Labor Program," box 13, AR, NARG 33.

16. "Illinois State Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1943," AR, NARG 33; "Illinois 1944 Annual Narrative Report, Emergency Farm Labor Program," AR, NARG 33.

17. "Illinois State Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1943," AR, NARG 33; "Illinois 1944 Annual Narrative Report, Emergency Farm Labor Program," AR, NARG 33.

18. "Nebraska Report: Farm Labor, World War II," box 11, Publicity, General and Other Correspondence and Related Records, 1943-1948, Records concerning the Farm Labor Program, Records of the U.S. Extension Service, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter PUB, NARG 33); "Nebraska, State Supervisor, Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1943," box 6, AR, NARG 33; "Nebraska Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 27, AR, NARG 33. As part of the Emergency Farm Labor Program for Nebraska, the WLA supervisor had not been employed full-time, year-round, instead she organized the WLA for eight months each year (May through December); part of the year she devoted her full effort to the organizations, while in the months before January 1, she worked part-time.

19. Lester A. Schlup, "Recruiting the 'Land Army,'" The Nation's Agriculture 19 (May 1944): 4, 18-19; Nebraska Report:

Farm Labor, World War II," PUB, NARG 33; "Nebraska, State Supervisor, Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1943," AR, NARG 33; "Nebraska Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," AR, NARG 33. Even if farmers had been willing to hire Nebraskan women for agricultural work, state recruitment efforts would have been difficult due to a reluctance by women to enter farm labor.

20. "Nebraska, State Supervisor, Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1943," AR, NARG 33; "Nebraska Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," AR, NARG 33.

21. "South Dakota Farm Labor Prospects in 1943: Its Effects on Crops and Livestock," folder farm help, box 6, Harold E. Stassen Records, Minnesota State Archives, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul (hereafter Stassen Records); "South Dakota, 1943 Annual Farm Labor Report," box 9, AR, NARG 33.

22. "South Dakota, Farm Labor Reports, 1944," box 19, AR, NARG 33; "South Dakota, Farm Labor Supervisors Annual Report, 1945," box 30, AR, NARG 33.

23. "Kansas, Emergency Farm Labor, Annual Report, 1943," box 4, AR, NARG 33; "Kansas, Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 24, AR, NARG 33; Caron Smith, "The Women's Land Army During World War II," Kansas History 14 (Summer 1991): 82, 86, 87. In Kansas, the state labor program had not utilized the distinct "Women's Land Army" name for their female labor program. Instead found that the use of women had been better accepted as part of the overall wartime farm labor program. Regardless of their title, Kansas women discovered that as the war progressed, the amount of time they spent per day on farm labor increased.

24. Smith, "The Women's Land Army During World War II," 86, 88.

25. The lower figure for employment in 1943 was a result of bad weather which reduced crops and the state's demand for emergency farm labor.

26. "Oklahoma, Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1943," box 8, AR, NARG 33; "Oklahoma Emergency Farm Labor Annual Report, 1944," box 18, AR, NARG 33; "Oklahoma Farm labor Supervisors Annual Report, 1945," box 29, AR, NARG 33.

27. "Ohio State Supervisor Emergency Farm Labor Annual Narrative Report, 1943," box 7, AR, NARG 33. The use of the term "women" in Ohio, referred only to urban, professional, white (native-born) women, not all women.

28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.; "Ohio Annual Report, 1944," box 17, AR, NARG 33; "Ohio Farm Labor Supervisors Annual Report, 1945," box 28, AR, NARG 33; Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," 148-49.
30. "Ohio State Supervisor Emergency Farm Labor Annual Narrative Report, 1943," AR, NARG 33.
31. Ibid.; "Ohio Annual Report, 1944," AR, NARG 33.
32. "Michigan Emergency Farm labor Program Annual Report, 1943," box 5, AR, NARG 33; "Michigan Annual Report, 1944," box 15, AR, NARG 33; "Michigan Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 25, AR, NARG 33.
33. "Michigan Emergency Farm labor Program Annual Report, 1943," AR, NARG 33; "Michigan Annual Report, 1944," AR, NARG 33.
34. "Michigan, Annual Report, 1944," AR, NARG 33; "Michigan, Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," AR, NARG 33; Elizabeth Spence, "Vacation Down on the Farm," Independent Woman 22 (April 1943): 110-11.
35. "Michigan, Annual Report, 1944," AR, NARG 33; "Michigan, Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," AR, NARG 33.
36. William Lemke to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 5 August 1943, XYZ file, folder 1937-1945, box 4, Official file 227a (Farm Matters), Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York (hereafter FDR Papers); "North Dakota, 1943 Annual Farm Labor Report," box 7, AR, NARG 33; "North Dakota, Annual Report, 1944," box 17, AR, NARG 33; "North Dakota, Farm Labor Supervisors Annual Report, 1945", box 28, AR, NARG 33.
37. Frances W. Valentine, Women and Wartime Work: A Study of Eight Midwest States in 1944, Extension Service, USDA, 1944, 8-9.



CHAPTER 9. WOMEN IN SERVICE, THE SOUTH:  
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN RACE AND CLASS GET IN THE WAY

The WLA existed throughout the country during World War II. In the South, however, the presence and acceptance of the labor program did not occur immediately. While the East and West coasts had readily accepted nonfarm female labor and the WLA, regions like the Midwest and South opposed the use of nonfarm women on farms. In the Midwest, farmer biases had been a result of the belief that nonfarm urban women were unsuitable for agriculture. Over time, midwestern farmers accepted the WLA and its labor. In the South other conditions controlled the presence, or lack, of the WLA. Although that region's farmers also held a negative attitude regarding the use of nonfarm women on farms, the justification and reasoning concerning nonfarm women was racially motivated.

The South consisted of two distinct societies based on race. Within each separate society other characteristics, mainly economics, affected the region's ability to promote the WLA and recruit nonfarm women for work. Because of these issues the WLA did not organize in any manner similar to the remainder of the country. For the most part, the racial component of southern society affected the operation of federal programs during World War II. The southern WLA organizations encountered racial problems upon establishment. Many states did not officially organize a WLA program due to racial discord, while other states excluded African Americans from joining. Southern farmers had concerns about urban white women in cotton, tobacco, and other crop fields, especially in terms of their position within society. These issues confronted southern farmers and hindered progress of the federal labor plan in the region. In the South, the issues regarding acceptance of nonfarm women as agricultural labor result more from racial and economic distinctions than social. In a region where racial discrimination was part of society,

it is not surprising that its characteristics became part of wartime labor measures as well.

Throughout the southern states, a specific labor system developed among African American farmers and field workers. In addition to their work on their own farm, African Americans spent time on other farms participating in a system of labor exchange. In a study of North Carolina, Dolores E. Janiewski described the situation that developed in the agricultural fields. Tenants and sharecroppers performed many different jobs each day. In addition to caring for the home and children, processing food, making clothing, and caring for the garden, home, and livestock, married women assisted in the fields and, at times, held wage-earning positions. These women would have completed wage work at home, or hired out as farm workers for neighboring farms. In her analysis, Janiewski recognized that studies regarding tenant and sharecropping women indicated their willingness to shift from the women's sphere to the men's sphere on their own or another's farm without difficulty. Contemporary studies of the early twentieth century related that women expressed pride in their ability to accomplish any type of farm work, thus making the African American system of labor exchange acceptable in the region.<sup>1</sup>

Historically in southern states, the development of an African American exchange of labor system had not been unique. As described by Melissa Walker, and her work regarding extension agents, "black farm women worked side-by-side in the fields with their husbands and . . . as domestics or agricultural day laborers." This tradition of labor exchange did not extend to all southern farmers. Walker further discussed that it had not been common for white women to participate in an exchange of labor system. While the white farm women would have worked occasionally on their own farm, they rarely provided assistance to other farms.<sup>2</sup> And, while these issues concerning the work completed by African American

women are important to understanding the agricultural structure in the South, they do not conceal more important southern concerns, mainly those of race and class.

For the most part, a southern state's inability to accept female labor had been a result of the position that race and class placed on people in the region. Connected by the southern experience, these characteristics of southern society are further strengthened in ways that can be described as "gender-specific." Feminist Karen Sacks has addressed these issues as she examined ties between three characteristics of society: class, gender, and race. Sack's Marxist examination of society analyzed the work expended by families, as well as those members of families that did not provide viable assistance.<sup>3</sup> From this it is possible to extrapolate the presence of women on the farm, and dependent on the location within the country, and decide whether their labor was considered beneficial. In those locations where women had been viewed as "reserve labor," as in the Midwest, their contribution to farm labor had not been great, however in locations where all members of the family worked the farm, the women's participation would have been necessary and expected.

The issues of class and race in relation to gender are also important in studying the WLA. Race and class greatly affected the work attitude of individuals and effectively divided the social system. While services and businesses had been segregated by race, in agriculture a distinction by class also existed. For the most part, men and women of the lower economic class, black and white, had worked in the fields and homes for decades. Additionally, southern society grouped all African Americans into a lower economic and social class regardless of their position within that society.<sup>4</sup> The presence of women and children in the fields had occurred as southern tenants and sharecroppers eked out a living. Because of these labor traditions, the presence of middle-class southerners in agriculture had not been common by the end of

the Depression, and therefore, as evidenced in WLA annual state reports, the recruited presence of urban middle-class white women in southern fields had been difficult to promote.<sup>5</sup>

Southern states required agricultural labor during World War II just as much as other regions of the country, and they worked to provide this labor to their farmers. Compounded by initial farmer reluctance to accept female farm workers (Caucasian), as well as the absence of state WLA organizations, labor had not always been easy to secure for each year's harvest. Although according to a 1943 Gallup poll, 49 percent of southern farmers "agreed with the idea of women as field workers," they had not been as eager to accept white, middle-class, urban women. Additionally, states had the problem of enticing residents to remain in rural areas and work on farms instead of leaving for the urban locales and entering the defense industry. During World War II, some 3 million people left the rural South, decreasing that region's population by 22 percent. As part of this group, rural African Americans left their tenancy and sharecropping lifestyles to enter the urban, industrial sector. This out-migration of rural southern African Americans had started early in the twentieth century and continued through World War II. In the period from 1915 to 1960 nine million blacks left the rural South in search of better conditions in the nation's cities. In the period from 1940 to 1960, the rural black population of the South decreased from 51 to 25 percent of the total, or roughly half of the total black population.<sup>6</sup> During the course of the war, thousands of African Americans left the region for urban areas and a chance at a better life.

This concern, population out-migration from the South, along with the added issues of race and class, caused southern farm owners additional problems in securing adequate labor during World War II. Societal biases had to be addressed in order to effectively hire harvest workers. Thus, southern agriculturalists and state farm organizers needed to put aside

their racial prejudices and work to create an effective program for farm labor. For the most part, the placement of African American and white farm women in fields had been wholly acceptable, as was the use of nonfarm black women, however, as a source of labor nonfarm urban white women had not been acceptable to southern farmers or labor programs.

In the Southeast, the presence of the WLA within the state labor structure had been tolerated at best. In many cases, the main concern had not been a racial bias alone, but one that combined the issues of race and class. This attitude did not exist across the entire region, however, as several states operated successful WLA programs, as well as recruited thousands of women to participate in harvests. At the time of congressional appropriation hearings the one positive statement concerning the use of women as agricultural labor had been made by T. O. Davis, director of the Alabama Extension Service in Auburn. Expecting initial farmer resistance, Davis described methods used by Alabama extension agents to educate farmers regarding the best possible use of female labor and ways to utilize unused school buildings and buses for housing and transportation. These efforts in 1943 brought acceptance of the WLA to Alabama, while convincing farmers of the viability of the program.<sup>7</sup>

Davis' statements before Congress did not accurately summarize the WLA program in his state, but instead illustrated Davis' and Hall's perception of a perfect farm labor program in Alabama and the nation. In terms of Alabama, however, the question remained. Had Alabama farmers readily accepted WLA forces in their fields? The answer lies in the annual reports of the Emergency Farm Labor Program issued after each crop year. For the most part, the state organization reported that the previous presence of women on Alabama farms had not been considered unique but common because "in Alabama farm women have always worked. In addition to their house work they work at the same field jobs

as the men." Because of this, it had not been necessary for the Extension Service and the WLA to recruit farm women for assistance in the fields they were already there. These agencies would, however, recruit nonfarm women for field work; in most cases, these women were African Americans. Women employed on Alabama farms in 1945 harvested fruits and vegetables, "stacked" peanuts, and picked cotton.<sup>8</sup>

The situation that developed in Alabama with the use of African American women as seasonal labor was a South-wide occurrence. For the most part, it is difficult to determine the extent racism existed within the WLA because the annual reports did not explicitly state the problem. In most cases, states hinted at issues that emerged regarding race and/or class in the WLA, its workers, and among area farmers. In the case of South Carolina, however, these concerns were discussed in the state's report.

While it had not been common for states to explicitly state their biases and reservations in relation to the recruitment and placement of women in their fields, South Carolina had explicitly done so within its annual labor reports. In a state where the traditional farm labor source, African Americans, had been lured away from agriculture as a result of high-paying jobs elsewhere, or the security of military pay, action needed to be taken to return the labor to the land. To provide farmers with necessary labor, the state recognized its need for strong recruitment measures to bring African American women back to farm work. However, South Carolina labor officials, in 1943, did not want to appear to have created an organization that recruited only African American farm workers, and therefore the WLA recruited only white farm women for that year. State officials assumed that it would be easier to bring African Americans into the organization at a later date, rather than the addition of Caucasian women to the organization if they had initially recruited only African American women for labor positions.<sup>9</sup>

South Carolina's 1943 labor recruitment policy does not seem to be well thought out or beneficial to the state's agricultural sector. After admitting the need for black women to return to farming, South Carolina WLA's then recruited only white farm women. Clearly, these actions indicate an attitude of discrimination against the membership of African American women in the state WLA labor program.

The practice by the South Carolina WLA to recruit only white farm women during its first year of operation had been a result of the racism present within southern society at the time. Concerned with the image and reputation to be gained if it recruited African American women in 1943, the South Carolina WLA excluded black women from its organization. This action by the WLA did not remove African American women from South Carolina's fields, it just did not allow them entry in their state labor program. Additionally, South Carolina farmers had not been keen on the acceptance of urban white women as labor either, and therefore, barred their participation as well. The agency's approval of white farm women as agricultural laborers hinged mostly on their status as farm women, therefore, they were already farm workers. By including only white farm women within their organization, WLA state officials did not expect to upset the main political and social attitudes present in South Carolina at the time. Even so, however, this recruitment action by the WLA did not immediately benefit their cause. White farm women, their participation in the government program notwithstanding, had not seen it necessary to participate in agriculture as a members of the WLA. While almost eleven thousand women worked as agricultural laborers in 1943, only 1046 women enrolled in the WLA. For the most part, these eleven thousand women had been African American, and although not actively recruited by the WLA, they provided the needed farm labor. South Carolina farmers who were anxious to harvest their cotton had not been particular regarding the source of their labor.<sup>10</sup>

The first South Carolina WLA unit was established in Chesterfield County for the 1943 crop year. Selma Lisenby was recorded as the first enrollee within the county, and she assisted on her family farm. Following the recruitment practice in place in 1943 in South Carolina, it is probable that Lisenby was a white farm woman who joined the WLA for the sole purpose of working on her family's farm. By taking her brothers' place on the farm, Lisenby along with her father worked their acreage. As reported by her father, H. C. Lisenby, "we had about the best and cleanest crop we have ever had, and more acreage than usual . . . Selma worked regularly at all sorts of farm work, was happier than ever, and was a mighty good worker, too." The stories continued, and for 1943, it is obvious from the statements recorded in the WLA annual report, that WLA members for the year had been farm women. It is not so obvious about their race, however, from the recruitment policy in place, assumptions are that these were white farm women.<sup>11</sup>

Regardless of the racial policy in place in South Carolina in 1943, more than one thousand farm women joined the WLA. These recruits worked thirty days on South Carolina farms, either as the main source of farm labor or as seasonal help for farming operations. During the first year of operation, participants of the WLA labor program had four responsibilities to the organization: to assist in all efforts to assure that crops were harvested for war production; to work closely with county agents in their efforts to provide labor to farmers; to recruit and place nonfarm urban women on farms where needed; and to interest South Carolinian farmers in the use of women as farm workers.<sup>12</sup>

In the later years of the WLA program (1944 and 1945), a subtle change of language occurred in the annual labor reports of the WLA in South Carolina. African American women were mentioned in regard to tobacco cultivation and harvest, as well as the seasonal harvest of several crops. "Two meetings



with colored people were held by the WLA supervisor in Dillon county in an effort to secure additional workers for the tobacco harvest. As a result . . . some non-farm workers helped out during the tobacco harvest. . . . Mr. C. H. Watson, Dorchester county, made this comment: 'The harvesting is largely done by colored women who are, at present, inclined to "take it easy" because they are drawing dependency allotments, or have husbands in high-paying war jobs.'" In either instance, the presence of these women in the state's fields did not appear to have been widely accepted by farmers or state officials. But, no blatant comments regarding the use of African American women or Caucasian women are discussed in 1944 or 1945. Still, the use of African Americans in the fields, even though they are the acknowledged previous labor force, did not seem to have been widely accepted across South Carolina.<sup>13</sup>

In the remaining years of war, changes occurred in South Carolina's WLA organization. Acknowledging the ability of women to accomplish most farm jobs, due to the presence of technology and mechanization, the WLA did not foresee any problems in their efforts to gain acceptable labor. With a much more structured labor campaign than the previous year, South Carolina officials worked to establish a successful program for 1944. Therefore, the state WLA no longer recruited only white farm women, but recognized the need to accept all women into its organization to meet farmers' labor demands. To accomplish this, farm women who worked in 1943 became a large part of the recruitment force that influenced women to join the WLA in 1944.<sup>14</sup>

Not only did the WLA work to recruit the largest group of women for 1944, but its staff also wanted to reach more farmers than the previous year and provide them with labor. To accomplish this, the WLA surveyed South Carolina farmers and questioned them regarding their needs. The answers received established the need for thousands of women to join

the state WLA organization. WLA work in South Carolina during the war years included labor on truck-crop, tobacco, and cotton farms. More than twenty-one thousand women in 1944 and sixteen thousand women in 1945 made the program in that state successful during the last years of war. College students and faculty, as well as working women and homemakers worked as part of the South Carolina WLA in 1944 and 1945.<sup>15</sup>

In South Carolina, the WLA met with teachers, principals, and superintendents at the annual Education Association meeting held Spring 1944. There, WLA staff discussed the recruitment of labor and the need and necessity for students and faculty to become involved in the war effort. At meetings held at numerous South Carolina campuses, WLA staff or school personnel addressed the farm labor program and the role that women played in the WLA and war effort. Encouraging college and university women to join the WLA resulted in thousands of new volunteers. Mary Lou Nelson, a college student and WLA worker in 1944, remarked, "I can't tell you the satisfaction I have derived from being a member of the Women's Land Army. College officials are always reminding us that the best way that we can serve now is to continue our education. Still, we often feel that we are so far from doing all that we can do for the war effort. Hence, we are so happy to find that there is a real need for us during our summer vacation." Her comments are representative of college and university students in the South and the rest of the country who volunteered for the WLA. And although this example seemed to tell students to remain in school, the opposite is true. Women continued their studies during the academic year, but then joined the WLA during the summer months. Subsequently, college and university students proved invaluable to the overall wartime agricultural labor effort.<sup>16</sup>

Sara Cauthen, a student at Columbia College joined the WLA to harvest peaches in 1944. With two friends, "Sara . . . did outstanding work in the packing shed at the Fernwood Farm.

Her employer said that she did the best inspecting job of any person he had ever employed. He gave her a fifty-dollar bonus at the end of the season." Sara herself enjoyed the experience and realized the importance that her and other women's work brought to the war effort. "I would not have been happy had I not done this work or something like it. I thoroughly enjoyed my work. We had long hours to work, but I was glad of that because it made me feel like I was helping the war effort that much more. I am willing to assist next year. . . . If I don't get to help with the actual peach harvest, I shall be glad to help with the recruitment program." In 1945, Cauthen assisted with WLA recruitment in the state. Efforts by students such as Nelson and Cauthen assisted in bringing the importance of the WLA to most areas of South Carolina. By involving college and university students during their semester vacations, communities realized the importance that the women had on area farming.<sup>17</sup>

Across the South, farmer biases toward the employment of women on farms had hampered the efforts of the WLA in 1943. But, for the most part, the negative attitude held by farmers regarding the placement of women on farms changed over the course of the war, in some cases becoming overwhelmingly supportive. Richland County, South Carolina labor assistant wrote in 1944:

Farmers in Richland county, who have used women emergency workers on their farms this year, are high in praise of the fine work that women have done. While the kinds of labor required of women have not been as diversified as in some counties of the state, their efforts have played a large part in conserving the bountiful crops produced in Richland county. In doing farm jobs, such as, grading sweet potatoes, peaches, and truck crops, women have learned the details involved and have followed them more closely than men, according to farmers with whom these

women were placed.<sup>18</sup>

South Carolina had not been the only southern state in 1944 to laud the work accomplished by members of the WLA. In Mississippi, the state report noted, "The present farm labor shortage has changed materially all past procedures, customs, and thinking of farm people. . . . there is a decided difference in the types of work women are doing. Practically every county has expressed pride in the contribution women are making. . . . Women laborers are found to be dependable, require little supervision, given to punctuality and details, work systematically and with little or no confusion, all of which tend to please the fancy of the farmer." And, while, South Carolina had been preoccupied with the race of its WLA workers, Mississippi had no such concern--more than forty thousand African American and Caucasian women joined the WLA in 1943 and 1944. Further limitations regarding the women's ability to work as men had been eliminated with the presence of "motor-driven machinery" on farms. And in most cases, as with the national attitude for the year, farmers, who had been leery of the use of women as farm labor in 1943, readily accepted those same workers in 1944.<sup>19</sup>

For the WLA workers in Mississippi, their main labor had been completed on truck-crop and cotton farms as seasonal labor, with a few year-round positions within the state. The women who worked as agricultural laborers in Mississippi in 1944 had overwhelmingly been homemakers, accounting for 75 percent of the more than forty thousand women employed in Mississippi. In contrast to other locales around the country, professional and business women counted for less than 5 percent of the total group of women working in Mississippi. In 1945, Mississippi recruited a larger labor force than it utilized, thus, southern women traveled to South Dakota to work on farms in that state.<sup>20</sup> This practice of interstate exchange of labor was not unique for Mississippi, it occurred

in most areas of the country as labor was transported from one state to another where the need for workers was great. States in border areas of regions traded labor throughout the war as men and women worked on farms and in factories.

While farm women remained on their farms and provided labor, large-scale seasonal operations utilized all nonfarm labor available. In North Carolina, the formal organization of the WLA did not occur, but women still worked on farms. In most cases, rural and farm women had actively worked as agricultural labor before the war. The absence of a formal WLA organization in North Carolina did not hinder farm and nonfarm women from "pitching in" and helping to raise and harvest the state's agricultural products.<sup>21</sup>

In Florida, the presence of women in agriculture had been a common occurrence prior to World War II. With the importance of the state's citrus crop, all available labor had been used each year at harvest. The years of war would prove no different. In Florida, custom dictated that farm families work in the fields, a practice upheld by the majority of the state in the 1940s. And, regardless of race, men, women, and children worked in the fields "producing, harvesting, and storing" the year's crops and food products. In 1942, Florida discovered that "exchanging labor was about the only means that many of the farmers had for harvesting their crops." Within the tradition of labor exchange, African American families had been more inclined to participate than white farm families. "Many entire white families work on their own farms, and negro families work on their own places and also hire out to work on other farms. Exchange of labor is also a custom."<sup>22</sup>

In 1943, Bonnie J. Carter, assistant state supervisor for the farm labor program, recognized the importance that labor exchange made to Florida farming and noted, "Exchange of labor was practiced among white families to a greater extent this year than has heretofore been the custom." Still, regardless

of labor exchange systems in place, women remained involved in Florida agriculture. In 1943, women produced, harvested, and stored a variety of crops, including fruits and vegetables, cotton, peanuts, and tobacco. Without a structured WLA recruitment program, Florida women were placed on farms by those farmers who desired labor to harvest their season's crops. Even without a recruitment plan in place in 1943, some women voluntarily joined the WLA to participate in its program.<sup>23</sup>

In this way, thousands of farm and nonfarm women worked in Florida's fields to harvest crops. These women fulfilled the labor need seasonally, mostly on their own, or neighbor's farm. Work exchange, used each year, made the presence of a formal WLA recruitment plan unnecessary. By 1945, most Florida farm families participated in "labor exchanges" with neighbors in order to harvest crops in a timely manner. In most cases, women joined the agricultural labor force and WLA on their own, in answer to the farmers' need and the country's patriotic request for war workers. Consequently, more than eight thousand women worked on Florida farms in 1943. In the following war years, the number of women employed on Florida farms numbered more than thirty thousand each year. While, some of these women were members of the WLA or placed through Extension labor programs, the majority had been African American and Caucasian farm and rural women who secured their own employment. Although the WLA did not actively recruit labor in Florida women were not prohibited from joining the organization. Regardless of recruitment efforts or lack thereof, Florida women joined the WLA to participate in the American war effort.<sup>24</sup>

The success of labor exchange programs in Florida during the war, caused other southern issues to be down played. In terms of race and class, blatant racism in the state's annual reports cannot be found; but, implications did exist. In 1943, Carter reported, that, while African American women

worked in fields, white women had been hired for "packing houses and canneries." Further discussion included statements that reported that African American women had been used in citrus groves and vegetable fields, without mention of employment of white women in the same locations. In an effort to downplay the presence of racism, Carter described the work placements in the following manner. "Due to the unsatisfactory living conditions and to the customs of long-standing in regard to not employing white women alongside negro men and women in the fields, it has been the policy of the Emergency Farm Labor Staff to refer applications from members of the Woman's Land Army from other states to the United States Employment Service for placement in citrus and vegetable packing houses and/or citrus canneries."<sup>25</sup>

With the passage of time, the attitude regarding the placement of white female farm labor might have changed in Florida. However, without mention of race in the remaining WLA annual reports, a clear conclusion cannot be drawn. Still, it is reasonable to hypothesize that the remaining years of war would follow the example illustrated in 1943. In 1945, Florida packing houses and canneries utilized a large labor force of local and out-of-state women. Based on statements made in the 1943 report, these women would have been placed by the U.S. Employment Service or through local efforts, and, if the procedures continued from year-to-year, would have been white.<sup>26</sup> The situation that developed in Florida fields, groves, and packing houses is not peculiar to the South. And, although the practice of labor exchange is a positive action taken during the war, the discrimination toward and exclusion of African American women from some positions is disheartening in the face of domestic defense.

Other states experienced situations much like that in Florida during the war. Georgia farmers also exchanged labor; additionally, farm and rural women continued to work in agriculture, joined in most cases by urban women hired

specifically for seasonal labor. And, while Florida's citrus importance is replaced by peaches in Georgia, the pattern of Georgia agriculture is similar to Florida. A major agricultural difference between the two states during World War II regarded the role that the WLA played. While, Florida's WLA organization did not possess an active recruitment plan, the Georgia state program had approached the labor situation differently. Georgia WLA officials recruited women for the WLA, and although slow to organize, once established, the organization placed thousands of women on Georgia cotton, peach, peanut, tobacco, and other crop farms.<sup>27</sup>

Like Georgia, the state of Kentucky also utilized the WLA in its recruitment for farm labor; in contrast, however, Kentucky's WLA worked to recruit female labor almost immediately. However, race- and gender-related issues became major considerations in proposed labor recruitment. The 1943 annual labor report stated the situation as, "The larger proportion of farm workers in Kentucky have been negroes. It is not in keeping with the Southern tradition to think of women replacing negroes. There is a decided sentiment against the employment of women for general farm work and year-round help." Kentucky, as a "general farming" state, did not possess the tradition of women in its fields, thus with the absence of men, the necessity of early recruitment and placement of women had been deemed imperative for agricultural survival. In that regard, the registration of women for the WLA included farm and rural women who had been previously and/or continuously engaged in agricultural work, and nonfarm women.<sup>28</sup>

In terms of general farming, the state had not expected to change its labor practices. Historically, Kentucky had used African American and white men for farm labor, and for the most part, did not visualize a great change during the period from 1943 to 1945. Kentucky farmers expected to continue the use of men on farms, and, while state officials



and WLA staff worked to recruit female agricultural labor, farmers did not welcome the presence of nonfarm women as workers in exchange for men. In terms of year-round, full-time positions, Kentucky labor officials filled these jobs with men, because general "farming enterprises in Kentucky are not the type for which women workers are particularly adapted." Because of this attitude, Kentucky farmers accepted farm and rural women, black or white, but not the white urban lady who arrived to assist farmers. "Our best and finest farm women are working on their own farms. A pretty high type of woman is willing to work in such pressure crops as strawberry picking. Custom has given approval to that, but tradition does not tolerate the employment of women for usual farm work. In the main, women who seek employment on farms for heavier work are negro women and white women of rather low type."<sup>29</sup> Clearly, Kentucky farmers had not been comfortable with urban, middle-class, white women in any farm positions. Out of necessity, however, they would tolerate such a labor force in seasonal crop harvests.

In peace time, Kentucky farming had not used women as its premier labor source. Subsequently, the prevailing attitude among Kentucky farmers during the labor shortage of the Second World War kept farm women on their own farms and the use of nonfarm women as labor acceptable only for seasonal crops. Kentucky seasonal crops included strawberries, tomatoes, and peaches. Successful placement of nonfarm women in seasonal farm labor positions in 1943, allowed the continual use of women in more positions during later years. The placement of farm and nonfarm women on agricultural operations during the war was an important concession for Kentucky farmers, especially in regard to their attitude concerning the use of women in a "general farming" state.<sup>30</sup>

With the first WLA crop year, policy regarding labor recruitment had been initiated. In Kentucky, the WLA recruited the following people to assist in agriculture in

1943. Again, Myrtle Weldon, WLA supervisor noted the action taken in the state,

Farm women have made their greatest contribution by doing agricultural work on their own farms; . . . and non-farm women have made their greatest contribution to seasonal farm work, particularly work concerned with such pressure crops as strawberry picking, tomato picking, peach picking and grading, etc. Emphasis will be placed on registration of women for work on their own farms and for seasonal work. So long as year-round workers can be supplied from men and boys, we will not worry too much about placing women in these jobs. If the need increases, the attitude which now prevails against the employment of women for year-round workers may change.

However, in 1943 the need did not arise, and for the most part, women remained in seasonal labor positions. In general, Kentucky farmers accepted female farm labor for seasonal and specialized crops, at the same time acknowledging that general-style farming did not particularly adapt itself to women workers.<sup>31</sup> The attitude present in Kentucky is one that is more common in the states of the Middle West rather than the South. Midwestern farmers accepted the necessity of nonfarm female labor for seasonal and specialty crops, but not for their own or a general-agriculture farm. Recognized as being short-sighted, this biased view regarding nonfarm women would be adjusted by the end of the war as farmers, regardless of location or farm type, accepted women agricultural workers without complaint.

In Virginia, the recruitment of women for the WLA continued much like other southern states. In 1943, the use of nonfarm women was unsuccessful. Attempts to recruit, train, place, and keep nonfarm women on the state's farms resulted in disappointment. Initial 1943 labor estimates

requested fifty nonfarm women for state agricultural labor. Eight applied, were trained, and by the end of six months, only one remained "on the job." Thus, ended Virginia's efforts to recruit nonfarm women for year-round agricultural labor. However, while nonfarm women had proved unsatisfactory for year-round labor, that was not the case in the placement of nonfarm women in seasonal positions. Reported in the state's annual labor report, "Washington vacationists, including various departmental secretaries, helped harvest tomato, peach, and other crops in Rockingham county. . . . Farmers state that for certain selected jobs these women proved satisfactory." And, except for one statement, "Negro women recruited in Norfolk have not been considered a part of the Women's Land Army," race appeared not to have been an issue or to affect the operation of the WLA in Virginia. However, like most southern states, that was not the case. This statement, from Virginia's labor report, reflected the situation that developed because states did not wish to use both black and white women for labor, but attempted to segregate and separate the women. Again, African American women were kept from the WLA organization.<sup>32</sup>

The exclusion of Virginia's African American women from the WLA demonstrated the South's continual determination to keep black women from the wartime agency. While historically it had been acceptable for black women to work in the fields and on the farms to harvest foodstuffs and crops, it had not been possible to be a member of the federal organization involved in the same occupation. In Virginia as the war progressed, the state WLA organization did not acknowledge the presence of African American women within their group. Additionally, the 1944 and 1945 annual labor reports indicated a reluctance to utilize white women as farm labor in some areas of the state, due in part to the "high negro population" and poor weather that existed. The WLA supervisor reported that few women had worked in agriculture prior to the war,

thus their presence during war would not be required. Due to the number of African Americans present in the population, one might assume that the absence of women in farming referred to Caucasian women and not all Virginia women.<sup>33</sup>

In terms of seasonal labor, especially apple production, however, women were called in great numbers to participate. And, in Virginia, as with other states, homemakers made up the largest proportion of women employed during the war; additionally working women, students, teachers, and service men's wives worked in Virginia fields cultivating and harvesting seasonal crops. The annual labor reports did not indicate whether these "women" included all available women, only Caucasian women, or only African American women. Regardless, it is evident from the reports that the state's fruit harvests required thousands of laborers each year. The impression that women workers leave with skeptical farmers each year assist in the next recruitment efforts. And Virginia had been no different. Farmers lauded the accomplishments of the WLA and its workers. From Hugh Wiley, "All our WLA girls are fine. I never had any better help. They are quick to learn, have dogged perseverance, and are conscientious in their work. I would like to have them back next year." And, from Gardner Lum, "They are quick to catch on to what has to be done. They realize that packing a good peach is more important than just packing, like local labor usually does." The accolades continued through the 1944 and 1945 crop years.<sup>34</sup> The language expressed in the 1944 or 1945 annual state reports did not explicitly describe race or class differences, as they had in 1943, but the situation still existed among the female agricultural workers in the South.

In comparison to other states throughout the nation the biases against the employment of nonfarm and urban white women had been greatest in 1943. By the end of the war, states had attempted to put their prejudices aside and concentrate on the recruitment and placement of any and all

available labor. Even so, the situation that developed in each southern state illustrated the position that the WLA held, as well as demonstrated the attitudes of farmers and workers. For the most part, these deep-seated traditions and biases had been based on work conditions that had existed for decades. With these issues in mind, it is not difficult to understand the problems faced by southern state labor organizations to effectively promote the use of all available women for agricultural work. In several states, the formal organization of the WLA did not occur in a timely manner, in some cases, more than one year after its federal establishment. Thus, in several states, such as Florida, Mississippi, and North Carolina, other state agencies handled the recruitment of female farm labor for farms. Still, the persistence of the WLA remained, so that by the end of the war, its presence in the southern United States represented an attempt to register all women for farm work and to participate in the war effort.

Regardless of their situations or the work that farm women conducted in the southern United States, issues such as race and class clearly divided these women. In the South, the issues regarding acceptance of nonfarm women as agricultural labor result more from racial and economic distinctions than social. In a region where racial discrimination was part of society, it is not surprising that its characteristics transcended to wartime labor measures as well. Be they either black or white, rich or poor, southern farm women differed in several aspects. Race and class brought division regarding the proper place in society for southern women, as well as the acceptability and suitability for these women to be engaged in agricultural labor. In that regard, southern women faced a greater challenge in their efforts to join the WLA than women of other areas of the nation. Southern women combatted society's attitudes and biases regarding their position in society, and their participation in the national farm labor

effort. While midwestern farmers had not been eager to employ nonfarm women as agricultural laborers due to their suspected unsuitability for farm work, southern farmers had employed racial and economic prejudices to keep certain women out of their fields. However, federal government crop and food production goals, brought the issue of female recruitment to the forefront of farm labor policy. In the years of WLA operation it had been necessary for the highest level of participation possible. Accomplished through extensive media releases and education programs, the southern WLA state programs found success and importance as part of the Emergency Farm Labor Program in spite of the prejudices against women as agricultural workers.

## Notes

1. Dolores E. Janiewski, Sisterhood Denied: Race, Gender, and Class in a New South Community (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985), 28-31. Janiewski reported that North Carolina's census clearly underestimated the value and importance of married women's wage work and their contribution to the family income, as state and federal census officials did not place the presence of women's incomes as necessary to family survival.

2. Melissa Walker, "Home Extension Work among African American Farm Women in East Tennessee, 1920-1939," Agricultural History 70 (Summer 1996): 488-89.

3. Karen Anderson, "Work, Gender, and Power in the American West," Pacific Historical Review 61 (November 1992): 486-87. This information had been taken from a review article by Karen Brodtkin Sacks, "Toward a Unified Theory of Class, Race, and Gender," in American Ethnologist 16 (August 1989): 534-50, especially 541-42.

4. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," Signs 17 (Winter 1992): 259.

5. Anne Firor Scott, The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995). The image presented by Scott's work developed by the society in which it resided. The racial issues that plagued the South in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries affected the manner by which women conducted their lives. White, middle-class, urban women were far removed from agriculture in the twentieth century, and these "ladies" were not deemed appropriate to enter the field. Over time, the southern "lady" had given way to a portrayal of a new woman, one that had been independent, self-confident, and employed.

6. Katherine Jellison, Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology, 1913-1963 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 134; D'Ann Campbell, Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 240; Gilbert C. Fite, Cotton Fields No More: Southern Agriculture, 1865-1980 (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 168-69; Jack Temple Kirby, "Black and White in the Rural South, 1915-1954," in The History of Rural Life in America, ed. Barbara R. Cotton (Washington, D.C.: Agricultural History Society, 1986), 215; Craig Heinicke, "African American Migration and Urban Labor Skills: 1950 and 1960," Agricultural History 68 (Spring 1994):

186-87, 192. According to Campbell, the number of African Americans women engaged in agriculture during World War II decreased by half from 1940 to 1944, with a further reduction from 1944 to 1947. Estimated that 1.65 million southern African Americans left their farms in the period from 1940 to 1950; not all went to the north or west, as 1.27 million blacks left the South altogether. Thus, the remainder remained in southern urban locales.

7. House, Committee on Appropriations, Farm Labor Program, 1943: Hearings before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943, 150-57.

8. "Alabama, Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 21, Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports of Extension and Other Workers Under the Farm Labor Program, 1943-1947, Records of the U.S. Extension Service, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter AR, NARG 33).

9. "South Carolina, Annual Report State Extension Farm Labor Program, 1943," box 8, AR, NARG 33.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. "South Carolina Annual Narrative Report Emergency Farm Labor Program, 1944," box 19, AR, NARG 33; "South Carolina Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 30, AR, NARG 33.

14. "South Carolina Annual Narrative Report Emergency Farm Labor Program, 1944," AR, NARG 33; "South Carolina Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," AR, NARG 33.

15. "South Carolina Annual Narrative Report, Emergency Farm Labor Program, 1944," AR, NARG 33; "South Carolina, Farm Labor Supervisors Annual Report, 1945," AR, NARG 33.

16. "South Carolina Annual Narrative Report, Emergency Farm Labor Program, 1944," AR, NARG 33.

17. Ibid.; "South Carolina, Farm Labor Supervisors Annual Report, 1945," AR, NARG 33.

18. "South Carolina Annual Narrative Report, Emergency Farm Labor Program, 1944," AR, NARG 33.



19. "Mississippi 1944 Annual Narrative Report, Emergency Farm Labor Program," box 15, AR, NARG 33.

20. Ibid.; "Mississippi Farm Labor Supervisors Annual Report, 1945," box 26, AR, NARG 33.

21. "North Carolina, Emergency Farm Labor Annual Narrative Report, 1943," box 7, AR, NARG 33; "North Carolina Annual Narrative Report, 1944," box 17, AR, NARG 33; "North Carolina Farm Labor Supervisors Annual Report, 1945," box 28, AR, NARG 33.

22. "Florida, Emergency Farm Labor, Annual Report, 1943," box 2, AR, NARG 33.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.; "Florida, Emergency Farm Labor, Annual Narrative Report, 1944," box 12, AR, NARG 33; "Florida, Farm Labor Supervisor, Annual Report, 1945," box 23, AR, NARG 33.

25. "Florida, Emergency Farm Labor, Annual Report, 1943," AR, NARG 33.

26. "Florida, Emergency Farm Labor, Annual Narrative Report, 1944," AR, NARG 33; "Florida, Farm Labor Supervisor, Annual Report, 1945," AR, NARG 33.

27. "Georgia, Emergency Farm Labor, Annual Report, 1943," box 2, AR, NARG 33; "Georgia, Farm Labor Supervisor, Annual Report, 1945," box 23, AR, NARG 33.

28. "Kentucky, Emergency Farm Labor, Annual Report, 1943," box 4, AR, NARG 33.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.; "Kentucky, Emergency Farm Labor, Annual Report, 1944," box 14, AR, NARG 33.

31. "Kentucky, Emergency Farm Labor, Annual Report, 1943," AR, NARG 33.

32. "Virginia, Annual Report Emergency Farm Labor Program, 1943," box 10, AR, NARG 33.

33. "Virginia Annual Narrative Report, 1944," box 20, AR, NARG 33.

34. Ibid.; "Virginia, Annual Report Emergency Farm Labor Program, 1943," AR, NARG 33; "Virginia Farm Labor Supervisor Annual Report, 1945," box 31, AR, NARG 33.

## CHAPTER 10. CONCLUSIONS

The success of the WLA as a wartime agricultural labor measure is demonstrated by the fact that the organization did not reach an early demise, but continued through the end of the war. Additionally, the enrollment, participation, and employment of more than three million women by the WLA, Extension Service, and/or farmers represented one of the largest farm labor programs organized during World War II. Regardless of the attitudes held by several individuals within the USDA and national farm organizations, the presence of women workers on the country's farms continued from the first year of operation through 1945. At that point, however, the WLA placement of women in the fields decreased and then ceased as farmers and farm laborers returned home. Similar to the situation that occurred in the industrial sector of society, female farm workers recruited and placed by the WLA, who had been considered temporary labor assistance during the war, did not, for the most part, continue their agricultural employment into 1946.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the termination of the WLA after the 1945 crop season allows the scholar the ability to analyze the historical significance of the WLA within a specific time frame, i.e. World War II. Confined to this limited period, the success of the WLA program, as well as the greater organization of the Emergency Farm Labor Program, can be measured by the number of participants and efforts put forth by the federal government and farm workers. Additionally, the continual placement of women in agriculture implies that the WLA influenced farmers and others within the field that women had been suitable as laborers. Although the program met its demise in 1945, women remained in the fields, either as private hirees or as members of the Emergency Farm Labor Program.

Undoubtedly the WLA changed the role that women played in

agriculture during the early 1940s. By bringing women back to the fields in some regions and expanding the work force in others, the WLA altered the structure of farm labor. And these changes had not been restricted to agriculture as women reentered or joined the work force in all areas of the economic sector of society. In some cases, women returned to work during World War II, while other women acquired jobs for the first time. The result of this wartime employment brought the presence of the WLA and other wartime labor programs and their efforts to the forefront of study. How had these programs affected women's place within the economic sector of society? And, did wartime programs establish a trend that allowed women to remain in the labor force after the war or did these programs create a valuable precedent for women to begin working after the war? In terms of the WLA, it is important to address the means by which the organization provided farmers with agricultural workers in the absence of men during the national emergency. But, did its eventual demise at the end of 1945 affect female employment in agriculture.

Long before the federal government had initiated legislation to establish the WLA, several states organized their own programs. With examples in place in California, Maine, Oregon, and Vermont, for example, the federal government considered these states viable models for its own program. By the time of actual federal involvement in early 1943, the administration and Congress had discussed the issue of wartime farm labor and the role of women. Drawing on these examples, as well as foreign counterparts, the federal government organized an agricultural labor program. With limited funding the first year of its operation, the WLA commanded only 150,000 dollars of the total 26 million dollar USDA budget. Seen as only an experimental program, the USDA and Congress had not placed much of their resources in the organization, but instead waited for the WLA to prove itself.

Although some states had early state- or private-run organizations in place as early as 1941, it was not until the official creation of the WLA in 1943 that the work women accomplished on farms was legitimized by the federal government. With the passing of governmental legislation, women's contribution to the war effort and to farm life became an important component of the domestic defense effort. Although in some states women had worked as seasonal labor for decades, the 1940s represented a time when the federal government made a concerted effort to organize and recognize female farm labor on a national scale. In addition to the use of women as seasonal labor in the East and West, farm women had actively participated in agriculture as well. Although in the decades immediately prior to World War II, for the most part, farm women had been removed from the daily activity within the fields, they remained tied to the land in much the same manner as their husbands, fathers, and brothers. Due to mechanization, new crops, and overall improvements in farming practices, the use and need of farm women and girls in the fields had diminished. Although women still held several agricultural jobs that occupied their time, field work had not been one of them. Because of this, farmers easily disavowed the use of women as farm and field labor during the early 1940s.

In the Midwest, farmers discouraged the use of women to assist in the region's fields, citing their inability to operate heavy farm equipment. Prejudiced against the use of nonfarm urban women as labor, farmers stated their belief that these women would not be appropriate for field work or possess the knowledge to operate machinery. This assumption by midwestern farmers that women could not handle large farm implements is unique as other locales around the country allowed women access to machinery, as well as trained women to operate the equipment.

In the South, the prejudice that existed had been

different and more confining to the total female population of the region. Steeped in racial issues, southern farmers did not immediately accept nonfarm, middle-class, white ladies as agricultural labor. Wrapped within issues of race, gender, and class, some southern WLA organizations attempted to survive by adhering to these social restrictions. By keeping African Americans from the WLA, confining urban white women to select jobs, or refusing to even organize a WLA in some states, southern farmers sometimes faced difficulty in securing adequate labor. In 1943, to acquire its needed labor southern farmers recruited farm and nonfarm women for service, in many cases without benefit of WLA membership. Tens of thousands of women participated in efforts to harvest state crops, while state WLA annual reports recorded WLA participation fewer than ten thousand. For example, Florida, South Carolina, and Texas registered few if any women WLA workers; however, tens of thousands of women worked on each state's farms during crop years. As an example, South Carolina illustrated the racial attitude present in the region during the 1940s. At that time, the WLA did not advocate the recruitment of black women for fear that their presence within the organization would keep white farm and nonfarm women from participating.

Southern state officials believed that the association of African Americans with the WLA would affect the position of the WLA within southern society. To bypass these problems, and forego the possibility of recruitment of labor, many southern states resisted establishment of the WLA within their borders. Thus, if southern states or farmers needed labor in 1943, they skipped the WLA totally and recruited labor from other sources. Either the farmers themselves recruited their labor, or the state enrolled farm women within their labor program. These actions by southern farmers, the federal WLA organization, and state officials restricted female presence in agriculture in 1943. In 1944 and 1945, the state WLA

organizations relaxed these restrictions and accepted most women who wanted to join their group and work on farms. By that time, however, it was sometimes too late to recruit African American and urban women as they had located alternate employment.

In the Southwest, other conditions dictated the reluctance by regional farmers to utilize a female labor force. For the most part, farmers' hesitancy is a result of the region's use of Mexican nationals and farm women as a labor force. In 1943, Texas did not officially organize a WLA organization, even though more than seventy-five thousand women worked on farms. The situation remained constant in Texas for each year of war, and roughly consistent for the other states of the region as well. These actions taken by southern, midwestern and southwestern farmers to ignore nonfarm WLA members and to employ non-WLA workers as agricultural laborers did little to deter the federal program. The WLA, on a national scale, managed to recruit and place more workers than any other labor program during the war, and clearly, it is the presence of this organization that assisted in the nation's efforts to combat its enemies during the war years.

The first year of WLA operation, 1943, served as a proving ground for the federal organization as state agencies provided farmers with necessary labor. Farm and nonfarm women, African American, Asian American, and Caucasian women worked on farms to assist in meeting the wartime agricultural production quotas established by the federal government. These production quotas would provide not only food and supplies for the United States, but also for its allies. Although the Extension Service recorded less than five hundred thousand women as part of their labor programs in 1943, at least twice as many women worked on farms during that year.<sup>2</sup> The difference consisted of farm and nonfarm women not recruited by the Extension Service or WLA. It was the inexact

number of farm and nonfarm women who worked without being members of the WLA that made it difficult for the federal government to accurately state the number of participating women.<sup>3</sup> Still, we can theorize that the participation for 1943 had been about one million members, which suggested to the WLA administration, Extension Service and USDA that the labor program had been successful for its first year of operation. Based on this premise, the federal government continued its funding and support for future crop years.

As the organization continued, the use of women, farm and nonfarm, expanded. Following 1943, and the first official year for the organization of the WLA, the federal agency had been determined to keep the momentum that the agency created in place. To do this, the federal WLA administration needed strong recruitment efforts for 1944 and a deep determination to continue the program. Florence Hall and her staff created brochures and newsletters, held public forums, and met workers to further instill the need for agricultural workers. Distributed to state agencies, WLA recruitment materials continued to entice women to join the war effort and perform their patriotic duty. Each year of operation, the WLA enjoyed greater farmer demand and greater recruitment of nonfarm women. By giving up their yearly vacations, working and professional women and college and university students and faculty joined the ranks of the WLA.

In 1944, Hall and her administration hoped to recruit 800,000 women. The WLA's actions and eventual results can be determined from state annual reports, WLA newsletters, and national publicity. Articles in the popular press assisted in drawing attention to the WLA and its "successes." During that crop year, the WLA's new recruitment materials brought more women to participate in agriculture across the nation. Due in part to the greater demand for agricultural products established by the federal government, as well as requests from farmers for laborers and women for placement, states

enjoyed greater participation and activity. A cigar company, state unnamed, asked for women specifically to provide labor in 1944; farmers requested women "to drive tractor, do plowing, harrow and general work--to go to work now [May] and until fall."<sup>4</sup> For the most part, farm and nonfarm women worked in similar positions as in 1943.

In the two regions of the nation that had protested the placement of nonfarm women in its agricultural structure the previous year, the Midwest and South grew more accepting in 1944. These regions placed more women on their farms each succeeding year. Nonfarm women were employed on a greater scale than had been previously, as midwestern farmers utilized this labor for more general farm work in relation to those who had been employed in seasonal positions, such as detasseling corn. In the South, farmers initiated recruitment efforts to include African Americans and other minorities within their structure, all in attempts to disregard the exclusionary practices used in 1943. Clearly, the efforts put forth by the federal WLA agency accomplished the recruitment goals as more women participated in the WLA and worked on farms than the previous year; this trend continued in 1945. Throughout the 1944 crop year, WLA administrators and other USDA officials created a good public image of the WLA and its work program. Additionally, women themselves assisted in recruitment measures by bringing others to join the WLA ranks. Farmers who had been opposed to the labor program in 1943, utilized more women in their efforts to meet wartime-production quotas. Across the country women joined forces to harvest crops.

As a result of WLA performance in 1943 and 1944, Hall and her staff expected great efforts in 1945. With that year's crop year to a good start, state programs actively recruited female farm labor. During the first half of the 1945 crop year, the country remained posed for wartime-production, which included agricultural production. However, in the second half of the year, following V-E and V-J days and prior to most crop



harvests, some WLA volunteers found themselves displaced from their farm labor positions as returning farmers and agricultural workers went back to work. Even so, the increased wartime production needed to be harvested, and in many cases WLA participants continued in their wartime positions. War-level agricultural production required more labor than returning servicemen provided, thus, the presence of farm and nonfarm women in the nation's fields was still necessary. And even though the number of enrollees in the WLA had been lower in 1945 than expected, participation remained high.

Between 1943 and 1945, the number of WLA participants continued to climb. All told, the WLA had been able to credit more than three million farm and nonfarm women to work in agriculture during World War II. Although Wayne D. Rasmussen in "The History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program, 1943-1947," reported fewer women in the Extension Service program, the validity of these reporting services have been questioned. Several reporting agencies within the federal government "counted" the number of women who participated in the WLA, and the figure of three million accounted for farm and nonfarm women.<sup>5</sup> However, regardless of the number of women "counted" by each agency, the WLA recorded greater participation levels with each passing year. Thus, the WLA obtained the greatest number of participation than other farm-labor programs. Farm and nonfarm women aged eighteen years and older worked in year-round, month-long, week-long, or days-long positions. For the most part, nonfarm women were placed in seasonal-labor positions. Women who worked in northeastern, southern, and western states commonly planted, cultivated, and harvested seasonal crops; still, some women worked year-round on dairy and livestock operations. In the Midwest, women worked on crop, dairy, and livestock farms. Thus, the success of the WLA should be measured by its ability to retain labor, as well as the recruitment and placement of

great numbers of women during each succeeding year, even in locations unfavorable to the WLA previously.

The rate of success of the WLA can be defined by the positive response received by the workers and farmers who participated. And, except for the opposition encountered by those farmers in the Midwest and South, in general, public sentiment regarding the WLA appeared positive. But, how accurate was that sentiment? For the most part, information obtained from WLA annual reports and newsletters, media releases, Extension Service and USDA publications, and feature articles portrayed the WLA favorably. It would have been detrimental to the future of the WLA to present the organization and its efforts to raise an effective labor force in an unfavorable light. The few negative comments that are part of the public record reflect the opinion of midwestern and southern farmers during the first year of WLA operation. Concerned with the inclusion of nonfarm women in the program, midwestern and southern state reports and media articles did not depict the use of nonfarm women as laborers in a completely negative manner, but rather as a labor force that worked best elsewhere. However, in general, biased prejudices disappeared by the end of the first crop year.

In contrast, the reaction by female members of the WLA had been overwhelmingly positive. For the most part, it is difficult to locate strong negative comments from the participants. For most of the same reasons as described above, it would not have been beneficial for the program to publicize a worker's unhappiness regarding their experience in the WLA. Therefore, most state reports, Extension Service publications, medial releases, and feature stories portrayed women as they enjoyed their wartime service. It is unusual to discover women who had not enjoyed their service and publicly stated that dislike. However, some do occur. The following statement made by a 1944 WLA worker in Michigan is not completely negative regarding the program and farm work, but

it is far from positive. "It was really an experience. The hours were long, the food bad and as good as no bathing facilities. I can begin to appreciate what my son who is a bombardier in Italy may be having to put up with."<sup>6</sup> While not a common sentiment, some women expressed their service in that manner, thereby discounting any benefits that they provided to the overall harvest. Thus, due to this statement, one concludes that not all WLA workers embraced their farm labor with the exuberance exhibited by program and Extension Service propaganda.

Still, for the most part, women seemed enthusiastic about their patriotic service during the early 1940s. As mentioned, the arrival of war brought several changes to the structure of the female labor force, least of which being age and marital status. These characteristics transcended themselves not just in the urban areas of defense work, but to the farm fields as well. Married women, of all races, entered domestic and defense industries and agriculture at rates unseen, and "constituted a significantly larger proportion of the wartime increase in female employment than did single women. . . . married women outnumbered single women in the female work force." And of these women, white married women accounted for significant numbers. Additionally, the presence of older women in the defense labor force represented another wartime trend. Statistics have shown that women over the age of thirty-five had been more inclined to work than those who had been between twenty-five and thirty-four or of traditional childbearing age. Additionally, single women aged fourteen to nineteen also entered the labor force in record numbers.<sup>7</sup>

Although women had been part of the working world for centuries, married women accounted for less than 5 percent of that paid force by the turn-of-the-century. By 1940, the number of married women in the work force had crept up to slightly more than 15 percent of total workers. World War II would greatly alter the married women's contribution to paid

work. During the height of the war, the presence of married women in the labor force has been quantified two ways. The United States Bureau of the Census recorded working married women in terms of the military status of their husbands; therefore, table 3 compares the percentages of women working in terms of husbands who remained at home and husbands who were in the military. Among married white women the greatest number of women who joined the work force during the war had been older homemakers. And they, like their compatriots remained in the work force at greater figures in 1950 than ten years previous.<sup>8</sup>

Table 3. Married women's participation in the work force

Women	Husband	1940	1944	1947	1950
All ages	present	15.6	21.7	20.0	23.8
	military		52.5		
25-44 years	present	17.7	24.7	22.4	26.0
	military		55.0		
45-64 years	present	10.3	20.0	18.4	21.8
	military		41.7		

source: Claudia D. Goldin, "The Role of World War II in the Rise of Women's Employment," American Economic Review 81 (September 1991): 742.

The assumption that the end of World War II also signaled the end of women's employment in the country is false. Although women had been viewed as temporary workers during wartime and they had been displaced from some positions by returning servicemen, they remained in the work force. Comparison between the rate of married working women for 1944, 1947, and 1950 indicates that although women returned to the home immediately following the end of the war, many accepted paid employment before 1950. Therefore, the importance of World War II on the number of women working in the country in

the late 1940s and into the 1950s has been debated by several scholars. While historian William Chafe described World War II as the "watershed" that redefined economic and social roles within the country, others disagree. Scholarship in the 1980s revised this image of World War II and "discounted the importance of World War II in altering the lives of American women." While women participated in the labor force, they had not become permanent employees nor given lasting positions. Scholars reiterated women's desires to only participate in the war as part of their patriotic duty with the intent to quit once the war had finished. Karen Anderson recounted such sentiment in her work, particularly through the comments made by Genevieve Trofanowski when she was dismissed from her wartime job. "I think a woman's place is in the home--except when there's a war on."<sup>9</sup>

Still, large numbers of women had not been content to return to their homes and resume a full-time home life. Many wanted to remain in their industrial and agricultural jobs following the war. That proved difficult when returning servicemen filled those positions and displaced women. Not all women had been removed from their wartime positions, and those women remained as the years passed. In the 1950s, more married women remained in the work force than had been present during the height of World War II. Chafe reported that more than ten million married women were employed in 1952, two million more than during World War II and almost three times as many employed married women in 1940. In the 1950s, married women comprised a majority of working women, 52 percent in 1950 compared to slightly more than 36 percent in 1940.<sup>10</sup> Chafe saw these increases as evidence that World War II dramatically changed the position of women in society, but others, such as Anderson, Campbell, and Goldin had difficulty agreeing with his analysis. According to Claudia Goldin in her analysis of women's employment role in society, World War II "had several significant indirect impacts on women's

employment, but its direct influence appears to have been more modest." Therefore, it is possible to hypothesize that the presence of labor programs during World War II, and the WLA in particular, provided women with the legitimization needed to justify their presence in the work force rather than the push to enter it. Thus, women remained working following the war, and in the case of married women their numbers only increased as the years passed. By 1960, married women's participation in the labor force had doubled over the rate recorded in 1940; the greatest number of which being white women who had worked in 1940 and 1944 and continued to work through the 1950s.<sup>11</sup>

The success of the WLA placed the organization in an unique position within the federal government. This labor program recruited a large number of women workers to participate in a war effort not related to industry. Aside from the work performed, hours kept, and wages paid did female farm laborers differ greatly from female industrial workers? In terms of the overall women's labor force during World War II several characteristics have been identified as typical. Of these, age and marital status, are as important to this agricultural labor study as studies that focused on female industrial laborers. While it had not been possible to track the age of most WLA workers, general conclusions were drawn. For the most part, state annual reports did not record their members on the basis of age. Reports did indicate, however, the person who volunteered for service. Thus, generalizations can be made regarding those students who participated in the WLA. Common assumption was that these students were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two during their time of WLA service. Therefore, it was possible to find eighteen year-old women working along side women sixty years of age in seasonal labor positions.

Also, with an older female labor force and higher instance of married women working in the country, the WLA boasted a similar trend. While university and college

students worked in some regions of the country, in many cases, married homemakers and farm and working women accounted for a large proportion of the WLA participants. Again, assumptions are made concerning the presence of both groups of women in the fields. In the WLA annual reports, two terms were regularly used to describe the state's workers. Generally, the term "girls" related to the presence of students within the organization, while "women" accounted for married women. Not every state, of course, used this terminology. Some officials discussed participants by their position in society, either as married or single women, or by their primary employment or occupation. In that regard, states recorded the number of students, homemakers, professionals, and others present each year in the fields. Regardless, it is not possible to unequivocally state the ages or marital status of women who participated in the labor program except to relay that WLA workers were over the age of eighteen and able to perform hard physical labor.

Regardless of their age or marital status, women who joined the WLA expressed their desire to be patriotic and help the war effort as their reason to engage in agricultural labor. State WLA annual reports and national media articles furthered this perception of the women's motivation. Clearly, money had not been their main concern. Farm workers earned less money and worked longer hours than most industrial laborers. Most women who worked as agricultural laborers had not been dependent on that income for their support. Professional women, university and public school faculty, and homemakers met their patriotic duty without regard to the wages paid. A college student reported that her farm salary did not sustain her and she relied on her parents for basic expenses.<sup>12</sup> Professional/working women and homemakers treated the WLA as a service to the nation, as the money they earned only subsidized their income. This acceptance by WLA members of low-paying wages was contrary to women who worked in the

industrial sector of society. Women employed in defense industries had, in many cases, relocated and worked full-time to provide better conditions for their families. In terms of farming, however, the women's role and attitude has been defined as one of patriotism and concern for the ability of American farmers to adequately provide the needed foodstuffs for the nation and world.

Given the success of the WLA's three years of operation, its administrators assumed that the labor program would continue past the end of World War II. This, however, did not occur. For many the completion of the WLA and eventual ending of this labor program echoed the actions of the industrial sector of society at the end of the war. Industrial managers and owners also released the women working in defense plants and other factories once servicemen returned home. With men returning to the home front, wartime jobs went to pre-war employees without thought of the women who had worked as replacements or temporary labor. Women were displaced from jobs they had held for years. In light of this action by private and public agencies, the question must be asked whether the use of women in the war had brought any benefits to each respective sector of society. Women who had been employed in industry and manufacturing visualized their contribution to the war effort in the form of defense supplies.

In agriculture, however, the quantification of women's efforts to defense are different. In the case of farming, each year production began again as farmers started with a new crop. While crop yield per acre and quotas were recorded, visual evidence of production, such as tanks and weapons, did not remain from year-to-year. Thus, how did society and the WLA view the women's participation in agriculture? If a positive experience occurred, should women remain in farming following World War II. Or, had it been necessary as in industry, to displace female farm workers in the same manner.



Thus, in action similar to industry, with the end of war, the WLA met its own demise. Women who joined the agricultural front as members of the WLA were removed from farms as servicemen return home.

First, it is important to note that although the Emergency Farm Labor Program remained in place through the 1947 crop year, the WLA did not. And, while women remained in agriculture past 1945, their participation did not reach wartime levels. In the post-war period agricultural labor traditions returned to pre-war situations as men and boys returned home, and then to the fields. Women, for the most part, moved back into their homes and kitchens. Confined in this manner, women needed to redefine their lives and prepare for their livelihoods as homemakers. For farmers who had accepted the presence of women, nonfarm women especially, in the fields, it is incredulous that American farmers would immediately remove these women from their fields and farming operations. In the days following war, women were perceived as "throw-away" labor, an image epitomized by the temporary nature of wartime labor and the hazards that develop once the war ended. The removal of women from wartime labor positions occurred throughout the nation and within any industry that had employed women as temporary employees.

Conditions existed in agriculture after 1945 that imply that the federal government had been hasty in dissolving the WLA in 1945. But, at that time, the WLA represented only another temporary agency used to guarantee successful harvests while men performed their patriotic duty. As a short-term emergency labor program, the WLA became another casualty of war and was disbanded by the end of 1945. The end of the WLA did not automatically signal the end of women in agriculture or as agricultural laborers, instead the demise of the WLA signalled only the end of a successful federal labor program. Women working in agriculture would continue into the next decade and beyond.

Thus, did farmers immediately return to the use of men as farm labor in 1946? As part of the Emergency Farm Labor Program which remained in place through 1947, women continued to work in agriculture after the demise of the WLA. Under the jurisdiction of the Recruitment and Placement Division of the Emergency Farm Labor Program women participated in crop harvests after World War II. The Recruitment and Placement Division had been responsible for the development and implementation of "plans, policies, and procedures to be followed in the mobilization and recruitment of both interstate and intrastate sources of labor, in the placement of all labor and maintenance of farm-placement centers, on the transportation of domestic workers within States and between States, and in the housing and medical care of workers." Although no longer part of a separate organization, female farm workers still possessed protection within the larger federal labor program.<sup>13</sup>

While women still participated as part of the Emergency Farm Labor Program, had that only delayed the inevitable? Did post-war agriculture have room for women or had the WLA only represented a crisis-derived organization? Over time, the role and presence of women in agriculture, especially nonfarm women, decreased, so that in the 1950s, their numbers were "proportional" to pre-war levels.<sup>14</sup> With the return to pre-war levels, it would be easy to argue that World War II and the WLA did not affect the long-term employment of women in agriculture at all, but only served as an emergency effort to provide labor. However, that is not entirely true.

In terms of agriculture, the presence of women had been proportional to earlier decades; however, the actual numbers of women were higher in the 1950s than the 1930s. This combined with a steady decrease of men in agriculture, to levels half of pre-war years, allows the conclusion that the position that women found in agriculture, as a result of wartime participation, had not ended with peace. In other

words, in the 1950s, the number of women engaged in agriculture had been on the rise, while the number of men continued to decline.<sup>15</sup>

With the continuation of women in agriculture it is possible to conclude that World War II assisted in the efforts by women to remain in farming, and/or enter the national work force. When women reported, on average, that they had been employed in agriculture longer than women in other positions in January 1951, they included their stint in World War II as part of their experience. Those employed as "farmers and farm managers" stated their average length of time in the position as more than 7 years, while those employed as "farm laborers and foremen" reported an average of 4.8 years for continuous employment. Additionally, not every woman employed in agriculture worked on a full-time bases. In 1951, many worked part-time, especially those women who had been classified as "farm laborers and foremen." Among that group, about 36 percent of the women employed worked in full-time positions, the remainder worked part-time. Within the category "farmers and farm managers," those figures are reversed. About 63 percent of the women worked in full-time positions in 1951, with the remaining women employed part-time.<sup>16</sup> Again, these figures represent a trend from World War II, where it had been difficult to arrange for the placement of women in year-round positions, generally, because professional women had no desire to give up their main source of income for farm work. Thus, in most states, the number of women employed in year-round positions had been relatively few and not statistically significant to the total women employed as reported by the Extension Service. The Extension Service counted 32,314 women employed year-round on farms, a figure less than 3 percent of their total 1.3 million female participation. Without the figures for farm women employment, it is impossible to draw a more concise picture regarding the significance of year-round employment for women on farms. Understandably, however, farm

women who remained on their own farms, and did not register as members of the WLA would increase the percentage of year-round labor, possibly as high as 50 percent of total women participation in World War II. In 1951, about one-third of the women employed as farm laborers and foreman in 1951 worked full-time, considerably fewer than the women who worked part-time.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, even though the war had ended, women continued to work in various jobs in the 1950s and beyond. The war had not ended their part in the economy, only the specific program in place during the national emergency. In most industries, women's presence in the labor force, especially that of married women, had been greater after the war than the decades that preceded World War II. In the example of farming, the success of the WLA and other farm labor programs brought women back to the farms and to the experience of field work. Pushed to the sidelines by the advent of technology in the first part of the twentieth century, women found themselves back in the fields during the 1940s. With more women involved in agriculture in the 1950s than in earlier decades, their presence involved a change in attitude by many American farmers. Clearly, women had become more involved as society accepted their place in agriculture and their position in the fields and barns. And while the majority of these involved had been farm women, they still represented a larger portion of the population than earlier decades. The use of women as agricultural labor during World War II strengthened the perception of the necessity and ability of women on the nation's farms. In contrast to earlier decades, when the use of women on farms had been minimized due to new technology and societal norms, the post-war period continued the image of World War II that illustrated the nation's need for female farm labor. Additionally, the use of women in all areas of industry during the war also kept the women's presence active in society. The number of working women in the nation

continued to increase as the decades passed.

The success of the WLA as an agency within the Emergency Farm Labor Program and Extension Service can be measured by the number of women counted by federal agencies regarding their participation within this program. The millions of farm and nonfarm women who worked during the 1943, 1944, and 1945 crop years brought a strength and exuberance to farming that had not been present prior. The women's ability to conform to any situation, to be able to work expeditiously and competently brought much support from American farmers regarding the women's ability. In every state it is possible to discover farmers who had been enthusiastic regarding the use of women on their farms. Farmers from the North, South, East, and West regions of the nation lauded the benefits and successes that employing women had brought to their agricultural production.

With recruitment efforts and statements from WLA and USDA officials, women flocked to the war labor program in an effort to assist American farmers. National media efforts summarized successes in the nation's fields and advocated all women to become involved. Working women, university faculty and students, and homemakers all answered the call for labor by joining the WLA. Thus nonfarm and farm women assisted in the production of agricultural crops required during wartime. As part of the Emergency Farm Labor Program, the WLA accounted for the largest group of wartime agricultural workers, with the Victory Farm Volunteers closing behind. Numbering close to 2.5 million members from 1943 to 1945, the VFV supplied farmers with seasonal labor as well. The utilization of both the WLA and the VFV placed American farmers in a comfortable position as they relied on sources of more than 5.5 million laborers during the war. Additionally, the Bracero Program supplied contractual Mexican nationals to the labor market, and as the war progressed conscientious objectors, convicts, and prisoners of war all participated in farming. Still, the

number of women who participated in farm labor as part of the United States Crop Corps and Emergency Farm Labor Program granted the WLA a significance that is missed in the larger study of World War II labor.

## Notes

1. In the industrial sector of society, a similar event occurred. As servicemen returned home and ultimately back to work, these men displaced working women and sent them back to their homes. For the women, this action did not please their new-found sense of accomplishment and achievement resulting from their experiences during World War II.

2. See Appendix.

3. The accounting on the WLA by numerous agencies within the federal government has resulted in an inaccurate and unclear figure regarding the exact number of women participating. Rasmussen, in his history of the farm labor program, has reported an estimated number of women in the Extension service related labor programs (455,049), while WLA administrator, Florence Hall, reported the participation level at about 600,000 women for 1943. Other agencies, such as the BAE reported higher figures. All of these combined allowed for the estimate of 3.5 million women to have been utilized by the WLA during the course of its operation.

4. New York Times, 17 May 1944.

5. Marie Dawson, "Pitching in on the Home Front," Countryside 1 (Winter 1990): 86; Judith Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, "'To the Rescue of the Crops': The Women's Land Army during World War II," Prologue 25 (Winter 1993): 349; U.S. Women's Bureau, Women as Workers: A Statistical Guide (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1953), 15; "Women Prove Helpful in Meeting Nation's Food Crisis," Labor Information Bulletin 11 (March 1944): 3.

6. "Michigan Annual Report, 1944," box 15, Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports of Extension and Other Workers under the Farm Labor Program, 1943-1947, Records of the U.S. Extension Service, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

7. Karen Anderson, Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 3-5; William Chafe, The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 144-45, 148.

8. Claudia D. Goldin, "The Role of World War II in the Rise of Women's Employment," American Economic Review 81 (September 1991): 741-42; Chafe, The American Woman, 144.

9. Goldin, "The Role of World War II in the Rise of Women's Employment," 741-43; Anderson, Wartime Women, 162. Goldin cited the following scholars and their work as examples that placed World War II as a "watershed event" or not. Anderson, Wartime Women; D'Ann Campbell, Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984); William Chafe, The American Woman, especially chapter 8; Ruth Milkman, Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex During World War II (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

10. Chafe, The American Woman, 182.

11. Goldin, "The Role of World War II in the Rise of Women's Employment," 741, 744-47, 755; Anderson, Wartime Women, 7. More than 50 percent of white married women who worked in the 1950s had also worked in 1940 and 1944. While similar figures (20 percent to 29 percent) existed for those women who worked in the 1950s and during World War II or were employed after the war. In many cases, the women had worked the entire 1940s decade, and then continued into the 1950s; more than 85 percent of women employed in December 1941 and March 1944 were working in 1951 as well.

12. Frances W. Valentine, "Successful Practices in the Employment of Nonfarm Women on Farms in the Northeastern States, 1943," Bulletin No. 199, U.S. Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, 1944; New York Times, 9 July 1943, 5 March 1944, 29 May 1944; New York Times Magazine, 4 July 1943.

13. Wayne D. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program, 1943-1947," Agricultural Monograph No. 13, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, USDA, September 1951, 67.

14. Women's Bureau, Women as Workers, 10.

15. *Ibid.*, 10, 17. In 1953, the Women's Bureau reported 730,000 women reported as "farmers and farm workers," compared to 690,000 in 1940 and 1.93 million in 1945. A continuous decline existed in the period from 1946 through 1953, which implied the lessening importance of women to farming, however, with the continual decrease of men in the same field, this "lessening importance" is not as substantial as the numbers may imply. In 1940, 5.7 percent of the total female work force had been employed in agriculture; with 23.3 percent of the total male force on farms. In 1945, women farm workers were 10 percent of their total work force, and men numbered 19.5 of their total force. By 1953, 3.9 percent of the total number of women in the work force had been on farms, while only 11.9 percent of the total number of men. In terms of these statistics it is possible to conclude that women had



gained in the field of agriculture versus the placement of men in the same field, while both lost ground in the overall employment figures for the year.

16. Ibid., 43, 79.

17. States had problems with year-round placement and employment each year. While most states placed fewer than 5 percent of their WLA force in year-round positions, a few recorded a high percentage of year-round positions. In 1943, only Nevada had year-round or full-time positions similar to the rate recorded for 1951. Subsequent years, however, such as 1944 and 1945, saw higher figures of women employed year-round. (These figures are approximate, and represent the best estimate by the Extension Service regarding women hired for farm labor. Rasmussen, "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," 148-49.)

1943	Year-round	Total	% of total
Montana	81	1,472	5.5
Nevada	53	158	33.5
New Hampshire	16	222	7.2
New Jersey	58	591	9.8
North Dakota	672	4,879	13.8
Utah	522	4,531	11.5
Wyoming	47	288	16.3
<b>1944</b>			
Alabama	728	9,180	7.9
Arizona	50	484	10.3
Colorado	379	3,891	9.7
Florida	1,328	4,654	28.5
Indiana	95	1,022	9.3
Montana	41	602	6.8
Nevada	67	148	45.3
New Hampshire	11	176	6.3
New Jersey	73	1,166	6.3
New Mexico	165	2,234	7.4
Tennessee	843	14,301	5.9
West Virginia	65	211	30.8
Wyoming	82	268	30.6
<b>1945</b>			
Alabama	442	7,217	6.1
Indiana	86	996	8.6
Kentucky	198	2,884	6.9
Maryland	78	765	10.2
Massachusetts	22	432	5.1
Mississippi	4,863	37,351	13.0
Montana	62	713	8.7
Nevada	98	262	37.4
New Hampshire	27	330	8.2
New Mexico	124	1,047	11.8
Rhode Island	4	18	22.2
Tennessee	1,386	18,214	7.6
Texas	2,780	53,868	5.2
Vermont	6	56	10.7
Wyoming	55	171	32.2

## APPENDIX.

Table 4. Number of women placed by Extension Service programs in 1943

<u>State</u>	<u>Seasonal</u>	<u>Year-round</u>	<u>Total</u>
Alabama	5,924	122	6,046
Arizona	1,018	4	1,022
Arkansas	74,447	345	74,792
California	27,307	690	27,997
Colorado	4,024	51	4,075
Connecticut	1,516	14	1,530
Delaware	84	--	84
Florida	4,678	130	4,808
Georgia	38,701	205	38,906
Idaho	3,344	65	3,409
Illinois	5,373	13	5,386
Indiana	1,403	2	1,405
Iowa	2,698	47	2,745
Kansas	640	23	663
Kentucky	2,733	5	2,738
Louisiana	16,156	65	16,221
Maine	962	8	970
Maryland	2,585	6	2,591
Massachusetts	1,276	11	1,287
Michigan	12,679	--	12,679
Minnesota	5,454	162	5,616
Mississippi	42,531	617	43,148
Missouri	4,003	95	4,098
Montana	1,391	81	1,472
Nebraska	1,564	28	1,592
Nevada	105	53	158
New Hampshire	206	16	222
New Jersey	533	58	591
New Mexico	1,192	57	1,249

Table 4. (continued)

<u>State</u>	<u>Seasonal</u>	<u>Year-round</u>	<u>Total</u>
New York	6,168	91	6,259
North Carolina	17,503	365	17,868
North Dakota	4,207	672	4,879
Ohio	3,605	9	3,614
Oklahoma	8,185	46	8,231
Oregon	15,284	91	15,375
Pennsylvania	3,184	15	3,199
Rhode Island	95	3	98
South Carolina	14,630	303	14,933
South Dakota	747	8	755
Tennessee	10,979	141	11,120
Texas	74,949	758	75,707
Utah	4,009	522	4,531
Vermont	761	5	766
Virginia	1,631	26	1,657
Washington	15,338	252	15,590
West Virginia	31	--	31
Wisconsin	2,626	22	2,648
Wyoming	241	47	288
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>448,700</b>	<b>6,349</b>	<b>455,049</b>

source: Rasmussen, "History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," 148.

Table 5. Number of women placed by Extension Service programs in 1944

<u>States</u>	<u>Seasonal</u>	<u>Year-round</u>	<u>Total</u>
Alabama	8,452	728	9,180
Arizona	434	50	484
Arkansas	38,851	224	39,075
California	45,880	704	46,584
Colorado	3,512	379	3,891
Connecticut	1,184	21	1,205
Delaware	60	--	60
Florida	3,326	1,328	4,654
Georgia	13,777	667	14,444
Idaho	1,570	70	1,640
Illinois	4,254	37	4,291
Indiana	927	95	1,022
Iowa	2,160	43	2,203
Kansas	1,391	17	1,408
Kentucky	1,544	20	1,564
Louisiana	12,188	111	12,299
Maine	1,101	35	1,136
Maryland	1,940	41	1,981
Massachusetts	1,431	67	1,498
Michigan	13,751	446	14,197
Minnesota	5,009	98	5,107
Mississippi	40,765	996	41,761
Missouri	2,699	18	2,717
Montana	561	41	602
Nebraska	1,008	35	1,043
Nevada	81	67	148
New Hampshire	165	11	176
New Jersey	1,093	73	1,166
New Mexico	2,069	165	2,234
New York	11,545	155	11,700
North Carolina	15,087	383	15,470

Table 5. (continued)

<u>State</u>	<u>Seasonal</u>	<u>Year-round</u>	<u>Total</u>
North Dakota	5,600	--	5,600
Ohio	3,105	30	3,135
Oklahoma	15,886	75	15,961
Oregon	15,246	204	15,450
Pennsylvania	4,408	29	4,437
Rhode Island	51	2	53
South Carolina	21,878	814	22,692
South Dakota	1,155	23	1,178
Tennessee	13,458	843	14,301
Texas	49,912	1,288	51,200
Utah	1,632	31	1,663
Vermont	475	9	484
Virginia	4,026	99	4,125
Washington	23,898	389	24,287
West Virginia	146	65	211
Wisconsin	3,022	76	3,098
Wyoming	186	82	268
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>401,899</b>	<b>11,184</b>	<b>413,083</b>

source: Rasmussen, "History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," 148.

Table 6. Number of women placed by Extension Service programs in 1945

States	Seasonal	Year-round	Total
Alabama	6,775	442	7,217
Arizona	135	3	138
Arkansas	28,667	593	29,260
California	41,904	713	42,617
Colorado	2,378	106	2,484
Connecticut	593	19	612
Delaware	160	--	160
Florida	5,336	241	5,577
Georgia	15,448	359	15,807
Idaho	2,498	32	2,530
Illinois	3,756	19	3,775
Indiana	910	86	996
Iowa	1,465	7	1,472
Kansas	381	11	392
Kentucky	2,686	198	2,884
Louisiana	13,121	100	13,221
Maine	1,156	26	1,182
Maryland	687	78	765
Massachusetts	410	22	432
Michigan	8,556	51	8,607
Minnesota	3,549	151	3,700
Mississippi	32,488	4,863	37,351
Missouri	545	4	549
Montana	651	62	713
Nebraska	443	18	461
Nevada	164	98	262
New Hampshire	303	27	330
New Jersey	1,436	69	1,505
New Mexico	923	124	1,047
New York	11,102	84	11,186
North Carolina	12,780	453	13,233

Table 6. (continued)

<u>State</u>	<u>Seasonal</u>	<u>Year-round</u>	<u>Total</u>
North Dakota	6,620	148	6,768
Ohio	1,869	95	1,964
Oklahoma	18,102	397	18,499
Oregon	14,713	193	14,906
Pennsylvania	1,895	66	1,961
Rhode Island	14	4	18
South Carolina	16,463	104	16,567
South Dakota	759	19	778
Tennessee	16,828	1,386	18,214
Texas	51,088	2,780	53,868
Utah	911	5	916
Vermont	50	6	56
Virginia	2,585	7	2,592
Washington	10,191	411	10,602
West Virginia	146	6	152
Wisconsin	1,999	40	2,039
Wyoming	116	55	171
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>345,755</b>	<b>14,781</b>	<b>360,536</b>

source: Rasmussen, "History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," 149.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## PRIMARY SOURCES

**Government publications**

- Backgrounds of the War Farm Labor Problem. Bureau of Agricultural Economics and Farm Security Administration, USDA, May 1942.
- Botts, Ralph R. "Experience of 30 Reporting Companies with the Victory Farm Volunteers and Women's Land Army Accident Policy in 1943." Bureau of Agricultural Economics, USDA, 9 March 1944.
- A Call to Farms for Women of America. Extension Service, USDA, March 1945.
- Ducoff, Louis J. "Wages of Agricultural Labor in the United States." Technical Bulletin No. 895. Bureau of Agricultural Economics, USDA, 1945.
- "Fighting the Battle on the Land." Extension Service Review, December 1942, 182.
- "Farm Labor Needs." Circular No. 406. Extension Service, USDA, April 1943.
- Food Information Series. pamphlets and reports. Office of Information, USDA.
- Going Our Way? To Work for Victory on the Farm Front. Extension Service, USDA, March 1945.
- Going to the Farm Front?: Safety Tips to the U. S. Crop Corp. USDA, May 1943.
- "Here's Your Girl . . . Mr. and Mrs. Farmer." 1944 Food Production Program Series. Agricultural Extension Service, University of Minnesota, 1944.
- House. Committee on Agriculture. Farm Labor and Production: Hearings before the Committee on Agriculture. 77th Cong., 2d sess., 1942.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Committee on Appropriations. Farm Labor Program, 1943: Hearings before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations. 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943.

- \_\_\_\_\_. Committee on Appropriations. Farm Labor Program, 1944: Hearings before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations. 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds. Amending the Act to Expedite the Provision of Housing in Connection with National Defense: No. 2, Hearings before the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds. 77th Cong., 2d sess., 1942.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds. Amending the Act to Expedite the Provision of Housing in Connection with National Defense: No. 4, Supplemental Hearings before the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds. 77th Cong., 2d sess., 1942.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds. Amendment of Title II Housing in Connection with National Defense: No. 4, Hearings before the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds. 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds. War Housing: No. 6, Hearings before the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds. 77th Cong., 2d sess., 1942.
- "Insurance: Emergency Farm Labor Program." Bureau of Agricultural Economics, USDA, April 1944.
- Join us on the Farm Front. Extension Service, USDA, March 1944.
- Lovewell, Reinette. "A Woman Who Needs You." In A City Woman Who Found her War Job on a Farm, USDA, 1918.
- A Message to Employers about the Need for Vacation Harvest Workers. WLA, Extension Service, USDA, 1945.
- "Need for Farm Labor." Agriculture and National Defense, Office of Information, USDA, 27 September 1941.
- "OADR Shaping Up Farm Labor Program." Agriculture and National Defense, Office of Information, USDA, 22 November 1941.
- Pitch In and Help: The Women's Land Army Calls 800,000 Women to the Farm in 1944. Extension Service, USDA, May 1944.

- "Potato-Harvest Labor in Aroostook County, Maine, 1941."  
Miscellaneous Publication No. 568. Maine Agricultural  
 Experiment Station, Orono, March 1942, 9, 17.
- Rasmussen, Wayne D. "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor  
 Supply Program, 1942-1947." Agricultural Monograph No.  
13. 1951.
- "Report of Progress for the Year Ending June 30, 1942."  
Bulletin No. 411. Maine Agricultural Experiment Station,  
 Orono, University of Maine, June 1942.
- Safety Check List for Women and Girls Doing Farm Work.  
 Extension Service, USDA, March 1943.
- Safety for the US Crop Corps. USDA, May 1943.
- Senate. Committee on Appropriations. Farm Labor Program, 1943,  
Hearings before the Subcommittee of the Committee on  
Appropriations. 78th Cong., 1st. sess., 1943.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Committee of Appropriations. Farm Labor Program, 1944:  
Hearings before the Subcommittee of the Committee on  
Appropriations. 78th Cong., 2d sess., 1944.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Committee on Appropriations. War Housing and War Public  
Works in and Near the District of Columbia under the Act  
of April, 1942 (Public Law 522): Hearings before a  
Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations. 77th  
 Cong., 2d sess., 1942.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Committee on Banking and Currency. Amending National  
Housing Act: Hearing before a Subcommittee of the  
Committee on Banking and Currency. 77th Cong., 1st sess.,  
 1941.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Committee on Banking and Currency. To Amend the  
National Housing Act: Hearing before the Committee on  
Banking and Currency. 78th Cong., 1st. sess., 1943.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Committee on Banking and Currency. National Housing Act  
Amendments of 1942: Hearing before the Committee on  
Banking and Currency. 77th Cong., 2d sess., 1942.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Committee on Education and Labor. Defense Housing and  
Community Facilities: Hearings before a Subcommittee of

the Committee on Education and Labor. 77th Cong., 1st sess., 1941.

\_\_\_\_\_. Committee on Education and Labor. Defense Housing and Community Facilities for the District of Columbia: Hearings before the Committee on Education and Labor. 77th Cong., 2d sess., 1942.

\_\_\_\_\_. Committee on Education and Labor. To Amend the Defense Housing Act: Hearing before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Education and Labor. 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943.

Sound the Call to Farms!: Helps for Recruiting Local Farm Workers in 1945. War Advising Council, USDA, n.d.  
U.S. Statutes at Large. Vol. 50, 888.

U.S. Women's Bureau. "Guidelines for Wartime Use of Women on Farms." Special Bulletin No. 8. Department of Labor, 1942.

\_\_\_\_\_. Women as Workers: A Statistical Guide. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1953.

Valentine, Frances W. "Successful Practices in the Employment of Nonfarm Women on Farms in the Northeastern States, 1943." Bulletin No. 199. U.S. Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, 1944.

\_\_\_\_\_. Women and Wartime Work: A Study of Eight Midwest States in 1944. USDA, 1944.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Women's Emergency Farm Service on the Pacific Coast in 1943." Bulletin No. 204. U.S. Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, 1945.

VFV on the Farm Front. Extension Service, USDA, May 1944.

Wiener, Minnie, comp. War Public Works: A Compilation of Statutes, Executive Orders, Regulations, and Other Documents Relating to the Construction, Financing, Operation, and Maintenance of Community Facilities Under the Lanham Act, as Amended. Federal Works Agency, Office of General Counsel, 1943.

Women Farm Workers: The 1943 Story of the Women's Land Army of the U.S. Crop Corps. War Food Administration, Extension Service, USDA, October 1943.

"Women Prove their Mettle." Extension Service Review. November 1943.

Women's Land Army: Extension Farm Labor Program, 1943-1944-1945. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1945.

The Women's Land Army of the U.S. Crop Corps, 1944. Extension Service, USDA, May 1944.

Women's Land Army of the U.S. Crop Corps Needs Workers. Extension Service, USDA, July 1943.

### Books

Ayling, Keith. Calling All Women. New York: Harper, 1942.

Blatch, Harriot Stanton. Mobilizing Woman-Power. New York: The Womans Press, 1918.

Fraser, Helen. Women and War Work. New York: G. Arnold Shaw, 1918.

Help for the Farmer. New York: Advisory Council of the Women's Land Army of America, 1918.

Knoepfel, C. E. Women in Industry. New York: C. E. Knoepfel, 1918.

Ross, Mary Steele. American Women in Uniform. Garden City, N.J.: Garden City Publishing, 1943.

Shewell-Cooper, W. E. Land Girl: A Manual for Volunteers in the Women's Land Army. London: English Universities Press, 1941.

Tolley, Howard R. The Farmer Citizen at War. New York: Macmillan Company, 1943.

What Women Can Do to Win the War. Chicago: Consolidated Book Publishers, 1942.

Wickard, Claude R. Farmers and Defense. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Public Affairs, n.d.

Women on the Land. New York: Advisory Council of the Women's Land Army of America, 1918.

**Journal articles**

- "800,000 Women Farm Workers Needed This Year." Labor Information Bulletin 11 (March 1944): 5.
- "Advisory Council of the Women's Land Army of America." Women's National Farm and Garden Association Monthly Bulletin 4 (February 1918): 6.
- Bakke, Mrs. Arthur. "Look Out!: Girls at Work." Successful Farming 41 (April 1943): 96-97.
- Bird, John. "New Hands for Our Farms." Country Gentleman 112 (September 1942): 9, 43-44, 77-78, 80.
- Bryan, Elizabeth, and Katherine Bonnell. "Farm Jobs for City Girls." Liberty, n.d., 20, 22.
- Case, Victoria. "Oregon Checks Womanpower." Independent Woman 21 (March 1942): 78, 91.
- "City Girl Answers Call to Farms." Country Gentleman 113 (June 1943): 73.
- Cockerell, T. D. A. "War Work of College Women in the West." School and Society 6 (15 December 1917): 699-705.
- Colvin, Esther M. "Another Women's Land Army?" Independent Woman 21 (April 1942): 102-04, 126.
- Cook, Catherine. "National Service and the Women's National Farm and Garden Association: Join the Land Army, A Call to the Women of America." Women's National Farm and Garden Association Monthly Bulletin 4 (October 1917): 1-2.
- Denman, Lady. Foreword to Land Girl: A Manual for Volunteers in the Women's Land Army, by W. E. Shewell-Cooper. London: English Universities Press, 1941.
- "Employment of Womanpower to Fill Places of Men Who Have Gone on Active War Duty." Milk Plant Monthly 32 (September 1943): 20.
- "Farm Women Help." Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead, 17 April 1943, 237, 255.
- Gavrilova, Claudia. "Woman Does Nearly All Milk Plant Work." Milk Plant Monthly 32 (September 1943): 28.

- Hall, Florence L. "The Nation's Crops Need You." Independent Woman 24 (July 1945): 187, 203.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "They're Getting in the Crops." Independent Woman 22 (July 1943): 194-96, 216.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Yes, Town Women Can Help." Farm Journal and Farmer's Wife, August 1944, 33.
- Harding, T. Swann. "Womanpower Vs. Manpower." Independent Woman 23 (May 1944): 132.
- Harmon, Dudley. "Is the Woman Needed on the Farm?: What the United States Government has to Say About Farm Work for Women this Summer." Ladies' Home Journal 35 (May 1918): 105-06.
- Hogeland, Ruth. "The Girl Who Stayed." Country Gentleman 113 (June 1943): 72.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "They Don't Know How to Say Quit!" Country Gentleman 113 (November 1943): 74, 76.
- Landman, M. V. "Women Farmers." Cornell Countryman (Spring 1918): 479-81, 500, 502, 504, 508.
- "More Womanpower: Your Answer to the Manpower Shortage." Ice Cream Review 27 (September 1943): 62-63.
- Ogilvie, Ida H. "Agriculture, Labor and Woman." Columbia University Quarterly (October 1918): 293-300.
- "Oregon Trains Women Farm Dairy Workers." Milk Plant Monthly 33 (July 1944): 46.
- O'Shea, Bernard G. "Volunteer Farmers: The City to Country Farm Plan Enters its Tenth Summer in Vermont." Vermont Life, September 1951, 44-49.
- Patterson, Jean. "Hayseed in My Hair." Country Gentleman 113 (September 1943): 77, 84-85.
- "Placing Women on the Land: Experiments in the Eastern United States." Women's National Farm and Garden Association Monthly Bulletin 4 (February 1918): 1-6.
- Policastro, Charles. "Emplyoment of Women in Ice Cream Plants." Ice Cream Review 27 (March 1944): 27, 56, 58.

- Powell, Hickman. "Sister Pitches In." Country Gentleman 112 (July 1942): 14, 59.
- Reid, Margaret G. "Food Strategy." Pamphlet No. 1. Wartime Farm and Food Policy Series. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1943.
- Schickele, Rainer. "Manpower in Agriculture." Pamphlet No. 3. Wartime Farm and Farm Policy Series. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1943.
- Schlup, Lester A. "Recruiting the 'Land Army.'" The Nation's Agriculture 19 (May 1944): 4, 18-19.
- "She Makes Idle Acres Feed the Hungry." Literary Digest, 8 March 1919, 98-102.
- "Sighted Goals; Met Same." Farm Journal and Farmer's Wife, September 1942, 13-17.
- Spence, Elizabeth. "Vacation Down on the Farm." Independent Woman 22 (April 1943): 110-11.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "War Time Harvest." Independent Woman 21 (September 1942): 270-71.
- Streeter, Carroll P. "Can Town and City Women Help?" Farm Journal and Farmer's Wife, July 1942, 32-33, 43.
- Talbot, Dame Meriel. "The Women's Land Army in the Great War, 1914-18." In Land Girl: A Manual for Volunteers in the Women's Land Army. London: English Universities Press, 1941, iii-iv.
- Taylor, Toni. "Women on the Home Front." McCall's, May 1942, 64-65.
- "They Give the Farmer a Hand." Woman's Home Companion, May 1943, 74-75.
- "To the Land-Ladies!: A Toast to Members of the Women's Land Army, and a Call to Others to Join their Ranks." House and Garden 85 (April 1944): 66, 81.
- "To the Rescue of the Crops." Independent Woman 23 (May 1944): 130-31, 154-55.



- Tunnell, Charles N. "Experience of Texas Dairymen with Womanpower." Milk Plant Monthly 32 (September 1943): 30-31.
- "Use of Women in Milk Plants." Milk Plant Monthly 32 (February 1943): 34-36.
- Van Delden, E. H. "Solution of Manpower Problems will be Womanpower." Milk Plant Monthly 32 (September 1943): 26.
- Warren, T. R. "A Victory Dairy Maid." Hoard's Dairyman 88 (25 September 1943): 534.
- "When Town Girls Help." Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead, 19 June 1943, 1.
- "Wo-Manpower for the Ice Cream Industry." Ice Cream Review 26 (March 1943): 18-19, 37.
- "Womanpower: 'Any Job a Woman Takes Which Releases a Man for Military Service or Heavy Industrial Work is a War Job.'" Milk Plant Monthly 32 (September 1943): 22-24.
- "Women: Without Fuss or Feathers." Time, 12 January 1942, 16.
- "Women Drivers at One Milk Plant." Milk Plant Monthly 32 (September 1943): 29.
- "Women Drivers in Milk Delivery." Milk Plant Monthly 32 (February 1943): 38.
- "Women Play Vital Role in Milk Plant." Milk Plant Monthly 32 (September 1943): 27.
- "Women Prove Helpful in Meeting Nation's Food Crisis." Labor Information Bulletin 11 (March 1944): 3.
- "Women Workers Help in Harvesting Crops." Labor Information Bulletin 9 (October 1942).
- "Women's Role in Wartime Economy Will Grow." Milk Plant Monthly 32 (September 1943): 24-25.
- Wyatt, Edith Franklin. "The Illinois Training Farm for Women." Kimball's Dairy Farmer, 15 April 1918, 18, 33, 36.

**Manuscript collections**National Agricultural Library

Diehl, Edith. "Report of the Wellesley College Training Camp and Experiment Station for the Women's Land Army of America." 2d ed., 1919.

Hall, Florence L. to Assistant State Supervisor, WLA. 1944. Extension Service, USDA.

Hall, Florence L. to Women's Land Army Supervisor. 1943-1945. Extension Service, USDA.

"Insurance: Emergency Farm Labor Program." BAE, USDA, April 1944.

Ogilvie, Ida H. "Women's Agricultural Camp, Bedford, New York, Second Annual Report." 1918.

Ousley, Clarence. "Women on the Farm." Address before Woman's Committee, Council of National Defense. Washington, D.C.: USDA, 1918.

"Outline of Suggestions for Developing a County Plan." Emergency Farm Labor Program, Extension Service, USDA.

"Some of the Responsibilities of a State Women's Land Army Supervisor." January 1944.

"Vacation Work with the Shade Tobacco Growers Agricultural Association, Inc. and Connecticut Agricultural Extension Service." Report. Shade Tobacco Growers Agricultural Association, Inc., 1945.

Wetmore, Edith. "Report of the Newport Farmerette Unit, 1918, First Annual Report."

Women's National Farm and Garden Association Monthly Bulletin, vol. 4 (1917/1918).

National Archives

Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports of Extension and Other Workers under the Farm Labor Program, 1943-1947. Records of the U.S. Extension Service. National Archives Record Group 33, College Park, Maryland.

- Divisional Histories and Other Records Summarizing the Program, 1943-48. Records Concerning the Farm Labor Program, Extension Service. National Archives Record Group 33, College Park, Maryland.
- General and other Correspondence and Related Records, 1943-1948. Records concerning the Farm Labor Program, Records of the U.S. Extension Service. NARG 33. National Archives, College Park, Maryland.
- M. L. Wilson, director. Records of the Extension Service, National Archives Record Group 287, College Park, Maryland.
- Publicity, General and other Correspondence and Related Records, 1943-1948. Records Concerning the Farm Labor Program, Extension Service. National Archives Record Group 33, College Park, Maryland.
- Women Workers in World War II, 1940-1945. Division of Research. Records of the U.S. Women's Bureau. National Archives Record Group 86, College Park, Maryland.

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

- Official File--227a (Farm Matters). Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
- Official File--1 (Agriculture). Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
- Official File--Housing, 1941-1945. Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers. Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
- Official File--Mexico, 1941. Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers. Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont

- Root, Arthur. Report on the Volunteer Land Corps, Summer 1942. n.d. Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont, Burlington.

Walter Library, University of Minnesota

College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics Papers.

University Archives, Walter Library, University of  
Minnesota, Minneapolis.

Section G, Historical. ALD6.1. Agricultural Extension Service  
Papers, 1914-1976/1977, University of Minnesota.

University Archives, Walter Library, University of  
Minnesota, Minneapolis.

Specialists Annual Reports. ALD6.1. Agricultural Extension  
Service Papers, 1914-1976/1977, University of Minnesota.

University Archives, Walter Library, University of  
Minnesota, Minneapolis.

Minnesota Archives

Harold E. Stassen Records. Minnesota State Archives. Minnesota  
Historical Society, St. Paul.

Great Northern Railway Company Records. Minnesota State  
Archives. Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

**Newspapers**

Christian Science Monitor, 9 January 1943.

Denver Post, 1940-1945.

The Farmerette, December 1918-May 1920.

Farmer's Advocate, 26 June 1941-26 November 1942.

New York Times, 1942-1945.

PM's Daily Picture Magazine, 1943

Saturday Evening Post, 25 July 1942, 16 December 1944.

Washington Evening Star, 1943

Washington Post, 21 March 1943.

Wyoming Eagle, 1943-1945.

## SECONDARY SOURCES

**Books**

- Anderson, Karen. Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981.
- Britnell, George E., and Vernon C. Fowke. Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace, 1935-50. Stanford: Stanford University, 1962.
- Braeman, John, Robert H. Bremner, and David Brody, eds. The New Deal: The National Level. Vol. 1. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1975.
- Campbell, D'Ann. Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984.
- Chafe, William Henry. The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970. New York: Oxford University Press, 1972.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Paradox of Change: American Women in the Twentieth Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).  
(Revision of The American Woman)
- Fink, Deborah. Agrarian Women: Wives and Mothers in Rural Nebraska, 1880-1940. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).
- \_\_\_\_\_. Open Country, Iowa: Rural Women, Tradition and Change. Albany, State University of New York Press, 1986).
- Fite, Gilbert C. Cotton Fields No More: Southern Agriculture, 1865-1980. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984.
- Gamboa, Erasmo. Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942-1947. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990.
- Genung, A. B. The Agricultural Depression Following World War I and its Political Consequences: An Account of the Deflation Episode, 1921-1934. Ithaca, N.Y.: Northeast Farm Foundation, 1954.

- Greenwald, Maurine Weiner. Women, War, and Work: The Impact of World War I on Women Workers in the United States. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980.
- Gregory, Chester W. Women in Defense Work During World War II: An Analysis of the Labor Problem and Women's Rights. New York: Exposition Press, 1974.
- Hartmann, Susan M. The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982.
- Higonnet, Margaret Randolph, et al., eds. Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.
- Hooks, Gregory. Forging the Military-Industrial Complex: World War II's Battle of the Potomac. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991.
- Hurt, R. Douglas. Agricultural Technology in the Twentieth Century. Manhattan, Kansas: Sunflower University Press, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. American Agriculture: A Brief History. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994.
- Janiewski, Dolores E. Sisterhood Denied: Race, Gender, and Class in a New South Community. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985).
- Jellison, Katherine. Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology, 1913-1963. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.
- Koistinen, Paul A. C. The Military-Industrial Complex: A Historical Perspective. New York: Praeger, 1980.
- Leuchtenburg, William E. The FDR Years: On Roosevelt and His Legacy. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940. New York: Harper and Row, 1963.
- McElvaine, Robert S. The Great Depression: America, 1929-1941. New York: Times Books, 1984.

- Milkman, Ruth. Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).
- Nash, Gerald D. The Great Depression and World War II: Organizing America, 1933-45. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979.
- The New Deal Viewed from Fifty Years: Papers Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Launching of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal in 1983. Edited by Lawrence E. Gelfand and Robert J. Neymeyer. Iowa City, Ia.: The Center for the Study of the Recent History of the United States, 1983.
- Saloutos, Theodore. The American Farmer and the New Deal. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1982.
- Scott, Anne Firor. The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995.
- Shideler, James H. Farm Crisis, 1919-1923. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957.
- Spielvogel, Jackson J. Western Civilization. Vol. 2, 2d ed. St. Paul, Minn.: West Publishing Company, 1994.
- Taylor, Sandra C. Jewel of the Desert: Japanese American Internment at Topaz. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
- Tentler, Leslie Woodcock. Wage-Earning Women: Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States, 1900-1930. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- War Business, and American Society: Historical Perspectives on the Military-Industrial Complex. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1977.
- Wartime Agriculture in Australia and New Zealand, 1939-50. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954.
- Wise, Nancy Baker, and Christy Wise. A Mouthful of Rivets: Women at Work in World War II. San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994.

**Journal articles**

- Allen, Susan L. "Preparing Women for the National Crisis: The Role of Oklahoma A. and M. College." Chronicles of Oklahoma 69 (Winter 1991-1992): 392-407.
- Anderson, Karen. "Work, Gender, and Power in the American West." Pacific Historical Review 61 (November 1992): 481-99.
- Bearden, Russell. "Life Inside Arkansas's Japanese-American Relocation Centers." Arkansas Historical Quarterly 48 (Summer 1989): 169-96.
- Buecker, Thomas R. "Nazi Influence at the Fort Robinson Prisoner of War Camp During World War II." Nebraska History 73 (Spring 1992): 32-41.
- Carpenter, Stephanie Ann. "At the Agricultural Front: The Women's Land Army in World War II." Agricultural History 71 (Spring 1997): 163-85.
- Corbett, William P. "'They Hired Every Farmer in the Country': Establishing the Prisoner of War Camp at Tonkawa." Chronicles of Oklahoma 69 (Winter 1991-1992): 368-91.
- Crawford, J. G., et al. "Wartime Agriculture in Australia, 1939-50." In Wartime Agriculture in Australia and New Zealand, 1939-50. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954, 1-237.
- Daniels, Roger. "The Decisions to Relocate the North American Japanese: Another Look." Pacific Historical Review 51 (February 1982): 71-77.
- Davidson, Joel. "Building for War, Preparing for Peace: World War II and the Military-Industrial Complex." In World War II and the American Dream: How Wartime Building Changed a Nation. Washington, D.C.: National Building Museum; Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1995, 184-229.
- Dawson, Marie. "Pitching in on the Homefront." Countryside 1 (Winter 1990): 84-86.



- Doyle, Susan Badger. "German and Italian Prisoners of War in Albuquerque, 1943-1946." New Mexico Historical Review 66 (July 1991): 327-40.
- Fahey, John. "John Fahey on 'Reeducating' German Prisoners During World War II." Oregon Historical Quarterly 93 (Winter 1992-1993): 368-93.
- Flora, Cornelia Butler and Jan L. Flora. "Structure of Agriculture and Women's Culture in the Great Plains." Great Plains Quarterly 8 (Fall 1988): 195-205.
- Flynn, George Q. "Drafting Farmers in World War II." In At Home on the Range: Essays on the History of Western Social and Domestic Life. Edited by John R. Wunder. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985, 157-74.
- Gamboa, Erasmo. "Braceros in the Pacific Northwest: Laborers on the Domestic Front, 1942-1947." Pacific Historical Review 56 (1987): 378-98.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Mexican Migration into Washington State: A History, 1940-1950." Pacific Northwest Quarterly 72 (July 1981): 121-31.
- Goldin, Claudia D. "The Role of World War II in the Rise of Women's Employment." American Economic Review 81 (September 1991): 741-56.
- Harley, Sharon. "For the Good of Family and Race: Gender, Work, and Domestic Roles in the Black Community, 1880-1930." Signs 15 (Winter 1990): 336-49.
- Heinicke, Craig. "African American Migration and Urban Labor Skills: 1950 and 1960." Agricultural History 68 (Spring 1994): 185-98.
- Hewitt, William L. "Mexican Workers in Wyoming During World War II: Necessity, Discrimination, and Protest." Annals of Wyoming 54 (Fall 1982): 20-33.
- Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race." Signs 17 (Winter 1992): 251-74.

- Hooks, Gregory. "The Weakness of Strong Theories: The U.S. State's Dominance of the World War II Investment Process." American Sociological Review 58 (February 1993): 37-53.
- James, Thomas. "The Education of the Japanese Americans at Tule Lake, 1942-1946." Pacific Historical Review 56 (February 1987): 25-58.
- Johnson, Melyn. "At Home in Amache: A Japanese-American Relocation Camp in Colorado." Colorado Heritage no. 1 (1989): 2-11.
- Kirby, Jack Temple. "Black and White in the Rural South, 1915-1954." In The History of Rural Life in America. Edited by Barbara R. Cotton. Washington, D.C.: Agricultural History Society, 1986.
- Liss, Samuel. "The Concept and Determination of Prevailing Wages in Agriculture During World War II." Agricultural History 24 (January 1950): 4-18.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Farm Wage Boards Under the Cooperative Extension Service During World War II." Agricultural History 27 (July 1953): 103-108.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Farm Wage Boards Under the Wage Stabilization Program During World War II." Agricultural History 30 (July 1956): 128-37.
- Litoff, Judith Barrett, and David C. Smith. "'To the Rescue of the Crops': The Women's Land Army during World War II." Prologue 25 (Winter 1993): 347-61.
- Lobdell, George H. "A Tale of Two Christmases at the Algona Prisoner-of-War Camp." Palimpsest 73 (Winter 1992): 170-83.
- Martelet, Penny. "The Women's Land Army, World War I." In Clio was a Woman: Studies in the History of American Women. Edited by Mabel E. Deutrich and Virginia C. Purdy, 136-46. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1980.
- Matsumoto, Valerie. "Japanese American Women During World War II." In Unequal Sisters: A Multi-cultural Reader in U.S.

- Women's History. Edited by Ellen Carol DuBois and Vicki L. Ruiz. New York: Routledge, 1990, 373-86.
- McAfee, Ward M. "A History of Convict Labor in California." Southern California Quarterly 72 (Spring 1990): 91-140.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "America's Two Japanese-American Policies During World War II." Southern California Quarterly 69 (Summer 1987): 151-64.
- McCain, Johnny M. "Texas and the Mexican Labor Question, 1942-1947." Southwestern Historical Quarterly 85 (July 1981): 45-64.
- Montgomerie, Deborah. "Men's Jobs and Women's Work: The New Zealand Women's Land Service in World War II." Agricultural History 63 (Summer 1989).
- Neth, Mary. "Gender and the Family Labor System: Defining Work in the Rural Midwest." Journal of Social History 27 (Spring 1994): 563-77.
- Richter, Anton H., ed. "A German P.O.W. at Camp Grant: The Reminiscences of Heinz Richter." Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 76 (Spring 1983): 61-70.
- Rogers, Joe D. "Camp Hereford: Italian Prisoners of War on the Texas Plains, 1942-1945." Panhandle-Plains Historical Review 62 (1989): 57-110.
- Ross, A. A. "Wartime Agriculture in New Zealand, 1939-50." In Wartime Agriculture in Australia and New Zealand, 1939-50. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954, 239-345.
- Sacks, Karen Brodtkin. "Toward a Unified Theory of Class, Race, and Gender." American Ethnologist 16 (August 1989): 534-50.
- Scherini, Rose D. "Executive Order 9066 and Italian Americans: The San Francisco Story." California History 70 (Winter 1991-1992): 366-77.
- Shea, William L., ed. "A German Prisoner of War in the South: The Memoir of Edwin Pelz." Arkansas Historical Quarterly 44 (Spring 1985): 42-55.

- Smith, Caron. "The Women's Land Army During World War II." Kansas History 14 (Summer 1991): 82-88.
- Taylor, Sandra C. "Interned at Topaz: Age, Gender, and Family in the Relocation Experience." Utah Historical Quarterly 59 (Fall 1991): 380-94.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Japanese Americans and Keetley Farms: Utah's Relocation Colony." Utah Historical Quarterly 54 (Fall 1986): 328-44.
- "Uprooted: A Portfolio of Japanese Americans in World War II." Colorado Heritage no. 1 (1989): 14-27.
- Voorhees, Anita. "Over Here: The Women's Land Army." Ms. 4 (November 1975): 22.
- Waddell, Brian. "The Dimensions of the Military Ascendancy During U.S. Industrial Mobilization for World War II." Journal of Political and Military Sociology 23 (Summer 1995): 81-98.
- Wages, Hazel. "Memphis Armed Service Forces Depot Prisoner of War Camp, 1944-1946." Tennessee Historical Quarterly 52 (Spring 1993): 19-32.
- Walker, Melissa. "Home Extension Work among African American Farm Women in East Tennessee, 1920-1939." Agricultural History 70 (Summer 1996): 487-502.
- Wax, Rosalie H. "In and Out of the Tule Lake Segregation Center: Japanese Internment in the West, 1942-1945." Montana 37 (Spring 1987): 12-25.

#### **Unpublished sources**

- Dyson, Lowell K. "The Women's Land Army of World War II." Paper presented at Missouri Valley History Conference, Omaha, Nebraska, March 1991.
- Jungmeyer, Roger L. "The Bracero Program, 1942-1951: Mexican Contract Labor in the United States." Ph.D. diss., University of Missouri-Columbia, 1988.