

1972

The Barometer

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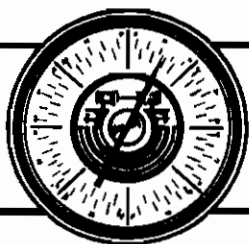
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Recommended Citation

Ducey, Anne L. and Williams, Lillian A. (1972) "The Barometer," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 25 : No. 4 , Article 9.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol25/iss4/9>

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THE BAROMETER

(Writers' comments on Lieutenant Commander Coye's article "The Restricted Unrestricted Line Officer: the Status of the Navy's Woman Line Officer" which appeared in the March issue.)

Lieutenant Commander Coye's article on the place of women in the Navy has been written at a most appropriate time, for with the women's movement gaining momentum in the civilian community, it is time for the military services to reevaluate their women's programs. One of the attractions of the military for women in the past has been that women did have greater opportunity for equal rights in the military than could be found in civilian occupations. Now the bars are being lowered in the civilian market not only with respect to equal rights, but also with respect to equal opportunity. Consequently, it behooves the military to take a hard look at their women's programs. If they are to be continued, they must be competitive or at least in the case of the Navy, it will not attract the talent that it has been able to expect in its women officers.

Miss Coye claims in the introduction to her article that the senior women officers are slow to work for new policies. I believe that our senior women officers realize the necessity of the development of a career pattern and the need to consider the desires and goals of our junior women officers if we are to continue to have women in the Navy. They have always been available on call to the "quasi-chain of command" and fully realize that the Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel for Women (AC/P(W))

cannot accomplish the changes single-handedly. She needs the help of the senior male officers in the Navy who are in the positions of authority over all our personnel, male and female. While she does have support at the policy level, the managerial level is not yet completely ready to institute the needed changes.

It is my understanding that reevaluation of the career development of women officers is part of an appraisal study being conducted of the total officer structure. Opening to women of the country area regional specialist (CARS/CARSO) program and new opportunities through the operational/managerial route are part of this reevaluation. These developments have evolved since the writing of Miss Coye's article—which in some respects has been overtaken by events—but, nevertheless, the young woman officer needs guidance today regarding what is important for her to consider in the development of her career.

It will take time to evolve all new career development patterns for women now being studied by the Bureau. While they are in the process of being developed, it might be well for an interim pattern to be published to assist any of the women officers who are at that stage of their careers that they may find need of same.

As for my personal philosophy, I would like to see women assigned initially as generalists, deterring the formal commitment to a specialty until selection for postgraduate school or for lieutenant commander, whichever

comes first. At the point where the woman goes to postgraduate school or is selected for lieutenant commander, she should be expected to be assigned progressively to more responsible jobs in a single field. She and her detailer would need to collaborate on what this field should be. It should be based on motivation, experience, education, and training. Service school and training in management should be part of the package for all women officers who demonstrate superior performance.

One of the biggest dilemmas in this scheme is how to insure that women will get progressively more responsible jobs. At present the Bureau of Naval Personnel can order a woman to an activity for duty fully intending her to be utilized in a challenging assignment. However, the commanding officer may have already determined that an officer already on board will be moved into that slot, and this could be prejudicial to the woman in gaining an acceptable and fulfilling job. Instances such as these demand some sort of centralized control to insure their prevention in situations of discrimination.

I would like to see the records of all women above the rank of lieutenant moved to the appropriate rank desks as quickly as possible, starting with the rank of commander and subsequently including the ranks of lieutenant commander and lieutenant. Monitoring of their assignments might be necessary, until such time as de facto discrimination no longer exists. Such monitoring should rest with the administrative staff in Pers B1.

One of the most serious defects in the women's program in the past has been the reluctance to assign women to jobs where they would be in supervision of a male staff. This is being overcome, but is also an area where monitoring is advisable. Key middle management jobs are essential steps to O-6 and flag rank. I hope the day has passed when a command is permitted to refuse to take a

woman officer because it "already has its quota."

In the past, women have had a definite advantage over the men with respect to the opportunity for postgraduate education. Four years' experience as a member of the PG Board gave evidence that the percentage of women before the board who are selected each year is larger than the percentage of men. This possibly reflects their superior educational qualifications and also the advantage that continual shore assignments give to the woman who is interested in preparing herself for selection through off-duty education. Opportunities for command, for service schools, and key middle management jobs have begun to be made available to women, but we need the continuing help of the Navy male leadership to insure proper utilization of womanpower. Upper management positions and selection to flag rank are still on the back burner, but I am optimistic enough to think that this will also be a reality in the not too distant future.

I believe that a review of the women's program, as Miss Coye recommends, would reveal that changes are overdue in the way in which we manage our womanpower, a fact that is already known by Navy policymakers. The author's basic study has accumulated many references and reviewed much sociological background which might be of value to people involved in the utilization of women personnel. Perhaps Miss Coye's article could assist the Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel for Women in her efforts to provide the senior male officers in the Bureau of Naval Personnel with proof that womanpower is vocal, is interested in a challenge, and is eager for equal opportunity and the responsibilities that go with it.

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Having read the article dealing with discriminatory Navy policy toward women officers by Lt. Comdr. Beth F. Coye (March 1972), I take this opportunity to comment on her thesis. Not only has she brought to the reader's attention many of the problems facing the woman officer today, but she has also provided practical solutions which may be employed by the Navy as corrective measures.

Lieutenant Commander Coye pointed out that, generally speaking, Navy personnel consider the feminist movement ridiculous or amusing, which is unfortunate. Hopefully, this will not remain the case. If so, the Navy is sure to continue losing many talented individuals because of this apathetic attitude. And, going one step further, some may not feel threatened by this loss, as they see no need for women in the military. However, clarification of the necessity of the female naval officer is irrelevant, and even the imposition of such a question is insulting. Women should not have to feel apologetic about their sex nor give reason for their utilization. However, our present society has yet to fully realize the capabilities of its female members. Therefore, the Navy must offer education on this subject to its personnel, as Lieutenant Commander Coye suggested.

One of the primary restrictions placed on the woman line officer is the lack of opportunity provided by the Navy. When I joined the service 2 years ago, I did so having no idea that I would, in all probability, enjoy a career of administrative work. Presently I am serving as a Public Affairs Officer and Educational Services Officer and have worked in Enlisted Personnel. Even though I have absorbed valuable knowl-

edge from these billets, and for the most part enjoyed them, I shudder at the thought of spending years in this type of work. I am certain most junior officers agree. However, Navy policy dictates that I have no other course to follow as an unrestricted line officer, except for an occasional tour in communications, intelligence, or data processing.

And what about the enlisted women? The Director of the Waves has called the problem of retention of enlisted women "disastrous." Many of the junior enlisted personnel are dissatisfied with Navy policy and consequently are leaving the service. They too experience very limited opportunity because being born female they must bear the "burden" as such.

Even though there is much to be overcome, I am optimistic about the future of the Navy woman. The Navy in recent years has proven itself to be the leader of the armed services in meeting and rectifying various social ills declared so by our modern society.

A need for change in Navy policy toward women having been established, I support Lieutenant Commander Coye's proposition that a study be conducted by the Bureau of Naval Personnel, encompassing the objectives she stated. And, of the three policy options she proposed, I feel that "Policy # 2: Different but Equal Opportunity" is the most practical. If an individual is qualified and interested in a particular billet, she should not be rejected as a potential incumbent by the Navy on the basis of sex.

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