

MARYLAND COUNCIL OF DEFENSE—CECIL COUNTY
WOMEN'S DIVISION

November 10, 1941

Elkton

WE are gathered here today in the shadow of another Armistice Day. Instead of the jubilation, however, brought by that first Armistice Day of 1918, tomorrow brings uncertainty and anxiety—*anxiety mixed with dire apprehension, an apprehension reflected even in the purpose of today's meeting.*

Truly may it be said that, from the international standpoint, "the day of chivalry is past." Merely to view this assemblage of the women of Cecil County, collected here today to give consideration to *Women's Place in National Defense*, is to be brought face to face with the realization of the vast change that has come over the world with regard to the practice of chivalry.

Until the last few years, we have liked to pride ourselves on the belief that the world had made tremendous progress since the days of the Middle Ages. It must be admitted, however, that dictators of today have much to learn from the warriors of the Middle Ages about their code of chivalry, under which every woman, every child, every aged and infirm person was safe from harm, not only in peace times, but in war as well.

The very fact that so many women in this county, in all the 23 counties of Maryland, and in every county throughout the 48 states, are being mobilized for National Defense is in itself a sad commentary upon the state of the world today, and upon the alleged progress that has been made throughout the centuries.

If one were to seek in a few words the answer to the question, "What is women's place today in National Defense?," it might be replied briefly that in today's defense of one's homeland, women must stand beside the men, ready to aid in every possible way short of actually bearing arms.

It might be said, too, that women today face practically the same dangers in their homes and cities that the men of our Country face on the field of action. Unpleasant as it is to admit it, the conduct of warfare has been lowered to the level of the barbarian. Under warfare as it is carried on today in this supposedly civilized world, instead of protection being afforded to non-combatants, to the young and the old, and the infirm, special efforts are made to destroy this section of the population, and thus to defeat from behind, you might say, the military and naval forces that up to this time have been the sole instruments of warfare.

Women's place in National Defense is a long story. Part of it has been unfolded to you already, and by the activities of the Maryland Council of Defense in enlisting women volunteers for air raid spotters, for nursing corps, and for other emergency duties.