Harry H. Woodring

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On 27 August 1936 Secretary of War George H. Dern died at Walter Reed Army Hospital after a lengthy illness. Five days later, after impressive ceremonies in Washington, he was buried at Salt Lake City, Utah. No sooner had Secretary Dern's death been announced than politicians and newspapermen began to speculate about who would be chosen to take his place. Those mentioned most frequently as possible successors were Frank Murphy, Commissioner to the Philippines; Governor Paul V. McNutt of Indiana; Fiorello H. LaGuardia, Mayor of New York City; and Presidential Secretary Stephen Early. Assistant Secretary of War Harry Woodring's name was occasionally mentioned, but he was not considered a prime contender for the job. Most political observers expected a replacement to be named within a few days and expected Woodring to remain as Assistant Secretary; however, when the early weeks of September had passed, and the President had failed to announce who would fill the position, it came to be felt that perhaps no selection would be made until after the upcoming presidential election. In the meantime, Woodring, who had automatically become Acting Secretary upon Dern's death, continued to fill both the number one and the number two spots in the War Department—as he had during most of the previous three and one-half years. By mid September, President Roosevelt seemed quite satisfied with the existing arrangement and had apparently decided not to fill the post in the immediate future.

In late September the President, who was in the midst of a vigorous
campaign for reelection, traveled to his home at Hyde Park, New York, for a few days of relaxation. On Friday, 25 September, he received a message from the Executive Clerk at the White House, calling attention to a letter that had just been received from Attorney General Homer S. Cummings. The letter informed the President of a law that provided that a cabinet position must be filled within thirty days of a vacancy; therefore, it would be necessary to appoint a Secretary of War no later than the following day. Having given little or no consideration to such an appointment, yet being faced with the necessity of fulfilling a statutory requirement, Roosevelt decided to appoint Woodring.

From his home on the Hudson the President immediately wired Woodring, informing him that, since he could not legally remain Acting Secretary for longer than thirty days, he was announcing his “temporary selection” as Secretary. Roosevelt concluded the notification by saying, “I know you will understand my reason for making this a temporary designation.” From Washington the obviously happy Woodring quickly replied, expressing his thanks for the appointment and saying, “I fully understand and approve the temporary designation. My wish . . . has been that you would take only such action which gave paramount consideration to your best interests for November.”

There seemed to be no doubt that the appointment would be temporary. Roosevelt made that point clear to Woodring, and he wanted it made equally clear to the press. The official announcement from Hyde Park said that the appointment was “temporarily filling the vacancy” left by the death of Secretary Dern, and it emphasized that the law required that the vacancy be filled. When reporters asked for clarification of the statement, especially the “temporarily filling the vacancy” phrase, White House officials declined to give one. The wording of the announcement was therefore taken to mean that Woodring would be only a “temporary” Secretary of War, with a “permanent” Secretary being named sometime in the future, in all likelihood after the election. Harry H. Woodring was now the Secretary of War, but for how long was anyone’s guess.

By designating Woodring to serve “temporarily,” Roosevelt accomplished three politically advantageous feats. First, he gave cabinet recognition to the home state of Republican presidential nominee Alfred Landon just six weeks before the election. Second, he could hold out the secretaryship for possible political advantage in the presidential campaign. Third, he gained campaign support by putting a World War veteran and American Legionnaire into the New Deal cabinet for the first time.

The reaction to the announcement of 25 September was mixed, as is the case with nearly all cabinet appointments. For the most part, Woodring’s
promotion to the top spot was looked upon with gratification in official and military circles.\(^9\) Within the President's official family the reaction was generally favorable, the only exceptions being Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, WPA Administrator Harry Hopkins, and Press Secretary Steve Early.\(^10\) Professional military men were pleased, because it put into office a man whom they knew they could get along with, one who was familiar with the problems and needs of the War Department.\(^11\) In most cases, editorial reaction was in line with that of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, which applauded the selection and said that "Secretary Woodring seems to have what it needs in the war office."\(^12\)

The most violent opposition to the appointment of Woodring came from the two-million-member American League against War and Fascism. The national chairman of the league wrote to Roosevelt, criticizing the choice of Woodring because the record showed that "he is a militarist." Many local chapters of the organization also voiced opposition toward the "militarist who prates peace and urges war preparation." One letter expressed fear of the new Secretary because of his "obvious desire for the militarization of our whole system of government." It was apparent that the members of the league remembered well the CCC article that Woodring had written back in 1934.\(^13\) Opposition also came from people who were against war and in favor of disarmament. The *Christian Century* expressed disappointment that the President had selected a man that could "hardly be expected to cooperate with groups interested in promoting disarmament."\(^14\) John Flynn, writing in the *New Republic*, called Woodring "the leader of the jingoes" and expressed fear that he might try to establish a conscript army as Hitler had done.\(^15\) Criticism also came from more moderate quarters. The *Cincinnati Enquirer*, in an editorial, claimed that the new Secretary represented "the professional point of view of the army . . . [and] a different type of mind is needed in the position."\(^16\) On the whole, opposition was not as strong as it might have been, because the appointment was generally looked upon as temporary.

Throughout the fall of 1936 Woodring continued to function as both the Assistant Secretary and the Secretary of War. In spite of such a burden, he still found considerable time to work for an administration victory in the November election. The Secretary had good reasons for devoting so much time to the Roosevelt campaign. First, if the President was not reelected, he would certainly lose his job. Second, if he proved to be a real asset to the party cause and the President was returned to office, perhaps his "temporary" appointment would be made permanent. Consequently, Woodring worked long and hard for a Roosevelt victory in 1936. The Secretary's political labors started in May, when the President sought his assistance in mapping out the
strategy for the Kansas campaign. Kansas was considered to be an important state, because it was felt that Governor Landon would probably be the nominee of the Republican party. Because of Woodring's familiarity with Landon's political strengths and weaknesses, he was able to give much valuable assistance in planning the course of the Democratic campaign.17

Woodring also put his oratorical skills to good use. In early September he hit the campaign trail, praising Roosevelt and lauding the many accomplishments of the past three and one-half years. The smooth-spoken, aggressive Kansan was one of the first administration figures to take Roosevelt's record to the electorate. In mid September the New York Times observed that except for Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, "Mr. Woodring is the only other high member of President Roosevelt's official family to take up the cudgels for the administration." 18 Throughout September and October, Woodring continued to travel around the country, urging the reelection of Roosevelt. Although personally on good terms with Governor Landon, Woodring did not hesitate to attack him politically. He scoffed at Landon's fiscal record as Governor, and he said that the Republican nominee was offering the American people "a second-hand New Deal at second-hand prices." 19 Wherever Woodring spoke, he was enthusiastically received by large crowds, and both local and state party leaders praised him for the "excellent," "wonderful," and "outstanding" speeches that he made. These reports reached the Democratic National Committee and then the White House, where the fine job that Woodring was doing was noted with pleasure. 20 The new Acting Secretary of War also assisted the party financially by contributing $2,050 to the campaign fund, one of the larger contributions of that year. 21

As Woodring labored on behalf of the Democratic cause in the fall of 1936, he did so with no assurance that it would be personally profitable, even in the event of victory. In a letter of 9 October to General MacArthur he expressed confidence that FDR would be reelected, but concerning his own future he said:

No member of the Cabinet has any license to expect a tour of duty in the New Cabinet. I shall be very happy to continue in the service, of course, but my plans are not based on that assurance. New elections bring new obligations and the President's Cabinet is so thoroughly his own personal family of advisers that I would not and am not permitting even a suggestion to be made on my behalf. 22

One matter that Woodring urged upon the party strategists was the need "to take an advanced stand on the peace issue." He felt that there was a strong sentiment for peace in the West and that, in light of recent events in
Europe, the "peace issue" could bring much support. His pleas made little headway with party leaders, because at that time the administration was preoccupied with relief and recovery, not peace. Feeling that this was important, Woodring took up the issue and tried to assure the voters that President Roosevelt was "a man who hates war with every fiber of his soul and who is devoting his life to keeping America at peace." In spite of Woodring's efforts, peace never became an issue in 1936.

In November, Roosevelt was reelected by a landslide, and his administration prepared for another four years in office. The question now arose as to whether the President would make Woodring's temporary appointment permanent or whether he would appoint someone else to fill the post. For six months, from November 1936 to April 1937, Roosevelt did neither: he merely let the matter ride. During that period the status of Secretary Woodring was always in doubt, and as a result, rumors concerning the War post continually filled the air. One day rumor had Woodring being retained in the cabinet; the next day, on his way out. Journalists, relying on "impeccable sources," predicted time and again what the President would do and when, but the dates came and went, and still nothing happened.

At the time of the temporary appointment, FDR gave the impression that he would replace Woodring after the election, but in the weeks that followed the Democratic sweep he made no move to do so. Apparently Roosevelt's failure to act stemmed from certain factors that served to complicate his earlier decision. The fine job that Woodring was doing as Secretary of War, as well as the excellent job that he had done campaigning for the administration, certainly caused the President to have second thoughts about replacing him; however, the primary reason for not appointing a new Secretary was probably the mounting pressure, from many sources, to retain Woodring. The temporary Secretary had gained many friends since coming to Washington, and now they came to his aid.

The strongest pressure for retaining him came from military circles. The *Army and Navy Journal*, a sort of "unofficial" organ of the military services, continually urged that the appointment be made permanent. Such action, it said, "would be greeted with acclaim by the Army." The *Journal* continually praised Woodring, claiming that he was an "extremely efficient Assistant Secretary," who displayed "high qualities of administration" and ran the War Department in a "most capable manner." Other military-oriented publications, such as the *Army-Navy Register*, the *Reserve Officer*, and *Army Ordnance*, also voiced editorial support for Woodring. Some pressure was aimed more directly at the President. Lt. Col. Frank Lowe, National President of the Reserve Officers Association, wrote to Roosevelt: "I do not believe it would be too extravagant to say that every officer . . . of
the Army would be *very much* pleased to see Mr. Woodring so rewarded,”
that is, by making him the permanent Secretary.²⁸ Edgar H. Taber, Executive
Officer of the National Association of Regulars, informed the President
that his organization had received “quite a number of letters from service-
men expressing the hope that our present Secretary of War be reappointed
to office.”²⁹

The retention of Woodring was also supported by certain individuals,
both military and nonmilitary, whose influence was considerable. The Chief
of Staff, Gen. Malin Craig, wanted Woodring to be retained in the top spot
because Woodring got along so well with him and the General Staff.³⁰
Gen. John J. Pershing, who, although long retired, was still looked to for
advice by many top military men, said: “I do not see why F.D.R. should
not continue Woodring . . . he would be better than some man who thought
he knew it all.”³¹ Postmaster General James Farley, whose advice the Presi-
dent often heeded, continually urged that the appointment be made perma-
nent. From the House of Representatives came support from Congressman
Lister Hill, one of the most influential members of the Military Affairs
Committee. On 28 December 1936 Hill wrote to Roosevelt, stating that he
had had the opportunity to observe Woodring’s work more closely than any-
one else in Congress, and he felt that Woodring had done an outstanding
job. Hill then recommended, in the strongest terms, that the President retain
Secretary Woodring in his present position.³² This was a key recommen-
dation, for it seemed to indicate to Roosevelt that his temporary Secretary
had the confidence and support of the House Military Affairs Committee.

Throughout November and December the President failed to decide
what he should do about Woodring and the War post: he continually
wavered between retention and removal. In mid November, Press Secretary
Steve Early told the editor of the *Army and Navy Journal* that Woodring
would not be reappointed.³³ About this time, moreover, Steve Early and
Harry Hopkins, apparently on their own initiative, approached Jesse Jones,
head of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, and asked if he would be
interested in becoming Secretary of War. When Jones replied that he would
not, they dropped the matter.³⁴ As 1936 drew to a close, Woodring’s status
was as uncertain as ever, but the newspapers continued to indicate that he
was on his way out.³⁵ On 23 December, Roosevelt told Secretary Ickes that
while he personally thought Woodring was a “nice fellow,” he was not going
to retain him as Secretary of War.³⁶ In spite of such indications from Roose-
velt that he would remove Woodring, week after week passed, and still he
did nothing. In mid January 1937 there appeared the first public indications
that Woodring might be retained in the cabinet. On 20 January the *New
York Times* reported that Woodring’s status was still in doubt, but added,
“There is no certainty that he will be replaced.” The following day the same newspaper reported that, except for the possible departure of Farley, no changes were expected in the cabinet and that Roosevelt’s second term would probably end “with his ‘official family’ composed as at present.”

As the early months of 1937 slipped by, Secretary Woodring continued to run things at the War Department, and President Roosevelt, who was involved in his fight for court reform, was content to let him do so. While this “temporary arrangement” was working satisfactorily, it could not go on indefinitely, because Woodring had been appointed when Congress was not in session and had therefore not been approved by the Senate. This meant that unless a nomination for Secretary of War was submitted during the present session, Woodring’s appointment would expire when the Senate adjourned, thus leaving the position vacant. Such a situation made it mandatory that Roosevelt make some sort of decision about Woodring.

At a White House conference on 19 April 1937, Roosevelt told James Farley that although it was going to be an unpleasant task to perform, he definitely was going to remove Woodring. The President explained that since he had made it clear at the time of the appointment that it would be only temporary, the Secretary would not be surprised by the action. To this, Farley replied: “General Malin Craig was in to see me about Harry; the Army thinks very highly of him. . . . I think Harry is doing a good job and deserves an appointment to prove his fitness for the job.” One week later, for reasons known only to himself, President Roosevelt decided to reappoint Woodring as Secretary of War, and on 27 April he sent the nomination to the Senate. The Military Affairs Committee, having no objection to the appointee, reported favorably on the nomination, and on 6 May the Senate confirmed the appointment without debate or objection. At last Harry Woodring was Secretary of War in his own right; the axe that Roosevelt had been holding over his head for the past six months had been removed. The President now faced the problem of finding an Assistant Secretary to take Woodring’s old job; however, he chose not to deal with that matter for several months.

Just why the President decided to keep Woodring in the cabinet will never be known, but perhaps a contemporary evaluation of the situation by the nationally known news columnist and radio commentator Boake Carter can give an insight. On 27 April, the day that Woodring’s name went to the Senate for confirmation, Carter told his radio listeners:

The President did the nation a good turn; the Army got a good break; and the little clique of “discredit-Woodring” boys pretty high up in the Administration looked not a little foolish this evening, after the President sent the nomination of
Harry H. Woodring for a regular cabinet term as Secretary of War, to the Senate.

. . . It is pleasing to discover that the President was not impressed by those close about him who sought to set his hand against one who has turned out to be one of the most able of his cabinet and one of the most able and earnest peacetime secretaries of war America has ever had. For a long time, he has been more than simply a figurehead, but on the contrary, an active secretary, who desires to take an earnest interest in his job and not simply rest content to be another shop-window ornament. He has, to his credit, the cleanup of the procurement and supplies smell in the Army of a few years back; an active, rather than simply an academic interest in the Army’s Air Corps; the author of plans and methods looking to promoting methods and means of building up stock piles of reserves for industry in case of war. He thinks not in terms of how devilish a death-dealing instrument the Army can be made, but rather of what use it can be put to preserve peace. He will listen to generals, some hide-bound with tradition, and will listen just as willingly to a lowly lieutenant. Pomposity and gold braid do not impress him any more than juvenile irresponsibility. The Army should be tickled that it has this sort of man as boss, and the country that it has this kind of individual as a War Secretary. One hopes that he will wear as well in the future as he has in the past.40

When Harry Woodring became the United States Secretary of War, few people knew or cared what he thought about war, peace, the size and make-up of the Army, and its role in national defense. Such ideas, concepts, and principles are important, for they go together to form an individual’s “military philosophy.” To understand how Woodring looked upon and tried to solve the many problems facing him, especially ones such as military readiness, rearmament, and neutrality, it is essential to know something of the “Woodring military philosophy,” for it contained the principles that were to guide his actions during the years that he headed the War Department.

Woodring was different from most earlier Secretaries of War in that his military philosophy was fairly well fixed before he became Secretary. His Army experience, his American Legion activities, his work with the National Guard as Governor, and his three and one-half years as Assistant Secretary of War had caused him to think considerably about the Army and national defense. His having had years to develop his philosophy was beneficial to Woodring, because it made him more sure of himself and gave him confidence that the direction in which he was leading the War Department was the proper one. His outlook was that of both an idealist and a realist. He was an idealist in that he sincerely believed in and hoped for such things as an understanding among people everywhere, cooperation among nations, and world peace. On the other hand, he was a realist in that he did not see the possibility of such things becoming a reality in the near future. Wood-
ring felt that with world conditions as they were in the thirties, it would take more than hope and understanding to ensure peace.\textsuperscript{41}

During the years that Woodring served in the War Department, he was charged with being "a militarist," "one of the most warlike officials in Washington," and "the leader of the jingoes."\textsuperscript{42} Such descriptions caused many Americans to picture the Kansan as a "warmonger," when nothing could have been further from the truth; for if there was one thing that he wanted more than anything else, it was for the United States to remain at peace. Shortly after Woodring became Secretary a journalist asked him what he considered to be the most important requirement for a competent Secretary of War, and without hesitation he replied, "A profound respect for peace."\textsuperscript{43} His obsession with this issue was based on his fear that participation in another war would prove disastrous to both victor and vanquished; thus, since United States involvement in another major conflict would lead to the destruction of the nation, he considered it necessary to do everything possible to avoid war.\textsuperscript{44} In his first speech as Secretary of War, Woodring pledged: "I shall dedicate my efforts to peace."\textsuperscript{45} He did. For nearly four years he warned against, and took action that he felt would prevent involvement in, a foreign war. He was so determined to keep out of war that he ultimately was forced out of office because he would not go along with a policy that he felt might pull the nation into a European conflict. Woodring was a man of peace and was recognized by many as such. The \textit{Washington Times Herald} editorially praised the Secretary of War because "Woodring speaks the language of the people—Peace." Columnist Ernest Lindley referred to him as "a persistent opponent of foreign adventure," and political analyst Ray Tucker called him one of only two "peace-minded men in Roosevelt's Cabinet."\textsuperscript{46}

Nearly all Americans agreed with Secretary Woodring that peace was desirable, but when it came to deciding how to maintain that peace, many could not agree with him. Woodring felt that the best way to avoid war was to provide an "adequate national defense which would act as a powerful deterrent against aggression on our shores." He continually stated that peace without security was impossible and that the best security was a military force of sufficient size and strength to keep any nation from even considering an attack. According to him, "peace and security go hand in hand," and the former could not be obtained without the latter.\textsuperscript{47} His strong belief in preparedness as the way to ensure peace caused him to come into conflict with those groups and individuals who felt that a strengthening of defenses would be apt to provoke war. Believing that the idea that "preparedness causes war" was a great misconception, Woodring lashed out at anyone who spoke against proposals to strengthen the military forces. Those who urged a de-
crease in the size and strength of the Army and the Navy were warned of
the "folly [to which] a pacifist policy like this leads." On numerous occasions
the Secretary warned his countrymen of what had happened to countries,
including the United States in 1917, that found themselves forced into a war
when they were woefully unprepared: the result was a loss of life and money
far beyond what might otherwise have been; therefore, the nation should
never follow such a "foolhardy policy." Woodring was firmly convinced
that failure to prepare "would be to ignore all past history and openly invite
the possibility of a future national conflagration."

When critics occasionally expressed fears about growing military influ­
ence in Washington, Woodring reminded them that the Army had no voice
in making laws, shaping foreign policy, or deciding whether or not the
nation should go to war. He stated time and again that the Army "sought
only to serve, never to dominate the country." Many of the individuals
who feared increased military strength were worried about the world arms
race that was under way in the mid thirties. They were especially alarmed
by Woodring’s continuous demands for increased preparedness, because they
felt that he was urging the United States to join that contest. That such was
not the case the Secretary of War made clear in his Annual Report for 1937:
"I certainly do not recommend that the United States join in this feverish
arms race. . . . However, I do think as insurance against attack we should
further strengthen our armed forces."

While Woodring was a strong advocate of preparedness, he did not feel
that the country should arm itself beyond its ability to pay, and he spoke
proudly of the fact that in 1937 the cost of the United States military estab­
ishment was only 3.2 percent of the national budget. To understand this
seeming paradox of a desire for stronger defense, on the one hand, and a
relatively small defense expenditure and no participation in the arms race,
on the other, it is essential to understand Woodring’s ideas about the size,
make-up, and role of the United States Army.

As Woodring conceived it, the peacetime Army should be a moderate­
sized force capable initially of protecting the continental United States,
Panama, and Hawaii, yet still able to serve as a nucleus for the raising, train­
ing, and equipping of such additional troops as might be needed in an
emergency. He favored an Army of quality, not quantity. He never advo­
cated a large military force; in fact, he praised the American Legion because
it had made no "fantastic recommendations for a huge standing army." Woodring maintained that the size of the Army was relatively unimportant
and that it should be a matter for Congress to determine; he was more in­
terested in providing the military force with the best of equipment and
training. Furthermore, he believed that a moderate-sized standing army
would be sufficient, because its function would be strictly defensive. In speech after speech he reiterated his belief in the long-standing national policy that contemplated the use of American armed forces only for defensive purposes. As he put it: "The kind of Army we have in mind would be of no use as an expeditionary force such as was sent to Europe in the World War. It is designed purely and simply to defend our own territory."\textsuperscript{56}

When Secretary Woodring or other top members of the administration talked of defending the country, they were not thinking of just the continental United States, but of the Western Hemisphere. From 1937 to 1940, plans for the Army were made in accordance with the concept of hemisphere defense that was adopted by the Roosevelt administration.\textsuperscript{57} During this period President Roosevelt thought solely in terms of defense of the Americas. For example, when War Department officials in late 1939 presented plans to provide reserves necessary to equip a large expeditionary force for possible use in Europe, the President refused them, saying: "Whatever happens, we won't send troops abroad. We need only think of defending this hemisphere."\textsuperscript{58}

Although the Secretary did not consider that the size of the Regular Army was of great importance, he did feel that it should be organized so that it could be expanded rapidly. This would require a well-trained standing force, which could serve as the basis for new units to be made up primarily of personnel from the National Guard and the Organized Reserves. Since a large Army, if it were to be created in time of need, would have to be supplied, Woodring considered supply preparedness vital to the Army's ability to expand. His answer to the supply problem was not to be found in large stockpiles of arms and ammunition, which would deteriorate and become obsolete with age. Instead, his solution was to educate and prepare industry in time of peace for its responsibilities in time of war.\textsuperscript{59} This idea was incorporated in the Industrial Mobilization Plan which Woodring labored to perfect, first as Assistant Secretary and later as Secretary.

While Woodring considered military preparedness essential to keeping the peace, there was another factor that he considered to be almost as important. He believed that the American people and all government officials should conduct themselves in such a way as not to incite war or involve the country in one. This, Woodring held, could be done in two ways: by legislation and by moral rearmament.\textsuperscript{60} According to him, the legislative means to avoid war were to take the profits out of war and to assure that neutrality was maintained. Since he felt as he did, it is not surprising that from 1936 to 1939 Woodring congratulated Congress on passage of the Neutrality Acts and praised its efforts to take the profits out of war.\textsuperscript{61} He favored such legislation, because he thought that it could play a major role in keeping the
country from being drawn into war. Woodring thought that if another European war came, there would be demands within the United States for the benefits that would come from the war trade, as well as cries for the preservation of neutral and international rights. He warned Americans to avoid the mistakes of 1914-1917 and to avoid getting involved in a European conflict again, because "the temporary profits of war and the protection of a national vanity are not worth the horrors of war." The Secretary maintained that if Americans wanted to trade with countries at war or to travel on their ships, then they should do so at their own risks. He went even further when he claimed that if war came to Europe, isolation might be thrust upon the United States as the only alternative to becoming involved. Should this happen, he said, he was confident that the American people would accept it and "make this additional sacrifice for the sake of peace." After war came to Europe in 1939, he changed his views to some extent, indicating that because the social, moral, and economic consequences of the war could not be avoided, the country could not "retreat tortoise-like" within its borders. He continued, however, to maintain that it was possible to insulate the country from Europe militarily. Woodring was an isolationist only in that he wished to keep the nation isolated from war. On other matters he was an internationalist; thus, he continuously advocated increased foreign trade and urged international cooperation to solve some of the world's social and economic problems.

Whereas Woodring viewed adequate military defense and proper legislation as essential to the ensuring of peace, he also felt that the nation needed "something more." That something was "Moral Rearmament." Included in this concept was an understanding of one another; recognition of each other's rights; tolerance of other's habits, customs, and religious views; development of a spirit of justice and self-control; and "more of the spirit of brotherly love." The Secretary of War believed that "Moral Rearmament is a great, tremendous influence for good, and it ought to be encouraged." Furthermore, "it is because the war to end selfishness has never been fought that the war to end wars has never been won." Although Secretary Woodring felt that this concept had great merit, he considered it more in terms of a hope for the future. He still believed that a well-trained Army and proper legislation were the hopes for the peace of the present.

In addition to the ideas that made up the "Woodring military philosophy," there was a principle that the Secretary always followed, even though it sometimes meant going against his own philosophy. The principle was that military men, not civilian leaders, should make decisions on matters that were primarily military in nature. When Secretary Woodring was forced from his post in 1940, the Baltimore Sun said, "It cannot be recalled that Mr.
Woodring has ever opposed any of the purely military suggestions of his
chiefs of staff. That Woodring was proud of this fact was quite evident
in a letter that he wrote five years after leaving office:

I have that feeling that I was right in the Office of Secretary of War in following
and leaving the military decisions to the General Staff and would like to . . . [see
vindicated] that principle of National Defense rather than the Civilian Com-
mander-in-Chief idea knowing more than professional military strategists who
made it a life study and profession.

Although Woodring was a "yes man" when it came to what he con-
sidered to be strictly military matters, he certainly was not when it came to
decisions in the political-military area, and that is where the bulk of his de-
cisions lay. From the time that he became "permanent" Secretary of War in
1937, the outspoken Woodring made it clear to the President, the cabinet,
members of Congress, and other officials that he had a mind of his own.

Several ideas and concepts, then, made up Woodring's military philos-
ophy and served as guidelines for his policy decisions: (1) the country must
remain at peace at all cost except aggression; (2) an adequate defense is the
best way to avoid war; (3) the government is not and should not be mili-
tarily oriented, and thus it should not have a large standing Army or enter
into the arms race; (4) the Army is to be used strictly for defensive purposes;
(5) while the size of the standing Army is relatively insignificant, it is
essential that it be adequately equipped and trained and that it be capable of
rapid expansion; (6) proper legislation can be a key factor in keeping the
country out of war; (7) only military isolation is desirable; (8) on economic
and social matters the country should cooperate with foreign nations; (9)
moral rearmament is the hope for the peace of the future; and (10) military
decisions should be made by military men. The effects of this philosophy
were quite evident in the policies of the War Department from 1936 to 1940.

When Harry Woodring became Secretary of War in 1936, there were at
work throughout the nation certain forces that served to make his job more
difficult than it might otherwise have been: those forces were isolationism
and the Depression. The former began to appear after World War I, when
the United States attempted to turn its back on Europe. Rejection of the
League of Nations and refusal to join the World Court were indicative of
the growing feeling that the United States should not become involved in
European affairs. Throughout the twenties and early thirties, isolationism
became the accepted policy of the President, Congress, and the majority of
the American people. This sentiment was further strengthened in the mid
thirties, when the Nye Investigating Committee and certain historians, such
as Walter Millis and Charles Beard, succeeded in convincing the American
people that the United States had entered World War I in order to provide for and safeguard the financial interests of a few bankers and munition makers. Feeling that the mistakes of the past could be avoided by legislative means, Congress responded by passing a series of neutrality acts, which it felt would ensure that the country would not again be drawn into war. These acts prohibited the exportation of arms, ammunition, and other war commodities to belligerents; forbade the extension of loans and credit to warring nations; and made it unlawful for Americans to travel on ships of belligerent nations.

With the passage of the neutrality legislation there developed a complacent feeling that the chance of being involved in a foreign war had been virtually eliminated; therefore, prior to 1939, Congress and the American people showed little or no interest in the War Department or its military activities. Even those individuals who were concerned about the nation's defenses paid little attention to the Army, because they considered the Navy to be the bulwark against aggression. Woodring found such complacency difficult to combat.

The Great Depression also contributed to the difficulties of the Secretary of War. Since Roosevelt, Congress, and the public were still primarily concerned with economic recovery as late as 1938, they had little time for or interest in national defense and foreign affairs. Even if the interest had been there, the funds were not. With little concern over defense and with an administration economy drive under way, it was not surprising that the Army experienced severe budgetary problems. After all, if government expenditures had to be cut in some areas, what better place to do so than in the War Department? Roosevelt himself had exemplified this feeling upon entering the presidency, when he had urged Congress to cut the Army's budget by $144 million. Furthermore, it was no secret that Roosevelt, a former Assistant Secretary of the Navy, had a pro-Navy outlook; thus, when he found it necessary to request additional defense funds, it was the Navy, not the Army, that received first priority. With the President, Congress, and most Americans in an isolationist mood and with government spending being slashed, Secretary Woodring faced a real challenge in securing the appropriations and legislation that were necessary in order to strengthen the United States Army. This, however, was to be just one of many problems that Harry Woodring was to face in his four years as Secretary of War.