

hadn't been to the field lately and didn't know how it worked for nurses.]

Some questions became even more pointed. "There was one male reporter in particular," reported a spectator, "who kept prodding the woman reporter next to him to ask more and more about illegitimate babies." To this query, Mrs. Hobby replied briefly that pregnant women, married or unmarried, would be discharged.

"The Director handled herself excellently," reported another observer. "She was very direct, forthright, composed, and as candid as could be. She made a good impression." The next day's newspaper stories confirmed this, although a few women columnists⁹ pointed out that Mrs. Hobby's previous "unavailability" had not made her popular with newspaperwomen who wanted intimate details, and the Negro press attacked the appointment of a woman from Texas.¹⁰ In general, the hundreds of clippings collected by the Bureau of Public Relations showed widespread praise for the Corps and the Director. A few spiced up the story with headlines such as "Petticoat Army" or "Doughgirl Generalissimo,"¹¹ and some punsters were obviously unable to resist such opportunities as "Wackies," "Powder-magazines," "Fort Lipstick," and (concerning girdles), "It wouldn't do to let the fighting lassies get out of shape."¹²

Male columnists were the worst offenders, in spite of Damon Runyon's remark, "A lady in the uniform of her country will scarcely be an object of jesting on the part of a gentleman not in the same garb."¹³ Some of the attacks contained savage comparisons to "the naked Amazons . . . and the queer damozels of the Isle of Lesbos."¹⁴ Others, as expected, had a field day with the idea that woman's place is in the maternity ward. Said

one: "Women's prime function with relation to war is to produce children so that the supply of men for fighting purposes can be kept up to par." Another: "Give the rejected 4-F men a chance to be in the Army and give the girls a chance to be mothers." Others became emotional over their assumption that all Waac recruits would be married women who had deserted infants.¹⁵

Thus began the fight to hold the line on public relations, which had wrecked recruiting for British women's services. Prematurely hopeful that the worst was over, the Director and her staff began their first day as a recognized and operating headquarters.

Establishment of WAAC Headquarters

"The next month was chaos," said a staff member later. "Every newspaper and magazine writer came down to see us. Important people of all sorts were also now willing to advise us."¹⁶ The open bays of the office at Temporary M swarmed with new clerks, insistent visitors, and hurrying staff members; telephones buzzed and boxes of supplies were stacked in corners.

On the day after the Director's appoint-

⁹ Columns mentioned n. 7.

¹⁰ *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 23, 1942, and others. WDBPR Newspaper Clippings, WAC, DRB AGO.

¹¹ *Fargo* (N. D.) *Morning Forum*, May 17, 1942, and *Niles* (Mich.) *Star*, May 20, 1942, respectively.

¹² First three in *Little Rock Arkansas Democrat*, May 23, 1942. The last in the column "The Totem Pole," *Seattle Star*, May 20, 1942.

¹³ The column, "The Brighter Side," May 22, 1942. WDBPR Newspaper Clippings, WAC, DRB AGO.

¹⁴ The column, "Miami Story," *Miami* (Fla.) *News*, May 20, 1942.

¹⁵ Editorials in *New York Daily News* and *Augusta* (Ga.) *Herald*, and a column in *Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman*, May 1942, respectively. WDBPR Newspaper Clippings, WAC, DRB AGO.

¹⁶ Interv with Mrs. Herrick, 9 Jan 46.