

whether applicants had ever lived in clubs or dormitories, their travel, sports interests, and health. Answers to the essay question on "Why I Desire Service" were believed to be particularly revealing. There followed what Director Hobby called "four days of careful, almost prayerful, work of making the final selections."⁴⁴ The Director personally read each of the final papers. The 30,000 applicants had been reduced to the 4,500 who appeared before the final boards, and in the midst of selection procedure, word came from the Chief of Staff to pick not 360, but 1,300, the papers of the extra candidates to be kept for call to later classes as needed.⁴⁵

The work was finally completed late on the night of 30 June. Within a week, corps areas had notified the 360 top-rated applicants, who thus had less than two weeks to close out their jobs, take the oath, and get to Fort Des Moines for the opening on 20 July.

The selected candidates had one characteristic in common: 99 percent had been successfully employed in civil life. Although there was no such educational requirement, 90 percent had college training and some had several degrees. Most fell in the age group of 25 to 39, although 16 percent were under 25 and 10 percent were 40 and over. About 20 percent were married, most of them to men in service, and there were some mothers, especially mothers of servicemen, though none with small children.⁴⁶ The candidates included many women who had held responsible jobs: a dean of women, a school owner and director, a personnel director, a Red Cross official, a former sales manager, and several editors, and there were many more who had been reporters, office executives, lawyers, social workers, Army employees,

and teachers. In compliance with promises made to Congress, it had been necessary to choose a certain number from each corps area and from each state, regardless of density of population, with the result that many highly qualified women in certain crowded areas had to be turned down, while in certain sparsely settled states it was necessary to take almost every woman who applied.⁴⁷

Special Groups of Candidates

Two other problems complicated the task of the selecting authorities: the selection of Negro officer candidates and the selection of Aircraft Warning Service candidates. The Negro problem was particularly delicate, for the Negro press had immediately attacked the choice of a Director, and the National Negro Council had written President Roosevelt protesting the appointment of a Southern woman.⁴⁸

The opposition was unexpected, since the War Department had early informed Congress that it would train Negro WAAC officers and auxiliaries up to 10 percent of the Corps and Mrs. Hobby had declared her support of the plan; while the Navy Department's WAVES, although not headed by a Southerner, did not accept any Negroes at all for almost three years.

The real cause of the objections came out in later news stories, which revealed that Negro leaders had hoped to use the

⁴⁴ Speech at Howard University, 6 Jul 42. WDBPR Press Release, 6 Jul 42.

⁴⁵ Memo, Preplanners for G-1, 7 May 42. Tasker Staybacks.

⁴⁶ Some of the Aircraft Warning Service candidates later added to this group had young children, as it was supposed that they would live at home.

⁴⁷ (1) Figures given to Senate Com on Mil Affairs. (2) List in WDBPR Press Memo, 3 Sep 42.

⁴⁸ *Atlanta Daily World*, May 17, 1942.