

other matters such as supply she was only a staff adviser to the commanding general of the service command and could take action only through military channels, signing herself "Chief, WAAC Branch."⁵² The latter position was roughly comparable to that of service command special staff officers such as the surgeon, finance officer, or quartermaster. However, these officers were chiefly colonels and were expected to be experts in one field only, while the Waac was a second lieutenant and was supposed to be an adviser in all fields—health, supply, housing, personnel, discipline, finance, public relations, and all others. If there were no WAAC Regulations to cover a situation, she must determine whether Army Regulations could legally apply, or whether it would be necessary to recommend new WAAC Regulations. In addition to her work in headquarters, she must visit every service command station where Waacs were assigned or expected, as a traveling trouble shooter to resolve difficulties and promote efficiency. She was also responsible for the command and well-being of Waacs at airfields, ports, Signal Corps stations, and all other exempted activities within the service command, most of which were already bristling at the thought of control through alien channels.

Because of the alarming responsibilities of the positions, some thought was given to the possibility of promoting all service command directors at once to the rank that was allotted to the position: assistant director or lieutenant colonel. After much debate, Director Hobby decided to postpone promotions until each woman's efficiency on the job was proven. However, Acting Director Helen H. Woods some days later secured permission to send an explanatory letter to each commanding

general, noting: "We were conscious of the fact that we were sending out second lieutenants to the field to break ground, and to confer with major generals concerning their relative command powers."⁵³

Only one major policy was fully impressed upon the regional directors before their departure: they must as far as possible act as if the Corps were a part of the Army; they must demonstrate that women needed no extra frills and comforts such as Army commanders might feel a gallant desire to provide.⁵⁴

Field Action

The initial reception accorded these women upon their arrival at service commands varied from "all the co-operation a person could ask or need" down through various degrees of lesser warmth to "stand-offish."⁵⁵ One fact became abundantly clear the moment each staff officer reported, and that was that most of the service commands—in fact, eight of the nine—had no intention whatever of complying with War Department Circular 344 insofar as it pertained to a WAAC command channel. Said one director, "When I arrived at this station and was presented to the Commanding General, he informed me, with some emphasis, that he was in charge of the Service Command and did not propose to tolerate any dual channels; that my loyalty was to him and to no one else." Others told much the same story.

⁵² AGO Memo S635, 4 Dec 45. SPWA 314.7 (6-2-41) sec 3.

⁵³ Interv with Mrs. Woods, 9 Oct 48.

⁵⁴ Undated Draft of Dir WAAC speech to SvC mtg, Dec 42, in personal papers of Col Rice.

⁵⁵ Ltrs from SvC Dir, 30 Nov-9 Dec 42. SPWA 319.2 (12-2-42) WAAC Stf Mtg, WAAC Planning files.