

the unit was in the field ten days before an officer arrived. The staff director reported, "Undoubtedly the timing went wrong somewhere, but it created an unfortunate impression of WAAC organization."³

There were also more lasting inconveniences to stations receiving units. Enrolled women of low ability or questionable character, who once had been weeded out at training centers, now were undetectable in the general confusion and were the subject of complaint when they arrived at field stations. Company officers and cadre for outgoing units were lumped together from whatever was available at the moment, without much consideration of such factors as relative age and civilian experience, although these were often the margin between success and failure in groups of women destined to spend the rest of the war together in one installation. Untried cadre were promoted by training centers to the grades specified in the Table of Organization, often leaving units in the field saddled with incompetents who had too much rank to be reassigned. Officers were sent out as company commanders who had little or no experience or aptitude for the work; Maj. Betty Bandel noted, concerning the Air Forces, "Our greatest problem is our company commanders. I make a special plea that at least one experienced officer go out with any new unit to the field."⁴

Field stations frequently complained that neither WAAC officers nor enrollees arriving from training centers knew anything about WAAC rules and regulations, and did not have copies of them. Some company commanders considerably embarrassed their staff directors by informing station commanders that the Army had no jurisdiction whatever over WAAC units. Others had little idea of real Army life in the field, and attempted to inculcate

a state of discipline and daily routine suitable only for a brief and strenuous basic course, but impossible to sustain in a working unit.⁵

Commissioning of Unqualified Officers

Among early casualties of the expansion program were the original perfectionist plans for avoiding British mistakes in officer selection. As soon as the expansion program was directed, it was evident that the original carefully selected 1,300 officers would be insufficient to staff the new units. Since officer candidate training was weeks longer than basic training, it became necessary to begin large officer candidate classes before the women to be commanded were even recruited. Unavoidably, almost all came from the training centers, since most companies in the field were still in transit or had not had time to set up boards and select officer candidates, although it was well known that many of the best-qualified women had been placed in early field companies, while those in the training centers had not yet had opportunity to demonstrate leadership under actual field conditions.

As available personnel in training centers was combed over again and again for successive classes, quality fell rapidly. Daytona Beach complained that it had to furnish four large groups of officer candi-

³ Ltr, WAAC Stf Dir WFTC to Exec WAAC, 3 Jun 43. SPWA 319.1.

⁴ Comment of Air WAAC Off, Min, Stf Dirs Conf, Chicago, 15-17 Jun 43. SPWA 337 (6-1-43). Also see: (1) other comments in Min; (2) Memo, Consultant (Miss Lies) for Dir WAAC, 6 May 43. Plng Proj 6, WAAC Planning files, 1943.

⁵ (1) Rpt of 2d SvC, Min cited n. 4. (2) Interv with Lt Col Katherine R. Goodwin, former Stf Dir 1st SvC, 31 May 46. (3) Statement by Lt Col Jessie P. Rice, former Stf Dir 3d SvC, in speech at Purdue Univ., Apr 45. (4) Min, Stf Dirs Conf, New York, 1-3 Dec 43. SPWA 337 (11-10-43).