

CHAPTER IX

Stresses of Rapid Build-up: Supply and the WAAC Uniform

As was to be expected from past Army experiences, the difficulties of expansion were also felt immediately in the matter of supply. For the WAAC, supply problems had been more or less chronic since the Corps' establishment, with crises following each new expansion plan, none more than temporarily remedied.

Shortages of Clothing

Of these supply problems, the one most apparent to the public was the Corps' inability to issue even one set of military outer garments to recruits—a situation that rarely pertained to male draftees. As the Corps neared the end of its first winter, fully half of the women in some training centers still went through their entire training without uniforms, while at others only summer clothing was available. Fort Dix, New Jersey, for example, was surprised to see descending from a train—in the midst of a March snowstorm—the entire 42d WAAC Post Headquarters Company from Daytona Beach, dressed in summer cottons. The women were promptly restricted to barracks and put to bed to keep warm, while Fort Dix for-

warded comments derogatory to the intelligence of WAAC authorities in training centers.¹ One west coast airfield, expecting a company, received a single untidy-looking Waac whose only clothing was the begrimed civilian outfit she had worn from her home to the training center and throughout basic training. After acid comment by telephone to Washington, one uniform was obtained. Other Waacs arrived with one or two shirts at desert airfields where the daily temperature averaged 110 degrees. At other times stations complained that women had been given their complete clothing issue by a process of issuing them grotesquely ill-fitting garments and, still worse, wrong-sized shoes, with the assurance that “you can change them when you get to your permanent station,” even though the stations obviously had as yet no maintenance supplies of WAAC clothing.²

¹ (1) TWX, Comdt 1st WAAC Tng Cen to Dir WAAC, 24 Dec 42. WA 421 (11-20-42) Status. (2) Ltr, 2d SvC to Dir WAAC, 9 Mar 43, sub: 42d WAAC Post Hq Co. SPWA 319.1.

² (1) AAF WAC Hist, p. 39. (2) Memo, Dir WAC for QMG, 30 Aug 43. SPWA 400.34 (3-21-42)(1) sec 4 (1942). (3) Ltrs, WAAC Hq to field, 24 Feb 43, and replies; Memo, Lt Ryan for Plng Serv, 3 Apr 43. Same file, sec 3a.