

not wear. These included summer and winter pajamas, galoshes, handkerchiefs, dress shields, athletic shoes, and summer and winter bathrobes.<sup>41</sup>

Next, a Quartermaster committee "made personal investigations at Fort Des Moines" and found that only 25 percent of the women were wearing the issue girdles, others preferring to wear none or to purchase a favorite brand commercially.<sup>42</sup> The Quartermaster Corps felt that Waacs should be given, in lieu of the issue, money to purchase the brassières and girdles of their choice, and WAAC Headquarters concurred. However, this plan would have required amendatory legislation and, after various unsuccessful attempts to draw up the legislation in general terms, the Army's Legislative and Liaison Division retreated in disorder. One colonel in this division recommended that the proper physical appearance of Waacs be attained by exercise and good posture, and not by the use of "surgical contraptions." If the government was to issue brassières and girdles to women, he wrote, then "such devices could well be considered for the officers and enlisted men."<sup>43</sup> The issue of girdles and brassières was therefore stopped. Several months later, when such items became very scarce on the commercial market, the Director requested that the issue be resumed, but this request was refused by The Quartermaster General.

#### *Public Reaction to Unsuitable Uniforms*

By this time it was unfortunately impossible to conceal from the American public the fact that the WAAC uniform and supply program had become a tragicomedy of errors. Gallup polls showed that eligible prospects for enlistment rated the WAAC uniform last in attractiveness, after the

Marines', Waves', and Spars' uniforms. The citizenry at large was inspired with a desire to be helpful, and letters poured in from housewives, designers, Congressmen, soldiers, and other interested bystanders. All writers were firmly convinced that adoption of their ideas would immediately end the WAAC's recruiting difficulties.<sup>44</sup>

Many ideas, particularly those from Army stations and Waacs in the field, were practical and sound, but required major revisions, which could not have been made during the expansion period without greatly delaying contracts, and which could not be made afterward in view of the necessity of wearing out huge stocks of already-procured items. The same public that condemned the Waacs' appearance was not ready to support expensive measures such as discarding thousands of dollars worth of unsightly and ill-fitting garments. When recruiting advertisements pointed out that Waacs received certain fine-quality items worth a total of \$250 (although actually costing the government half that) irate readers wrote to ask why the taxpayers' money was spent in this fashion. Later, Congressional committees were to investigate the alleged expenses.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>41</sup> (1) Memo, Distrib Div SOS for Reqmts Div SOS, and Ind. SPDDQ 421 Shoes, in same file, sec 1. (2) Memo, WAAC Hq for CofAdm Serv, 23 Nov 42. SPWA 400.34.

<sup>42</sup> Rpt cited n. 25(1).

<sup>43</sup> (1) Memo, Col E. J. Walsh, L&LD, for G-1, 28 Oct 42. SPWA 422.2 (9-16-42) Foundation Garments. (2) Memo, QMG for USW, 16 Sep 42, sub: Proposed Amendment to PL 554. Folder, WAC Recruiting, ASF Sp Coll DRB AGO.

<sup>44</sup> See entire SPWA 400 files, as well as: (1) Memo, Dir WAC for OQMG, 20 Aug 43. SPWA 400.34 (3-21-42). (2) Ltr, Miss Erma Reece, Kansas City, Mo., to Mrs. Hobby, 10 Jul 43. SPWA 421. (3) Ltr, Mr. A. J. Drugan to the President of the U.S., 9 Oct 42. SPWA 421. (4) Comments in Min, Rctg Conf, Chicago, 7-8 May 43, SPWA 337. (5) For Gallup polls, see Ch. XV, below.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*