

The committee wishes to express its unqualified endorsement of this organization . . . [and] feels constrained to voice its condemnation in no uncertain terms of those who malign this splendid group of patriotic women. Certainly no self-respecting patriotic American would indulge in such a cowardly, contemptible, despicable course.¹⁰⁵

Army commanders at many stations also immediately made their stand known to the troops; one stated to the men:

We have gained aid and help from the women of America. If we do anything to make their lot uncomfortable or unhappy, if we fail to give them a maximum amount of respect, if we fail to behave always as gentlemen, we have not only lost a contribution towards winning this war, but we have also lost some of the finer qualities of manhood.¹⁰⁶

Others in Congress and elsewhere took the attitude that the stories were merely good clean fun and that the Waacs were spoilsports to object to them. According to a member from Alabama, WAAC stories were "like traveling salesman jokes" and he looked upon them as "the way this country keeps its sense of humor."¹⁰⁷ General Marshall was later to suggest that responsible Army officers might be able to distinguish between clean fun and a dirty joke by asking themselves if the stories would appear equally funny if circulated about Army wives and daughters instead of about Waacs. To Director Hobby for the WAAC, General Marshall wrote:

To me, one of the most stimulating aspects of our war effort has been the amazing development of the WAAC organization in quality, discipline, capacity for performing a

wide variety of jobs, and the fine attitude of the women themselves. Commanders to whom the Waacs have been assigned have spoken in the highest terms of their efficiency and value. The best evidence in the matter are the demands now being made on the War Department for increased allotments of WAAC organizations. . . .

I wish you would reassure your subordinates of the confidence and high respect in which they are held by the Army.¹⁰⁸

WAC leaders were later to conclude that the whole slander campaign had been to some degree unavoidable. In this, the British precedent of identical slander in two world wars lent strong support. One WAC leader commented, "Men have for centuries used slander against morals as a weapon to keep women out of public life." Mrs. Hobby, after a lapse of some five years, remarked, "I believe now that it was inevitable; in the history of civilization, no new agency requiring social change has escaped a similar baptism. I feel now that nothing we might have done could have avoided it."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ HR Rpt 566, 78th Cong, 1st sess, Rpt of Com on Appropriations to Accompany HR 2996, Mil Establishment Appropriation Bill FY 1944. Hobby files, 18 Jun 43.

¹⁰⁶ Ltr, Base Surg to Mil Pers of Base Hosp, Tinker Field, Okla.; reprinted in Ltr, Base Comdr to All Mil Orgns . . . at Tinker Field, 23 Jun 43; copy in Folder, Slander Campaign, OCMH.

¹⁰⁷ *Washington Post*, June 16, 1943.

¹⁰⁸ Personal ltr, CofS to Oveta Culp Hobby, 15 Jan 43. Gen Marshall's personal files; read by author by courtesy of his secretary, December 1945. The Chief of Staff was in Africa at the time of the columnist's charges, and had just learned of the attack.

¹⁰⁹ Comments to author. British published reports reached the same conclusion. See Appendix B.