

women, the first of whom reported in late May to a training course at the State Teachers' College at Livingston, Alabama, with eleven other schools scheduled for later opening.¹⁹

Effect of Army Status

The Signal Corps was highly pleased by the WAC's new Army status and the system of assignment, instead of attachment, to the using command. Signal Corps Wacs could now be assigned to the signal service company and not to the post, while the simultaneous multiplication of WAC units in the field made it possible to attach these women to existing companies in adequate numbers without violating War Department housing policy. On the other hand, Army status wrecked plans for WIRES training, since the new WAC legislation provided for no inactive reserve component. A mere 276 women were already in schools; these were given a choice of discharge or enlistment, and all enlisted.

The Signal Corps immediately began to seek some other system of earmarking acceptable recruits in order to retain Signal Corps control of qualified women during their basic training. For this purpose, the newly devised plan for branch recruiting appeared made to order, and it was with some disappointment that the Signal Corps received the Army Service Forces' decision not to join the AAF in branch recruiting at this time. The disappointment was alleviated within a few months by the authorization for station-and-job recruiting, which achieved virtually the same result. Under this plan, women received basic training first and then reported to the Signal Corps for either immediate assignment or specialist training.²⁰

Some difficulty in obtaining recruits, even with the station-and-job promise, was caused by the high requirements of the Signal Corps. Women for attendance at the three radio operators schools were required to have near-officer qualifications: AGCT scores of 100 for radio operators and 110 for repairmen, as well as good scores on the radio operator's aptitude or mechanical aptitude tests.

By September of 1943 some 1,750 women had been trained, chiefly for the Air Forces, and the schools were discontinued. Thereafter the Signal Corps generally accepted only women with high AGCT scores as well as civilian skill "sufficient to qualify them for assignment with only nominal on-the-job indoctrination in Army procedure." Thus, women to be trained as tabulating machine operators were required to have clerical skill and an AGCT score in Grade III or better; women to be key punch operators required the same plus average typing speed; cryptographic clerks needed officer qualifications—an AGCT score in Grade I or II plus good education and mathematics or language background. Full civilian training in their fields was required of radio operators, radio and electrical repairmen, telephone operators, teletypewriter operators, draftsmen, and various photographic experts.

Such highly qualified personnel was not only hard to find, but the subject of competition from other agencies, particularly the WAVES, which offered officer status

¹⁹ (1) Appendix cited n. 16. (2) Stf study cited n. 13(1). (3) Memo, Col James S. Willis, SigC for Brig Gen Frank C. Meade, OCSigO, 17 May 43. SigC 322 WAC. (4) WDBPR Press Releases, 11 and 21 May 43.

²⁰ (1) Ltr, Hq AAF to AACS, 31 Jul 44, and incls. WD G-1 220.3 WAC (8-7-44). (2) SigC WAC Narrative. (3) Memo, Dir MPD ASF for Dir Pers ASF, 26 Oct 43. SPAP 341 WAAC (2-26-43).