

I believe that the policy of appointment cited above will cause the personnel of the WAC to feel that the War Department has broken faith with them, and that the continuance of such a policy will be a great blow to the morale of the entire Corps. . . . The policy of selecting officers only from graduates of officer candidate school, and of selecting officer candidates only from the ranks, has been presented to the American public throughout the history of the Corps as a soundly democratic one.¹⁵

This apparently minor event received widespread and generally unfavorable publicity in Australia, which had its own women's services for qualified women, as well as British women's services. An even worse reaction came from Army men, particularly young combat officers who had not yet been promoted to equal ranks. Soldier mail, in the month before the first American Wacs arrived, showed that 90 percent of the comments about all Wacs were unfavorable, many obscene, alleging that all Wacs would be used only for "morale purposes" for officers.¹⁶ This situation was to cause a serious morale problem among arriving Wacs.

In the United States, General White's office was at once swamped with renewed demand from Congressional and military sources for direct commissions for American civilian women with prominent sponsors.¹⁷ The War Department held that the three commissions were irrevocable, but public reaction continued to be so adverse that G-1 Division succeeded in blocking any further appointments, except the one in Europe which was requested again in view of the exceptions made for SWPA. However, the Director secured a ruling against further such action in the future.¹⁸

In the theater, commanders noted continuing bad effects for months after the event, especially upon the morale of highly qualified enlisted men and women. Some

commanders were obliged to forbid the women to talk or write of the subject, on threat of disciplinary action. The women's reaction was generally surprising to those not informed of the Corps' previous history and basic problems.¹⁹

Arrival of WAC Staff

Director Hobby released for assignment as staff director an experienced officer from her own staff, Lt. Col. Mary-Agnes Brown. Since the Southwest Pacific Area was known to be headed by ranking Regular Army officers with World War I experience, Colonel Brown was believed especially qualified by virtue of twenty-five years' acquaintance with Army channels. She had been employed in Army finance in World War I, had ten years' experience as executive secretary to ranking Army medical officers, and was thereafter an attorney for the Veterans' Administration, holding the degrees of A.B., LL.B., and S.J.D. In the Army she had been the first staff director for the Eighth Service Command and later executive officer in the Office of the Director WAC. With four officer assistants, Colonel Brown flew to the theater, arriving on 15 March 1944, to

¹⁵ D/F, Dir WAC for G-1, 25 Feb 44. SPWA 320.2 (2-25-44)B, in SPWA 314.7 (1-7-43) sec 5.

¹⁶ (1) See Chart, p. 000. (2) MI Rpt 107, 31 Aug 44. SFPOE, in MID files. (3) Personal ltr, Catholic priest to Col Hobby. WDWAC 330.14 (1945).

¹⁷ Numerous ltrs, especially to and from Senator Charles O. Andrews, 10 Apr 44. WDWAC 095 and SPWA 095.

¹⁸ D/F, G-1 for TAG, 21 Apr 44, WDGAP 210.1 WAC (4-17-44), approves attached Memo, Dir WAC for CofS, 14 Apr 44. Approved by CofS, 18 Apr 44. WDWAC 210.1.

¹⁹ (1) Seminar comments. (2) Griffith Account, "Awards and Decorations." (3) Intervs with Col Brown, Col. A. Robert Ginsburgh, and Miss Dorothy Pat Costello, former sergeant in GHQ detachment. (See Bibliographical Note).