

A still more serious problem after the integration in the Army was that of finding a place to confine Wacs who were sentenced to long terms by Army court-martial. Director Hobby had always advocated that, for minor offenses, some punishment more suitable than confinement or restriction to quarters be found, since, she said, "no military purpose is served by taking a woman off the job in wartime."⁴¹

Since serious offenses meriting such punishment were rare among WAC members, an entire service command covering several states ordinarily had only one or two women to be confined. One inspector found a station with its one WAC offender installed in a separate guardhouse with a necessarily private bath, with a detail of three able-bodied military police to guard the door night and day. From her window she received a stream of sympathetic military and civilian visitors, bearing gifts, so that her sufferings seemed to be slight. In another case the Eighth Service Command hopefully requested that a woman just sentenced to two years confinement be transferred to the "WAC Stockade, Fort Des Moines"—unfortunately, a nonexistent institution.⁴²

A WAC disciplinary barracks at one of the training centers was actually under consideration at the time, since one such centralized institution would have been adequate to care for the few WAC prisoners from all over the nation. The Commandant, Fort Des Moines, advised Colonel Hobby in response to her inquiry:

I believe that one place under competent administration could restore many of the women as good Wacs. . . . With the increase in the size of the Corps we must recognize that a few undesirables will slip in, and make provisions for their welfare.⁴³

Accordingly, the Director recommended that suitable training center facilities be provided for the confinement of women serving short-term sentences. For those with longer sentences, she suggested that arrangements be made to transfer them to the Federal Industrial Reformatory for Women at Alderson, West Virginia, which she believed to be a recognized institution with long experience in the scientific rehabilitation of female prisoners. This was in line with existing policy, which provided that federal facilities might be used for male military prisoners.⁴⁴

The portion of her recommendation concerning transfer to Alderson was approved and put into effect. Cases accepted, however, were only those in which the individual had committed a felony or violated a civil law. Still undisposed of were sentences, like the two-year sentence in the Eighth Service Command, that were imposed for violation of military regulations only. The War Department never approved Colonel Hobby's recommendation for disciplinary barracks at WAC training centers for these women. High-level negotiations were involved. The Navy Department could never be persuaded to set up a similar institution for convicted WAVES and SPARS, whom it preferred to discharge, and the War Department felt that extremely unfavorable publicity and loss of recruits might result if it was known that the WAC was

⁴¹ Min, Stf Dirs Conf, 15-17 Jun 43. SPWA 337 (6-1-43).

⁴² Ltr, Hq 8th SvC, 20 Jan 44, A-902 359. SPWA 250.3 (11-22-43).

⁴³ Ltr, Col Frank U. McCoskrie, Comdt 1st WAC Tng Cen, to Dir WAC, 17 Jan 44. SPWA 250.3 (11-22-43).

⁴⁴ Memo, Dir WAC for Dir Pers ASF, 22 Nov 43, sub: Places of Confinement for Members WAC, re conf with Dir Pers, JAG, TAG, etc; two tng cens' concurrences atchd. SPWA 250.3 (11-22-43).