

Director Hobby urged staff directors to "discourage as much as possible" pictures of women in the kitchen, particularly since these usually showed a background of oversized ladles, monumental cooking pots, and wholesale quantities of food.²⁰

There was never to be any conclusive explanation of why the expectation of cooking duties should drive recruits away by the thousands, as it was well known to do. Classification experts were of the opinion that women with other skills feared, in spite of all job guarantees, that they would be forced into kitchens. Psychiatrists noted that many recruits wanted to do a man's job, and felt that kitchen duty was not particularly military. Possibly the best explanation came from civilian social analysts, who noted that domestic service had been steadily dropping in popularity, with "reluctance of workers, in the face of growing opportunities in factories and shops, to enter a field with low standards of work and wages and inferior social status."²¹

This hypothesis was confirmed by the example of the British women's services, which indicated not only that well-qualified women would not enlist for mess work, but that they would not enlist in, and wear the uniform of, a corps that earned a reputation for specializing in mess management.²² In the WAC, it was noted that "those in charge of recruiting found that it was almost impossible to recruit office workers so long as the general public believed that women in the armed forces were used largely as cooks, waitresses, etc."²³ Only selective service had ever enabled any women's service to get numbers of skilled "white-collar" workers and mess personnel in the same corps.

For this reason, no recruiting campaign to organize WAC mess companies was

ever sponsored. Early in 1945, Director Hobby obtained publication of a War Department circular forbidding the assignment of Wacs to men's messes, except in hospitals and except when Wacs ate in consolidated messes and furnished a proportionate share of personnel.²⁴

Other Questions of Proper Employment

Thus, the only two major policies on WAC jobs ever to be adopted by the Army centered around the decision that Wacs would perform only military duties, and that the Corps would continue to specialize in office work rather than food service. Of all other questions concerning proper employment, most were satisfactorily settled at a field level; only a few ever received War Department attention.

In the field there seemed to be some impression that a list of other prohibited duties did exist, or should, and in its early days WAAC Headquarters constantly received queries concerning the maximum size of the trucks women might drive, the weights they might lift, and similar matters. Such inquiries continued to be so frequent that WAAC representatives worked long and painfully with Military Personnel Division, ASF, to compile a list of prohibited duties, which would have included some 150 occupations such as blacksmith, boilermaker, and bath attendant. The attempt seemed more amusing than useful, and was finally abandoned, as it appeared

²⁰ Min, WAC Stf Dirs Conf, New York, 1-3 Dec 43. SPWA 337 (11-10-43).

²¹ U.S. Dept of Labor, *Women's Occupations Through Seven Decades*, Women's Bureau Bull 218. 1947, p. 141.

²² Gen. Sir Frederick Pile, *Ack-Ack* (London: Geo. Harrap & Co., Ltd., 1949).

²³ AAF WAC Hist, pp. 2 n. 2, 36, 37.

²⁴ WD Cir 76, 9 Mar 45.