

somewhat unlikely that anyone would assign women to such work in any case.²⁵

Furnace Firing

One minor question, which arose at many stations lacking central heating in barracks, was whether the women could fire their own barracks furnace on roster duty as did most men's units. Since the answer varied according to the size and nature of both the furnace and the Wacs, the Director believed that the matter should be left to the discretion of Army stations.

For example, the Second Service Command reported to the Director an "acute problem" at Camp Upton, New York: the women's health was affected because they had to fire furnaces, while Waacs at nearby Fort Dix had such work done for them. The service command asked that the Director set a uniform policy. In reply, WAAC Headquarters refused to try to set a policy, stating that the matter was one of command, and that its only policy was that Waacs should not do work that overtaxed their strength. Colonel Clark write:

If the work of manning furnaces at Camp Upton is reasonably beyond the physical capacity of women, manifestly they should not be required to do it. It is believed to be purely a matter within the province of the Post Commander, who will undoubtedly take such action as is deemed necessary, upon the request of the WAAC Company Commander.²⁶

In most instances local commanders solved the problem with considerable common sense. Where one post service detail did this job for men's barracks, the Waacs' could easily be included. If each barracks did its own, the WAC com-

mandant was usually able to arrange for the duty to be assumed by women of suitable strength, who often preferred it to kitchen police. If the unit contained no such strong women, or if section chiefs refused to release office workers for the task, civilians or male service troops were given the detail without causing any great comment.

This local-option view was not shared by the Chief of Engineers' office, which informed the field, without consulting the Director WAAC:

With proper training, the members of the WAAC can operate furnaces and water heaters in the same manner as enlisted men. No change is contemplated in the established policy that such equipment be operated by the personnel occupying the quarters in which it is installed.²⁷

When it was discovered that the commandant at Fort Oglethorpe was using labor troops to fire furnaces and heaters for the whole post, rather than drawing details from Wacs for this purpose, ASF headquarters took these men from his allotment and stated, "War Department policy does not contemplate the use of station complement personnel to fire small heating units."²⁸ During the following winter, Fort Oglethorpe was subject to severe Congressional and public criticism for repeated cases in which recruits reported to cold barracks, and spent much of their so-called basic training period in firing furnaces, with a resulting high rate

²⁵ (1) Memo, Lt Ruth Spivak for Col Clark, 11 Jun 43; (2) Draft of Memo, 18 Jun 43. Folders 21 and 22, Plng Serv file.

²⁶ Ltr, 2d SvC to Dir WAAC, 8 Mar 43; 1st Ind, 19 Mar 43. SPWA 220.8.

²⁷ Ind, CofEngrs to CG 1st SvC, to Inquiry, 19 Mar 43, with notation. SPWA 320.2.

²⁸ Ltr, Post Comdt Ft Oglethorpe to 4th SvC, 22 Jul 43, with 3d Ind, MPD ASF to 4th SvC. SPWA 320.2.