

cause a local woman, while housed on a separate floor of the Chamberlain Hotel in Des Moines, had to eat and do kitchen police with Negro women on the next floors.¹³ An Army officer reported:

I am hearing constant rumors as to a relaxing of segregation of Negroes at Fort Des Moines. Such rumors are horrifying to people in this section and I know are interfering seriously with recruiting.¹⁴

In any attempts to change the Army policy, a newly established volunteer corps, under orders to attempt an expansion program unsupported by selective service, obviously offered the least promising point for a beginning. Only Director Hobby's personal convictions prevented the wiping out of the steps already taken at Fort Des Moines.

Recruiting

Most Negro organizations alleged that the policy of segregation would deter the best-qualified Negro women from enlistment, and this possibility was recognized and provided for in the original War Department policy concerning Negro Waacs, which stated:

There is a definite reluctance on the part of the best qualified colored women to volunteer in the WAAC. This is brought about by an impression on their part that they will not be well received or treated on posts where they may be stationed. This could be overcome by an intensive recruiting campaign with the idea in view of interesting the desired class of colored women in this project and arriving at a thorough understanding of their rights and privileges while in the service. . . . An eminently qualified person, preferably a Negro recruiter, will be sent out to colored colleges in order to secure the proper class of applicants.¹⁵

Definite instructions requiring the ac-

ceptance of Negro applicants were sent out to recruiting stations. Noncompliance was discovered in only five cities and was corrected by telegraph in the WAAC's first week of recruiting.¹⁶ One of these cases, in Pittsburgh, caused the editor of the *Pittsburgh Courier* to demand that a woman from his staff be assigned to the Director's Office, since "We wouldn't want the public to deceive itself with the notion that what happened in Pittsburgh was due to the fact that the Director of the WAAC is a white woman from Texas."¹⁷ The demand for such an adviser became a nationwide campaign with as many as thirty-five mimeographed letters being received from one small Virginia city.¹⁸ However, the work of checking on such complaints was instead given to one of the first Negro officer candidates, Lt. Harriet West of the Director's staff, a former assistant to Dr. Bethune. Later charges of recruiting discrimination were investigated by Lieutenant West. In most cases records revealed that identical recruiting standards had been used, although rejected Negro applicants sometimes tended to blame discrimination rather than their own failure to pass aptitude or physical tests.¹⁹

¹³ Ltr, Manager KWKH and KTBS, Shreveport, La., 17 Apr 43. SPWA 291.21.

¹⁴ Ltr, Comdt 5th Tng Cn to Exec WAAC, 3 May 43. SPWA 319.1.

¹⁵ Memos and D/F cited n. 5.

¹⁶ Cities were Pittsburgh, Winston-Salem, Columbia, S. C., Dallas, and St. Paul. File of action is WA 291.21 (5-27-42), 1942. See large file in SPWA 201.2 (1942).

¹⁷ Ltr, Percival L. Prattis, Exec Bd, *The Pittsburgh Courier*, to Dir WAAC, 28 May 42. WA 291.9.

¹⁸ (1) Mimeo Ltrs, from Lynchburg, Va., 21 May 42. WA 291.21. (2) Memo, G-1 for Exec WAC, 7 Aug 43. WDWAC 291.2.

¹⁹ (1) Ltr, Walter White, Secy NAACP, to Dir WAAC, 8 Jun 42, and reply. SPWA 291.2. (2) Ltr, Maj Harriet West to Frances L. Munson, 1 Sep 43. SPWA 291.2.