

They don't want to scrub. . . . They want a future, i. e., training . . . they don't like the civilians because the civilians are late, lazy, and mean . . . they said they knew they weren't wanted in the beginning . . . they want promised ratings.

The conviction that racial discrimination was involved led a part of this Negro unit to refuse to report for duty even after personal pleas from the WAC staff director, two colonels, a judge advocate, an inspector general, and the commanding general of the service command, which finally caused all but four members to return to work. The court-martial of these four was declared proper even by the NAACP, which issued a statement that "We recognize that there is no right to strike in the Armed Services." Although the commanding general upheld the court-martial proceedings, the conviction was reversed by the Judge Advocate General, and the women restored to duty on the technicality that the court was improperly convened.⁴⁹

Negro Wacs Overseas

The European theater was the only overseas theater to employ Negro Wacs. ETO policy vacillated. Negroes were requisitioned in 1942 with the declaration that "in time of war it is the privilege of all American citizens regardless of race or sex to serve in and with the Armed Forces." However, when Director Hobby refused to let the women be scattered in uncontrolled small field units near male Negro troops, the theater hastily canceled the requisition and stated that "colored Wacs will not be requisitioned until such time as the War Department announces that their shipment to theaters of operation is a necessity."⁵⁰

Pressure of Negro groups finally forced

the War Department to direct the European theater to accept Negro Wacs. As directed, the European theater submitted a requisition for approximately 800 Negro women to set up half of a central postal directory. Declaring that these women would not fill any existing military jobs, the theater asked and expected an additional allotment of grades, but none was received.

The unit, the 6888th Central Postal Battalion, was selected from both the Air Forces and the Service Forces in order to give all women a chance at overseas service, but sufficient volunteers to fill the unit could not be found. One Negro editor had alleged that "they are heartbroken because they cannot serve overseas like their white GI sisters,"⁵¹ but this opinion apparently did not accurately reflect the sentiments of all of the women, one of whom suggested to an inspector that they ship the NAACP instead.⁵²

The battalion arrived in Europe in February of 1945, under the command of Maj. Charity Adams, later promoted to lieutenant colonel. The unit contained 40 percent unskilled workers, as against 1 percent for white Wacs in this theater, and 40 percent in the two lowest AGCT grades, as against 10 percent for white Wacs.

As a separate T/O unit, the battalion

⁴⁹ (1) Ltr, CG 1st SvC to CG ASF, 13 Mar 45, with incls. SPBVG. (2) Memo Slip, Int Div ASF for Dir Pers ASF, 21 Mar 45, with atchd; and another, 3 Apr 45. (3) Clippings in same file. (4) Weekly Int Summary 164, Hq 1st SvC, 31 Mar 45. SPBIB 350.09, Racial Situation Annex.

⁵⁰ Following, unless indicated, based on ETO Bd Rpt, Vol. I, pp. 126-29 and Vol III, Apps. 85d and 125.

⁵¹ Ltr, Malvina Thompson to Dir WAC, 1 Nov 44, incl Ltr from city editor of *AFRO-American*, 26 Oct 44, and reply, 4 Nov 44. WDWAC 330.14.

⁵² Interv with Maj Marjorie Ludwigsen, Hq AAF, inspector of unit for AAF.