

Conclusions

It proved difficult to evaluate the success of the program of employment of Negro Wacs. The second WAC Director, Colonel Boyce, when asked to comment, replied, "The Negro women in the Army are a part of the WAC. The record of achievement of the Corps cannot be attributed to any individual or to any group but to the whole Corps."⁵⁶ Training center authorities were inclined to wonder if the nuisance value of the constant civilian searching parties had not outweighed the military contribution by the women.⁵⁷ In the field, comments of post commanders applied to ability rather than race: every skilled Wac was assignable regardless of race, and unskilled ones were never wanted. When the WAVES, near the end of the war, were considering admitting Negroes, a WAC authority advised them,

To speak very frankly, the problems are fundamental ones—charges of segregation, discrimination, not giving them clerical jobs. . . . Success depends in the main on (1) the caliber of officers . . . (2) intelligent assignment and utilization.⁵⁸

It appeared that in some respects the Navy policy had been more successful than that of the Army. The WAVES had not admitted any Negro women until 1945, by which time the Navy had announced an end of segregation for men. At this time the WAVES accepted only 70 Negro enlisted women and no company officers. By virtue of the small numbers, enlistment was highly selective, and only women of high aptitude and skill and good personal appearance were chosen. For this reason, the WAVES were able to abolish

segregation from the beginning, and to incorporate the few skilled specialists into existing units. The approval with which the Navy policy was received by Negro organizations strongly suggested that, had the WAC never set a 10 percent quota, and instead limited Negro enlistment to a few women who met the highest standards, it might not only have avoided the burden of unassignable low-grade personnel, but also have successfully abolished segregation. However, the WAC could hardly have adopted this policy in the absence of a change in Army policy.⁵⁹

There was some indication that, as compared to the relative problems of Negro men in all services, the WAC had experienced lesser problems and been more highly regarded by the Negro civilian population. When asked in a nationwide survey "What are your chances in the different services?" more Negro women answered "Good" concerning the WAC than did Negro men concerning any of the armed services.⁶⁰ It appeared that the armed forces' eventual decisions concerning male Negro troops would apply equally well to female troops, with the exception—which applied to women of all races—that higher-grade female personnel would continue to be required in view of the fact that women could not perform combat and heavy service duties.

⁵⁶ Series cited n. 55(1).

⁵⁷ Ltr, Comdt 1st Tng Cen to WAAC Ex, 19 Aug 43. SPWA 291.2.

⁵⁸ Ltr, ASF WAC Off to Dir WAVES, 4 Nov 44. SPAP 220.3 WAC.

⁵⁹ (1) Ltr, Headlines and Picture Editor to Dir WAC, 31 Jul 45. SPWA 291.2 (1943). (2) Navy Press Release. (3) WAVES Hist, pp. 78-79.

⁶⁰ Study, 8 Jul 43, sub: The Negroes' Role in the War, OWI Memo 59, pp. 9-10. SPWA 291.2.