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(Dept. 2.)

THE EYES OF THE GUNS

It's Keenness That Counts Among The WAAC's



without radio-location are like cats without eyes," we were told as we drove up to a radio-location unit to see some of the WAACs at work. "These girls are the eyes of the guns,"

Twenty or 30 girls were seated round a lecture room when we arrived, but this was not a lecture on radio-location that they were having. These WAACs were all fully trained and qualified. They were having a discussion—the first of a series of Army Education discussionson International Affairs, and were busy talking about strategy in the Pacific

"We are all proud of the fact that we are part of the New Zealand Artillery," one of the WAACs told us. "We always wear battle dress when we are on duty here, and we have to have our tin helmets in case a real flap should develop. This is a great life. The work itself is interesting, and we all enjoy camp life. Our camp is very comfortable and sociable, and we have plenty to entertain us in our off duty times. We have picture shows and dances and plenty of outdoor life. All of us enjoy the swimming parades," she added.

"And the hours?" we asked.

"Six a.m. reveille, and till 7.30 to dress, clean out our huts and tidy up generally. At 7.30 we have our breakfast and at 8.30 we begin our work. We stop here on duty all day until 4.30 p.m. I don't think one of us ever has any regrets that she has joined up in this. It is stimulating, and we all know that it is an essential job that has to be done.'

From All Kinds of Jobs

We asked the sergeant in charge from what kinds of jobs these girls came and what need there was for them to have had any special scientific knowledge,

"All we need," she replied, "is girls who are of good average intelligence and

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-and they all are that. A good many worked in shops, some were in offices, this girl here was a dentist's mechanic, and I myself was just at home before the war."

Another girl confided that until a year or so ago, she had been working in a store. "I don't know whether all girls would think it a good advertisement for this job, but I put on a stone in my first two months here. I don't think it's all fat either. This life keeps us thoroughly

Several girls were busy in the plotting room. "It's not as complicated as it might seem," our guide explained. Here is a map, and on this, from the figures which they get from the field instruments, they can plot exactly where the aircraft is and what is its height and speed. These figures then go immediately to the local operations room, where the information is used to direct anti-aircraft fire. It is absolutely essential that all the plotting is accurate, and in the handling of these delicate instruments there is no doubt that a woman's hand is better than a man's. As for women's nerves, well, girls in England showed us that they could do their job as well under fire as men could, and the girls here are every bit as good as the girls in England."

From the local Operations Fire Control Unit we went on to visit some of the girls working at the local head-quarters. There are fewer here, and their job is to deal with the information sent from the local units. From this centre the orders are sent to the various anti-aircraft batteries. "We all realise the immense importance of the work that we are doing," said one girl. "The first six weeks' training gives us a working knowledge of what we have to do. The next months give us practise in it. But now we can feel ourselves expert in the handling of instruments, and if it should come to a flap, we can take it."

Perhaps the best testimonial came from the army officer in charge of the unit. "Frankly," he said, "I was a bit fed up when I was told I was to take over a unit of the WAACs. I wanted to train men. But now I am enjoying it. I've never had a keener lot of people to work with, and it's keenness that counts in winning the war."