

The Chatelaine discusses the subject of Oriental employment of white women with those who know the "inside" story.



that he is perforce on good behavior. He is a business man. Successful laundries throughout the country are already arranging for the installation of machines, which will mean the employment of more women to operate them. With no grounds save race prejudice to bar them, there seems no reason why women should not be allowed to profit by this increase in industry, provided no personal distaste, danger or untoward environment holds them back. Proper regulation and inspection of all such establishments could at least ensure safety.

Magistrate Helen Gregory MacGill, of Vancouver, where, of course, the Chinese problem is most acute, has contributed the following opinion on the subject:—

"Should we prohibit Chinese from employing white women, or should white women and girls be forbidden to work for Chinamen? Any problem affecting public welfare should be considered in all its phases and the question here reversed indicates another angle.

"In advocating laws forbidding the employment of a section of one race by all the members of another, it may be well to examine closely if the real difficulty lies in racial characteristics, or whether it is in the nature of the employment, the relations existing between employers and employees and the condition surrounding it.

"During the recent police investigations in Vancouver, the Chinese were not the only nationality involved, the nationals of another country were quite as frequently or even more frequently implicated in the degradation of white women and girls.

"If the real issue is the protection from exploitation, moral or financial, of women, then there are other nations whose members should be precluded from employing women—but why limit it to *white*? Then again are we to forbid any and all employment by Chinese, and shall we attempt to limit the association only to employment? In British Columbia, and the Pacific Coast, generally, we see girls and women employed in a great variety of capacities and occupations not only by Chinese but by other Orientals, by Greeks, by Czecho-Slovakians, Russians and many alien peoples and races. Fruit, silk and curio shops, restaurants, eating houses, hotels (owned and managed by white men but with the dining-room privileges sub-let to Chinese, Greeks or Japanese, etc.), in many cases have white women workers. Some canning companies let contracts to Chinese who employ women workers under white foremen or forewomen of mature age, and the contractor himself comes

little in contact with the other employees. Perhaps such a situation, while regrettable economically, does not carry much moral danger. But in lodging, boarding houses or restaurants we have another phase. These are not usually among the first class, well-kept places. The managers and proprietors are seldom of high standing even among their own people. Positions in such establishments are sought as a rule by women from families themselves low in social or moral standing, those impelled by poverty to accept the less attractive 'jobs' or the daughters of the careless or indifferent who either see no danger or are indifferent to it.

"Restrictions are sometimes favored because of the beliefs of their promoters, too frequently well-founded, that many purveyors of narcotics, distributors of 'dope,' are Chinese. But, alas, the Chinese are not alone in this vice, nor do they seek their victims only among those they employ.

"If laws prohibiting women from working for a particular race cover the situation or solve the problem, then those laws and their enforcement should have the whole-hearted endorsement and support of every good citizen. But there is no proof that such prohibitions do so or will do so.

"If the employment is safe and properly paid, then we wrong the woman or girl by not allowing her the opportunity to secure perhaps the only employment offered. If the danger lies in the environment, nature and conditions, and these carry a menace always or customarily, not only should employees be protected, but their customers, patrons and frequenters should also be protected. In British Columbia we have a law (introduced by Mrs. Ralph Smith) by which no person may employ white or Indian women or girls, or permit them to reside or lodge in or frequent (except as bona fide customers) any laundry, place of business, or amusement if, in the opinion of the Chief of Police it is advisable in the interest of morals that they should not do so. (Chapter 175, R.S.B.C. 1924)

"Before restrictions or prohibitions are enacted which may bring hardship without relief some very clear thinking should be done, careful examination should be made of the problem as a whole, other conditions besides employment such as lodgings and amusement resorts should be considered, regardless of the particular nationality of their owners, managers or promoters.

"Measures to reduce such menace or danger to a minimum should be adopted regardless of the race or nation affected. There should be no treaty with evil or 'most favored nation' clauses, literally or metaphorically, in dealing with the offenders. But legislation should not be rooted in prejudice, dislike or fear. It must be broad and based on knowledge and understanding. The Municipal Act in British Columbia contains a section which says:—

"No person shall in any municipality employ in any capacity any white woman or girl or permit any white woman or girl to reside or lodge in or to work in or, save as a bona-fide customer, in a public apartment thereof only, to frequent any restaurant, laundry, or place of business or amusement owned, kept, or managed by any Chinese person. (S. 465, chapter 179, R.S.B.C. 1924)

"This Act does not apply to cities having special charters such as Victoria and Vancouver.

"In comparing these two laws, the first quoted, which uses moral danger as the test, offers more in the way of real protection than the second mentioned, which attempts to meet the difficulty by racial prohibition.

"Allowing dislike or fear of a nation or race to make us hysterical, or permitting our judgment to be clouded by prejudice, does not increase our ability to reach wise conclusions. The famous excuse of a noted hunter for a mistaken object and poor aim, that he shot to hit if it were a bear and miss it if it were a calf is interesting in game circles, but scarcely sound theory for legislation. While hunting the bears we are overlooking the lions and the tigers. Laws that apply only to particular cases, as in this instance, cannot be expected to be as effective as legislation that grapples with the problem as a whole. What is needed is protection against recognized danger, not restriction directed against a race. These aims are not necessarily one and the same.

YET the Chinese are at present singled out in various parts of Canada for special industrial legislation. Dr. Noyes asks: "Why should British subjects in China receive favored nation treatment, and Chinese citizens in Canada receive least favored nation treatment?"

"The Chinese resent these statutes because they are singled out as the only people in the Dominion who cannot employ white women. This seems like race feeling gone to seed. They with their friends feel it is un-British and un-Christian. Some Chinese are Canadian citizens by naturalization or by birth. Is there a difference in rights or citizens?"

"One cannot help feeling that such legislation is unnecessary, because there are enough laws protecting women at work without one that points out but one race, and that, on the whole, law-abiding. It is insulting to the pride the Chinese have in their status in Canada, and to their feelings of the slight offered to their mother country.

"It seems to be contrary to the spirit of British law. It interferes with the best efforts being made in the Dominion to share the best of our Christian civilization with men, many of whom will return to China to do their part in bringing in a better day. It is liable to hurt not only Canadian but British trade in China. It makes it more difficult for the Chinese loyal to Canada and her interests to carry on. It is a survival of the past, of a. (Continued on page 55)