

Rollin chemical co.

October 22, 1918.

Lieutenant R. M. Mann,  
Production Division,  
Ordnance Department,  
Washington, D.C.

My dear Lieutenant Mann:

Thank you for the information about the  
employment of women at the Rollin Chemical Company. We  
should be very glad if you would bring to our attention  
new occupations for women as you observe them in inspecting  
plants, as we are trying to secure as complete as possible  
information on this subject.

Sincerely yours,

Mary Van Kleeck, Director  
Woman in Industry service.

MVK/ALL

*Return to WY -*

All communications should be accompanied by carbon copy and addressed to

OCT 18 A.M.

WAR DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ORDNANCE  
PRODUCTION DIVISION

WASHINGTON

RMM/meh

October 16, 1918.

To insure prompt attention,  
in replying refer to

No. *230.6*

Attention of *5794*

Lt. R. M. Mann

03-6845

From: Major B. H. Gitchell, Industrial Service  
Section, Safety & Sanitation Branch

To: Miss Mary Van Kleeck, Director of Woman  
in Industry Service, Dept. of Labor

Subject: ~~switchboard~~ Operators.

My dear Miss Van Kleeck,

1. You will no doubt be interested in learning that the Rollin Chemical Company of Charleston, West Virginia, is operating four 500 KW rotary converters and the accompanying switchboard by women. Three of them do this work in three shifts, and I am advised by the plant management that they replaced men about four months ago, and have been particularly satisfactory ever since. Although they are above the average worker, no particular difficulty was observed in the matter of obtaining them or in their training.

*F 2*

2. I was particularly impressed with the desirability of using women in this kind of work.

B. H. GITCHELL,  
Major, Ord. Dept., U.S.A.

BY: *A. D. Reiley*  
A. D. REILEY, *John*  
Capt., Ord. Dept., U.S.A.

OCT 7 - A.M.

WAR DEPARTMENT,  
WASHINGTON.

October 5, 1918.

From: War Department, Major F. W. Tully.  
To: *him* Mary Van Kleeck, Director, Women in Industry Service.  
Subject: Complaint regarding conditions in Rollin Chemical  
Company.

The complaint regarding conditions in the Rollin Chemical Company at Charleston, West Virginia, has been referred to the Industrial Service Section with the recommendation that it be referred to the Community Service Section, and the further suggestion that the Industrial Service Section co-operate with you in taking whatever steps seem mutually appropriate.

*F. W. Tully*

F. W. Tully,

Major, Ordnance U. S. A.

Detailed to Office of Secretary of War.

September 24, 1918.

Rev. Howard R. Gold, Asst. Secretary  
Joint Committee on War Production Communities,  
105 E. 22nd Street, New York, N.Y.

My dear Mr. Gold:

We find that the Rollin Chemical Company concerning which you have sent us a confidential report, has contracts with the Ordnance Department. We are therefore referring the whole matter to the War Department for such action as they may find appropriate.

Thanking you for bringing it to our attention.

Cordially yours,

Mary Van Kleeck, Director  
Woman in Industry Service.

MVK/AL

September 24, 1918.

From: Woman in Industry Service, Mary Van Kleeck, Director  
To: War Department, Major F. W. Tully  
Subject: Complaint regarding conditions in Rollin Chemical  
Company.

1. The attached reports from the Joint Committee on War Production Communities, regarding conditions affecting women in the Rollin Chemical Company, are referred to you for such action as you may think appropriate.

As you may know, the Woman in Industry Service has a Committee on Hazardous Occupations which is making a thorough study of the chemical industries at Niagara Falls. The Committee has representatives from the Public Health Service, the Ordnance Department, the Navy and Bureau of Standards, in its membership and these organizations, especially the Ordnance Department and the Public Health Service are taking an active part in the field work. Captain A. D. Reiley represents the Ordnance Department and serves as Secretary of the Committee. It is respectfully suggested that you may wish to refer this matter to the Committee on Hazardous Occupations, further suggesting that the Ordnance Department detail a representative of the Women's Branch to work with us in this matter.

MVK/AL

Mary Van Kleeck, Director  
Woman in Industry Service.

# JOINT COMMITTEE ON WAR PRODUCTION COMMUNITIES

REPRESENTING THE HOME MISSIONS COUNCILS AND THE  
GENERAL WAR-TIME COMMISSION OF THE CHURCHES

## OFFICERS

CHAIRMAN: JOHN M. GLENN  
SECRETARY: REV. ALFRED WMS. ANTHONY  
TREASURER: W. T. DEMAREST  
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY: REV. WORTH M. TIPPY  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY: REV. HOWARD R. GOLD

105 EAST TWENTY-SECOND STREET  
NEW YORK CITY

TELEPHONE, GRAMERCY 1846

## REPRESENTING THE HOME MISSIONS COUNCIL

REV. CHARLES A. BROOKS  
REV. C. E. BURTON  
REV. DAVID D. FORSYTH  
REV. S. L. MORRIS  
REV. W. P. SHRIVER  
REV. CHARLES L. WHITE  
REV. WARREN H. WILSON

## REPRESENTING THE GENERAL WAR-TIME COMMISSION OF THE CHURCHES

PROF. WILLIAM ADAMS BROWN  
JOHN M. GLENN  
REV. HOWARD R. GOLD  
SHELBY M. HARRISON  
REV. HUBERT C. HERRING

## REPRESENTING THE COUNCIL OF WOMEN FOR HOME MISSIONS

MRS. J. S. ALLEN  
MRS. FRED S. BENNETT

August 31, 1918.

Miss Mary VanKleeck,  
Ouray Building,  
8th & G. Streets,  
Washington, D. C.

My dear Miss VanKleeck:

About August first, we forwarded to you information received from Charleston, W. Va. concerning the unsatisfactory moral conditions under which the women work in one of the plants there. We did not then have the name of the firm. It is The Rollin Chemical Co. of South Charleston, West Virginia, and attached herewith is a communication given us. We have not checked up on this but our correspondence is reliable.

Very cordially yours,

THE JOINT COMMITTEE

Per *H. R. Gold*

HRG.W  
Enc.

*100,000 tons caustic soda  
Ordnance Dept.*

"From two different sources within the plant I have learned that the conditions under which women are employed and kept at work are scandalous. Before white women went in in large numbers it was confidently believed by the Travelers' Aid and YWCA leaders that colored women were being kept within the plant for immoral purposes, and an investigation was attempted but thwarted at the plant. (This Dan Cunningham is employed in some way at the plant, in just what capacity I have not been able to learn.) No one has succeeded in getting past Hugh Rollin and his representatives, yet clean straight-forward young men employed by the company tell their friends that the moral strain is frightful. It is said, too, that these young women [the white women] curse and swear like sailors and also chew tobacco."



## WOMAN IN INDUSTRY SERVICE

August 16, 1918.

My dear Mr. Gold:

Your letter of August 7th enclosing a report on conditions in Charleston, W. Va. is received. If you have not already done so, I would suggest your sending this report to Mr. F. C. Butler, Industrial Service Section, Ordnance Department, 7th and B Street, Washington, D. C. who is in charge of Community Organization for the Industrial Section of the Ordnance Department. It will probably be desirable also to refer the matter to the United States Public Health Service. ~~Wanted~~ that the Sanitary Engineer expects soon to come to Washington for conference with Surgeon General Blue. It may be that his efforts could be reinforced by a report from your Committee.

As to the conditions of employment of women in one of the plants, if you will let me know the name of the establishment, I shall be glad to take the matter up with the Department having contracts.

Yours sincerely,

MARY VAN KLEECK,  
Director, Women in Industry Service.

Rev. H. R. Gold,  
Joint Committee on War Production Communities,  
105 E. 22nd Street,  
New York City.

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105 EAST TWENTY-SECOND STREET  
NEW YORK CITY

TELEPHONE, GRAMERCY 1945

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REV. HUBERT C. HERRING

## REPRESENTING THE COUNCIL OF WOMEN FOR HOME MISSIONS

MRS. J. S. ALLEN  
MRS. FRED S. BENNETT

August 7th, 1918.

Miss Mary VanKleeck,  
Curay Building,  
8th & G Streets,  
Washington, D. C.

My dear Miss VanKleeck,

Here is a copy of a letter from one of our workers in and about Charleston, W. Va. This party has been studying this field for some time and has been sending in reports regularly. As the survey went along the whole situation became so serious that she wrote this informal report. I am not sending a copy to anyone else at the present, but would appreciate it if you would send me the names of any officials who should have this and other information we get from this general region. Kindly use the information here given as you wish, but treat it confidentially.

Next week Dr. Tippy, our executive secretary, and four or five other men and at least one woman are going to Charleston for three days to study the situation and to develop a policy in connection with the local church leaders and other agencies. We wish a constructive program of cooperation, and therefore do not want to use the information we get, such as the enclosed, in a way that would neutralize our activities in this area and probably at the same time not accomplish any definite results after all.

In the course of a day or so we shall be able to assemble our reports of this region and will then send you a copy. I should appreciate your opinion as to what official action might be brought to bear on the situation in this area.

Yours very cordially,

*H R Gold*

Enc.

HRG.K

Hotel Jefferson,  
Charleston, W. Va.,  
August 1, 1918.

Dr. Worth M. Tippy,  
105 East 22 Street,  
New York City.

My dear Dr. Tippy,

In the last two days I have come face to face with things which I feel I must pass on to you in plain English and ask your counsel as to what should be done: I have had long interviews with the following people:- the Secretary of the YMCA, the clerk of the State Supreme Court (a substantial member of the church here and president of the Rotary Club), a reputable physician (to whom I went this morning for inoculation, realizing the great danger I am in), and the Sanitary Engineer of the State Board of Health who was the author of the Sanitary Survey of Charleston of which I spoke in my first weekly report, and has fought for proper health and sanitation for three years against terrific odds. This afternoon I added to the list the President of the YWCA board, a woman who has lived here all her life and is the most influential person, or woman I should say, in the city. These people have given me their views on the situation in Charleston and I should like to pass them on to you, together with a clipping which will tell you in brief what the development of the city as to population and wealth in recent months has been! Conversations with other folks, less conspicuous in public life, substantiate all they have said and more - please do not think I am presenting an exaggerated report.

Before I start the report, let me assure you that there are many very good people here but they have not awakened to the task of planning a city's welfare and do not know the first essentials of modern social organization. They are deeply distressed over the conditions of things when they are made aware of what is going on, yet they have no wide-awake native people to take the leadership in the bettering of things. Hospitable, kindly and clean themselves, they seem to think everyone else will take care of himself or herself. The president of the YWCA board said to me this afternoon that she held the women responsible for the immoral conditions for they could control the situation if they would, showing an utter lack of comprehension of the need of the untrained and inexperienced girls who are not aware of the traps which are laid for her. The YMCA secretary and the Sanitary Engineer (a pure New Englander of fine family, true culture, highly trained and a man after your own heart, if I am any judge of men) are most keenly alert!

First of all, the political situation is rotten to the core in both the city and country circles. Governor Cornwell seems to command the respect of even the keenest and most capable critics, but the county political life is guilty of almost anything bad which it could do. The doctor told me this morning that it was a matter of common knowledge that one of the ring a few years ago was worth only about \$3000. at the most. He holds a job which pays \$2.00 a day and is now worth almost \$500,000. The engineer told me of a bridge across the Kenawha which was condemned a year or so ago and then sold for \$125,000 more than it originally cost (the bridge was privately owned), and the ring pocketed the "boodle"! Thousands of dollars of public money have been disposed of and yet the public tolerates it. The county officers will give no support to any progressive move and, worse still, block anything which anyone can get started which will mean the betterment of health or sanitary conditions. It is a commonly understood fact that the physicians who are appointed as health officers in the surrounding towns pay the larger part of their salaries back to the ring in order to hold their places.

FOR SENT TO  
DR. BOLEBY X 3

Bad as this is, the city ring is worse, for the Mayor is an openly recognized libertine and the chief of police is no better. The city fathers are described to me as being the most corrupt looking lot of men imaginable, so corrupt and inane as to arouse deepest disgust on the part of any right-minded person. The police force cannot be trusted - I scarcely need to say! The man who was put on my trail last week, one Dan Cunniggham, is said to be the most fearless man in the State, but he will do anything for a bit of money and is declared to be ruffian of the worst type, and the story of his part in the case of a little white girl, who was abducted here a few years ago by a colored man and in which city officials were tied up closely, is too vile for repetition by self-respecting people. That is the type of person - without exception so far as I can learn - which makes up the city administration!

In my other report I have spoken of the health and sanitation problems, but let me add what has come to me today! I am told that 42 percent of the draftees were declared to be affected by venereal diseases, but it is being kept under, as you may guess. Just now there are 50 reported cases of typhoid in the city and the real number is at least 80 for the laxity in reporting diseases, births and deaths is a not orious fact. (By the way Nitro, despite the enclosed article, has 12 cases of typhoid and has had 3,000 of dysentery in the month of July). Last year Charleston had over 500 cases of typhoid and the number would be greatly increased now if it were not for the fact that every family that has regard for these things is boiling all drinking water. The doctor said to me this morning that every drop of water which flowed from a spigot in the city was poison, and the engineer who is responsible for the supervision of the filtration plant told me that it could not be made to produce a pure water supply.

The county court blocked the plan of the State Dept. of Agriculture for slaughtering tubercular cattle in dairy herds (which provided for the reimbursement of the owner, half by the state and half by the county) by refusing to pay the county's share in the herds of the county. Milk inspection is as lax as everything.

Bad as all this is, it is nothing as compared with the moral situation, yet anyone inquiring of the smugly respectable people of the town would be told that their segregated district was cleaned out four years ago and that since that time things have been well ordered. All three men above mentioned say the city is wide-open - a little New York! Indeed the engineer told me that he had it from some New York men that there were at least 25 women here from New York (whom they had known there), stationed in and about Charleston. Open solicitation is being carried on in drug stores at soda fountains, out at Luna Park, the only pleasure park developed in the valley as yet! The man who tried to have me arrested and who is considered one of the leading business men of the city is seen more frequently on the streets and in the public dining places with his high-salaried stenographer than with his wife and it is spoken of freely by practically everyone with whom I speak. The grounds of the Country Club are reported to be infested with the most blatant immorality so that decent folk can scarcely venture out for a walk. Dr. Beck discovered while here that a certain restaurant was pretending to employ waitresses legitimately but in reality was in cahoots with the taxi people in an immoral traffic.

In the matter of recreation the valley is woefully lacking. Strangely there is almost nothing. A few movies here in the city run fairly good screens which are passed on to Nitro. There is a movie in St. Albans (just across from Nitro), and one in Dunbar. These with Luna Park constitute the commercialized recreation and amusement program of the valley, except for the work which is done by the city YMCA for the boys, and the club work of the YWCA which is very limited in its reach. There is not a single playground in the valley and the only place equipped for any kind of sport is one at the high school in the eastern part of the city, accessible to only a comparative few. Let me remind you that by the "valley" I mean the tract of land between the foot of the range of hills to the north of the city and the

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Kanawha River and from Kanawha City 7 miles above (to the southeast) to, and including St. Albans on the west and north with "unbar which lies to the north of the River. There are plenty of places where playgrounds could be developed but no one seems to realize the need. Boys and girls are going to ruin under war conditions, all up and down the valley and almost nothing is being done for them. The most forward movement I have yet discovered is the effort of the Rpatary Club (yet to be made but in process of planning) to raise \$12,000 to develop thoroughly the Boy Scout movement of the city.

The church situation you already know, I think. The city is well-churched so far as Charleston and West Charleston are concerned, and the pastors are a fine lot of men, only they are not awake to present needs, and the slow-going city does not see any reason for agitation of social problems from the pulpit. Yet some have been stirred up by some men. "Brother Pat", the head of the Union Mission and the strongest single force for righteousness in the city, sadly says that the ministers are asleep, and they are judged by our standards. The suburban churches, with the exception of St. Albans, are mere missions, for the towns are under four years old.

To sum it all up the sanitary engineer said that Charleston deserved all that had come to Philadelphia and New Rochelle but he wanted to save here from the disgrace of it if he could. The Washington authorities are informed as to the health and sanitation problems, and he cherishes a hope that he can get into a position in the near future in which he can defy all the local authorities and either make them clean up or give them the "most infernal airing" a city ever got. He is to go to Washington very soon to meet Surgeon General Blue and plead the cause of Charleston for yet a few weeks longer until she be given another chance to clean up her own sore spots. I admire his optimism to the full but I don't believe it can be done. He is a rare type of young man, free from the political filth and standing almost alone in the fight. If he succeeds it will be a twentieth century miracle. For two hours he told me of the battles he had fought (in some the winner and in most the loser) of the resignation of his corps of young, well-trained assistants because their hands were so tied by politics and the presence of a fossil in the position of State Health Commissioner. Fearless and brave tho he is, the fight will be an awful one.

Charleston was not meeting her own problems before this war industrial camp came swooping down upon her. She can't meet her own needs, much less those of her newly acquired residents. Can the church at large be brought to see that it is just as necessary to raise large funds for caring for her industrial workers as for her soldiers and sailors? They need libraries (I forgot to say that the city has a one-room library with 13,000 volumes) the only library in the valley), reading rooms, recreation, well-censored movies, etc., every whit as much as the soldiers. How can the church people be awakened to the necessity? A careful co-ordination of all these features for the valley could be effected, and an educational program by these means could be worked out which would help much in bettering permanently thousands of lives. Why should YMCA funds be expended upon the men within the government reservation here at Nitro and none upon the men and women who live outside but are doing the work of the government quite as much? If good music could be carried to them as it is to the camps, wouldn't the effect be the same?

And now may I add a bit of information which has come to me regarding the man who tried to have me arrested last week? This stenographer of his employs all the labor. From two different sources within the plant I have learned that the conditions under which women are employed and kept at work are scandalous. Before white women went in in large numbers it was confidently believed by the Travelers' Aid and YWCA leaders that colored women were being kept within the plant for immoral purposes, and an investigation was attempted but thwarted at the plant. (This Dan Cunniggham is employed in some way by the plant, in just what capacity I have not been able to learn). No one has succeeded in getting past Hugh Rollin and his representatives, yet clean straight-forward young men employed by the company tell their

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tends that the moral strain is frightful. It is said, too, that these young women (the white women) curse and swear like sailors and chew tobacco.

Since this plant is doing government work, surely the government should know what is going on there. I was told yesterday that this Mr. Rollin was called to Washington to discuss the need of an enlargement of the plant to meet the government needs. He fixed the cost at about double the necessary amount and when one of the officials said that it was a large amount and asked if it could not be done for half the estimate, he picked up his grip and attempted to leave until he was persuaded that it would be better to take it quietly. He came back and boasted of what he had tried to "put over" on the government! He has also boasted that his women employees are doing as good if not better work than the men whom they replaced, even though he is paying them less than half the wages paid the men.

It is evident that the wave of immorality is coming upon the valley swiftly and surely, and I can see no force which can stay it, do all that we may! I simply had to unburden my soul to someone and you and Mr. Wehrly understand it best! If you have any plan to suggest, I shall do my best to put it into execution. It is hard to be patient when one knows that so much needs to be done and can get so little done!

Most sincerely yours,