

**BUREAU OF LABOR REPRESENTATIVE EXPLAINS OREGON CIVIL RIGHTS LAWS**

The following statement regarding the civil rights laws that are in force in the State of Oregon has been provided to the Klamath Tribune by Russell A. Peyton, representative of the Civil Rights Division of the Oregon State Bureau of Labor.

The Civil Rights Division of the Oregon State Bureau of Labor is the official state agency charged with the responsibility of developing improved inter-group relations and with eliminating acts of discrimination because of race, religion, color and national origin.

Twelve years ago it was declared to be the public policy of the state of Oregon that practices of discrimination against any of its inhabitants because of race, religion, color or national origin are a matter of state concern and that such discrimination threatens not only the rights and privileges of its inhabitants but menaces the institutions and foundation of a free democratic state.

In 1949 the first law implementing this public policy was in the

area of employment. This law is known as the Fair Employment Practices Act. The purpose of the law is to eliminate and prevent discrimination in employment by employers, employment agencies, labor organizations or other persons who aid, abet, compel, coerce the doing of the acts forbidden under the law.

Administration of the law was assigned to the Bureau of Labor. In the twelve years since, we now have jurisdiction over discrimination in public accommodations, vocational schools and housing. Having jurisdiction means that the Bureau of Labor is empowered to eliminate and prevent discrimination in these areas on account of race, religion, color or national origin. This means that the Bureau of Labor is authorized to receive complaints, to investigate allegations of discrimination, to enter into agreements of conciliation and, in the event that conciliation fails, to hold public hearings which result in orders that may be judicially enforced.

**The Fair Employment Practices Law, as do the other laws men-**

**tioned herein, establishes special privileges for no one. In employment it sets the job qualifications (aptitude, training, skill, character and job experience) as the sole prerequisite to employment.**

The Public Accommodation Law was passed in 1953. This law is to insure that all persons, regardless of their race, religion, color or national origin, have equal access to and use of places of public accommodation, resort and amusement. Places of public accommodation include hotels, motels, motor courts, trailer parks; any places offering to the public food or drink for consumption on the premises; any places offering to the public entertainment, recreation or amusement; any place offering to the public goods or services. It is an unlawful act to withhold or deny to any person fair and equal treatment because of the religion or the color of his skin.

The Housing Law is the most recently enacted civil rights law over which the Bureau of Labor has jurisdiction. This law pro-

hibits discrimination because of race, religion, color or national origin in the renting, leasing or selling of real property.

All of the statutes, of course, set some limits as to the Bureau of Labor's jurisdiction. For instance, in the Fair Employment Practices Law, employers with less than six employees are exempt from the law. In the Public Accommodation Law, clubs, institutions, places of accommodation, resort or amusement which in its nature is distinctly private are excluded from the law. In the area of housing the Oregon law provides that only persons engaged in the business of selling, leasing or renting are covered by the law. This includes a person who, as a business enterprise, sells, leases or rents real property, and such a person may not refuse to sell, lease or rent or make any distinction or restriction against a purchaser in price, terms, conditions or in the facilities or services in connection therewith.

Any person who believes that he has been denied equal treatment because of race, creed, color or national origin in employment, in public accommodation or in attempting to rent, lease or purchase real property should certainly bring his complaint to the Civil Rights Division of the Bureau of Labor. It is known that many people are being denied equal job opportunity or equal access to the housing market only because of the religion they practice or the color of their skin or because of their national origin. The Bureau of Labor is unable to do anything to correct these practices of discrimination, either by enforcement activity or by educational means, if the Bureau does not know about them. It is up to every individual to make the effort to assist in bringing to the attention of this department any discriminatory acts that are believed to be based on race, religion and national origin.

The Oregon State Bureau of Labor has a continuing educational program in this field, but the cooperation of everyone is needed. As citizens, each should use his own initiative as a citizen to protect his own rights. If each person in Oregon would do this, it would be of tremendous help in eliminating and preventing discriminatory practices, and by eliminating discrimination we will foster unity among all our people. Good citizenship is a mutual achievement, and each one has an essential part to play.

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