

## GOSSIP AND GOOD BUSINESS

"Let your people gossip and you will have contended employees". This suggestion comes from the U.S. and is beginning to run the circuit in West German concerns. What do the experts think of the U.S. idea? Is gossip as spread out as some sociologists think?

Coffee cups clatter. Cake forks shovel creamy pies. The rest is talk. Six office girls talk during work. They do what according to the experts is the normal thing to do and what costs the concerns millions of Marks monthly: They pay homage to gossip, the original sin of all offices.

Marita Grundgens, the sister of Hamburg's deceased star actor, Gustav Grundgens, has thoroughly studied the role which gossip plays. Employed by a Solinger metal concern, she came up with the following:

"Everyone gossips about the

other. The carrier of gossip can become quite dangerous." At worst, he is in a position to destroy a person's work and his future.

In order to prevent as much of this happening as possible, Marita Grundgens hit on the idea of shutting up gossip with music. "Those who hear music keep their mouths shut."

It is a well meant suggestion, but unfortunately it does not work practically. Gossip is tough to reform. The talking continues even with music.

This fact caused other responsible people to realize that man, cannot live without gossip.

Prof. H. Distel, a work psychologist from the U.S., favours gossip for easing tensions, "Take a break and talk about your neighbour." After that the work will go along better again.

American personnel chiefs immediately latched on to Distel's ideas and began to support the Kaffeeklatch among the employees.

The motive: Our people are coming closer together. The feeling of unity intensifies. Work atmosphere gets looser.

It went so far in U.S. concerns that employes have coined such phrases as "Love goes through the coffee pot." "Flirting only gets nice through the Kaffeeklatsch." Many a couple, delicate and bashful by nature, were brought together because of all the talking.

"Gossip is essential," is also the opinion of the director of a West German coffee house chain which employs 30,000 persons. Naturally he does not say this because of love. "Man needs gossip as a pressure valve. Without

this release, work would begin to decline."

His is an optimistic view not shared by all personnel chiefs. Most are resigned and tolerate the news agencies without interfering. But they are aware of the fact that gossip is not only good for conversation, but that it also potentially jeopardizes the work community.

"We have already gone through some trials," complained the director of a chemical concern in Hamburg. "It has happened that rumors developed, that assumptions were treated as facts, and that innocent parties were persecuted."

Fortunately it is not often that one's career is destroyed because of the colleagues' gossip. The possibility that some gossipers will unwittingly do good at a Kaffeeklatsch is an American justification for letting them be.  
— *The Chronicle*.