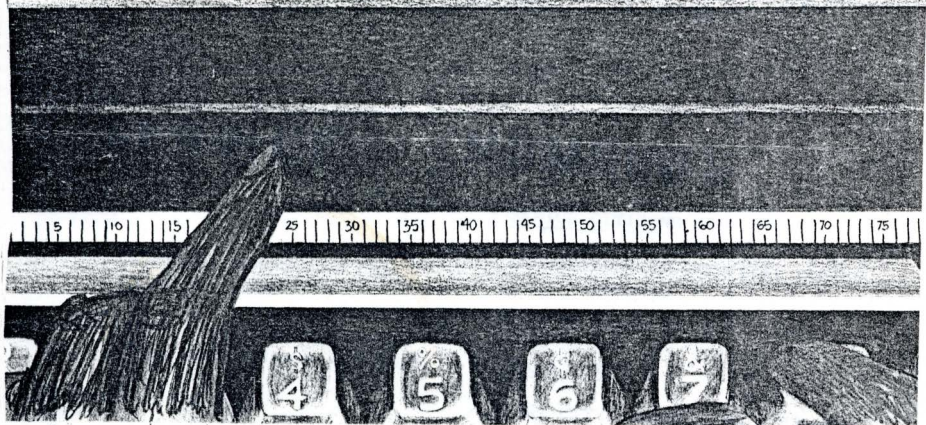


# A WOMAN'S PLACE

429-4063

Viki Faust



NEWSLETTER

*January 81*

# Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is any sexually oriented practice that endangers a woman's job, that undermines her job performance and threatens her economic performance. It is also any repeated and unwanted sexual comment, look, suggestion or physical contact that a woman finds objectionable or offensive and causes her discomfort on the job.

It can range from unwanted suggestions or comments to attempted rape or rape. Physically, it can include pinching, grabbing, hugging, patting, leering, brushing against and touching. Psychologically, it can include subtle hints, sexual jokes, and requests for dates or sexual favours.

## An expression of power:

Like rape, sexual harassment has nothing to do with affection or attraction. Whether from co-workers supervisors or customers, it is an expression of power, authority, or control through sex.

The harasser uses his ability to impose work-related penalties as a means of getting sexual favours from a female worker. From bosses the penalties can range from changing work assignments or a missed promotion to a bad personnel report, demotion or firing. From co-workers, the penalty is usually

poisoning the work environment to such an extent that the working situation becomes intolerable and the victim is no longer able to function effectively in her job.

The threat does not have to be openly expressed. An unwanted sexual advance from someone who has the power to hire and fire or to negatively affect your working conditions and job performance is in and of itself a threat.

Some people argue that if you eliminate sexual harassment you eliminate all the "fun" from the workplace--all the on-the-job flirtations, romances and love affairs. But they are dead wrong. A flirtation or love affair is mutual, both partners feel it and they willingly enter into a relationship with each other. But sexual harassment is entirely different. It is something that one person imposes upon the other--it is both a personal threat and economic blackmail.

## The effect of harassment:

Studies show that between 70 and 90 per cent of working women in different job categories suffer sexual harassment at least once in their working lives. The vast majority of the victims find it a threatening and frightening situation because they recognize that they may lose their jobs. The few

women who find the situation flattering in the beginning quickly get disenchanted. When they realize the costs they, too, become frightened.

Sexual harassment has two major effects: one on the victim's job performance and ability to keep her job; the other on her health. As Backhouse and Cohen, the authors of the book 'The Secret Oppression' put it:

"Tension, fear and anger build up inside sexual harassment victims who have nowhere to turn for relief. Most victims experience psychological depression and despair. Many suffer physical ailments such as stomach pains, headaches, nausea, involuntary muscular spasms, insomnia, hypertension and other medical illnesses caused by continual, unrelenting anxiety and frustration. A surprising number are reduced to the point of psychological and physical breakdown, to such an extent that they require hospitalization."

#### The Harassers:

They are ordinary men. Their behaviour is rooted in society's historic prejudice against women. Brought up to believe that women exist to serve their needs and must be dependent on them, they take their view of women with them to the workplace where it is only too easy for them to carry their power fantasies out.

Women are in a subservient position in the labour force. Locked into low-paying and low status job ghettos, women are highly vulnerable to unemployment. Most 'women's jobs' are personal

service in nature—secretaries, waitresses, nurses, servants etc.—they perform tasks where it is difficult to draw the line between job duties and personal favours. It is a reminder to women that their status in society is that of a sex object.

#### How can women fight back?

Sexual harassment is extremely difficult for a woman to combat alone for two reasons. First, people in authority positions (usually men) often prefer to deny it exists. Second, it usually takes place when the victim and harasser are alone, not in the presence of witnesses.

Women who individually try to take their complaints to people above the harasser in the organization sometimes find themselves labelled 'troublemakers' and their job becomes more difficult. As with rape victims, the behaviour (dress, language, social life) of the victims of sexual harassment is called into question while the behaviour of the harassers is ignored. Finally, the victims are forced to quit or are fired. Fully 48 per cent lose their jobs, and this happens whether or not they complain.

Even in cases where the organization is sympathetic, it is the victim who usually gets transferred to another job or another location. The organization has more of an investment in the harasser who is generally in a higher position than the victim. It is extremely rare for the harasser to get fired or





NATIONAL ACTION COMMITTEE  
on the status of women

LE COMITÉ NATIONAL D'ACTION  
sur le statut de la femme

Suite 306  
40 av. St-Clair est  
40 St. Clair Ave. E.  
Toronto M4T 1M9  
(416) 922-3246

NATIONAL ACTION COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN RESPONDS TO NEW SEX OFFENCE LAW

for immediate release

for information:

Kay Macpherson (416) 922-3246  
922-7490

Toronto...The National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) today described the federal government's draft legislation on sexual assault as "a series of steps in the right direction". Said spokesperson Kay Macpherson, "We were looking for certain specific changes. Many of these have been met in whole or in part." NAC is, however, hesitant about supporting the sections of the legislation dealing with children. Said Macpherson, "These areas - especially the penalties - do not appear to be very well thought out."

The principal changes which NAC endorses are:

- the reclassification of rape and indecent assault as sexual assault and aggravated sexual assault
- the differentiation of these offences based on the degree of risk and the use or threat of violence (rather than "penetration" as at present)
- the prohibition on inferring consent from lack of resistance
- the removal of a husband's traditional legal right to rape his wife

This last is especially important," said Macpherson. "We are pleased to see that the government at last agrees with us that the institutions of marriage and family are not served by having the criminal law tolerate one partner's violent attacks upon the other."

A principal problem in the new provisions, says NAC, is with the penalties for sexual assault (s. 246). These are supposed to mirror the new penalties for assault (s.245). Assault, however, has two types of penalty - one high, one low. Sexual assault has only one penalty and it carries a maximum sentence of 10 years. NAC would like to see a lower penalty added for sexual assault so that women could lay charges for more minor occurrences - such as fondling - without fearing that someone might be imprisoned for up to 10 years.

NAC is very disappointed that it did not have a chance to review the draft legislation with Justice officials before it was made public as the Minister, Jean Chretien, had promised the organization in a September letter. Nevertheless, Macpherson said that NAC would be taking advantage of the opportunities offered to discuss this further with the Justice Department, and NAC would also be preparing a brief to the Parliamentary Committee in the New Year.

NAC is an umbrella organization of over 150 women's groups working to improve the status of women in Canada

## ON THE HOME FRONT.....

### WOMEN'S LIBERATION - AND HOUSEWORK

Women's Liberation - and housework. You say this is trivial? Wonderful! That's what I thought. It seems perfectly reasonable. We both had careers, so why shouldn't we share housework? So I suggested it to my mate and he agreed - most men are to hip to turn you down flat. You're right, he said. It's only fair.

Here's my list of dirty chores: buying groceries, cooking meals and washing dishes and pots; doing the laundry, digging out the place when things get out of control, washing floors. The list could go on but the sheer necessities are bad enough. All of us have to do these jobs, or get someone else to do them for us. The longer my husband contemplated these chores, the more repulsed he became, and so proceeded the change from the normally sweet, considerate Dr. Jekyll into the crafty Mr. Hyde who would stop at nothing to avoid the horrors of - housework. Housework trivial? Not on your life! Just try to share the burden.

So ensued a dialogue that's been going on for several years. Here are some of the high points:

"I don't mind sharing the housework, but I don't do it very well. We should each do the things we are best at."

MEANING - I don't like the dull, stupid, boring jobs, so you should do them.

"I don't mind sharing the work, but you'll have to show me how to do it."

MEANING - I ask a lot of questions and you'll have to show me everything, every time I do it.

"We have different standards and why should I have to work to your standards. That's unfair."

MEANING - If I begin to get bugged by the dirt and crap I will say 'This place sure is a sty' or 'How can anyone live like this' and wait for a reaction. I know that all women have a sore called quilt over a messy house or housework is ultimately my responsibility.

"I've got nothing against sharing housework, but you can't

ON THE HOME FRONT, con't....

make me do it on your schedule."

MEANING - passive resistance. I'll do it when I damn well please, if at all. If my job is doing dishes, it's easier to do them once a week. If taking out laundry, once a month. If washing floors, once a year. If you don't like it do it yourself oftener, and then I won't do it at all.

POSTSCRIPT:

Participating democracy begins at home. If you are planning to implement your politics there are certain things to remember:

1. He is feeling it more than you. He's losing some leisure and your're gaining it. The measure of your oppression is his resistance.
2. Most men are not accustomed to doing monotonous, repetitive work which never issues in any lasting let alone important achievement. This is why they would rather repair a cabinet than wash dishes.
3. Keep checking up. Periodically consider who's actually doing the jobs...these things have a way of backsliding. Use time sheets if necessary. Alternate the bad jobs. Its the daily grind that gets you down. Also make sure that you don't have the responsibility for the housework with occasional help from him. I'll cook dinner for you tonight implies that its really your job.
4. Beware of the double whammy. He won't do the little things he always did because you're now a "Liberated Woman", right? Of course, he won't do anything else either.....

--Condensed from an article by Pat Mainardi  
published by the New England Free Press

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"Being a mother is a noble status right? Right. So why does it change when you put 'unwed' or 'welfare' in front of it?" --Florynce Kennedy--

4 (con't from page 3)

transferred.

But does this mean that women should not try to fight back? Not at all. For one thing, it is important to remember that women suffer the health and economic effects whether or not they complain. The fact that fighting sexual harassment is difficult simply means that women must protect themselves better in the battle and, whenever possible, fight back collectively instead of alone.

Sexual harassment is rooted in the social and economic inequality of women in society at large and it will not be completely eliminated until men and women become true equals. But in the meantime, there are a number of ways to contain it and lessen its harmful effects on the jobs and health of women workers.

excerpt from CUPE FACT SHEET,  
written by Farida Shaikh

### C.U.P.T.E. STRIKE UPDATE

"...the strike of the translators has been settled. Part of the settlement package included increased maternity benefits ( an additional 2 weeks at up to 60% of maximum insurable earnings ) as well as other provisions for parental leave, both paid and unpaid.

Although the maternity leave provisions do not go as far as the union had demanded, the total parental benefit package goes a long way in recognizing the needs of parents of both sexes who wish to combine work and family responsibilities and is a reflection of the government's continuing commitment to equal opportunity for women."

( from a letter from the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, Lloyd Axworthy )



### A WOMAN'S PLACE CHRISTMAS PARTY



Come and join us for a Pot Luck Supper, Mon day  
January 19, 1981 at 6:00 p.m. Bring a supper dish  
and a plate and cutlery for yourself.

Looking forward to seeing you  
The Steering Committee and  
The Staff , AWP.



MEMO TO All Consumers  
MEMO FROM Family Budget Counselling

SUBJECT Insurance

You will recall, that Octobers issue of the W.H. Newsletter contained info on basic insurance guides and types of insurance -- to continue and in addition to basic types of ordinary insurance there are combinations designed to meet special needs, such as --

1. FAMILY INCOME POLICY- a combination of life and decreasing term insurance. This type could be less expansive than buying policies separately (life and Term) If the policyholder dies during the term his family receive an income per month till the end of the term in addition to the amount paid to the beneficiary under the life provision.

2. FAMILY POLICY - a combination of life and term insurance. It gives protection to every member of the family. The life covers the breadwinner of the family, the term covers the wife and children. Insurance on the children can be converted to other insurance policies regardless of their health or occupation.

3. GROUP LIFE INSUR - is a policy sold to businesses etc. on a group basis under one policy without a medical exam. Each insured employee receives a certificate stating his amount of insurance, his benefits and his rights. In some cases the employee pays all the premium or some of it. There is also a conversion clause with group life.

4. INDUSTRIAL LIFE INSURANCE - differs -- premiums are paid weekly to an agent who comes to your home. Usually no medical is required and this type of insurance can be issued in under \$1000 amounts. Because of the expense in handling this type

of policy the premiums are generally high.

POINTS TO REMEMBER.

- Choosing an agent -
- one who can advise you on your own personal needs.
  - is licensed in your Province
  - is a trusted advisor
  - has good recommendations
  - has proven good client-customer relationships.

ALSO \_\_\_\_\_

Choose an insurance company who is licensed in your Province. Find out about the company you choose - see if it has a good reputation,

All in all -- shop around for facts -- remember it is your life -- not the agents nor the insurance company.

FAMILY BUDGET COUNSELLING will provide any further information that you may wish by calling 422-5897

PLEASE NOTE the phone number quoted in the October issue of the news letter was misquoted.



# GETTING BACK INTO THE (paid) WORKFORCE

A WORKSHOP on job hunting  
skills

including: resumes  
interviews  
& where to look  
for jobs

Thursday, January 29 at 1:30 - 4:00  
1225 Barrington St., Halifax

for more information call the Women's Employment Counselling Service  
422-8023

## SERVICE

## NUMBERS

### ASSAULT

S.O.S. PROJECT - preventive child  
abuse 423-4380

BYRONY HOUSE - shelter for abused  
women and children 422-7650

HELP LINE - 422-7444

### HEALTH

WELL WOMAN CLINIC - 428-2784

PLANNED PARENTHOOD - counselling  
and information 455-9656

ABORTION INFORMATION & REFERRAL  
SERVICE - Monday, Tuesday and Thurs.  
5:00 - 7:00 p.m. 429-9270

### SENIOR CITIZENS

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL CENTRE  
\$@ \$ (  
422-4290 or 422-5852

### LEGAL AID

PORT CITY COUNSELLING - 425-6731

DALHOUSIE LEGAL AID - 423-7197

NOVA SCOTIA LEGAL AID - 423-1291

### EMPLOYMENT

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT COUNSELLING  
SERVICE - 422-8023

FAMILY BUDGET - 422-5897

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