

have come in achieving equal status, rights and conditions in the work force. By pointing to the shortcomings of the past, the reader has the chance to examine the present and focus on the achievements in recent decades.

The study of women in labour in Ontario is not a new topic. In 1891, Jean Scott, a known critic of women in the labour force attributed the failure of women's trade unions to many factors, such as inexperience, and lack of social mobility. Yet she stated that the main problem was that the motivation in hiring women was that an employer was not required to pay a woman as much as he was a male worker. This idea presented a discriminatory situation of which the stigma has lingered to surface in many feminist labour issues today.

Wayne Roberts has touched on many aspects of working women dealing with domestic servants, secretaries, waitresses, teachers and factory "girls." In each area, he writes in detail, not only presenting the 'horror' stories, but also revealing the difficulties in organizing working women. Roberts describes the conditions of the work-poor pay, long hours, lack of promotion, little or no benefits and tedium which seemed to repeat themselves with regularity. He paints a well-researched picture of the plainly disgusting situation in which women were expected to produce and the struggle they endured to free themselves.

"Honest Womanhood" was a term coined by the Working Women's Protective Association and evokes the feeling of femininity, self-respect, a need for dignity and a sense of pride in good work. These were important values for the women who used them to find a place for themselves in the work force. Since their awareness of themselves was much like our own, we can only look at the desperation of their situation and marvel at what they accomplished in spite of it all.

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The Secret Oppression, Sexual Harassment of Working Women.
CONSTANCE BACKHOUSE and LEAH COHEN, Toronto: Macmillan, 1978, Pp. 206

Like the concern in recent years with abortion on demand and rape, "sexual harassment" has become a rallying point for the North American women's movement. Backhouse and Cohen define sexual harassment as "any sexually oriented practice that endangers a woman's job--that undermines her job

performance and threatens her economic livelihood." (p. 38) They state that sexual harassment ranges from verbal innuendos and inappropriate affectionate gestures to attempted rape or rape. It can manifest itself both physically (pinching, grabbing, leering and brushing against) and psychologically (relentless proposals of physical intimacy).

Basing their arguments on court records, interviews, case studies and statistics, Backhouse and Cohen claim that sexual harassment is "rampant" in the Canadian workplace. They also conclude that such harassment must be brought into the open and eliminated before women can gain employment equality with men. All women regardless of age, class, appearance or job level--are vulnerable to sexual harassment and, because so many women have experienced it, they are more likely than men to understand its implications. On the other hand, the authors found that men tend to trivialize the problem and either blame women for "seducing" men or argue that any mature woman should be able to handle men's advances.

The authors conclude that victims of sexual harassment are in a "no-win" situation, as they are seldom taken seriously by either management or unions. Nor are personal solutions very satisfactory. The authors suggest that women take collective action

such as lobbying to improve legislation, creating sexual harassment crisis centres, fighting group action court cases, striving for union contracts recognizing the problem and practising vigilante tactics. The traditional way of dealing with the problem seems to have been resigning from the job or asking for a transfer. The authors argue that women can no longer afford to react in such a passive way.



In presenting their abundant evidence of sexual harassment, the authors tend to slant the interpretation in favour of the women. For example, enticement behaviour on the part of women is attributed to their socialization but men's aggressiveness is not explained so sympathetically. Although passing reference is made to men's socialization, the theme of the female victim and the male villain is perhaps too pervasive and too neat.

Although the authors present a convincing case for the pervasiveness and negative consequences to women of sexual harassment in the workplace, their emotion-laden language sometimes works against the logic of their argument. Yet their contribution is a significant one, as they explain the existence of sexual harassment as an expression of power rooted in sexual inequality and an undemocratic workplace. Although this book may offend men, it may also serve to raise the consciousness of countless working women.

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