

Working Woman and Man

BOOKSTORE NEWSLETTER

WORKING WOMAN & MAN BOOKSTORE

613 West 24th Street

Minneapolis, Minnesota 55403

Sexual Harrassment on the Job—

BEHIND EVERY CHAUVINIST STANDS THE BOSS

Being called a "tramp" for working in a factory. Being told "I'd like to train you in to be my bitch." Appealing for help from supervisors and getting no action. Being physically molested and still no action from supervisors. Finally, quitting the job after a threat on her life for refusing sexual advances.

This was the experience of a woman factory worker at Continental Can Company in the Twin Cities. After several years of legal action, the woman recently won a Minnesota Supreme Court Decision that her employer, Continental Can, indeed had some responsibility for the sexual harassment of their employees. (The company had contended that the harassment was a personal problem amongst their employees.)

While this victory is significant in establishing the legal rights of women workers, it is only a step in stopping the widespread practice of sexual harassment of working women on the job, which is now at epidemic proportions. A survey by Redbook magazine found that 88% of 9,000 women surveyed had experienced sexual harassment at work. An earlier study by Working Women's Institute in Ithaca New York found 70% had experienced sexual harassment. Further, 50% of the respondents to the Redbook survey had either left jobs or knew some one who had done so because of sexual harassment.



Clearly a problem of this extent is not simply the result of personality conflicts and male chauvinist attitude of particular employees. Rather, sexual harassment on the job is a major obstacle to working class women's struggle for equality and economic security. To understand the essence of the problem and solutions to it, we have to look beneath the phenomena of widespread sexual harassment at the development of women's role in the class relations of production.

WOMEN'S ROLE IN PRODUCTION

Women now make up 51% of all workers in the workforce. Whether single or married, most women work out of economic necessity. Yet women on the average are paid only 60% as much as men, and 6 out of 10 working women are employed in low paying service and clerical jobs.

Women's increased role in social production outside of the traditional role of homemaker has been conditioned by capital's increasing demand for women's labor. The capitalists have the right--based on their ownership of the means of production in this society--to hire and fire workers for their factories, offices, hospitals, etc. They hire workers for

new AT the bookstore

BOOKSTORE RESEARCH PROJECTS:

As well as Bookstore Club Discussions the bookstore is organizing research projects to probe more deeply into particular conditions of working people today, and to develop our use of the tools of dialectical and historical materialism. Current areas of study and research are:

- Union Busting
- Childcare
- Police Repression
- Environment

Stop by the bookstore for more information and to connect to these projects.

Some New and Recommended Books:

Working Women and their Organizations, by Joyce Maupin, is a very brief history of the forms of organization that women have used through 150 years of history in struggle for equality and economic security.

Women's Conditions, Women's Struggles, by the production collective of the bookstore, is a brief statement and analysis of the principle contradiction facing working women today.

Who Owns the Earth? by James Ridgeway. Society today depends on the interconnected labor of working people on a global basis, yet the products of our labor are owned by a small number of multi-national corporations. This book details the sources, uses, and ownership of nearly 100 basic raw materials and food products.

World Hunger: Ten Myths by Lappe and Collins, exposes the fact that hunger persists today not because of objective scarcity, nor overpopulation, nor the sloth of people of underdeveloped countries, but because of the capitalist mode of production and distribution.

THE BOOKSTORE CLUB

A STRONGER AND BETTER BOOKSTORE
THROUGH YOUR SUPPORT AND PARTICIPATION:
JOIN THE BOOKSTORE CLUB!

The activities of the bookstore and the production collective have increased in the past 6 months. We sponsor a monthly film series on the struggles of working women; hold discussions on issues and events; research into critical issues facing working people; and will now be publishing this newsletter on a regular basis. Our work is to fulfil the purpose of the bookstore--To inform and educate working people about issues and events that have a direct and indirect influence on their lives. In this period of increasing attack on the standard of living and rights of working people, and of rising struggle against that attack, the need for clarity of our conditions and the issues facing us is even greater.

To fulfil its purpose, the bookstore needs the support of an informed and active base. To develop this, we are beginning a Bookstore Club membership drive. Club members are entitled to take part in discussions, make use of the bookstore's research facilities, and develop skills in writing and research. In addition, members are admitted to all films for one-half the admission price.

Show your support for the bookstore and for the process of developing understanding of our conditions and our struggle by joining the Bookstore Club. Membership is \$5 per year.

 Yes, I want to join the BSC.

Name: _____

Address: _____

When it is impossible to go on living in the old ways, socialist revolution begins; it continues in the struggle to develop new ways of cooperation and mutual help. Set in what was one of the poorest shanty towns in Havana before the revolution, *One Way or Another* portrays women's and workers struggles with old values of male chauvinism and individualism in a new social condition: socialist revolution.



“ONE WAY OR ANOTHER”

***A FILM ABOUT THE STRUGGLE FOR NEW RELATIONSHIPS IN CUBA
.... CHALLENGES THE VALUES OF MALE CHAUVINISM UNDER NEW
CONDITIONS OF SOCIAL LIFE.***

SHOWING: SATURDAY, AUGUST 30
AT: WHITTIER PARK BUILDING, 26th & GRAND AVE.
TIME: 7:30 PM
A short, open discussion will follow the showing.

NEXT BOOKSTORE CLUB DISCUSSION

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2:30 PM
AT THE BOOKSTORE

What role has government played in human development?

If this is a democracy, why do so many working class people feel powerless?
What is the significance of the ERA...The CIA...OSHA?

THE STATE

Call or stop by the bookstore for study materials.

Sexual Harrassment

continued from pg. 1

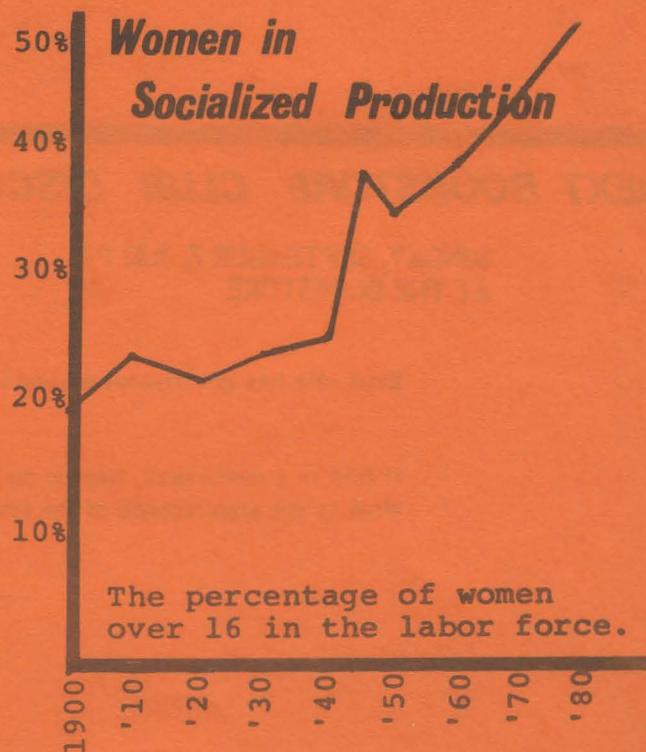
a wage that represents only a fraction of the total value workers produce. The remainder--the unpaid labor of the workers or "surplus value"--is pocketed by the capitalists as private profit. The drive of the capitalists to maximize their profits is limitless. Further, their profits are in inverse proportion to wages: if wages go up, profits go down; if wages go down, profits go up.

Capitalists have traditionally profitted indirectly from women's unpaid domestic labor, because the services women have provided in the home have made it possible for the capitalists to work thier husbands harder on the job. In effect the capitalists received the benefits of the labor of two people for the price of one.

Why is it that the capitalist gets a financial benefit from two at the cost of one? To answer this question we must understand how wages and profits are determined. Profit is determined by the cost over and beyond producing goods and services. The cost of producing goods and services includes the purchase or payment for materials, machines, equipment, tools, and workers, and either rent or mortgage payments on the building. In addition to the price of purchase of equipment, machines, tools, and the building, the capitalist must pay for ongoing maintenance and repair of the building, machines, tools and equipment. The exception being that the capitalist doesn't consider the needs of the worker to have service and maintenance to assure a certain level of safety, of mental and physical health, and social vitality. The capitalist denies the worker a service contract because it will take away some of his profits. By not sharing profits with the worker, the housewife is denied payment for her services; she is economically exploited. If she withheld her services, the male worker will experience many personal problems that will effect his output in production. Thus the capitalist gets financial benefit from two at the cost of one by not having to pay for a service contract, thereby indirectly economically exploiting the wife. or

girlfriend, or mother that must make sure the worker's personal needs are taken care of.

As capitalism has developed two factors have contributed to changes in this condition. The development of modern appliances and convenience foods, etc. have reduced the labor time necessary for production in the home while increasing the working class families' need for cash to buy these goods. At the same time, capitalists have looked to women--whose traditional role as domestic servant could be manipulated to justify paying lower wages--as a source of cheap labor, in order to maximize their profits. Capitalists have sought to recover from periodic crises of recession and depression by replacing male workers with lower paid women. In fact, women's percentage of the labor force has increased with every economic downturn. At the same time, economic recession, inflation, and layoffs have made it essential for women in most working class families to work for a wage as part of the working class struggle to maintain a decent standard of living. So, in summary, pushed by both their own economic necessity and by the demand of capital for cheap labor, women make up a growing and essential sector of the working class.



WOMEN'S STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY.

As women's conditions and role in socialised production has changed, so too have women's concepts of themselves and their rights changed. Women's increasing role in socialized production--breaking out of the isolation of individual domestic production, establishing some economic independence--has given rise to women's struggle for full equality and dignity. The women's movement has partially succeeded in eliminating some of the most blatant forms of discrimination against women and obstacles to women's development in social production. For example, employers can no longer advertise jobs for men and women only without particular cause.



OVERTHROWING SEXUAL HARRASSMENT

As women's struggle for equality has developed it comes more and more into conflict with the interests of the capitalists. The demand for equal pay for equal work and equal access and training for all jobs threatens very directly capitalist's super-exploitation of women and use of women woman's labor as a reserve to offset the effects of economic crises on their profits. It is in this context that the rise in sexual harrasment on the job must be seen.

What are the effects of sexual harrasment? Studies show that 75% of the harrassers have the direct power to hire and fire their victims. Similarly, women who are harrassed by coworkers have no more real control over the situation; as long as management condones the coworkers behaviour, they have no alternative but to tolerate it themselves or leave the job. Sexual harrasment is often aggravated for women who are in non-traditional jobs, and is often sited as a cause for the failure of large numbers of women to take higher paying non-traditional jobs. Similarly, it is often imposed as a condition of promotion or job success. Women forced to leave their jobs are disadvantaged in a number of ways. Not only do they suffer immediately from loss of their paychecks, but because of job turnover, they remain in the lower paying jobs and at the bottom of seniority ladders. Moreover, some women choose to stay in low paying jobs rather than risk possible harrasment. Victims of sexual harrasment responding to a Working Women's Institute survey reported that they suffered a loss of self-confidence, doubt of their ability to handle themselves socially and professionally, and physical illness as a result of stress--making women feel cheap in corresspondence to their low pay. As a result or intended result, women feel less forceful in demanding a wage increase.

So the social function of the sexual harrassment of women is clear. At a time when, on the one hand, the women's movement is overthrowing some of the key obstacles to women's full participation in socialized production, and, on the other hand, capitalists need for cheap labor is rising to offset the effects of capitalist crises, sexual harrassment serves as a means to cheapen women's labor and to confine women to their traditional places in the lower paying jobs. It is a particularly effective means for the capitalists since it obscures raw economic self-interest behind a cover of the most "personal" and private relations where women have been conditioned traditionally to accept subordination.

By understanding the function of sexual harrassment in this way we can understand some methods of struggle against it. The solution to the problem is not personal--seeking another job, giving in to sexual demands, or

remaining in dead end jobs-- rather it requires collective confrontation and struggle with both the bosses who benefit and with those backward workers who serve as their agents. In particular, unions and other workers organizations, both women and men, must take a stand to uncover and eliminate all manifestations of sexual harrassment. Finally, we must understand that sexual harrassment is only one tactic of a system geared to maximizing capitalists' private profit from the exploitation of socialized labor. Male Chauvinism, like white supremacy and all other forms of social oppression, can only be finally eliminated with the elimination of a system based on economic exploitation and its replacement with a system where the social production of all workers serve the interests of all workers.

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED