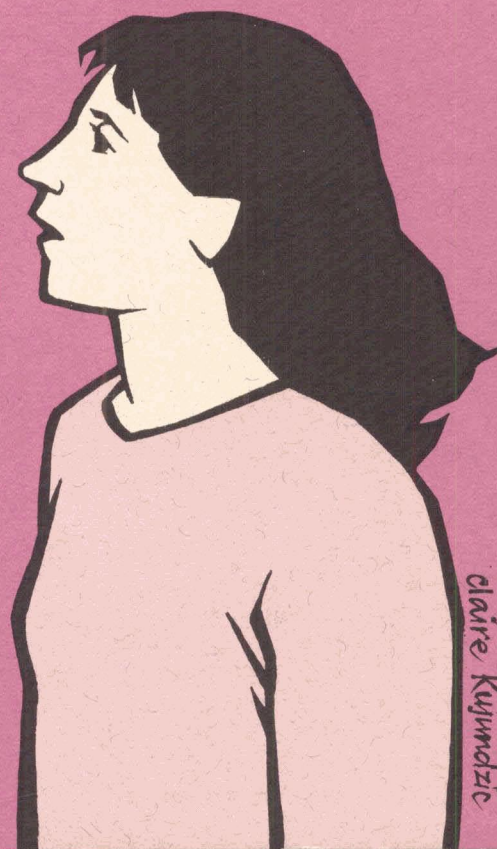


Taking Action

A UNION GUIDE TO ENDING
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

But why should I
read this? I'm not
a woman.

1. Right, but your mother, sister, daughter, and wife are.
2. I think that's kind of like asking why you should care about Medicare.
3. Read this, THEN ask me that.



claire kujumatzic

VANCOUVER WOMEN'S HEALTH COLLECTIVE
302 1720 GRANT STREET
VANCOUVER, B.C. V5L 2Y7
PHONE (604) 255-8285

Taking action:

A UNION GUIDE TO ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

A JOINT PUBLICATION

of the

B.C. FEDERATION OF LABOUR
AND THE WOMEN'S RESEARCH CENTRE

written by

Deborah Prieur, Women's Research Centre

and

Mary Rowles, B.C. Federation of Labour

with assistance from

Jan Barnsley

Copyright c 1992, Women's Research Centre and B.C. Federation of Labour, except graphics which are © Claire Kujundzic.

Contents may not be commercially reproduced but any other reproduction, with acknowledgements, is encouraged. For permission to reproduce graphics, please contact the artist.

This guide was produced with the generous assistance of Health and Welfare Canada through the Family Violence Prevention Division and the B.C. Federation of Labour. The views expressed in this book do not necessarily reflect those of Health and Welfare Canada.

Illustration and design by Claire Kujundzic

Edited by Shannon Edwards

Typesetting and Printing by Broadway Printers

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Prieur, Deborah, 1954- Taking Action

Co-published by the B.C. Federation of Labour, ISBN 0-9692145-9-6

1. Women — Crimes Against
2. Violence — Prevention
3. Sex discrimination against women
4. Women in trade unions
 - i Rowles, Mary, 1952-
 - ii Barnsley, Jan, 1945-
 - iii Women's Research Centre (Vancouver, B.C.)
 - iv B.C. Federation of Labour (C.L.C.)
 - v Title

HV6626.P75 1992 362.88'082 C92-091189-7

CONTENTS

PREFACE	7
Chapter 1: A CULTURE OF VIOLENCE AND INEQUALITY	9
Chapter 2: WIFE ASSAULT	14
Chapter 3: VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE	21
Chapter 4: CHILD ABUSE	25
Chapter 5: RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT	30
Chapter 6: SEXUAL HARASSMENT	34
Chapter 7: PERSONAL CONSEQUENCES	39
APPENDIX	43
RESOURCES	45

The Women's Research Centre is a community-based, feminist organization focused on research which makes visible women's experience and facilitates action on women's issues. We have conducted research and produced publications on violence against women, on economic issues such as pay equity, and have published guides for women's groups on action research and evaluation methods. We also assist groups in developing their own projects. A complete list of our publications is available from the Centre at the address below. We are a non-profit, charitable organization funded by government grants and contracts, and by donations. (Tax receipts will be issued on request.)

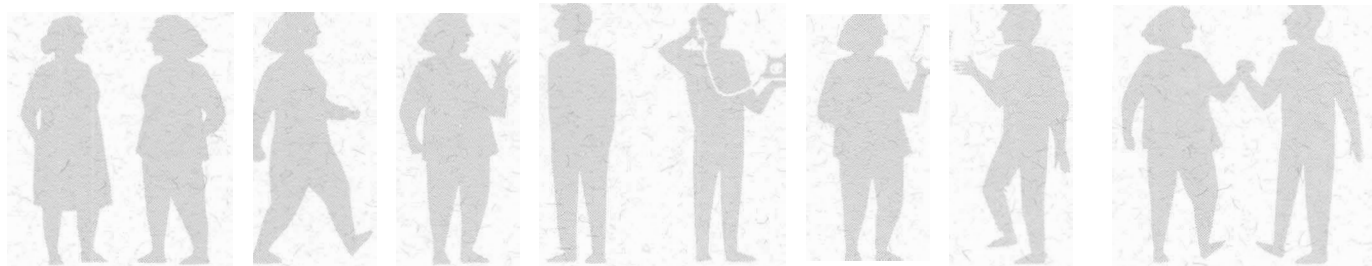
The B.C. Federation of Labour represents 275,000 organized workers in British Columbia, more than one-third of whom are women. Since the early 1970s, the Federation has had an active women's program and women's committee to analyze the status of women in the economy and to propose contract language, public policy, and legislation that will help women achieve dignity, security, and equality in our society.

We would appreciate receiving feedback from the readers of *Taking Action: A Union Guide to Ending Violence Against Women*. Please send your comments on the book — how it is useful, how it could be improved or suggestions for further work in the area to:

The Women's Research Centre
101-2245 West Broadway
Vancouver, B.C.
V6K 2E4

or

The B.C. Federation of Labour
4279 Canada Way
Burnaby, B.C.
V5G 1H1



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge and appreciate the many women who have contributed to this project.

Jan Barnsley of the Women's Research Centre for her encouragement and generous sharing of her wisdom and experience.

The members of the B.C. Federation of Labour Women's Rights Committee especially,

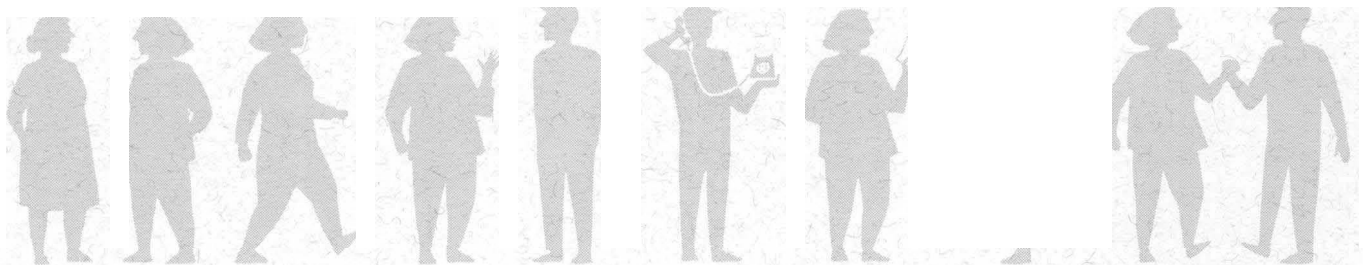
Christine Micklewright	Paddy Bradley
Christine Skrepetz	Roz Kennedy
Marion Pollock	Marie Decaire
Kay Sinclair	Patrice Pratt
Janet Shaw	Jan O'Brien
Linda Tosczak	

for their ideas, suggestions and support.

The union staff and members across the country who provided examples, shared stories and discussed their union initiatives for ending violence against women.

Beryl Kirk for her work on the resources. Setsuko Hirose and Johannah Pilot for their feedback and suggestions.

Claire Kujundzic for her illustration and design work, and our project editor Shannon Edwards.



PREFACE

In the spring of 1991, the B.C. Federation of Labour held its annual women's conference on the issue of violence against women. Every woman there had her own story. Every woman had experienced, witnessed or been touched by violence, harassment or abuse. Delegates to the conference were surprised and chilled by the extent to which violence and the fear of violence underlie women's daily lives. And they were determined to find ways to break the cycle. This handbook is one of the results.

As we began writing and researching we found that at labour conventions and conferences across the country over the past months, trade unionists have been openly discussing violence against women, trying to understand the dynamics behind it.

Unions joined the lobby to have December 6th declared a day of action in memory of the women, 13 students and one worker, gunned down in Montreal in 1989. December 6th is now an annual national focus for discussion and action on violence against women.

Unions have also been holding workshops, writing pamphlets, making videos, and starting the process of education and public lobbying to reduce violence in the workplace, the family and the community. The pervasiveness of violence against women makes a mockery of more than a century of struggle by the labour movement to secure social and economic equality and dignity for working people.

Ending violence against women, and changing the culture of inequality that sets women up as targets for violence, must be part of our ongoing work to achieve equality. Trade unionists who have pushed for pay equity or affirmative action know that working for equality isn't easy. Working to end violence against women, wife assault, rape, child abuse and sexual harassment also won't be easy. These issues challenge us to examine our values, our comfortable assumptions, and our personal relationships. Expect resistance and even backlash from some co-workers, both men and women, who are uneasy about the changes to the status quo and are uncomfortable examining the issues.

Working to end violence against women isn't about blame. It's about change. It's about taking responsibility,

"It's not enough to get up to the microphones on the Convention floor and condemn sexual harassment or wife abuse. Men have to start taking responsibility for their own behaviour and for the behaviour of other men around them. Women in the labour movement and in the community are demanding a dramatic social change - and it means a change in us. We did change social attitudes when the labour movement pushed for medicare and pensions -we redefined people's basic rights. Now we can ensure that women can claim their fundamental rights -equality and security."

Kenneth V. Georgetti,
President, B.C. Federation of Labour

personally and collectively, for securing dramatic changes in our society. That change won't occur without action by men as well as women.

Our culture has been slow to acknowledge the pervasiveness of violence and the far-reaching personal and societal effects of abuse of children, and women. Women who are abused, harassed, and assaulted are our friends, relatives, neighbours and co-workers. Every step that we take to end violence helps them, and all women in our society. We've also been slow to recognize the strength of individuals who have experienced violence. Women struggle and resist the long-term effects of violence. With courage women survive.

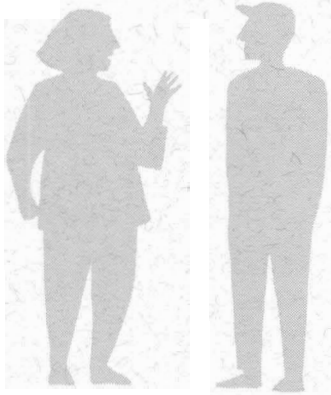
This book is about taking action. It contains information about the issues, examples of work that unions have already begun, and recommendations for some simple actions that can be taken by locals, by Labour Councils, by provincial or national union bodies. Some resources are listed, but if you're looking for more, your own union and your own community are places to start. The women's centre in your area is a good source of information on services available, and can be an important ally in securing more complete services for your community.

After reading this book, take action. Find other men and women interested in these issues, and begin to educate, build support and work for change.

"There is nothing that makes women feel more powerless than violence against women. It makes us feel frightened. Alone. Powerless. The only way that changes is by talking about it, and organizing against it together. And to speak its name, whether it's in the workplace, on the campus or in society. To understand that it is not an individual problem. It's everyone's problem. Whether it's a sexist prank at a university, sexist posters on the wall of a plant, whistles on the street, intimidation in a relationship, date rape, wife battering, murder or a massacre. It all comes from the same source: men, trying to exercise their power over women."

Judy Rebick,
National Action Committee on the
Status of Women
CLC Women's Conference, 1990

A Culture of Violence and Inequality



"We know that attitudes about gender, power and violence are formed long before people reach adulthood.

Thumbs Down is a classroom resource kit to help change attitudes. We sent it to 19,000 elementary and secondary schools across Canada. The primary level materials develop the theme that people aren't for hitting...by the senior level, the students investigate date rape and other violence against women. The background materials for teachers emphasize the impact of violence on children who witness their mothers being abused."

Heather Jane Robertson
Canadian Teacher's Federation

Each year one in eight Canadian women is battered by the man with whom she lives. One in four Canadian women is sexually assaulted during her lifetime, half before they are seventeen years old. The majority of women in our society have been harassed on the job or in public. Two in five girls are sexually abused.

Violence against women is too widespread to be dismissed as the isolated actions of a few dysfunctional or anti-social men. Violence against women is a social and political problem. Though individual factors such as alcohol abuse, stress, low self-esteem, and difficulty expressing anger may contribute to one man's use of violence in a particular situation, violence can never be justified. And these factors do not explain why there is so much violence and why it is directed at women.

To answer this question, we need to face the fact that North American culture is one of inequality and violence. Women lack social and economic power, and harmful sexual and racial stereotypes consistently devalue women's role, women's work and women's worth.

While men may face discrimination because of their race, class or sexual orientation, they do not face discrimination because they are men. Being male is a source of privilege in our culture.

ECONOMICS

The evidence of women's social and economic inequality is everywhere. Women are confined to a narrow range of jobs, most of which are poorly paid. Women are still excluded from many professions and are under-represented in managerial and executive jobs in the public and private sectors. Women continue to have little representation in

the courts, legislatures, and other occupations that shape and direct our society. As a result, women's voices, perspectives, and values are largely absent in most areas of public life.

Women's occupational segregation is reflected in profound wage inequalities that are largely gender based. Male dominated occupations are well paid, "women's work" is not. Despite a century of activism by women's groups and unions, women still earn only 60 percent of what men earn.

A lifetime of low wages means a lifetime of poverty for Canadian women. Whether in or out of the paid work force, women struggle to support themselves and their families. Sixty percent of families headed by women are poor, and 50% of the elderly are poor women.

The position of Canadian women is not unique. The World Health Organization estimates that women perform two-thirds of the world's work, but own only 1/100th of the world's wealth, and earn 1/10th of the world's income. The sexual division of labour at home means that women continue to assume the primary responsibility for cooking, cleaning, and maintaining households. They also do most of the work in raising the children. And they do this work in addition to working full-time, or working at a series of part-time jobs.

DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination operates in many ways. It is embedded in the policies and practices of our culture's systems and institutions. As a result, women of colour, First Nations women, lesbians of all races and women with disabilities are excluded and marginalized. Their voices are ignored and their perspectives are invisible in mainstream culture.

People are often discriminated against because they are different. The powerful in our society are the norm to which everyone else is compared. Those who are different are stereotyped, devalued and excluded. Misinformation and myths about others teach us to fear and hate difference in ourselves and in others. Myths and stereotypes about others foster prejudice and promote individual discrimination.

Discrimination, poverty, and family and household responsibilities exclude women from, or put them on the margins of, most social, political, and economic organizations.

VIOLENCE

Violence against women has existed for centuries, approved by church, custom, and law. In English common law, the "rule of thumb" was established in the eighteenth century



"We had a workshop for labour staff and activists instructing at our residential school to see if we could find ways to constructively challenge racism and sexism in the classroom and in the school environment. We used scenarios based on real incidents - you know, the instructor's nightmare - someone makes a sexist comment in the midst of a discussion, and you're trying to figure out what to say.

From the workshop we also developed a one-hour session on ending sexual harassment that all the facilitators use with their classes on the first day of school. Whether you're instructing arbitration or health and safety - it's something for the class to work through together.

We're trying to create a comfortable learning environment for men and women, make it easier to complain about incidents that are disturbing, and give activists some ideas about dealing with sexual harassment back in their workplaces and locals."

Brenda Makeechak
Canadian Labour Congress,
Pacific Region

"Resolutions came to our last national convention to set up a committee on homophobia and gay and lesbian issues. The vote was nearly unanimous and now we have the Pink Triangle Committee. It's to bring a policy statement on homophobia to the 1993 National Convention, and develop educational materials, and make recommendations on bargaining objectives, coalition-building and ways to involve lesbian and gay workers in the union."

Cynthia Wishart
CUPE National

"About eight years ago we looked at the Federation Executive and realized that there were too few women there — that the executive didn't really reflect the membership. So we changed the balloting rules so that when you were voting you had to vote for four women during the Officer elections, and for nine more women during the Council elections. Some people still think of this as special treatment for women — I think of it as special treatment for the labour movement. After all, if you don't integrate women into the decision-making levels of an organization like the Federation, you can't effectively represent the membership."

Angela Schira, Secretary-Treasurer
B.C. Federation of Labour

and maintained into the 20th century. This rule held that a man could beat his wife provided the stick was no wider than his thumb. A man killing his wife, particularly if she was having a relationship outside the marriage, was generally excused as a "regrettable but understandable consequence of male passion."

As late as 1982, members of the House of Commons snorted with derisive laughter when Member of Parliament Margaret Mitchell rose to speak about wife battering.

While it's less acceptable to laugh now, the public is still unwilling to honestly name and confront the dimensions of violence against women in our culture. In the summer of 1991, some members of a federal legislative committee refused to endorse a report on violence against women because the title, "The War Against Women," used language too strong for their sensibilities.

Our culture approves of using violence to resolve conflicts and to advance our political and economic interests on national and international levels.

The media glorify war and honor those who die and kill others. Women and children are always the forgotten victims of war. The human pain and suffering caused by war is dismissed.

The economies of all western nations, including Canada, is militarized. Around the world, military spending takes precedence over human needs. The world spends \$20 billion each week on munitions and military. The same amount of money would provide adequate food, clean water, basic health care, and primary education to every adult and child on earth.

In Canada, \$500 million was spent on the Gulf War, with little public debate. But it took weeks of public campaigning by women from Newfoundland to British Columbia to prevent the federal government from cutting the \$1.6 million that supports women's centres.

Television, in particular, has transformed violence into public entertainment. It is "part of the game" in professional sports. Films and television celebrate violent male heroes and conflict, and women continue to be portrayed as the vulnerable victims of rapists and murderers.

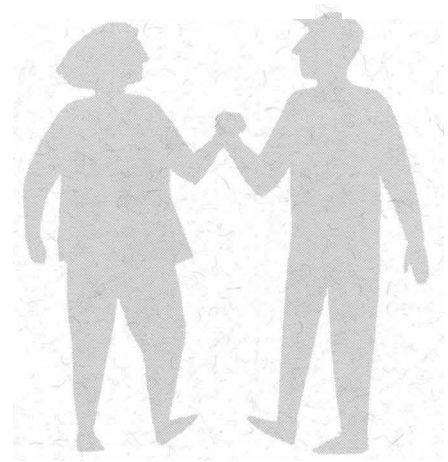
In pornography, sex and violence are linked. Pornography is a multi-billion dollar industry that hurts women. It promotes violence against women because it tells lies about women's sexuality. It promotes the myth that women want to be dominated, that they enjoy being hurt and degraded. Pornography demeans and degrades all women because it reduces women to sexual objects.

Both women and men come to believe these powerful images reflect the norm in our society. This makes their message difficult to challenge. In the end, these messages act as cultural permission for violence against women.

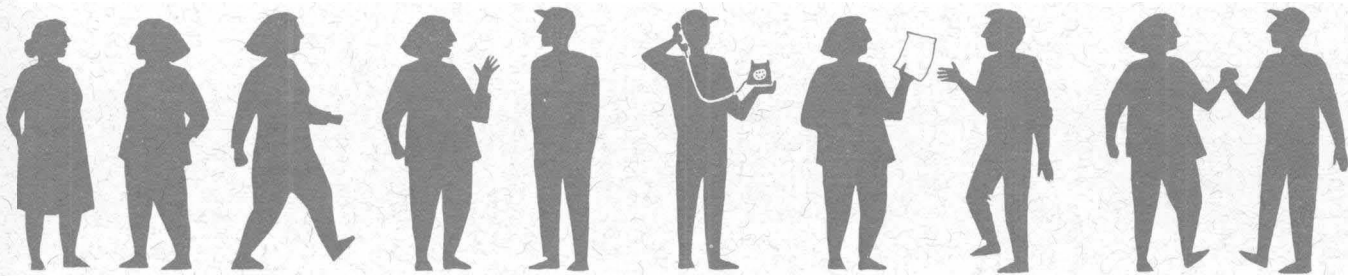
While ending violence against women will require widespread social and political change, we can start with the institutions and processes that we work in - labour structures. Despite many years of discussing women's equality and affirmative action, the leadership of many organizations does not reflect the number of women and workers of colour they represent. Many organizations have not succeeded in integrating women into decision-making positions within the union.

Unions can take steps to ensure that women and women's perspectives are integrated into the mainstream of union life. We can ensure that no systemic or hidden discrimination prevents women — particularly women of colour, lesbians, and women with disabilities — from fully participating in the workplace and the union.

We can take action to change what we see around us. We can use the programs, structures and organizational skills we have to promote the changes needed to end violence against women.



Taking Action



1. Establish a women's committee to develop women members' leadership skills and to integrate women's concerns into union activities. If the union is predominantly female, consider establishing a human rights committee.
2. Use non-sexist language in by-laws, constitutions, and contracts.
3. Examine the language in contracts and benefit packages to ensure that women are treated equitably, and that no measures discriminate against women.
4. Ensure that your constitution states all members of the union shall be treated with respect and dignity regardless of race, sex, disability, sexual orientation or national origin. Make sure this clause is widely publicized.
5. Hold events and skills training workshops specifically for women in the union.
6. Take special measures to make sure women are represented. For example, earmark positions for women on the executive board, or require that all union committees, such as the bargaining committee, have gender balance.
In unions where there are workers of colour or aboriginal workers not represented in
- decision-making bodies, take special measures to increase participation and to involve these workers, including reserving specific positions for members of these groups as well.
7. Establish a working relationship with women's centres or other women's groups in the community. Invite speakers to union meetings. Many of their goals - child care, pay equity, ending violence, and employment equity - are the same as ours, and we'll achieve them more quickly together.
8. Make it a union priority to win rights for part-time workers, many of whom are women.
9. Provide education for union leadership and staff on recognizing and challenging sexism, racism, and homophobia. Use newsletters to ensure members recognize that winning social and economic equality for women is central to the labour movement.
10. Follow the example of unions like PSAC who have developed workshops (Men and Women Talking) to allow open discussion of concerns, stress, values, and perspectives that cause conflict between men and women in the workplace, within the union, and in society.

CHAPTER 2

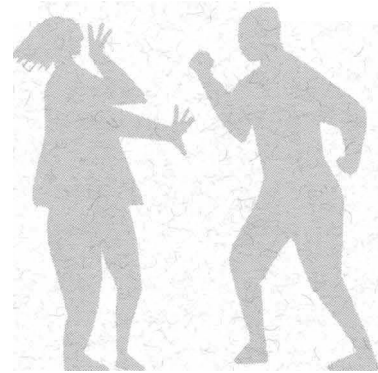
Wife Assault

Most couples quarrel. Some may shout insults at each other or throw things. Wife assault is something different. In wife assault, the central issue is power and control. In a battering relationship, the husband uses physical or sexual violence, or psychological abuse to control his wife's behaviour. And wife assault is a crime.

WHAT IS ABUSE?

Each year, one in eight Canadian women is battered by her legal or common-law husband. While some kinds of abuse are more dangerous than others, any form of assault or abuse is serious and needs to be taken seriously. We have to abandon the attitude that it's none of our business. Violence against women in relationships is not a private family matter - it concerns us all.

Abuse can take many forms. Physical abuse can be a shove or slap, a punch or a beating. Many women suffer bruises, black eyes, broken bones or other injuries. Many women



ARE YOU IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP?

- *Does your partner continually criticize what you wear, what you say, how you act and how you look?*
- *Does your partner often call you insulting and degrading names?*
- *Do you feel like you need to ask permission to go out and see your friends and family?*
- *Do you feel like no matter what you do, everything is always your fault?*
- *Do you feel like you're always walking on eggshells trying to avoid an argument?*
- *When you're late getting home, does your partner harass you about where you were and who you were with?*
- *Is your partner so jealous that you're always being accused of having affairs?*
- *Has your partner threatened to hurt you or the children if you leave?*
- *Does your partner force you to have sex whether you want to or not?*
- *Has your partner threatened to hit you?*
- *Has your partner ever pushed, shoved or slapped you?*

"One of the women at the air cargo office was murdered. She was just 22 years old.

She'd had a bad relationship for a long time. I look back now and think about the conversation we had in her home town when she talked to me about wanting a change, to go somewhere different. I didn't realize at the time why that was. Nobody did.

She left her boyfriend and had been in Vancouver for about two months. She was working in the office on a Saturday night shift and started getting calls from this guy. He'd flown down to the city and called the office repeatedly in the evening trying to talk to her. Next day, she didn't show up for work. People went to her apartment and they found her stabbed to death.

Her co-workers were just devastated. We have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) so we got the counsellor to come to the workplace and talk with individuals. The shop stewards phoned up the union office and wanted the union to donate some money in her name to a shelter.

The toughest part was that her body was cremated and the ashes shipped via air cargo back to her hometown for burial. Everyone in cargo that day knew what was in the box, knew they were handling her remains. It was just too hard.

Commemorating December 6th, meant something to all of us. The guys cut up lengths of white ribbon to wear. In our workplace, violence against women isn't something you read about, it's happened to someone we know and care about."

Christine Micklewright
Canadian Auto Workers,
Vancouver

are sexually abused - they may be forced to have sex either to avoid being assaulted or after they have been beaten.

Not all abusive relationships are physically or sexually violent. Many women are called names and put down, told they are fat, stupid, ugly or told they are terrible cooks, wives or mothers. Women are often harassed about imaginary affairs. Threats are common - a husband may threaten to hurt himself or his wife and children if she tries to leave him. Immigrant and refugee women speak of their husbands' threats to have them deported and have their children taken away. All these forms of psychological abuse hurt and control women. But often women who are psychologically abused may not identify themselves as battered women.

Abuse can start at any time. It may begin soon after a woman marries or moves in with a man. It may start during pregnancy or after the first child is born, and sometimes abuse begins after years of marriage.

Abuse can happen at any time. It may happen daily, every weekend, or once in a while.

NO EXCUSE FOR VIOLENCE

Many batterers apologize to their wives, promising never to hit them again. Though they may feel remorseful, most batterers do not stop without outside intervention. A husband may tell his wife that the violence is her own fault, that if she was a better wife and mother this wouldn't happen. Others blame work and money stress for their violence. Many blame alcohol, although men who use this excuse hit their wives when they are sober as well as when they have been drinking. Alcohol is an excuse for violence, not the cause.

There are no acceptable excuses for violence. Batterers must take responsibility for their abusive behaviour.

BATTERED WOMEN ARE ISOLATED

Isolation is a common experience for women in abusive relationships. Some men who batter control all the family's money. Even if his wife works outside the home, the husband controls how much she has to spend. Or he may never be available to look after the kids so she can go out. He may phone constantly to keep track of her time. He may be so jealous and possessive it becomes too dangerous for her to go out with friends because when she returns, he beats her and accuses her of having an affair. Some men belittle their wives in front of family and friends, or otherwise behave so badly that people gradually stop visiting. All this isolates a woman from the support of friends and family, and makes her more vulnerable to her husband's negative criticism.

Many young women are abused in their dating relationships and also find themselves isolated from family and friends. At the start, a boyfriend's jealousy and possessiveness can feel like love - he loves her so much that he wants her all to himself. He becomes angry if she talks to friends or has activities that don't include him. In time she becomes more and more isolated as he controls who she sees and how she acts.

As friends and family, instead of withdrawing because we're uncomfortable, we can offer support by speaking out about what we see. Men especially can take responsibility by confronting other men who they suspect or know are being abusive.

DOUBLE ISOLATION

Many battered women are doubly isolated. Women in rural or isolated communities and First Nations women living on reserves may have nowhere to go. Immigrant and refugee women who don't speak English may not know there are services available to help them or services may not be culturally sensitive to their needs. They may also be reluctant to call the police for help because of bad experiences with the police in their original country. Transition houses may not be accessible to women who are physically disabled.

Women in lesbian relationships are also battered. Homophobia makes it hard for many women to be open about being lesbian, and to tell anyone that they're battered is even more difficult. The fear of not being believed and other people's homophobia increases their isolation.

Young women are often under great pressure to have a boyfriend and for some, having an abusive boyfriend is better than none. Being in a relationship may make a young woman feel like an adult and her boyfriend may be the only person who listens to her or takes her seriously. She may not realize that what is happening to her is abuse. Or she may feel there is no one she can trust to tell what is happening to her. Often times young women don't know what to do about the abuse or where they can go for help.

HOW WOMEN COPE

Within an abusive relationship, women cope as best they can. Some try not to think about what is happening — to forget it. Others may use alcohol or prescription drugs to numb their feelings of fear and pain. Many battered women say their bruises heal, but the psychological pain lasts a long, long time. When women are repeatedly criticized, put down, and insulted - they lose self-esteem and confidence. Many women describe feeling crazy

"Our Labour Council called on the city to run workplace training on domestic violence for municipal employees. They took us up on it. They're designing workshops for their own employees, and they put up the money for a whole series of workshops for other workers in Toronto. Three hours of instruction, in the workplace and on the employers' time.

The women's centres and unions helped us plan the course — it's called Tools for Action. We hope it will explain the dynamic of violence against women - that you can't blame it on alcohol or the recession. But we really hope it will give people the tools they need to recognize a problem and get help or offer help.

Our goal is 400 workshops that will reach 8,000 workers, men and women, organized and unorganized. We want the program to increase awareness and help workers help each other."

Sharon Clarke
Labour Community Services
of Toronto



"I was in the hospital for minor surgery and some of the psychiatric nurses approached me about how they wanted to set up a transition house.

It embarrasses me to say it now, but I was skeptical about how much need there was. I mean wife assault, in our community?

They figured because I was a trade unionist I'd know about organizing things. So while I recuperated, I helped them develop a plan of action and a strategy for fundraising and getting community support. It was just putting union skills to work in the community - they did all the rest.

I made sure the Local knew about their efforts, and the Local donated \$1,000 to the start-up costs. Of course, the house was filled to capacity immediately, and the Local is still helping out financially when we can."

United Steelworkers of America
Trail, B.C.

because no matter what they do they are blamed for what happens to them. After a woman leaves an abusive relationship, she may blame herself for getting involved in the first place. Many women fear that it will happen again. Women feel fear and anger towards their husbands, but many women also feel sorry for them.

HOW WOMEN TRY TO STOP THE ABUSE

Women do not like being battered, nor do they passively accept abuse and assault. In fact, women are continually trying to make it stop. Because most women love their husbands but hate the abuse, they try to get their husbands to seek help for their drinking or anger problems, or to go for marriage counselling. Usually their husbands refuse or go for a few sessions and then drop out.

Some women try to change how they act, try to anticipate their husband's expectations and needs, try to read his moods and avoid saying or doing anything to upset him. However, her attempts to stop the abuse do not work as her behaviour is only his excuse for the abuse, not the cause.

WHY IT'S HARD FOR WOMEN TO LEAVE

Battered women usually feel ambivalent about ending their relationships. For most women, the relationship has not been all bad. Also, women in our culture are taught to take responsibility for the well-being of the family and relationships, so battered women often feel that if they try harder or stay longer they can change their husband's behaviour. By leaving, they feel as if they have failed. Most battered women leave and return a few times before they are ready to make the final break.

Economic dependence and the threat of poverty also keep many women in abusive relationships. Women with children who decide to leave their relationship face the same difficulties most single mothers face: a lack of adequate child care, affordable housing, and adequate income. If a woman needs to rely on social assistance, she and her family will live in poverty.

Young women abused by their boyfriends may not live with them or be economically dependent on them. So why do they stay in the relationship? Sometimes they stay because they feel sorry for their boyfriend if he's had an unhappy childhood or a troubled past. Often they feel they can help him or change him. Some young women come to believe it when their boyfriends tell them the abuse is their own fault and that they deserve it.

Many women try to leave. Some go to friends or family who are either supportive or who encourage her to go back and try again. Other women go to a transition house.

A transition house provides a woman and her children with a safe place to stay and support from workers and other women in similar situations. There she is no longer isolated and alone. At a transition house there is practical information and time to think. If a woman leaves a transition house to go back to her relationship, she leaves with new information about her situation and with the knowledge that there is support for her whenever she needs it again.

When women leave their husbands, they are often followed and forced or persuaded to return home. Many go back because they believe their husband's promises to change or to seek help. Some women return for their children's sake, believing the children need their father. Immigrant women may be ostracized by their immediate community and extended family if they do not return to their husbands.

Sometimes when a woman leaves, the abuse doesn't stop. Batterers often use visits with their children or custody fights to try to maintain control over their wives. Often in battering relationships, the most dangerous time for a woman is when she leaves.

THE WORKPLACE — HELPFUL RESPONSES

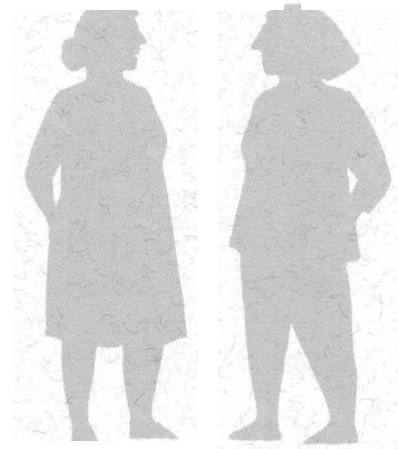
For one battered woman, work may be a safe place where she feels worthwhile and competent and where she can socialize with co-workers. It may be the only place she can be herself and not feel afraid.

Another woman may be tense or anxious at work. She may receive harassing calls from her partner and live in fear of losing her job because of his behaviour or her absences. She may not tell anyone what is happening because she's afraid they will judge her.

If a friend or co-worker tells you she is being battered, you may be surprised. She may never have told anyone because she was afraid no one would believe her. If her husband is well-liked and respected, it may be difficult for her friends and family to believe that this charming man also batters his wife.

You may know about or suspect battering long before a woman says anything, but not know how to approach her. It's important to take your cues from the woman herself. Telling her that you are concerned about her and would like to offer your support is often the best approach.

We can make our workplaces safe for women to talk about what is happening to them by offering friendship, support, and information about community resources. And we can use our concern and anger to support and work with other groups to stop wife assault.



"The scallop fishermen are a pretty rough bunch. I guess people were puzzled we'd take up an issue like this, but it wasn't a miracle. As a union we've been pushing how you have to assist organizations outside the union.

First of all, you can't just get all the fishermen together that easy, because they're out on the boats. So we meet once a year, when the fleet goes down in December. So at the meeting in Riverport, someone raised the issue of why not make a contribution to the local transition house. What with December 6th and all, the boys approved it, simple as that. They passed a motion to take the money out of the local dues and we sent it off to the transition house."

Canadian Auto Workers
Riverport, Nova Scotia

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT A CO-WORKER WHO IS BEING ABUSED



- Believe her.
- Encourage, but don't pressure her to talk about the abuse.
- Listen to her. Support her feelings without judging her.
- Let her know that she is not alone. Wife assault happens to many women.
- Reassure her that the abuse is not her fault. She is not to blame.
- Give her clear messages that:
 - She can't change her partner's behaviour.
 - Apologies and promises will not end the violence.
 - Violence is never justifiable.
- Her physical safety is the first priority: discuss her options and help her make plans for her and her children's safety.
- Respect her need for confidentiality.
- Give her the time she needs to make her own decisions.
- If she is not ready to make major changes in her life, do not take away your support. Your support may be what will make it possible for her to act at a later date.
- Give her a list of key community resources that support and work with assaulted women.
- Battered women need our support and encouragement. Some forms of advice can be harmful or dangerous.

Don't tell her what to do, when to leave, or not to leave.

Don't tell her to go back and try a little harder.

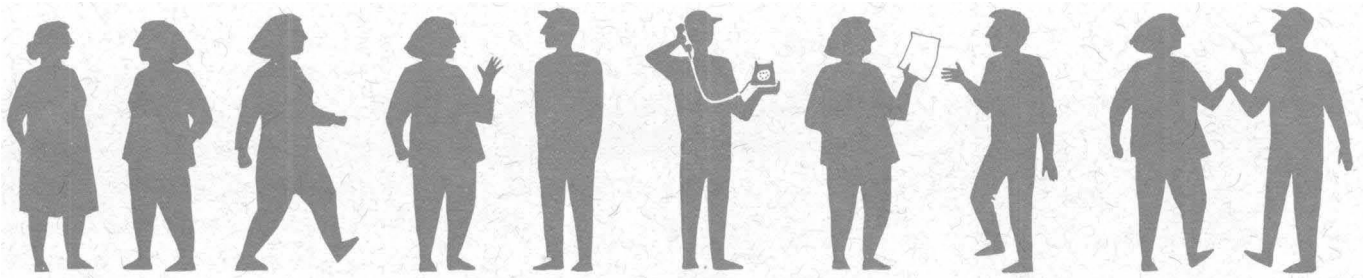
Don't rescue her by trying to make her decisions for her.

Don't offer to try and talk to her partner to straighten things out.

Don't tell her she should stay because of the children.

Source: Vis-A-Vis Newsletter, Spring 1991, Family Violence Program —
CCSD & Battered Women's Support Services pamphlet.

Taking Action



1. Make abuse an issue. Invite speakers, run films, and have lunch hour workshops or educational at a general meeting. Create an environment in your local in which honest, open discussion about abuse is possible.
2. Make links with the local transition house, helpline or women's centre working in the community.
3. Negotiate employer-paid legal assistance for use by abused women.
4. Adopt a family education program so that union members and spouses can discuss relationships and family stress.
5. Change the focus and expectations in steward training so that stewards learn more about where they can refer members for help.
6. Establish a union counsellor program in your local so you have individuals with counselling skills who are knowledgeable about local services for abused women and abusers. Check with women's centres or groups in your community to find programs that are actually helpful for women.
7. Address the confidence level of women by running assertiveness training workshops to help women claim their rights.
8. Run articles in union newsletters on the issue of abuse and the work of community-based organizations.
9. Introduce materials into the workplace from the local helplines and transition houses - some women may need this information.
10. Begin actively supporting your local women's centre or transition house. If there isn't one, use union organizational skills to get one started.
11. Lobby the provincial government for increased funding for transition houses and shelters.

Violence in the Workplace

"Not long ago, a dietary worker in a long-term care facility was serving the dinner trays when she was stabbed with a fork by a confused Alzheimer's patient. One problem is that our members aren't told anything about the patients. Everyone who has any exposure to patients with a history or likelihood of violence should know who they're dealing with and what to expect.

Now a lot of the facilities are putting emergency response teams in place and they're asking the maintenance men, the steam engineers to volunteer. A lot of our members are opposed to this. The volunteers get minimal training and then they're expected to come running when needed to help subdue a violent patient.

These Code White Teams, [as] they're called, aren't necessarily a bad idea, but they're no substitute for increased staffing levels - that's what's behind the high number of incidents. There's no training that can make up for having too few people on the ward."

Geoff Meggs,
Hospital Employees' Union
British Columbia

"In June two nurses were assaulted in the psychiatric ward of a large Lower Mainland hospital by a patient so violent that the local police had to be called. One of the nurses was kicked and punched in the face and required emergency treatment; the other, who ducked out of the way of a thrown chair, suffered back injuries when pinned against the wall. A week later at the same hospital, a nurse was attacked on the surgical floor by an intoxicated patient. Several weeks earlier, a nurse had been accosted in the hospital's parking lot by a man with a gun. The hospital is still requesting funding for 24 hour security."

B.C. Nurses Union

Not an unusual month at this health care facility, or at any other across the country. In 1990, the Newfoundland and Labrador Nurses' Union found 37 percent of nurses in their organization had been physically abused at work, 71 percent of those said they'd been abused in the past year. A 1991 survey by the Canadian Union of Public Employees in Nova Scotia showed a majority of its members working in the province's 19 special care homes had been abused on the job.

Kicks, bites, slaps, punches, gouges, beatings, even rape and murder are on-the-job realities for many women working in hospitals, psychiatric and long-term care facilities, centres for the developmentally handicapped, group homes, young offender facilities and prisons, and private homes across the country.

Women who work in any of these facilities — nursing aides, social workers, cleaners, kitchen staff, and laundry workers — are at risk and report increasing incidents of physical abuse from residents, clients, patients, patients' relatives, and the general public.

Health care workers in a special extended care unit in British Columbia recorded 2,778 incidents of punching,

slapping, pinching, kicking, tripping, biting, head-butting, and hair-pulling during a 100-day period.

Women providing services to the general public are also reporting increased levels of physical abuse. Women in welfare and unemployment insurance offices, workers' compensation branches, motor vehicle branches, airport ticket desks, waitresses and barstaff are all at risk.

Workers who enforce unpopular rules or the unpopular policies of a hated government, who must relay disappointing or frustrating information, or who must deal with frightened or grieving families, find themselves on the receiving end of abuse.

BLAMING WORKERS

Many workers are prepared to explain away abuse by pointing to de-institutionalization of psychiatric patients, aging populations, and increasing levels of stress in society, but many unions maintain that women in service delivery are being attacked simply because they are women. Their risk of attack is increased by management attitudes that violence goes with the job.

Service workers, caregivers, and other front line staff maintain that too often management dismisses incidents. Or they blame the worker. The attitude of doctors and supervisors often is that if a worker is injured, it's a result of their own negligence. Many times, the first question asked is "what did you do to provoke it"?

For social workers, nurses, and other caregivers who view themselves as professionals, this kind of blame is hard to escape. Supervisors and even colleagues suggest "if you were acting professionally this wouldn't have happened!" The individual, like a woman who is battered, blames herself for not being able to cope with the situation.

Even more disturbing is the reality that managers, supervisors, and other workers in positions of authority, such as doctors, accept no responsibility for preventing or even intervening in a violent attack on a woman worker.

Often individual workers themselves, especially in the health care field, deny their own experiences or dismiss them as inconsequential. When asked about violence in the workplace they say there is none because there are no guns, or no switchblades. They forget or file away the incidents of hair pulling, biting, or punching.

A survey by the B.C. Nurses Union, for example, showed that one-quarter of nurses did not even report incidents. The same is true of other workers.

In many jurisdictions, neither the police nor the courts take the issue seriously. Incidents that on the street would result in criminal charges, are dismissed as "part of the

"This guy came into the welfare office and pulled a gun on the receptionist and on me because he couldn't get reimbursement for a \$36 bus pass. The day before, someone had leaped over the counter into the clerical section, picked up a computer and smashed it on the floor right in front of one of the older workers - all the while glaring at her.

Everyone's trapped during any of these incidents because of the way the clerical section is designed.

The supervisor was not even around during the gun episode. I negotiated with the guy, found a pretext to get away and call the cops, and they dragged him away without anyone being injured. Well I burst into tears as soon as the pressure was off and when I did that, everyone else did too. For the first time I think we actually realized we were fed up with the abuse and threats. We needed time to pull ourselves together so we locked the door and shut down service.

When the supervisor finally showed up, her major concern is the door's locked. We just took control, demanded to see the regional director. People were really angry. Finally. We demanded the counter be raised so you couldn't just jump over it. We demanded the wall be moved so that we weren't trapped out there. We demanded some psychological counselling for the team.

It was the attitude of lower management that astonished me. The incident was barely over when the supervisor was trying to guilt us into going back to work. Before these two incidents, a really violent client had called up drunk and said he was coming down and wanted a fucking cheque. This was a guy the cops already knew, and they'd told us, if

he's causing trouble, report him by name so we can send extra officers.

It was lunchtime and the only staff left to deal with him were two new employees — one with three months' experience, the other with four days. The manager said he couldn't do anything about it, he had a lunch date.

After the gunman we got some action, but what we learned was if you want action, you have to be prepared to demand your rights. You need a strong health and safety committee and sometimes you have to shut the thing down. Once we did it, other offices did it too. When a worker was punched out, they closed the place down to figure out how to make procedures safer."

Darlene Jonas
B.C. Government Employees' Union

"We've developed a new course for the labour school held by the four nursing unions in the Atlantic provinces. We're going to combine assertiveness training with discussions of abuse. How to deal with physical abuse at work, stand up for your rights, set limits. We want people to make the connection...you don't have to take it; it's not part of your job."

Nova Scotia Nurses' Union

job." When individuals lay charges, with union assistance, unions are accused of grandstanding and the individual is ridiculed in the press or the courts.

OTHER RISKS

Judges faced with an individual who is institutionalized for developmental or psychological problems are quick to assume that such treatment means the person is incapable of taking responsibility for their actions.

Racism against women of colour, immigrant women or First Nations women can be an element in the attacks. This is particularly the case in physical abuse of foreign domestic workers who care for children in private homes. They are alone in a new country, far from family and community supports. They are often unprotected by employment standards legislation, anxious about jeopardizing their immigration status, and uncertain about their rights. As well as their race, these factors make them very vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Sexual harassment, beatings, and rape are reported by these workers across Canada.

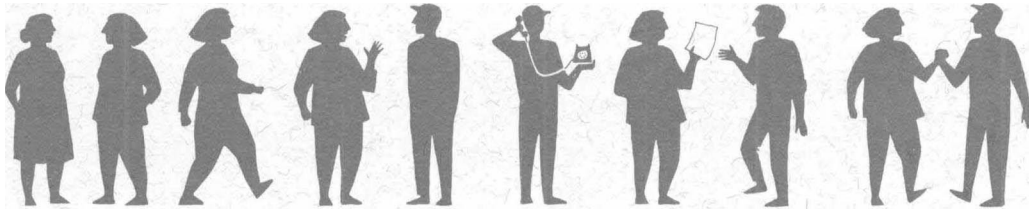
In health and social services delivery, government underfunding and cutbacks mean chronic staff shortages that increase worker risk. Outdated building designs contribute further to unsafe working conditions, when individuals must work out of communication range and are virtually alone with clients or patients. Few institutions or offices have modern security or communications equipment that reduce risk.

RESPONSIBILITY

The employer has a responsibility under health and safety legislation in Canadian jurisdictions to provide a safe workplace, and to take both remedial and preventive action.

In many jurisdictions, all workers, including those in psychiatric facilities and correctional facilities, have the right to refuse unsafe work assignments. But to win improvements, women and their unions must assert their right to work in safety. And to assert rights, workers must believe in their entitlement to a secure workplace. Unions must provide opportunities for workers to discuss their experiences and their reactions. We must advise workers of their rights, and demand on their behalf an acknowledgment that violence on the job is unacceptable. Unions must work for changes that reduce the risk of violence in the workplace.

Taking Action



1. Use articles, letters, policy statements, and convention resolutions to make violence against workers an issue in the union.
2. Run educationals, make and show videos, and print brochures that encourage workers to correctly identify and name their experiences. Make certain that members are aware of their legal rights and the union resources available to them.

At each workplace, negotiate procedures for dealing with incidents of violence. Clarify the responsibility of management and co-workers. Clarify who will call the police, who will notify the union, who will look after the medical needs of the individual, and what reports will be made and by whom.
4. Arrange meetings between management and union representatives and representatives of the local police force to discuss the workplace situation and the police response.
5. Encourage workers to press charges. Meet with representatives of the provincial Attorney General's office if courts are unsympathetic.
6. Bargain and lobby for increased staff levels and an end to working alone.
7. Secure employer-paid counselling for individuals who may have difficulty returning to work or who suffer emotional and psychological consequences long after an incident of violence.
8. Conduct a safety audit of your workplace, examining work procedures, building design, and scheduling patterns to uncover situations and circumstances that place workers at risk.
9. Negotiate provisions for educationals for hospital personnel so they are aware of their responsibility to intervene when patients are aggressive. Develop and push for an emergency response plan to deal with aggressive clients using either an in-facility team or security.
10. Ensure all personnel coming in contact with patients are trained in security or self-protection. Make sure training reflects the realities of their work and staffing levels.
11. If members are governed by licensing or professional bodies, try to ensure communication with these organizations regarding policies and procedures for dealing with violence in the workplace.
12. Make links with community groups who are working to end violence against women.
13. Make public presentations to council meetings, legislative committees, and use other opportunities to bring the issues faced by workers delivering community services to the attention of the community.
14. Negotiate contracts that oblige the employer to take responsibility, to provide information on patients or clients with a history of abusive behaviour, and to take responsibility for in-service training on dealing with violent patients or clients.
15. Lobby for changes to health and safety legislation and regulations to ensure that all workers have the right to refuse unsafe work, to provide for minimum staffing levels, and to make it the employer's clear responsibility to provide security in the workplace.

Child Abuse

Many of us know a friend, relative, or co-worker who was abused as a child. Some of us have begun to have memories of our own past abuse. Whether abuse is physical, emotional or sexual, all abuse hurts and has consequences for a child's developing sense of self.



"[He] ... tried to rape me ... I was getting ready to go to a dance and my uncle came into the house ... He followed me into the bedroom and tried to put his arms around me, tried to kiss me and I got really frightened. He said, 'I know you want it too' ... I can remember him throwing me on the bed and trying to get on top of me. But then he got off as if something made him change his mind ... He told me he'd kill me if I told. I wasn't supposed to tell anybody. And he put his hand around my throat as if to choke me."

Recollecting Our Lives
Women's Research Centre

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Each year thousands of Canadian children are physically abused and neglected. Some are deliberately denied the basic care they need to survive. Many sustain injuries ranging from bruises, cuts, and burns to broken limbs. Infants are most at risk for fatal injuries from being thrown or shaken. Yet our culture still approves of the use of physical force to punish children. Physical abuse is often disguised as discipline.

Early research into child abuse assumed that because women are primarily responsible for children's care, mothers are more likely to abuse their children. In recent years, studies have shown that children are as likely to be abused by their fathers as their mothers. In families where there is wife assault, the children are more likely to be abused by their fathers.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

While any child who is physically or sexually abused is also psychologically harmed, many children are specifically emotionally abused. They are constantly put down, rejected, made a scapegoat, belittled, criticized or isolated. Children who see their father batter their mother also suffer negative effects. Even though the abuse is not directed at them, the violence and tension in the home has a serious impact.

Children's behaviour provides clues to their pain and indications of possible abuse. When children suddenly become aggressive, silent, withdrawn, fearful, tense or anxious, they are trying to tell us something is wrong. We need to listen.

CONSEQUENCES

There are many serious and long-lasting consequences for

children who are abused. It hurts to be hit. It hurts to be called names, put down, yelled at, and told you can't do anything right. Children may well grow up believing those messages. A child who has been abused may also grow up believing that it's okay, indeed right, to hit or put down less powerful people. Significantly, little girls often grow up believing those negative messages apply to them, and little boys grow up believing they have a right to abuse others.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse is any sexual activity or behaviour that an older person imposes on a child. Two out of every five girls are sexually abused before they turn sixteen. Boys are sexually abused too, though in fewer numbers. Though there are exceptions, most abusers are male.

The men who sexually abuse children are not weird strangers. They are usually someone the child knows, often a member of her family — an uncle, older brother, grandfather, or her dad or step-father. Recent research suggests that boys are more likely to be abused by someone they know outside of the family.

Child sexual abuse ranges from sexual touching to rape. The abuse may be isolated incidents or it may go on for years. The abuse often begins gradually and progresses over time. Some women recall sexual abuse beginning as early as infancy or can't remember ever not being abused. The abuse may stop as a child gets older, or it may continue until she leaves home. Any act of sexual abuse is harmful and damaging.

A BETRAYAL OF INNOCENCE

Children depend on adults to care for them and meet their needs. They are taught to respect and obey adults' authority. Abusers take advantage of children's dependence and powerlessness. Because children know, trust, and often love the abuser, he may not need to use force, at least in the beginning. Instead, children are often manipulated and deceived by the abuser who disguises the abuse as a game, sex education, affection or punishment.

When the abuse is disguised as affection, the child is told she is special and loved. She may be given extra attention and affection. The abuser manipulates children's need to feel loved and to be special.

When children are lied to and manipulated, they become confused about what is happening to them. This makes it difficult for them to tell anyone they are being abused. They trust the abuser and are easily tricked by his distortions. By disguising the abuse as a game or affection,

"A lot of people think incest is an isolated problem — or something from the Phil Donahue show — not something that has happened to real people they know.

A friend who's an incest survivor came to a point in her life when things started to cave in on her. At work, she became highly emotional, breaking down over nothing, her absenteeism increased - often with her neglecting to give any sort of notice.

She was able to enroll in group counselling sessions through the Employee Assistance Program, which offers individual counselling and group sessions for incest survivors. I was surprised to learn that she was in one of two groups serving ferry workers and transit employees just in our area. The numbers made me realize just how prevalent incest is in our society."

B.C. Ferry & Marine Workers Union

"You swear you'll never do to your own kids what your parents did to you, but then you do, because it's the only pattern you have.

The parenting course shows you how to avoid getting caught up in a power struggle with your kids and helps you work on building mutual respect and trust using appropriate discipline. You have to start putting the events of your own childhood in perspective to stop from instinctively repeating patterns - and that's really important for adults who come from violent, abusive, or unloving homes."

Barb Griffin, Ontario



the abuser hides the truth of what is happening and protects himself from being found out.

Often children who are sexually abused are told that the activity is a secret and they are not to tell anyone. At first a child may be told not to tell because no one would understand or Mommy would be upset if she found out. Abusers often threaten children so that the abuse will stay a secret. Children are told that no one will believe them. Or they are told that something terrible will happen to them, the abuser or the family.

When children are told by the abuser that the abuse is their fault, they feel guilty. Children come to believe they are abused because they are bad or because they wanted love and affection. Because the abuse is a secret between the child and the abuser, the child ends up feeling some responsibility. The longer the abuse continues without being disclosed, the more guilt and responsibility a child feels.

Despite their guilt and confusion, children do try to tell us what is happening to them but often we do not hear or understand. Sometimes a simple statement like "I don't like Grandpa anymore" is a child's way of telling us she is being abused. Children's ways of telling are indirect and often non-verbal.

HOW CHILDREN ARE BLAMED

Children are often blamed for sexual abuse. When sexual abuse is disclosed, most abusers deny the abuse and say the child is imagining it. But children don't lie about sexual abuse. Experts say it is impossible for children to imagine sexually explicit behaviour they have not experienced.

Children are also blamed for sexual abuse by being called seductive. This myth shifts responsibility for the abuse to the child and ignores the power and authority of the abuser. It is dangerous because it denies children's innocence. Seductive behaviour is learned. Girls who have been sexually abused are taught that sex is a way to get approval and affection. Their behaviour is the result of being abused, not the cause.

THE IMPACT OF SEXUAL ABUSE

Child sexual abuse is a terrible burden for children. It sets them apart from their friends and other members of their family. They feel different, alone, and isolated. Women who were sexually abused describe their childhoods as full of fear, never knowing when the abuse would happen again. They describe feeling embarrassed, ashamed, bad, wrong and flawed. A child who is sexually abused loses her childhood. Her safety and security are taken away. Her innocence and trust are betrayed. Her body is violated

and she is made to feel guilty and responsible for what has been done to her.

HOW CHILDREN COPE

Children often cope with sexual abuse by trying to forget it, to block it from their minds and pretend it isn't happening. They numb their feelings or "leave their bodies" so the abuse seems as if it is happening to someone else. These are such common and effective ways for children to cope that many women reach adulthood with no memory of being sexually abused. Women describe gaps in their memories of childhood and intense feelings which do not seem connected to events they can recall.

While forgetting or blocking the abuse can help children survive, it makes healing difficult. With little memory of it, it is easy for women to doubt the truth of their own experience. Without memory, women suffer the consequences of abuse but have no events to connect their feelings to. This makes things feel unreal and women may feel as if they are crazy.

Children develop survival skills to escape, cope, and hide from the pain of their abuse. Some women say they used to cut off from their feelings and focus instead on intellectual achievement. Other women become helpers, focusing on taking care of others. Still others use drugs and alcohol, or develop eating disorders. Some women avoid sexual relationships to feel safe, while others use sex as the only way they know to seek love and approval.

TELLING IS HEALING

Many women never tell anyone they were sexually abused. Some women tried when they were children but because they weren't believed, they don't risk telling anyone again. When sexual abuse is not disclosed and acknowledged, healing cannot take place and the abuse affects all aspects of a woman's life. To heal, women need to break their silence and tell their secret to someone who believes them.

Many women find help in individual counselling and group work with other women who have been abused. Groups break the isolation and secrecy of sexual abuse and provide a safe place for women to share their experiences.

As women heal they come to believe and accept that the abuse was not their fault, that they were powerless as children to stop it, and that the shame and guilt they feel belong to the abuser. They can appreciate the strength it took for them to survive the abuse and move on.

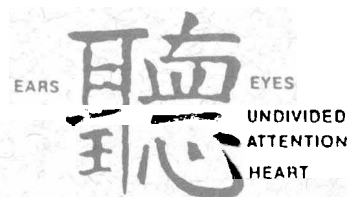
THE WORKPLACE — HELPFUL RESPONSES

When a friend or co-worker tells you she has been sexually abused, you may feel shocked or uncomfortable. You may

"One of our officers came out of a meeting with United Way and social services activists where they'd been discussing child abuse. Someone had said... 'the labour movement should be doing something about this...' and he agreed. We contacted the Institute for Prevention of Child Abuse, and within six weeks we had a pamphlet printed up. It talks about how widespread child abuse is, how abused children can become abusive adults, and about the work of the Institute. We distributed 30,000 pamphlets to union affiliates. It raised awareness... it's a start."

Carole Anne Sceviour
Ontario Federation of Labour

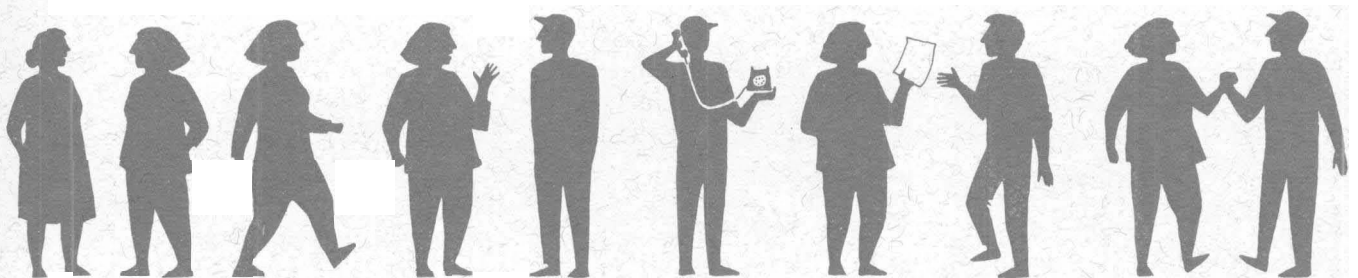
TO LISTEN



These Chinese characters that make up the verb "to listen" tell us something significant about the skill of listening. How often in our daily lives do we really listen to those around us?

not want to face the issue or feel that maybe it isn't any of your business. We need to acknowledge these feelings and deal with our discomfort so we can talk openly about sexual abuse. Women who have been sexually abused need us to listen, believe, respect, and support them. We need to use our anger about sexual abuse to take action to stop it and to assist survivors.

Taking Action



1. Make parenting courses a routine part of union education programs.
2. Have your union sponsor workshops for incest survivors - approach the employer to share or assume the cost.
3. Approach the local school board and teachers' association about offering classroom programs on the prevention of child sexual abuse.
4. Offer family education programs to bring union families together to discuss the union and stress on family relationships.
5. Ensure your workplace has trained union counsellors who know what resources are available in the community to assist incest survivors.
6. Advertise and promote awareness in the workplace of community events and educationals on child abuse.
7. Ask women's groups who work with incest survivors to write articles in your local newsletter on surviving and preventing child abuse, and on child prostitution.
8. Identify community groups working to prevent child abuse, and work with them on projects and education materials.
9. Lobby your city council to establish a kids' helpline in your community.
10. Actively lobby provincial and federal governments for a licensed, affordable child care system in Canada.

CHAPTER 5

Rape and Sexual Assault

Whether we realize it or not, almost all of us know a woman who has been raped — they are our sisters, daughters, wives, friends or co-workers. Rape or sexual assault is the use of threats or physical force to coerce a woman into sexual activity.

Women live with the threat of rape every day in countless situations — while a woman waits alone for her bus after a night shift or meeting; when she's working on her own in a store, office, or hospital; when she's out on a solitary walk or run; or when a date refuses to leave her apartment. The fear of rape controls women because women continually organize their lives to avoid situations where they might be raped.

MYTHS ABOUT RAPE

MYTH: Only young, attractive women are raped. Just being a woman makes a woman a target. Being very young or very old increases the risk. Women who have a disability are twice as likely to be sexually assaulted. Immigrant and refugee women and domestic workers are at risk from officials or employers who may threaten deportation if they don't comply with sexual demands. Homophobia increases lesbians' risk of being raped because they are lesbian.

MYTH: Women are usually raped by a stranger in dark alleyways or parks. Two-thirds of women know the men who rape them. The rapist may be an acquaintance, a neighbour, a date, a co-worker or husband. Or the rapist may be an authority figure like a boss, doctor or therapist who abuses the power and trust of their position. Most rapes happen indoors in homes and offices.

MYTH: Women ask for or provoke rape. This is a dangerous myth, because it implies that women really want to be raped or deserve to be raped because of what they wear or how they act. Women do not want to be raped. Rape is an act of violence. The myth that women

TAKING BACK THE NIGHT

A woman, alone at a window
shudders as she watches
the dark outside.

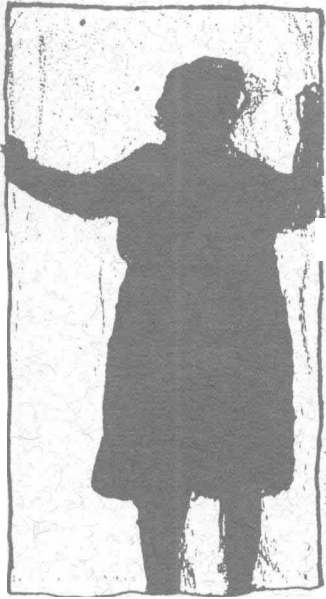
House after house it's the same.
Separately framed, hands
clench sills.

The hour has reverted
to an early dark —
each of us, last Sunday morning
got up, obedient, fingered
our own clocks back
to standard time.

No time now for that
after dinner stroll
when we could breathe in the hush
of early evening air. Already
it's night, and so far
only our slogan
has retrieved it from fear.
So far, instead of walking
we rage inside
and stare.

Sandy Shreve
(reprinted from

The Speed of the Wheel is Up to the
Potter, courtesy of Quarry Press, 1990)



Sandra heard that her longtime school friend, Steve, was back in town. Sandra decided it would be great to see him again. She gave him a call and they made plans to get together on Friday evening.

Sandra and her boyfriend, Phil, picked Steve up from work and they went back to Sandra's parents' house where Sandra cooked dinner for the three of them. Around nine o'clock, Phil left for the evening.

Sandra was happy to see her old friend. They talked about old times, her relationship with Phil and their future plans. She showed him photos from the past few years and updated him on her family.

By about eleven o'clock, Sandra and Steve decided they had had too much to drink for driving. They agreed it would be best for Steve to stay the night, as he had done many times in the past.

Sandra was in the spare room making the bed when Steve came up behind her. He grabbed her by the shoulders, pushed her down on the bed, held her down, and raped her.

Story told by Rape Crisis Worker

want to be raped is promoted in pornography and some mainstream films and videos. These images distort female and male sexuality by showing women as submissive and subordinate and men as aggressive and dominant. This inequality promotes sexuality characterized by coercion and force instead of mutual consent and respect.

MYTH: Rape occurs because men "lose control!" In fact, almost all rapes are planned. A key factor is isolation — a deserted building, a school, park, home, street or office. Rapists often target women they believe will be less able or less likely to prevent the rape.

THE IMPACT OF MYTH

These myths imply that women's sexual attractiveness causes rape. The myths say not to believe women when they say "no" because women want to be and enjoy being raped. And the myths say that how a woman dresses or acts makes her responsible for rape.

These beliefs shift responsibility for rape from the rapist to the victim, and they may blame women who are raped. They may also lead us to see a woman who is raped by a stranger as the innocent victim of a violent assault, and to blame a woman who is raped by someone she knows.

It isn't difficult to understand why women are often reluctant to report rape to police and go through a trial. They fear being blamed, judged, and disbelieved. In court, many women feel as if they are the ones on trial. The court process is often called "the second rape." We can help women who go to court after they have been raped by offering our support throughout the difficult legal proceedings.

THE IMPACT OF RAPE

Most women describe rape as a life-threatening situation during which they do not know if they will be seriously injured or killed. Women are often verbally abused and may be physically abused or threatened to prevent them from telling anyone.

A woman copes by doing whatever she can to get through it alive. There is no right or wrong strategy. Depending on the situation and her relationship to the rapist, a woman may scream, fight back, try to escape, lie, beg him to stop, cry, or try to talk or joke her way out of it. Or a woman may become passive, especially if she is being threatened. Becoming passive is not consenting.

Women who have been raped commonly describe feeling dirty, used, humiliated, and degraded. Many women bathe and shower over and over trying to feel clean again. Women feel sad, angry, powerless, and lonely and describe

feelings of deep loss for a part of themselves that has been taken away. Grieving this loss means moving back and forth through levels of denial, anger, and acceptance.

Women may feel guilty after a rape. They blame themselves for not protecting themselves, for not avoiding the situation altogether. A woman may not even call what happened to her on a date as "rape" until years later when she sees a program or reads an article about date rape. Because women are often blamed for men's violence, it is easy to understand how women feel shame and guilt after a rape. Shame and guilt often prevent women from telling anyone what has happened.

Being raped often creates a crisis in a woman's relationship with her husband or boyfriend. Many men feel angry at the rapist and powerless to protect their wives and girlfriends. But they may also not understand why it takes so long for a woman to heal or how to help her.

HOW WOMEN COPE

Women try many things to cope with their loss of safety. Some women change routines, like their routes to work or their daily walk or run. Some women dress in baggy clothes to make them feel less visible and therefore, less of a target. Some change the locks on their doors, move to a new area, take a roommate, get a dog or quit their jobs. Many women find self-defense classes give them back a feeling of strength and security.

Sometimes women deny what has happened. They try to forget it, to get on with their lives and re-establish their routine as quickly as possible so life will feel normal again. Some women use alcohol, drugs or food to numb their feelings.

THE WORKPLACE — HELPFUL RESPONSES

Women who have been raped need to talk to someone they can trust, someone who will believe them. Being listened to and believed relieves feelings of shame and guilt and ends the isolation as women realize they are not alone. Rape victims need to regain a feeling of control in their lives. So if a friend or co-worker comes to you for support, it is important not to tell her what to do nor make decisions for her.

If a friend or co-worker tells you she has been raped by a man that you know, it may be hard to accept and believe her. Accepting that someone you know is a rapist can feel threatening. Part of you may still want to believe you can identify a rapist by how he looks, even though you know that isn't true. Acknowledge and deal with these kinds of feelings so you don't lash out at women because their

"I was working one night at the telephone company — I was part-way through a program to place women into the traditionally male jobs. So there was me and another guy on shift, working out in this empty, isolated part of the building up on the second floor.

My co-worker was nowhere around when I got this phone call. I picked it up and the guy on the other end knew my name, and started talking about what color underwear I had on, and saying he was coming to get me. I could tell from the phone that the call was coming from inside the building.

That's what really upset me, was that he knew my name, and was calling from inside. I was terrified. I ran as fast as I could out of the building, jumped in my car and drove home. It turned out that it was one of the other workers who had been drinking at the hotel around the corner. My co-worker had unlocked the door, let him in, and had told him my name.

I didn't get any support from the other women workers. They all just insisted they wouldn't have been scared, they would have gone downstairs and told whoever it was to cut it out.

My shop steward took the case, and the guy ended up with a two-day suspension and he had to write an apology, and the second senior manager apologized personally. But we didn't win any of the other things we demanded. We'd asked that the guy be required to donate a few days pay to WAVAW, and that he be required to get counselling. We asked that they put up better lighting around the building. They said no to all of that."

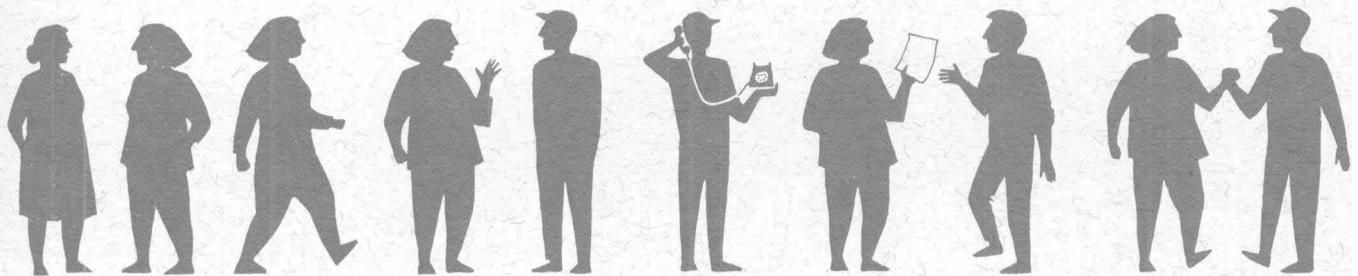
British Columbia

experience makes you feel uncomfortable. We must believe women who have been raped.

In many communities, women have established rape crisis centres that offer emotional support, information, assistance, and advocacy. Their services are also available to anyone who needs information, who wants to offer support to a woman but is unsure of what to say, or who needs support themselves.

The myths about rape hurt women. We need to challenge them and unlearn them. We need to respond to women who have been raped by believing them and not blaming them.

Taking Action



1. Lobby your city council to conduct a safety audit of the community.
2. Conduct a safety audit of your workplace, and negotiate improvements and measures that increase women's personal safety.
3. Contact organizations in your community for materials on date rape and make them available to parents in your locals who may have teenagers.
4. Advertise the "Take Back the Night" marches in your community and encourage women from the union to take part.
5. Pressure for regulations that oblige employers to provide safe transportation for women employees leaving work at night. Lobby the city and province to provide public transportation systems, including schedules and physical arrangements, that are safe.
6. Offer self-defense courses for women as part of union educationals.
7. Contact and support rape crisis centres in your community.

Sexual Harassment

"The first day of work I walked into the coffee room and the walls were covered with pinups. When I asked the guys to take them down they got really hostile. I remember one guy going on and on about freedom of expression....but to me they were really embarrassing. I'm sorry, but I just couldn't enjoy my break sitting there looking up at Miss April with her legs spread and Miss July with her butt up in the air. The whole thing got really confrontational. Somebody wrote my name on one of the grossest pictures. What astonished me was the anger. I mean it was only about pictures, and you'd have thought by their reactions that I'd shot their dog."

Annoyance, embarrassment, humiliation, fear, anguish. Sexual harassment is still one of the most common occupational hazards experienced by women in the workplace. It happens to young women on their first job, and to women who have been in the work force for years.

WHY DOES IT HAPPEN?

The reasons why people harass aren't complex. Harassment is a power play, motivated by a desire to exercise control over others, fuelled by sexism or racism or a fear and dislike for what is different. Harassment includes remarks and actions, intended to hurt, to embarrass, to confuse, to destroy an individual's confidence, to make someone cringe when the harasser comes around. In some workplaces, especially in non-traditionally female jobs, displaying graphic pornography is designed to make women feel uncomfortable, "foreign," and to drive them out.

When the target of harassment is a woman of color, an immigrant woman or a First Nations woman, or if the worker has a disability or is lesbian or gay, sexism, racism, and fear of difference are often intertwined.

It is possible for harassment to be unintentional. It may result from someone's ignorance of the impact of their behaviour. The test of a claim that harassment was unintentional, and "all meant in fun," is the harasser's willingness to change once it's clear that their behaviour offends or threatens others.

Unfortunately, the usual response to complaints of harassment is defensiveness, denial, and blame. People

"It was my first union meeting. I went in the hall and I was kind of nervous. I think there was one other woman there. I don't know. Anyway, I sat down and after a few minutes some guy came up and said 'Can I sit here?' There were empty chairs on either side of me and I said sure. Then he sits down in my lap! I pushed him off and he says, 'Ah, what's the matter — it's the best seat in the house.'"

New Westminster, B.C.



"I am the quilt which men have
cut/punched/pierced/hammered with
their slogans: bitch/cunt/slut/whore.
Sometimes they spit it in my face.
Other times they think it
their cheeks ripple with it.
When they curse other women
I duck behind deafness.
They hit harder.
The needles of their conversation
draw blood from me.
I use it to construct
pictures, pulling the broken pieces
of our days together
at night
when I am alone
with a thin red thread.

Kate Braid
United Brotherhood of Carpenters
and Joiners of America

aren't comfortable dealing with harassment or discussing harassment in the workplace.

It's easier when a manager harasses an employee — workers are used to seeing management as a problem. But even in this situation, it's hard for the individual who is being harassed. She may be embarrassed that she can't control the situation. She may feel she is somehow to blame for encouraging or not being able to stop the unwanted attention. But when harassment comes from a co-worker, it's even more difficult because workers take sides. Stereotypes about women, that "they ask for it," that they're to blame suddenly surface. Personal loyalties cut across gender lines.

Part of the conflict may arise because a woman challenges a workplace culture that is sexist, and offensive to many, but that no one has ever challenged before. Co-workers may become defensive because everyone has subscribed to the behaviour, either committing the offence or accommodating themselves to it. Everyone has always followed the unwritten rules, even if they don't approve of them.

Some people will deny that anything happened, or that it's unusual or significant. "We were only fooling around." "Everyone jokes around like that here. It's just part of the job." Men, and sometimes women, blame the person who complains, saying "she doesn't have a sense of humour" or they point to other women in the workplace saying "none of the others complain."

Other women may, in fact, keep the dynamic of sexual innuendo, and graphic jokes going in their workplace. This doesn't invalidate a complaint.

Workers will also blame outside forces — "feminists" who are forcing unnecessary changes on an unwilling society. This is often combined with appeals for sympathy by the harasser. "Boy you can't even compliment a woman now, without someone screaming that it's sexual harassment." This is intended to portray the plight of the harasser as more important than his effect on the woman who has been harassed.

THE IMPACT OF HARASSMENT

In a workplace where vulgar sexual remarks, innuendo, leering, pin-ups, and groping are commonplace, it can be confusing when someone objects and calls it harassment. Confusion is understandable, but not insurmountable. The reasons to change are powerful because of the negative effect harassment has on its target.

Women who are harassed may be embarrassed that they can't control the situation. They feel frustrated, powerless, and sometimes they are very frightened. They are always

angry. Many women swallow their anger and try to conceal their feelings, especially when they discover that any reaction encourages the harasser.

Internalizing anger and stress makes people sick. Many suffer headaches, nausea, insomnia, hypertension, heart problems, depression, and ongoing anxiety. Like any occupational hazard, harassment affects work performance. Women who see no support from co-workers or the union begin to find ways to avoid the problem. They book off sick or look for transfers. Studies show that the overwhelming majority of women who experience harassment on the job quit. They carry emotional scars and they pay a financial penalty. The harasser, meanwhile, is free to continue tormenting the next woman worker who comes along.

IT'S AGAINST THE LAW

Sexual harassment is illegal. Over the past few years, human rights commissions across the country have slowly expanded definitions of harassment and the responsibility for intervening. They've made it clear that harassment includes unwanted physical touching, patting, leering, and verbal abuse, as well as demands for sex accompanied by threats. They have eliminated ignorance as a defence and view what should reasonably be known to be unwelcome comments or conduct as harassment. And they have ruled that pin-ups, graffiti, jokes, and slurs, even when they are not directed at an individual, can poison a work environment, making it hostile and intimidating for women workers.

The Supreme Court recognizes the health effects of harassment, and has ruled that targets of sexual harassment are entitled to workers' compensation.

Employer attitudes often sustain work atmospheres that belittle women, but recent commission rulings indicate a union will be held legally liable along with the employer if the union leadership is aware that harassment is occurring and does nothing to stop it.

UNION RESPONSE

Unions have taken an active role in addressing workplace harassment. Since the seventies, unions have passed resolutions and policy statements condemning workplace harassment. They have fought against corporate advertising programs that belittle female employees or that use sexual innuendo about workers to sell corporate services or products.

Some unions have implemented special expedited grievance processes to ensure that sexual harassment complaints go straight to the top and are dealt with quickly. Others have implemented special complaints

"I went to a grievance meeting after one of our members got harshly disciplined for sexually harassing a co-worker. After we arrived at the boardroom and sat down, the management team filed in with their folders and coffee. This guy's supervisor sits down across from us and he puts his coffee cup down on the boardroom table. Well, it's one of those flesh-colored mugs with tits sticking out of it.

Talk about mixed messages — management's saying 'sexual harassment is a serious crime' and 'around here women's bodies are for cheap laughs!'"

Ontario Public Service
Employees' Union



"Last summer a gross pornographic picture was stuck up in the women's washroom. I went right to management and said we've got to do something here, we can't have this. So we set up a joint labour management committee with men and women on it to deal specifically with sexual harassment. Back in November, management staff received training that dealt with all forms of harassment. Now we're discussing training for supervisors and foremen. We're working on a policy statement that we'll take through the bargaining committee and into the contract.

CUPE Municipal Workers
Port Coquitlam, B.C.

"There's no escaping it — when women start to complain about sexual harassment they get picked on even more. What I see is women coming into the union office and asking us to help make it better...and I have to tell them, before it gets better, it's going to get a lot worse."

Christine Skrepetz
United Food and Commercial
Workers



"The situation often seems hopeless, but it will never improve if women don't first become aware and then make themselves heard. Don't be shamed into being one of the boys. Don't be afraid you're being a bitch or can't take a joke. You're not uptight because you believe ignorance, sexual advances, sexist remarks or pornography have no place in the workplace."

Shelly Logan
Canadian Brotherhood of
Railway Transport
& General Workers

resolution processes to try and resolve co-worker complaints, involving management only when resolution is impossible.

There are concerns that these internal processes are limited because special officers, often women, resolve the complaints, allowing others in the union to take no responsibility. There are also concerns that the grievance process itself falls short, and can provide few real solutions, especially in small workplaces where workers can't be moved.

Unfortunately, there are still too many complaints that union local leaders fail to support the woman being harassed, and fail to support union policies against harassment.

Some unions have started to explore contract language and statutory changes that would treat harassment as a workplace health and safety issue. Women facing unresolved sexual harassment in the workplace would be able to refuse to work, just as workers can now do in other circumstances hazardous to their health. The cost to the employer might spur resolution of complaints.

This is a promising innovation, but there are still too few collective agreements with even basic language to protect workers. By 1990, only 41 percent of Canadian workers had protection against harassment in their collective agreements.

In the long run what's needed isn't a good method of punishment, but a change in attitudes. Policy, contract language, and complaint processes, are a good beginning, but they aren't effective unless the leadership of the union, at all levels, clearly and unequivocally opposes sexual harassment. It's difficult to take on sexual harassment in the workplace, but unless the leadership is prepared to stand by women when they challenge the dominant culture in their workplace, nothing will change.

TAKE THE RISK

Unions cannot afford to ignore the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace or within our own structures. We cannot hope the problem will just go away as society gradually changes.

Harassment contradicts the words of equality, fairness, and justice that appear in convention speeches, resolutions, and newsletters. Unless actions match the words, members who are targets of harassment become cynical and disaffected. Harassment can destroy the fabric of the union.

We can pass policies about equality for women in the workplace or for people with disabilities, workers of color, immigrant women, First Nations people, and lesbians and

gay men. But as long as we tell sexist jokes or indulge in behaviour that degrades women or other groups, they will never be able to claim their place as equals in our society and economy. And as long as we condone sexism, homophobia or racism with our silence, we are obstacles to the achievement of equality. Men and women working together in the labour movement can achieve social and economic equality for all workers.



1. Adopt strong policy at conventions or local meetings condemning sexual harassment. Spell out exactly what kind of behaviour is considered harassment. While you're at it, make clear your union's opposition to harassment based on race, sexual orientation, disability, national origin or religion.
2. State clearly in the union constitution that every member has a right to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of race, sex, sexual orientation or disability.
3. Bargaining:
Language: Negotiate specific language in your collective agreement to protect workers from all forms of harassment. Make certain you have an anti-discrimination clause, as well as a separate clause on harassment to provide complete protection.
Complaints resolutions: Set up a process to resolve complaints quickly, or an internal process to try and resolve complaints between co-workers without involving management.
Counselling: Negotiate employer-paid counselling (chosen by the individual) and make it available to those who have been harassed and are lodging complaints, and for those who are harassers.
Right to refuse unsafe work: Negotiate provisions that allow women being sexually harassed to refuse to work until the employer has taken steps to stop the harassment. This recognizes the physical, emotional, and psychological health problems caused by harassment. Work to have this right included in provincial health and safety legislation.
4. Post the union anti-harassment policy and distribute it directly to members. Write special articles in the union newsletter letting members know the union opposes harassment. Encourage the employer to develop policies and advertise to all employees, including supervisors and management, that the company will not tolerate harassment.
5. Encourage discussion of the topic at union meetings. Offer workshops on ending harassment at general meetings or union educationals. Ask your union head office to develop materials, or work with a group in your community. Make sure dealing with harassment is included in steward training and officer training courses. Sponsor women's conferences and conferences on racism, human rights, and gay-lesbian rights, where the issue of dealing with harassment can be discussed by those who are most often the targets. Propose that the employer offer workplace training for all employees on ending harassment.
6. Support groups in the community campaigning against material and advertising that stereotype women, workers of colour, ethnic groups, lesbians and gay men, and contribute to harassment.

Personal Consequences



"At the Harrison Winter School, we used to award bottles of B.C. wine as prizes to the winners of the class choir competition. We stopped that a few years ago - instead we give away another fine local product - bottles of milk from the dairy. And we don't automatically put a bottle of wine on every table at the graduation dinner - it's available but you have to go and get it. These are small ways of showing that it's okay not to drink and that having fun doesn't depend on having alcohol."

David Rice
Canadian Labour Congress
Pacific Region

Some of the survival skills women and children develop work very well, at least for a time, to help them live through a situation they can't change. But some methods, such as anorexia, bulimia, and alcohol and drug dependency are harmful and self-defeating.

Many women try to cope by using alcohol and drugs to suppress memories of past abuse, to numb their feelings, and escape their pain. Some women develop eating disorders as a way to feel some control.

DRUG ABUSE

Many women go to their doctors for help when they are anxious, depressed or fearful. Their symptoms are often dismissed simply as signs of stress. But their anxiety and depression are often a response to abuse, and women's lack of power in our culture.

Too often doctors don't ask the right questions or provide the support that would help women deal with the causes of their feelings. Instead, they prescribe tranquilizers to make women feel better. As a result, many women who have been sexually abused or battered use tranquilizers to help them cope.

Tranquilizers are powerful drugs which are only meant to be used on a short-term basis. Because tranquilizers are legal and prescribed by doctors, women can be unaware of their negative effects. A battered woman, for example, may be numbed to the warning signs of an assault. Or a woman who has been sexually abused may substitute tranquilizers for the support and help she needs and deserves.

Many women are unaware that these drugs are highly addictive and that simply quitting them may well heighten feelings of panic and anxiety to the point that they must begin taking the drug again.

Women withdrawing from tranquilizers need information and support. They may have trouble sleeping and cry a lot. They may also experience physical side effects such as headaches, cramps, and sweating.

ALCOHOL ABUSE

Most women who enter alcohol treatment programs have

been sexually abused, assaulted, or battered. Alcohol numbs feelings. It offers escape from the pain of physical and emotional injuries and from the pain of powerlessness. Alcohol can also suppress memories, including memories of sexual abuse. When women who were sexually abused stop using alcohol, they often find that memories of sexual abuse begin to surface.

Women seeking help for alcohol abuse need a program in which they can feel safe. Because women often abuse alcohol as a consequence of violence and abuse, they may only feel safe talking about these issues in a group of women. If the group is mixed, they may never talk about the reasons why they began to use alcohol.

Twelve-step programs which focus on people admitting they have no control over their drinking and surrendering to a higher power, may not work for women who have been abused, manipulated, and controlled by others, and who are struggling to gain some control of their lives.

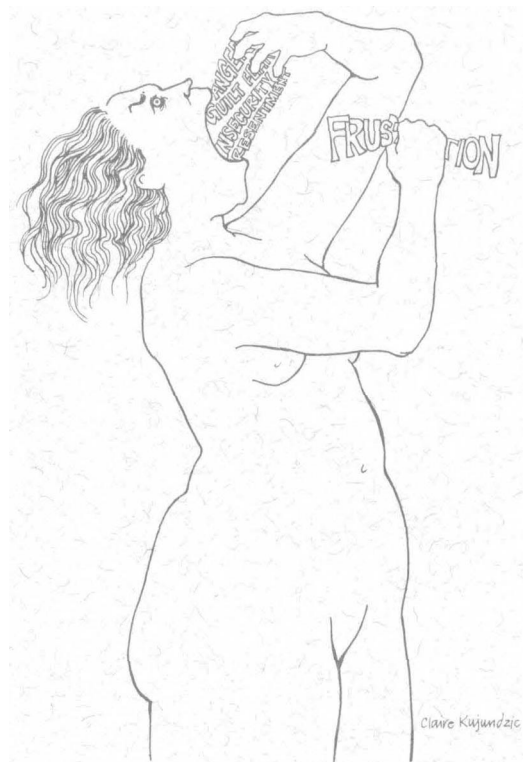
Of course, programs must also be affordable and offered in locations and at times that are convenient and safe. Programs that offer on-site child care or subsidy make it easier for women to attend.

EATING DISORDERS

The current stereotype of ideal female beauty in North America is a woman who is young, thin, and fit. She is also white, middle class, and heterosexual. The fashion, fitness, and advertising industries, as well as mainstream media, continually present images of women that equate thinness with happiness, success, love, independence, and control. Everywhere a woman looks, she is faced with intense cultural pressure to conform to the current stereotype of female beauty.

This image excludes many women. Women of color, lesbians, women with disabilities, working class and poor women, and old women are not represented. But most women, at some point in their lives, are vulnerable to the pressure to be thin as a way to try to conform to the feminine stereotype.

These images and messages encourage women to focus their frustrations and dissatisfactions on their bodies. A woman is told that thin is good, fat is bad; that how a woman looks is more important than who she is or what she does; and that a woman's worth and value depend on her appearance and attractiveness to men. The messages encourage women to think that if their bodies were thinner, they would feel better and have better lives. Most women have dieted at some point in their lives. Many women struggle with compulsive eating and some women develop eating disorders such as bulimia or anorexia.



"Part of our training program for union counsellors includes dealing with abuse, recognizing that behind a lot of alcohol and drug problems there may be a history of abuse.

We encourage our counsellors to take a hard look at themselves and their reactions to abuse. We challenge them to ask themselves honestly, 'Can I deal with this issue'? If the answer is no, then they need to involve another counsellor because they're not helping the individual or themselves."

Joanne Bachman
United Way - CLC

Most women who develop an eating disorder have been sexually abused, raped, or battered. Their conscious or subconscious reasons for overeating or starving themselves vary. For example, it's easy to understand how a woman who has had her physical boundaries violated may respond by bingeing and gaining weight as a form of protection. Women often feel less vulnerable when they are overweight because they see themselves as less sexually attractive to men and, therefore, less of a target.

A woman may also respond by drastic dieting called anorexia. She may seek to become very thin as a way to make her body less sexual which will protect her from further abuse.

Women with bulimia alternate between bingeing on food and then purging by vomiting or using laxatives. While bingeing may be a way to block or suppress uncomfortable feelings such as anger, guilt, shame, and self-hate, it also makes women feel anxious about possible weight gain. Purging gives them a feeling of control by getting rid of these feelings and enabling them to stay thin.

When a woman has anorexia she eats very little but is preoccupied by food and terrified of getting fat. Her body image is distorted so that even though she is emaciated, she sees herself as fat. If she eats and gains weight, she feels so out of control that she needs to lose the weight right away to feel in control again. For a woman with anorexia, controlling her food intake and her body size may be the only way she has to assert control in her life.

Women with eating disorders often feel great shame and guilt about their behaviour and try to keep it a secret. The secrecy increases their isolation. Women need acceptance, understanding, and support to begin to heal and to learn more positive ways of coping and taking care of themselves.

WORKPLACE CONSEQUENCES

Women trying to cope with violence, harassment or abuse may be distracted or preoccupied at work. They may be absent because of injury or stress, or because of medical, legal, and other appointments. Women struggling with alcohol and drug dependency or an eating disorder may have difficulty concentrating or completing work. Their attendance and behaviour may become erratic.

Often, behaviour that attracts disciplinary action in the workplace is only a symptom of some other problem in the workplace or in a woman's personal life.

Be alert for the possibility that poor work performance, erratic behaviour, and absenteeism have causes other than



C. Kujundzic

"We started our union counselling program in 1984 in Montreal. Then it spread to Quebec City, to Hull, until now we have a network of 1,000 counsellors in workplaces across the province."

"At first our focus was alcohol and drug abuse, and most of our counsellors had come through these experiences. But as the program developed, it changed to include issues of mental health, family relationships and family violence, and our counsellors now come from more varied backgrounds."

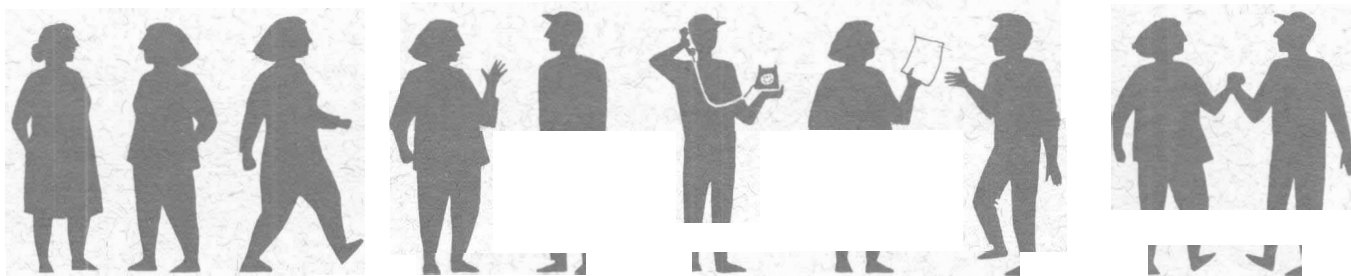
"What makes the union strategy distinct is first this network of people — not medical specialists, but workers who listen and refer individuals to community services. And now our focus is on prevention, not intervention — that's what is most important."

Jean Sylvestre
Federation de Travailleurs
et Travailleuses du Québec

boredom, rebelliousness or job dissatisfaction. Ensure that women have the option of counselling or other services.

Our instinct is always to avoid intruding on personal problems, but the problem of violence experienced by women isn't a private matter. At union meetings, we often call each other brother and sister. Many workers look to union officers and stewards to protect their interests and advocate on their behalf. Support from friends, colleagues, and stewards can help women find the resources they need to overcome the effects of violence. We can make the labour movement a strong voice in the struggle to end violence against women.

Taking Action



1. Make sure your union members have access to an effective Employer-Employee Assistance program or union counselling program. CLC offices and United Way across the country can provide information on union counselling.
2. Establish links with services in your community that provide education and counselling on alcohol and drug abuse and eating disorders for women.
3. De-emphasize alcohol at union events - provide alcohol-free environments and establish a setting where it's alright to not drink.
4. Set up a network with other union counselors from your union and from unions in your area for support and exchange of information.
5. Lobby for increases in drug and alcohol rehabilitation and treatment programs in the community - get your employer to join the lobby.
6. Labour Councils can use a community and social action committee to identify gaps in community-based counselling services around drug and alcohol abuse and eating disorders, and they can lobby for expanded services.

APPENDIX

EXCERPTS FROM SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY UNITED FOOD AND COMMERCIAL WORKERS

UNION ROLE

Harassment is not a joke. It is cruel and destructive behavior against others that can have devastating effects. Harassment among co-workers in particular is contrary to our basic union principles of solidarity and equality. It is an expression of perceived power and superiority by the harasser over another person, usually for reasons over which the victim has little or no control: sex, race, creed, colour, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, political or religious affiliation, or place of national origin.

Harassment on any of these grounds can be made the basis of a legitimate complaint to most provincial and federal human rights commissions.

Harassment can be defined as any unwelcome action by any person/s, in particular by management or a co-worker, whether verbal or physical, on a single or repeated basis, which humiliates, insults or degrades. Unwelcome or unwanted in this context means any actions which the harasser knows, or ought reasonably to know, are not desired by the victim of harassment.

WHY IS HARASSMENT A UNION ISSUE?

By pitting certain groups of workers, such as women or ethnic minorities, against others, harassment creates a climate of intolerance and division among the membership. By eroding our unity and strength, it can weaken our effectiveness at the bargaining table or on a picket line. Also, it obviously demeans the quality of the victim's life at the workplace. It is the responsibility of management to ensure that the workplace is free of harassment, but just leaving it up to management is not good enough.

Our goal as a union must be to help create a workplace environment free of harassment. That means not only dealing with complaints when they arise, but also watching for instances of harassment and confronting the source.

HOW DOES THE UFCW POLICY WORK?

The involvement of the union local is crucial in combatting harassment in the workplace. The local leadership plays a key role in providing support for victims of harassment and assisting them in resolving incidents without delay. The experience of harassment can be overwhelming for the victim. People often react with shock, humiliation, and intense anger. Harassment victims may not feel comfortable going through the normal channels for resolving such a problem. That is why under the UFCW policy harassment victims can report an incident and initiate a complaint with any number of elected local union people or the national office.

If a worker is being harassed at work and wants help —

1. The victim can approach any local elected union person or official, including members of the women's committee, human rights committee or affirmative action committee.
2. The victim, or her representative, must bring the harassment to the immediate attention of the unit chairperson or steward or business representative, or the local union president.
3. The local union president, or steward or business agent or the unit chairperson can contact the UFCW's national director or his or her designate and, if necessary, meet with senior company representatives to investigate.
4. Within 10 working days of notifying the local union, the issue must be resolved and the resolution of the harassment complaint must reflect the serious nature of such acts.
5. Confidentiality must be respected throughout the process.

This policy encourages all of us as union members to challenge harassment whenever it occurs. We must make sure that harassment does not threaten the dignity of UFCW members anywhere in the workplace. By respecting our brothers and sisters and confronting harassment in the workplace, we can build a stronger and more effective union.

RESOURCES

This resource guide suggests where to go for further information on any of the issues in this handbook. You may have to be patient and persistent trying to locate the appropriate resources. Some of the groups listed have had their funding cut back and may not be available at all times.

If you are a co-worker, union counsellor or shop steward wanting to help a woman get the service she needs, it's important that you know the community group or agency you are referring her to. Make a personal visit, speak to a staff person, get their literature, and ask some questions. Be sure that women you refer will be treated with respect, that they will be believed and not blamed. Women who are victims and survivors of violence are not sick. It's important that services recognize violence against women as a social and political problem, not a personal dysfunction.

GENERAL RESOURCES

1. If you need help locating resources in your community on wife assault, child abuse, and sexual assault, call —
Canadian Council on Social Development
Family Violence Program
Telephone: (613) 728-1865
2. **Vis-A-Vis** is a national bilingual newsletter on family violence published quarterly by the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) and is available free of charge in Canada. It provides information, articles, and resources from across the country. Send subscription inquiries to —
Newsletter Subscriptions
Canadian Council on Social Development
Family Violence Program
55 Parkdale Avenue
P.O. Box 3505, Station C
Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 4G1
Telephone: (613) 728-1865
3. For information, resources, and materials on wife assault, child abuse, incest, and elder abuse contact —
National Clearinghouse on Family Violence
7th floor, Brooke Claxton Building
Tunney's Pasture
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1B5
Telephone: (613) 957-2938
Toll free: 1-800-267-1291
4. **Media Watch** is a national feminist organization working to improve the portrayal and status of women in the media. They provide information and offer workshops on gender stereotyping, media sexism, and media literacy. Contact —
Media Watch — National Office
#204 - 517 Wellington Street
Toronto, Ontario M5V 1G1

There are local offices in many major cities across the country. The B.C. Media Watch office is located at —
703 Jervis Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6E 3M4
Telephone: 688-3034

5. The extension program at the Justice Institute of B.C. offers seminars and workshops on a variety of sexual violence and abuse issues. Course calendars are available upon request from —
Justice Institute of British Columbia
 4180 W. 4th Avenue
 Vancouver, B.C. V6R 4J5
 Telephone: 228-9771
6. For information on audio visual materials and union counselling programs contact —
Canadian Labour Congress
 #301 - 2841 Riverside Drive
 Ottawa, Ontario K1V 8X7
 Telephone: (613) 521-3400

FILMS AND VIDEOS

Films and videos are good educational resources. For each issue discussed in this handbook there are some films or videos available from union organizations or the National Film Board (NFB). It's always a good idea to have a resource person available to facilitate discussion, answer questions, and provide support. Many rape crisis centres, transition houses, and women's centres have films and videos that they use in their public education work. If you are going to buy your own film or video, you may want to contact these groups for their recommendations.

The National Film Board of Canada has two relevant catalogues of films and videos:

- *Beyond the Image*, lists films and videos about women's culture, politics, and values

The Family Violence Audio-Visual Catalogue lists audio-visual material available from various sources in North America.

To preview, rent, or buy any of the NFB films or videos, and to order the catalogues, check the white pages of your phone book under National Film Board or phone:

Atlantic Canada: 1-800-561-7104
 Quebec: 1-800-363-0328
 Ontario: 1-800-267-7710
 Western & Northern Canada: 1-800-661-9867

After the Montreal Massacre
 25 min
 NFB

One year after the massacre, this film looks at the issues of male violence against women, women's fear, and what we as a society must do.

Still Killing Us Softly
 30 min.
 NFB

Provides a critical look at the power and influence of advertising in perpetuating negative images of women. Shows how objectifying women's bodies is often the first step in justifying violence.

Can We Talk? — A Slide Show on Myths About Gay Males and Lesbians
 35 min
 Coalition for Lesbian/Gay Rights in Ontario

Designed for gay, straight and mixed audiences, the production is multicultural, non-sexist and non-ageist. Comes with a special guide for discussion leaders.
 Available from:
 Coalition for Lesbian/Gay Rights in Ontario
 Box 822, Station A
 Toronto, Ontario M5W 1C3
 Telephone: (416) 533-6824

BOOKS

Ending Workplace Discrimination Against Lesbians and Gay Men

A B.C. Federation of Labour information kit. Order copies by calling (604) 430-1421.

Fact Sheets on Racism. Toronto: Ontario Federation of Labour.

Eight pamphlets on issues from "How Racism Works," and "Race Relations/Human Rights Committees" to "Fighting Racial Harassment"

Fact sheets are available in French, Portuguese, Cantonese, Spanish, Hindi, and Italian, as well as English.

Guberman, Connie and Margie Wolfe, eds. **No Safe Place: Violence Against Women and Children.** Toronto: Women's Press, 1985.

A Canadian anthology of feminist writers on child battery, wife assault, child sexual assault and sexual harassment.

Price, Lisa S., ed. **Patterns of Violence in the Lives of Girls and Women: A Reading Guide**

Vancouver: Women's Research Centre, 1989.

Provides a picture of the different patterns of violence in women's lives based on women's experiences. Discusses some of the best feminist books on issues such as wife assault, child sexual abuse, rape, etc.

Responding to the Abuse of People with Disabilities Toronto: Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped (ARCH), 1990.

A small but comprehensive handbook for people with disabilities and their allies on abuse reporting and how the legal system works. Contains lists of resources, support services and national groups. Available from:

ARCH

40 Orchard View Boulevard

Suite 255

Toronto, Ontario M4R 1B9

Telephone: (416) 482-8255

TDD: (416) 482-1254

WIFE ASSAULT

In most cities and towns, the transition house or shelter for battered women and their children is listed in the inside cover or first page of the telephone book. Or contact the women's centre or crisis centre for information about the transition house nearest you.

You can also contact the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence at 1-800-267-1291 for a list of transition houses and shelters for battered women in Canada. This list also includes provincial and territorial associations of transition houses. They also have a list of Canadian programs for men who batter.

1. **B.C./Yukon Society of Transition Houses**

#204 - 408 Granville Street

Vancouver, B.C. V6C 1T2

Telephone: (604) 669-6943

This is the provincial transition house association for B.C. and the Yukon.

2. **Battered Women's Support Services**

P.O. Box 1098

Vancouver, B.C. V6C 2T1

Telephone: 687-1867

Provides one-to-one counselling, drop-in, and 10-week support groups for women who have been physically and emotionally abused, and a dating violence program. The group also does public education and legal advocacy.

3. **Munroe House**

Vancouver, B.C.

Telephone: 734-5722

A second-stage transition house for battered women and their children. Provides information, support, and advocacy to residents. Provides telephone counselling and a support group for women involved in custody and access issues, particularly women separated from physically and emotionally abusive husbands.

4. **Wife Abuse Intervention Program**

North Shore Family Services

#303 - 126 E. 15th Street

North Vancouver, B.C. V7L 2P9

Telephone: 988-5281

"Alternatives to Violence for Men" is a 24-week program for physically and psychologically abusive men. Focus is on power and control issues. Offers a support and education group for women who have been or are in abusive relationships.

FILMS AND VIDEOS

The Next Step Series

"Sylvie's Story" — 28 min.

"A Safe Distance" — 28 min.

"Moving On" — 29 min.

NFB

A video compilation of three films that examine what happens to battered women once they decide to leave their violent partners. The films explore different kinds of programs and services available in urban, rural, northern, and Native settings.

Loved, Honoured and Bruised

25 min.

NFB

This 1980 film tells the story of Jeannie, who leaves her physically and emotionally abusive husband after 16 years of marriage. This film provides a good introduction to the issues women face and the stages they go through as they leave an abusive relationship and begin a new life for themselves and their children.

The Crown Prince

30 min.

NFB

This video looks at the issue of wife assault from the perspective of a teenage boy who has witnessed and been a victim of assault. The film explores the difficult choices which have to be made to break free from patterns of violent behavior.

The Power To Choose

20 min.

NFB

This video focuses on the use of power and violence in teenage dating relationships.

BOOKS

Lewis, Debra J. **Dating Violence - A Discussion Guide on Violence in Young People's Relationships**

Vancouver: Battered Women's Support Services, 1987.

NiCarthy, Ginny. **Getting Free** (2nd ed.) Seattle: Seal Press, 1987.

A useful book for women considering leaving. Has chapters on emotional, financial, and social issues women face.

NiCarthy, Ginny. **The Ones Who Got Away** Seattle: Seal Press, 1987.

Personal stories of women who have left abusive relationships.

RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

In most cities and towns, the rape crisis or sexual assault centre is listed on the inside front cover or first page of the phone book. In areas without these specific services, contact your community's women's centre or crisis centre for assistance.

WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre

P.O. Box 88584
Chinatown Postal Outlet
Vancouver, B.C. V6A 4A7
Telephone: 255-6344

Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) operates a 24-hour crisis line and provides information, support, counselling, referral, and advocacy for victims of rape and sexual violence. They also provide public education.

2. In many cities and towns across the country, there are groups that offer self-defence training to women and children. Contact your community's local women's group or women's centre for further information.

WenLido

WEST (Women Educating in Self-Defence Training)
Telephone: 876-6390

Provides training in self-defence for women and their children. Program includes self-defence techniques, mental and physical exercises, and discussions on how to deal with verbal, physical, and sexual assault. Classes are held at various locations and can be arranged for any group of ten or more.

3. **METRAC**

(Metro Toronto Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children)

159 Spadina Road
Toronto, Ontario M5R 2T8
Telephone: (416) 392-3135

One of METRAC's projects has been to develop a safety audit kit to help women identify the design and safety shortcomings of sites in their communities. Copies of the safety audit kit can be obtained from the above address. In Vancouver, contact the YWCA at 683-2531 for information on a group's experience of using METRAC's safety audit kit.

BOOKS

Ellis, Megan. **Surviving Procedures After A Sexual Assault.** (3rd ed.) Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1988.

A handbook for survivors and rape crisis workers on the medical, police, and court procedures following a sexual assault.

Warshaw, Robin. **I Never Called It Rape: The Ms. Report on Recognizing, Fighting and Surviving Date Rape.** New York: Harper and Row, 1988.

A useful, practical, and very readable book on date rape

CHILD ABUSE

In many communities, there are groups for adult survivors of child sexual abuse. To contact a group ask at the local women's centre or sexual assault centre. Most groups are run through private counsellors or community counselling agencies.

1. **Kids Help Phone**

1-800-668-6868

A 24-hour toll-free telephone counselling service that provides a confidential response to Canadian youth.

2. **B.C. Parents In Crisis**

#13 - 250 Willingdon Avenue

Burnaby, B.C. V5C 5E9

Telephone: 299-0521

Self-help groups under the guidance of volunteer sponsors meet weekly in many B.C. communities. Groups deal with parental stress, build support systems, and help prevent child abuse.

3. **Helpline for Children**

Dial 0 and ask for Zenith 1234

Ministry of Social Services

A 24-hour, province-wide toll-free telephone line for children who need help or for any person who knows of a child who is abused or neglected.

FILMS AND VIDEOS

To A Safer Place

58 min.

NFB

This film tells the story of how one woman has come to terms with her life as a survivor of incest. The film follows her as she returns to the people and places of her childhood and features interviews with her mother, brothers, and sister.

Sandra's Garden

33 min.

NFB

An honest and intimate look at one lesbian woman's struggle to overcome the trauma of incest. It is a story of healing, of how women can work together to reshape and rebuild their lives.

BOOKS

Bass, Ellen and Laura Davis. **The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse.** New York: Harper and Row, 1983.

This is a valuable healing book for survivors of child sexual abuse. Designed as a workbook, it can also be read on its own.

Blume, E. Sue. **Secret Survivors: Uncovering Incest and Its After-Effects in Women.** New York: Ballantine Books, 1990.

This book provides an in-depth look at the after-effects of sexual abuse in adult women. Shows how sexual abuse is often at the root of such problems as depression, eating disorders, and drug and alcohol abuse.

Women's Research Centre (Pamela Sleeth & Jan Barnsley). **Recollecting Our Lives: Women's Experience of Childhood Sexual Abuse.** Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1989.

This book is a valuable resource for mothers of children who have been sexually abused and for survivors trying to make sense of their experience and break free of the consequences of childhood abuse.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Every province or territory has a human rights commission that provides materials on sexual harassment as a human rights issue. Many labour federations and some national unions have women's programs — staff and committees working on women's issues. They can provide information on resources and contract language. In B.C., contact Mary Rowles, Director, Women's Program, B.C. Federation of Labour, Telephone: (604) 430-1421

FILMS AND VIDEOS

Call me Sister, Call me Brother
20 min.
CAW

Available from Canadian Labour Congress and Canadian Auto Workers offices throughout Canada. A good exploration of the effects of racial and sexual harassment by co-workers, and an appeal to workers to build union solidarity by ending racism and sexism.

Facing Harassment
14 min.
Public Service Alliance
of Canada

Shows several different kinds of harassment by co-workers, including harassment based on sex and sexual orientation as well as race, national origin, and disability. The film discusses how harassment erodes union solidarity and what actions unions are taking to deal with the issue.

The Power Pinch
30 min.

Available from the B.C. Federation of Labour. An older American film, but useful for showing how harassment occurs, the way it is dismissed by many men, and how women can confront harassers.

BOOKS

Attenborough, Susan. **Sexual Harassment at Work**. Ottawa: National Union of Provincial Government Employees, 1980.

Discusses definitions, role of steward and other union members, and advice for victims. Includes sample policy, grievance processes, contract language, and solutions outside the labour movement.

Harassment Awareness Kit. Equal Opportunities Dept. Ottawa: Canadian Union Of Public Employees, February, 1991.

Includes CUPE policy statements, definitions, training considerations for local officers and stewards, and bargaining goals.

Lebrato, Mary T. **Help Yourself: A Manual for Dealing with Sexual Harassment**. California Commission on the Status of Women, 1986.

While the law cited is American, this 227-page manual is a comprehensive resource manual with many practical suggestions, letters to harassers, witness statements, and resource materials.

Policy Statement on Harassment. Toronto: Ontario Federation of Labour, November, 1991. A good discussion of developments in human rights cases and union contracts with a detailed program of action for unions, the labour movement, and legislation and public policy.

CONSEQUENCES

Most communities have alcohol and drug services. Contact your local women's centre or information service for a list of programs in your area.

1. Alcohol and Drug Tryline

Toll free: 1-800-663-1441

Provides toll-free information and referral services for people across B.C. who need help with any kind of substance abuse. Includes information on treatment services, education, and prevention, and ways in which communities and individuals can become involved in fighting drug and alcohol problems.

2. Aurora Society

2036 W. 13th Avenue
Vancouver, B.C. V6J 2H7
Telephone: 733-9191

A residential treatment centre for women who are alcohol and drug dependent. A 6-week structured program is offered.

3. National Eating Disorder Information Centre

2000 Elizabeth Street
CW 1-328
Toronto, Ontario M5G 2C4
Telephone: (416) 340-4156

They have a nation-wide listing of treatment services and resources available, and a bi-monthly bulletin you can subscribe to. They offer support groups, public education, and information on local family support groups.

4. Vancouver Women's Health Collective

#302 - 1720 Grant Street
Vancouver, B.C. V5L 2Y7
Telephone: 255-8285

Information and resources on a wide range of women's health issues, including eating disorders. Therapist and health practitioner information is also available.

FILMS AND VIDEOS

An Easy Pill To Swallow

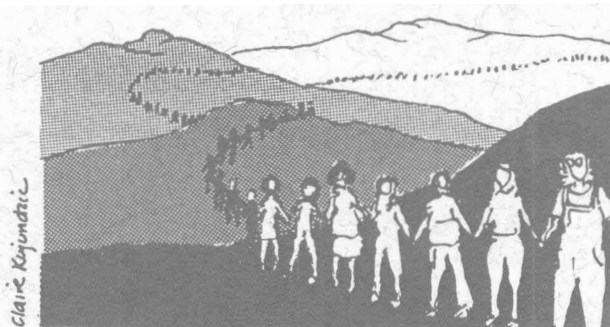
29 min.
NFB

An older film, but it provides good information about the context for women's prescription drug abuse, focusing on tranquilizers.

The Recovery Series

55 min.
NFB

A video compilation of four short films about women recovering from drug and alcohol dependency. The films explore different women's experiences of addiction and the issues they face on their path to recovery.



As trade unionists, we're working to achieve justice and equality in our society. Violence against women undermines that work. It's not a private matter—breaking this pattern is everybody's business.



BC FEDERATION
OF LABOUR



WOMEN'S RESEARCH
CENTRE