

## HANDOUT: SEXUAL HARASSMENT:FINDING SOLUTIONS

### The Victim

- \* **Don't ignore the problem.** Managers and/or co-workers may interpret your silence to mean you condone the behaviour.
- \* **Break down isolation.** You are not alone. By confiding in your steward and co-workers you will receive moral support and may discover that other women have also been targeted by the harasser.
- \* **Confront the harasser.** Let him/her know that you do not condone their behaviour. Tell them to stop. In many cases, this action will end the problem. The harasser counts on you to be embarrassed, and to hesitate to stand up for yourself.
- \* **Keep a record.** Maintain a detailed record of each incident. Document what happened, where and when. Note the names of witnesses. If possible, get statements from them.
- \* **Arm yourself.** Maintain a record of your work. Document accomplishments, compliments and work habits. Harassers may try to get back at the woman by accusing her of poor work performance.
- \* **Publicize the harasser's actions.** If confronting the harasser doesn't stop the problem, make the harassment public. Post notices at work: "John X is a sexual harasser." Or have co-workers wear buttons with the same message.

### The Shop Steward, Union or Co-worker

- \* **Listen.** When a worker comes to you with a complaint of sexual harassment, listen carefully. Remember, it may be difficult for the woman to report the incident. She may feel that she will be blamed, or she may fear reprisal.
- \* **Support the victim.** Let her(him) know that you and the union want to solve the problem. Support workers who have been or are being harassed. Accompany a woman who wants to confront the offender. Be a witness for her.
- \* **Build a case.** The steward case assess the situation and build a case for positive action (including the grievance process). Encourage the women to

keep a record of the incidents. Where possible, get witnesses.

- \* **Maintain confidentiality.** During case documentation or investigation, discretion and confidentiality are essential in order to prevent the harasser from using retaliation or intimidation against the women or against witnesses.
- \* **Grievance recourse.** As with any other grievance, proper, complete, and factual investigation and documentation is essential. A harasser may not be aware that his actions are offensive. This is not an excuse, but one solution may involve showing the offender that his actions are unwanted, threatening and destructive.
- \* **Grievance settlement.** Management may attempt to transfer the victim. The union should insist that the harasser, and not the victim, be moved. Should the victim request, or comply with, a transfer, it must be at the same status and pay. Because the harasser may create a problem in his new job, other forms of discipline should be tried.
- \* **Discuss the problem of sexual harassment.** Raise the issue at local union meetings. If there is a problem or concern, organize and use the union structure to raise the issue at a policy making level.
- \* **Training and education.** Take advantage of courses or seminars offered by the union or other labour organizations. Knowledge will help you become more effective in building cases and presenting grievances. Distribute educational pamphlets, bulletins or materials.