

# Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: A Discussion Paper

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Sexual harassment of working women is a problem of increasing concern to, and claiming the attention of, greater and greater numbers of women and women's groups. Over the last two years several major studies have been published in the United States, and this past year one has been published in Canada (Backhouse and Cohen, *The Secret Oppression: Sexual Harassment of Working Women*). Cases are being brought forward in both countries under human rights legislation in attempts to seek remedies for this kind of harassment. Workshops and conferences have been and are being held among women's groups in various provinces.

Articles and interviews are being published on this topic in newspapers across Canada, in the feminist press and in national magazines. The Canadian Labour Congress has done a study involving its full-time union staff women.

What is becoming clear is that sexual harassment has been one of the most pervasive but, so far, ignored features of working life for women.

As the facts begin to come out into the open and the implications begin to be understood, there is an increasing challenge to workers and the unions that represent them to develop ways of dealing with this problem.

In response to this need, the B.C. Federation of Labour's Women's Rights Committee prepared a policy statement defining and opposing sexual harassment that was overwhelmingly endorsed at the Annual Federation Convention in 1978.

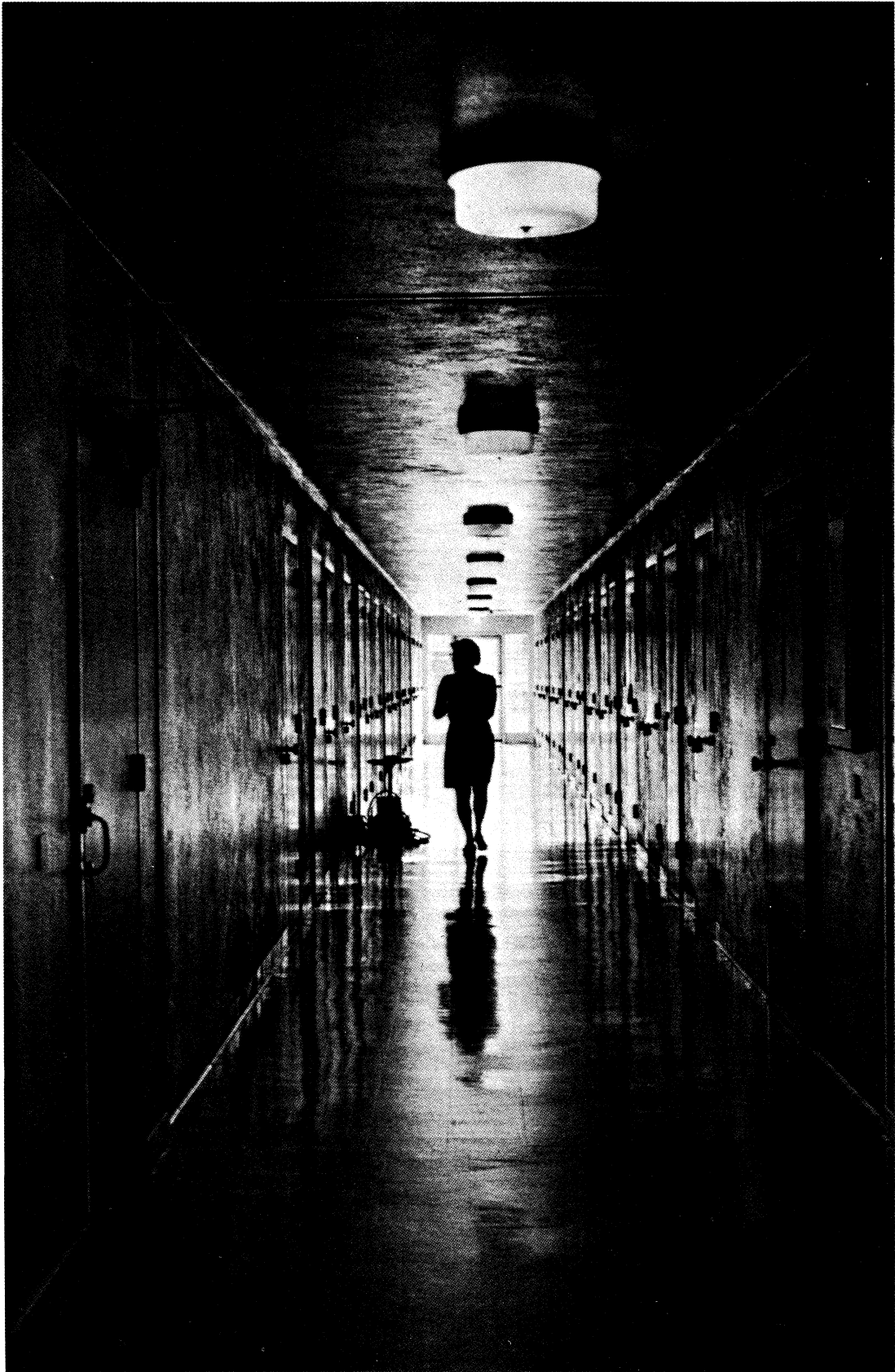
This study, initiated in the summer of 1978, represents the next step towards understanding and taking action against the problem. It is hoped that the information, analysis, and recommendations presented in this report will serve as a basis for discussion.©

**To obtain a copy of this working paper, please write to: Astrid Davidson, Director of Women's Programs, B.C. Federation of Labour, 3110 Boundary Road, Burnaby, B.C. V5M 4A2**



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