

SW One last question, Betsy, if you could pinpoint a time in your career that was a real turning-point, what would you choose?

BT That's hard....I think there were two vital times in my life as a student. The first was being turned down on my nursing career. That taught me it was OK to make mistakes. It forced me to assess myself and my future

very carefully and realistically. The other was deciding to go for president of the Student Association. Being scared and yet pushing myself. I learned a lot in a short time and I found strengths I never knew I had. And they've really helped me in everything I've done since then.

## Coming into the Workforce? Some Women's Issues for High-School Students

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Ce qui suit est un questionnaire qui évalue la conscience d'un/e étudiant/e par rapport aux pratiques discriminatoires sur le marché du travail.

In the past decade women's issues have been continually in the news. Scarcely a day goes by without the media's referring to equal-pay laws, family and marital law, and protective legislation designed to give women a better deal in the labour marketplace. Royal Commissions have inquired into the status of women and provinces have established women's advisory councils. The public and private sectors are examining administrative initiatives in affirmative action.

Schools, too, are responding to women's issues. Stereotypic materials presenting women in a negative fashion are being examined and altered. School boards and teachers' organizations are much more aware of women's concerns in employment practices.

However, in spite of activity in the area of sex discrimination many students cannot recognize discriminatory practices. Perhaps the pervasiveness of these practices is such that students frequently do not see that problems of differential treatment may be a result of an individual's sex.

A Rights Awareness Test (RAT) has been devised which measures students' knowledge and attitude toward discriminatory practices based on sex. The cases posed in the RAT are ones that are frequently encountered by provincial Human Rights Commissions. A sample RAT is presented below.

1. A security and protection company needs new recruits. The job involves patrolling a shopping centre. It advertises in the newspaper for help. The advertisement, in part, reads:

'Recruits wanted. Applicants must be eighteen years or older. Minimum height 5'8". Weight 175 lbs.'

- (a) Is there a law which prohibits the above advertisement?

YES DON'T KNOW NO

- (b) If there is not such a law, should there be one?

YES UNDECIDED NO

2. A company has recently hired two women to work in its maintenance department. The supervisor of that department does not like women working for him. It is the supervisor's responsibility to show all new employees aspects of the job. All are shown what to do except the two women. The supervisor then claims they were incompetent and fires them.

(a) Is there a law to prohibit the action of the supervisor?

YES DON'T KNOW NO

(b) If there is not such a law, should there be one?

YES UNDECIDED NO

3. A well-qualified woman applies for a job as a diesel mechanic on a road construction crew. The foreman is concerned that a woman will not fit in with the male crew members. He is concerned about the rough language the men use. He refuses to hire a woman.

(a) Is there a law to prohibit the action of the supervisor?

YES DON'T KNOW NO

(b) If there is not such a law, should there be one?

YES UNDECIDED NO

4. Management and union keep two seniority lists; one for male employees, one for female employees. When a position becomes available, union members apply for it. The chief criterion for promotion is the seniority of candidates. Management reviews the seniority of applicants and it sometimes happens that men with less seniority than women are selected because management reviews the male seniority list first.

(a) Is there a law prohibiting the selection of candidates on this basis?

YES DON'T KNOW NO

(b) If there is not such a law, should there be one?

YES UNDECIDED NO

5. A veterinary college has learned from experience that women tend to specialize in small-animal practice (dogs, cats, pets). There is, however, a large demand for, and a shortage of specialists in large-animal practice (farm animals). In spite of superior academic credentials the college refuses to accept female applicants.

(a) Is there a law which prohibits the action of the college?

YES DON'T KNOW NO

(b) If there is not such a law, should there be one?

YES UNDECIDED NO

6. A qualified woman is assigned to work as a helper to an experienced welder. When the welder's wife learns of this she is so unhappy that she insists the situation be changed. When the welder speaks to his foreman about the situation, the foreman decides the simplest way to handle it is to fire the woman helper.

(a) Is there a law which prohibits the action of the foreman?

YES DON'T KNOW NO

(b) If there is not such a law, should there be one?

YES UNDECIDED NO

7. There are three women clerks in a large business office. All of the other clerks are men. The supervisor asks the women to be responsible for making coffee for the office. The women do this, but when they realize that the men never make coffee, they refuse to do it. The supervisor fires them and replaces them with women who will make coffee.

(a) Is there a law which prohibits the action of the supervisor?

YES DON'T KNOW NO

(b) If there is not such a law, should there be one?

YES UNDECIDED NO

8. The owner of a men's wear store asks an employment agency to find a new salesman for the store. The employment agency reviews only the male candidates. When a woman hears that her application is not reviewed, she complains to the employment agency.

(a) Is there a law which prohibits the action of the employment agency?

YES DON'T KNOW NO

(b) If there is not such a law should there be one?

YES UNDECIDED NO

9. A manufacturing company, which has previously only employed men, interviews a qualified woman. The personnel manager, however, explains that they cannot hire her as there is only one washroom in the plant. He explains that it would be too expensive to provide another washroom for women.

(a) Is there a law which prohibits the action of the personnel manager?

YES DON'T KNOW NO

(b) If there is not such a law should there be one?

YES UNDECIDED NO

10. It is a company's policy to send two salespersons out traveling together. The company pays all expenses while the salespersons are on the road. It arranges for hotel rooms to be shared by them. A woman salesperson is rejected for a job with the company as it does not wish to put a male and female salesperson in the same hotel room. The company feels that it would have to incur additional costs for separate rooms.

(a) Is there a law which prohibits the company from employing in this fashion?

YES DON'T KNOW NO

(b) If there is not such a law, should there be one?

YES UNDECIDED NO

The answers to each question in the RAT are conditional upon the policy and legal interpretations given by Human Rights Commissions. However, it is suggested that ALL of the above practices would be seen to be illegal in most provinces.

The use of the RAT with high-school students frequently shows that students do not recognize discriminatory actions based on sex and are often surprisingly unsympathetic to women who find themselves in the situations posed.

The RAT, then, may be useful as it can provide a teaching instrument for both knowledge of the law and as a discussion base for issues involving sex discrimination. The RAT also deals with situations that are within the realm of students' experiences. Consequently, it may afford a useful tool in teaching courses in law and the social sciences.

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