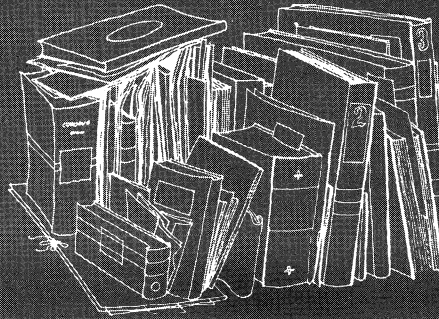


Book Reviews



PREVIEW

The Secret Oppression: Sexual Harassment of Working Women, Leah Cohen and Connie Backhouse, Toronto, Macmillan, 1979.

It's a very sexual job, and that's how you make most of your tips. That means you have to smile through abusive remarks made by the customer. You have to take a lot of hassles, everything from comments to being propositioned outright.

So said Rosalie Adams, a veteran waitress who worked in anything from a greasy spoon to an elegant dining room. She has lost a series of waitressing jobs because she refused to allow customers, employers, or co-workers to sexually abuse her. Her story is one of seven in-depth case studies undertaken by Leah Cohen and Connie Backhouse in *The Secret Oppression: Sexual Harassment of Working Women* (to be released by Macmillan in the spring, 1979).

The authors interviewed a wide range of working women only to discover that sexual harassment is a rampant feature of the work-place. Sexual harassment, they found, affects all working women, regardless of their age, appearance, occupational status, or social class. It manifests itself both physically and psychologically, running the gamut from leering, pinching, hugging, grabbing, and pawing to outright propositions for sexual favours. The harasser could be any man — a supervisor, a boss, a client, or a co-worker. Sexual harassment is not an expression of physical desire, but rather the exercise of male power over a female subordinate. In fact, sexual harassment is the most serious occupational hazard confronting working women.

The Secret Oppression will be the first Canadian book to address the subject of sexual harassment. The authors, a political scientist and a lawyer respectively, interviewed hundreds of working women and a cross-section of managers, personnel directors, union representatives, policemen, crown attorneys, government officials, and representatives of both the Canadian and the American women's movement. Their book focuses on what sexual harassment is; what it costs the victims; how it has affected working women throughout history; how management, personnel, and unions respond to sexual harassment (or fail to); and what legal ramifications exist.

Serious attention is given to a range of solutions. The book explores what tactics women use, successfully and unsuccessfully, to prevent sexual harassment and to deal with it when it arises.

A ten-point plan is provided for both management and unions who are concerned enough to want to minimize sexual harassment in their organizations. The question of the need for new legislation is considered, and the deeper, underlying societal problems which give rise to sexual harassment are examined.

Until very recently sexual harassment has been a closet issue. It is a sub-issue of rape, just one other expression of the coercive sexuality which saturates the total context of women's lives. The first step towards the elimination of sexual harassment involves an open, public dialogue. *The Secret Oppression* is an attempt to begin this process.

Leah Cohen, the co-author of *The Secret Oppression: Sexual Harassment of Working Women*, is available for workshops. The workshop is designed to provide participants with an overview of what sexual harassment is; how it manifests itself; and what it costs the victims. Included is an analysis of personal, legal, organizational, and societal solutions.

The fee per day is \$250.

Leah Cohen
299 Windermere Avenue
Toronto, Ont.
M6S 3K4
769-7980

Games Mother Never Taught You: Corporate Gamesmanship for Women, Betty Lehan Harragan, New York, Rawson Associates, 1977 (distributed by McClelland and Stewart), pp. 300, hardcover, \$14.50, paperback (Warner Paperback Library) \$2.50.

The Managerial Woman, Margaret Hennig and Anne Jardim, New York, Pocket Books, 1977, pp. 221, paperback \$2.75.

Linda Fischer

For any woman who works outside the home or who relates to people who do, these two books can contribute significantly to her understanding of what is happening out there. While both books are directed at managerial women whose aim it is