

tubeworker

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ORGANISE AGAINST SEXUAL HARASSMENT

What is sexual harassment?

In law it is “unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating someone’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment”.

This ranges from jokes about a person’s body to inappropriate touching to propositions for sex. Some people are unaware that their behaviour could be classed as sexual harassment; you might think, “it was only a joke” or, “I was just paying a compliment”. But just because you didn’t intend to sexually harass someone doesn’t mean that you didn’t. The “effect” on the recipient matters. It’s about how it feels on the receiving end (see image).

Is it just women who experience sexual harassment?

Not necessarily, but overwhelmingly yes. The 2016 TUC “Sexual Harassment in the Workplace” report states that in Europe women are three times more likely than men to experience sexual harassment and that perpetrators are overwhelmingly male.

Sexual harassment is a product and a part of this sexist society in which women have not yet won equality at work, at home, in popular culture and almost every strand of life.

Is it just about men vs. women?

No, it’s also about power. Sexual harassment happens when power hierarchies in the workplace mix with the power imbalance between men and women in society.

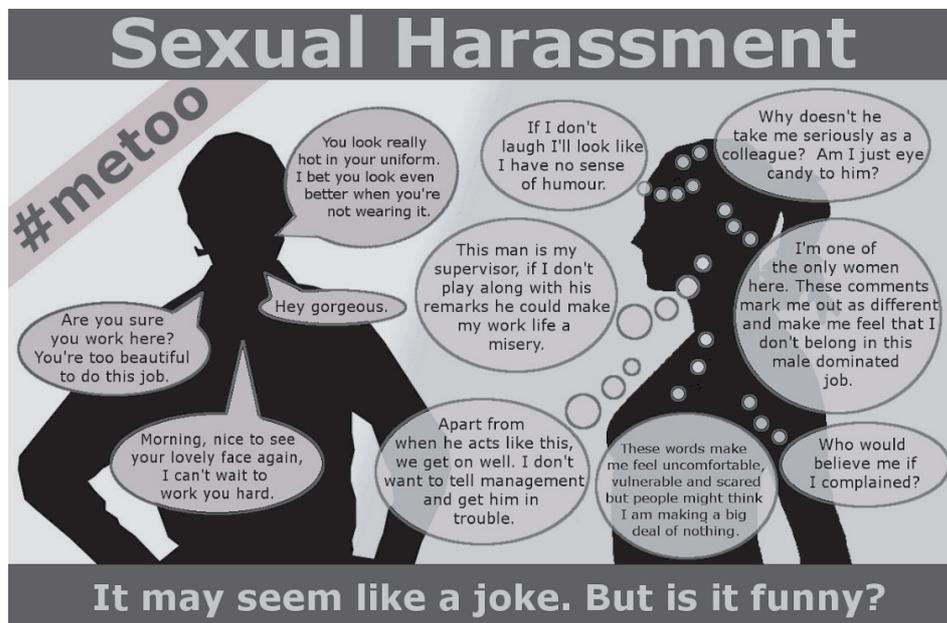
Men often have power over women at work. MPs and celebrities have recently been exposed for using their power and influence to act inappropriately to subordinates.

Cleaning

Sexual harassment is rife amongst the cleaning grade.

The TUC survey found that women without permanent contracts were more likely to experience sexual harassment and that there was a correlation between harassment and casualisation with women on irregular or precarious contracts more susceptible.

Contracted-out cleaners are very vulnerable to sexual harassment from supervisors and managers, including LU staff, who are often men. With insecure employment, women fear speaking up in case they lose their jobs.



In our industry, managers and supervisors are often male. We also work in a male-dominated environment, which gives men a kind of “strength in numbers” and a power to use sexual harassment to make women feel very unwelcome in our workplaces.

If no-one’s talking about it, then we’ve not got a problem in our workplace, right?

Wrong! Sexual harassment is widespread but rarely reported and talked about. According to the 2016 TUC report, 4 out of 5 women polled did not report sexual harassment to their employer and only 1% reported it to their union rep. As you see from the picture, there are so many reasons not to talk about it. Sexual harassment is confusing, intimidating, isolating.

You feel you’re making a big deal out of nothing. If we look at where we work, how many of us can honestly say that they’ve never been witness to sexual banter?

Just because no one objected publicly doesn’t mean it was OK.

What do we do about it?

DON’T DO IT! You might think you know someone really well and that you have a relationship where “banter” is acceptable.

But how can you know what that person is really feeling? If the person on the receiving end doesn’t object, they might be unwilling to be confrontational while feeling very uncomfortable at the same time.

Even if the individual you’re talking to feels OK, what kind of message does it send

to other women who work with you if these kinds of comments are commonplace?

CAMPAIGN! Our unions need to campaign. Every workplace needs a poster with a clear message: sexual harassment is not welcome here! Serious campaigns from our unions could encourage us to challenge our ideas and shift workplace cultures in which sexual banter is seen as acceptable. **BELIEVE WOMEN!** There is a stereotype of women making false allegations of sexual harassment to ruin mens’ reputations. This stereotype clouds judgement.

For every false allegation there are countless women suffering in silence for fear of not being believed. When an allegation is made, management and unions should proceed on the basis that the allegation is genuine.

Sexual harassment often occurs in a one-on-one setting, so it’s often “his word against hers”. A woman may not have witnesses or hard evidence but that doesn’t mean that she is lying!

SUPPORT WOMEN! Our unions need to support women who want to make complaints of sexual harassment.

This includes: providing a trained, impartial person to talk to in confidence; listening to the outcome that the complainant wants; arranging legal support. *Tubeworker* supporters are working on getting RMT to draw up best practice guidelines for supporting sexual harassment cases.

Sexual harassment is intimidating and isolating; unions need to be clear that you do not have to suffer it on your own.

DUST UP

Spare a thought for station staff at Moorgate, Old Street and Highbury & Islington.

Great Northern have omitted to clean their tunnels properly for a couple of decades, and the dust has now become a positive nuisance. The good news is that it doesn't - as initially feared - contain asbestos. The less good news is that it contains mould and various other nasty substances.

It is just not acceptable for us (or our Great Northern workmates) to be subjected to working in these conditions.

SLIPPING STANDARDS

The Evening Standard and the *Metro* have been getting permission from Area Managers to dish out their papers on the paid side of the gateline.

What could possibly go wrong? Apart from the litter build-up, obstruction, congestion, general aggro.

In any case, here at *Tubeworker*, we don't particularly like the idea of newspapers that regularly insult and abuse us being dished out to our paying customers.

TfL JOB CUTS THREAT

Transport for London has announced a plan to cut 1,400 jobs as part of its "transformation" programme. These jobs will come from engineering, admin, managerial, and other departments.

Unions must resist this cuts onslaught. Any job lost will be a setback, as it accepts the principle that cutting staff - whatever their grade or department - is the first option for making "savings" rather than, for example, trimming senior management pay, or actually fighting the government on the question of funding.

NO CUTS TO WEMBLEY EVENT STAFF!

The local manager wants to reduce event staffing levels at Wembley Central, possibly from 10 to 6. Local union reps are opposing this reduction.

There's no possible justification for the cut. It's penny-pinching, pure and simple.

If management don't see sense and agree to maintain the event staffing level, unions should explore the prospects for a local dispute. We cannot allow the company to place staff and passengers in danger for the sake of saving a few quid.

TOPRA CHANGES PENALISE JUNIOR DRIVERS

A change has been made to the Train Operators Professional Agreement (Topra).

Previously, any driver who had safety related incidents on a manual line, and who had been on the job two years, had an option of moving to an automatic line. Management and Aslef decided they wanted to increase this to five years and, despite RMT protestations, it has occurred.

Much like the changes in the 2009 agreement, also pushed through by Aslef, it is junior drivers who lose out, and management who make the savings. It also moves us closer to a two-tier situation between automatic and manual lines.

We need to know what's in our agreements, and organise to fight detrimental changes to them.

RETURN OF THE RAINBOW?

Remember Rainbow?

Managers at their keyboards spotting imaginary "patterns" in your sickness absence so they can issue warnings to staff who haven't actually triggered the Attendance procedure?

Well, it appears to have reappeared. The Rainbow has been spotted recently over some Piccadilly line traincrew depots, Central line stations, in service control, and elsewhere. If you spot it in your area, get on to your union rep straightaway. Where reps have objected strongly to it, management appear to have backed off.

At the end of this Rainbow is a crock... but not of gold.

LEAF IT OUT

Piccadilly Line trains management appear to be nervous about the leaf fall season.

They look like they are either setting up drivers to take the, erm, fall for the inevitable delays, or maybe thinking that by applying pressure, they can bludgeon drivers into inventing new techniques to stop wheels skidding on falling foliage. This is a strange strategy, given that all the evidence from recent troubles on the line points to other causes.

Tubeworker's message to management? Leaf it out.



YOUR MONEY BACK?

LU has produced a league table to help management identify whether "the same people" are "always" doing refunds for customers on the POMs.

What is this meant to prove? That some staff like to help when customers have been over-charged?

LU closes ticket offices and pressures us to do ticket selling duties without proper training, then watches to see if we do it "wrong".

LU is introducing more and more monitoring. It wants us to feel more "managed" and vulnerable. It has created a new layer of stations management for this purpose. We need to resist this culture shift.

TRAIN PREP CUT COULD COST LIVES

Management have told union reps on fleet that they intend to reduce the frequency of train prep, essential maintenance done to check that trains are safe to run, from 24 hours to 96.

This reckless cut could cost jobs, and lives!

Union activists are already organising to resist the attack. Stay tuned for more info.

What is Tubeworker?

Tubeworker is a rank-and-file socialist bulletin, published at least monthly, written by Tube workers, for Tube workers. It is published by the socialist group Workers' Liberty, but is produced in editorial meetings open to all workers.

Supporters from outside London Underground can help with public distribution.

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