

# STATEMENT OF POLICY ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT

## INTRODUCTION

The United Steelworkers wants to provide a harassment free environment at all International USW workplaces and activities.

We have democratically passed tough, meaningful policies on harassment at our Conferences and Conventions and negotiated such policies to protect our members. They are not just words. We take them seriously.

In addition to cooperation and understanding, mutual respect must be the basis of interaction among trade unionists.

The USW will neither tolerate nor condone behavior from its employees or from others doing business on USW property, such as vendors, that is likely to undermine the dignity or self-esteem of an individual, or create an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

One form of harassment that is particularly demeaning and intimidating is sexual harassment and the following policy shall apply to allegations of such harassment

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY<sup>1</sup>

Sexual harassment is not a joke. It creates feelings of uneasiness, humiliation and discomfort. It is an expression of perceived power and superiority by the harasser over another person. There are two principles fundamental to the trade union movement: human rights and solidarity. Sexual harassment strikes at the heart of both.

Sexual harassment is also illegal discrimination in both the United States and Canada. It is commonly defined as:

- (1) **Unwanted sexual attention** of a persistent or abusive nature, made by a person who knows or ought reasonably to know that such attention is unwanted; or
- (2) **implied or expressed promise of reward** for complying with a sexually oriented request; or
- (3) **implied or expressed threat or reprisal**, in the form either of actual reprisal or the denial of opportunity, for refusal to comply with a sexually oriented request;
- (4) **sexually oriented remarks and behavior** which may reasonably be perceived to create a negative, intimidating, hostile or offensive environment. Unwanted sexually directed behavior can include:

- assault
- physical abuse (touching, pinching, cornering)
- verbal abuse (propositions, lewd comments, sexual insults)
- visual abuse (display of pornographic material designed to embarrass or intimidate).

Some forms of harassment may not violate the law. For example, harassment allegations concerning an International employee and a Local Union member would normally not affect the member's employment or working environment. But such harassment does violate the basic principles of the union. The USW considers sexual harassment of any kind a serious offense. Complaints of harassment in the workplace and at USW activities will be investigated.<sup>2</sup>

This policy is based upon a desire to mediate resolutions of complaints in an amicable and non-adversarial manner.

Because, in most cases, the individuals involved are both members of our union, emphasis will be placed on resolving complaints informally in the first instance.

Where such resolution is not possible, a formal complaint can be processed. A substantiated complaint will result in appropriate action, up to and including termination of employment for USW employees. All complaints will be handled in a confidential manner and all formal complaints should be directed to the International President.

In addition to the contractual complaint and grievance provisions governing USW employees, the International has established a Committee on Sexual Harassment composed of representatives from the International, exempt employees, SRU, USW Local 3657 and OPEIU Local 343. This Committee will be responsible for developing an educational program on sexual harassment for all USW employees and for recommending procedures for responding to informal complaints under this policy.

The Committee will also provide for the investigation of any complaints referred to it by the International President.

*Adopted this 17th day of June, 1992 by the USWA International Executive Board.*

<sup>1</sup>*This policy covers USW International employees in the United States and Canada. It does not apply to USW members generally since they are covered by policies established by their employers. However, USW members can request investigation of a claim of sexual harassment by a USW employee under this policy. The policy also does not cover Local Union officers and Local Union employees. However, Local Unions are encouraged to adopt similar policies. The policy does apply to the conduct of others doing business on USW property, such as vendors.*

<sup>2</sup>*This includes complaints about conduct by Local Union officers or members against other members where that conduct takes place at International USW Junctions. In such cases, the Local Union will be notified of the results of the investigation so that appropriate action can be taken by the Local Union.*