

Sex Discrimination Thrives On The Job

By MARGARET MILLER

"Sex discrimination in employment is alive and thriving," reports a woman who spends her time checking into examples of such discrimination.

Sharon Kennedy of the Michigan department of civil rights told a weekend seminar on women's concerns at the Northwest YWCA that cases involving sex discriminations rose 60 per cent in the course of 1972.

"This is due either to increasing discrimination against working women or to the fact that women are complaining now about situations that have existed for years.

"I hope it's the latter." Over the last few years, Miss Kennedy said, the criteria for determining whether discrimination is present have changed considerably.

"The determining factor several years back had to be 'evil motive,'" she said. "That means it had to be proved that a company was willfully discriminating.

"An example of that sort of thing was the broadcasting company which refused to hire a woman as a newscaster because it claimed that 'news coming from women sounds like gossip.'"

Up to October of 1971, she said, what had to be

proved was "unequal treatment," like the case of the firm that permitted male executives to smoke at their desks but denied the same privilege to their secretaries, who were women.

Now the criterion is "disparate effect," Miss Kennedy said. "That means any policy that has an adverse effect on a particular group of employees."

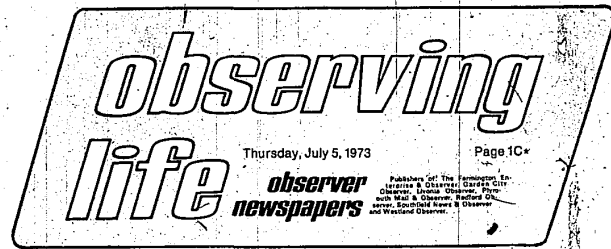
The example she cited involved a company charged with passing over women when it came to appointments to managerial positions.

"When we investigated," she added, "we were told that the company offered women executive positions but hardly any could accept because of the firm's policy of sending executives in training posts all over the country. Most women could not accept that requirement.

"But the point is that now a firm has to prove that a policy that turns out to be discriminatory is absolutely essential to business. If it cannot prove this, it's discrimination through 'disparate effect.'"

Guidelines have been set up by the federal Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, Miss Kennedy said, with regard to avoiding discrimination against women in jobs.

"These require that sex differentiation in hiring must be for a bona fide reason and not on assumptions of greater turnover among women employees or



the notion that men make more aggressive salesmen," she said.

"There can't be refusal to hire women because co-workers, supervisors or customers object, and there cannot be separate lines of employment or separate seniority systems."

They also deal with making a major issue of a woman's marital status, Miss Kennedy said.

"It's a funny thing about the way they use answers about marital status on those application forms," she said.

"If you're young and single, they figure that you're going to get married and quit. And if you're young and married, you're likely to get pregnant.

"If you're in your late 20s or 30s and not married, they figure there's something wrong with you, and if you're older than that, you're too hard to train.

"I know I'm not far off base by the embarrassed laughs I get when I suggest these categories to employers."

The guidelines also refer to fringe benefits, Miss Kennedy added. These include the same benefits for maternity leave as for other sick leave.

"It's changed now," she said, "but it used to be that men in our state department could use sick leave to take care of their children when their wives had babies, but the women in the department could not be paid while on maternity leave."

Miss Kennedy called the guidelines "significant" and added:

"We've won a lot of cases in courts, and I think we're going to win a lot more. Because processing a claim and taking it to court

can take weeks or months," she said that often representatives of her office try to talk to the employer and get it straightened out without a formal complaint.

"But we have to accept any claim of civil rights violation that is filed," she said.

"An interesting development has been an increase in the number of claims filed by white men, charging their rights have been violated because companies have been ordered to increase the percentage of minority and women employees on their payrolls."

The conference was sponsored by the 17th Congressional District Women's Democratic Caucus.

It also included a workshop on women and economics, led by Esther Shapiro of the Michigan Credit Union League and Milly Rawison, employed by the United Auto Workers and active in the Business and Professional Women.

There was a workshop on family relationships led by Maryann Mahaffey, a social worker and a member of the Detroit mayor's task force on anger, and one on education led by Joanne Keller, Cindy Hawkins and Bertha Kaminsky.

Miss Mahaffey also keynoted the seminar, pointing out that it is through such meetings that women could become aware of their rights and responsibilities.

"The rights movement, like you and me, is interested in improving the condition of everyone," she said.

"We know that only when everyone is free, anyone can be free. We have supported the labor movement and the black people, and we now are asking the same for women."

Couple Remembers Old Days In Plymouth

Lou Chambers of Plymouth can tell stories of driving an old horse-drawn hearse for the Schrader Funeral Home.

His wife, Eleanor, grew up in the Canton area and remembers taking care of Canton Township Supervisor Philip Dingley when he was a small child.

Together, they are enjoying life in a Plymouth townhouse after more than 60 years of marriage.

After building and selling several Plymouth homes and once trying a move to Florida, they now make their home in the Twin Arbor apartments.

Mr. Chambers, now 84, underwent a leg amputation in February, so the couple missed their annual trip to Florida.

But he has started driving again, so he says they'll be going next year.

"Maybe take it slower, though," he considered. "Not try to do it all in 2 1/2 days."

"He says that every year," his wife came back, "but he never wants to stop once we get going."

Lou Chambers and Eleanor Mott met while attending the wedding of one of her cousins.

Eleanor had lived in this area all her life and attended the Truesdell School, still in

operation in Canton Township.

"I'm a newcomer here," her husband said. "I didn't get to Plymouth until 1910."

The way he happened to come, he explained, was that he had left his home in the Grand Rapids area and headed southeast in search of farm work.

"I stopped in a barber shop in Ohio," he recalls. "His uncle was getting his hair cut, too, and he offered me a job on his farm in Plymouth."

"I said, 'Where's Plymouth?' and when he said, it was west of Detroit, I said I'd take the job. The girls came to meet me in a horse and buggy."

The Chambers were married April 15, 1913 in the home of parson Joseph Dutton, and it was after that that Mr. Chambers worked several years for Fred D. Schrader at his funeral home.

His job was driving the hearse to funerals, and some were some distance outside Plymouth.

"I had to sit outside in the rain and snow, no protection," he said. "And sometimes when I'd wash the hearse, the water would freeze on the wheels."

Lou Chambers also worked 22 years as a crib man "the one who takes care of the tools" - for Ford Motor Co. and did maintenance work for the Maybury Sanitarium before retiring 15 years ago.

The couple has one daughter, Mrs. Alice Moran, and four grandchildren, three of whom live in the Plymouth area. There are nine great-grandchildren.



MR. AND MRS. LOU CHAMBERS were photographed by the Observer's Bob Woodring in their Plymouth apartment after more than 60 years of married life. Below, Mr. Chambers is shown more than half a century ago driving a hearse for the Schrader Funeral Home in Plymouth. That's the late Fred Schrader standing to the left.



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