

WOMENS' OPPRESSION

WORK

Since the early sixties millions of black women in S.A. have been forced to take on jobs in industry as a result of their menfolk not earning enough wages or becoming unemployed. The situation is made worse as family life is broken up in this capitalist-apartheid system. Husbands leave their wives, and men give their lovers children, and then abandon them. Today, women occupy jobs which were seen as "men's work" before. At work they experience even worse problems than their husbands, brothers, sons and lovers.

SEXISM

The vast majority of women in S.A. are oppressed and exploited in three ways. As Black people, as women and as workers. All black people in this country, all who are not classified White are denied the most commonly accepted rights. All women suffer in varying degrees from Sexism whereby women are regarded as inferior to men - this affects women's participation in worker, community and political organisations. For example, a man's opinion on any issue will usually be regarded as more important than a woman's.

Black women workers make up almost half of S.A.'s total workforce. In numbers they almost equal men, yet they are paid much

less than men. In certain industries, such as food and canning textiles and clothing shops etc. where bosses actually prefer women they are still paid less than men doing the same work. Women also have less choice of jobs. The only hope of survival for millions of women is low paying casual labour or domestic labour.

DOMESTIC SERVICE

Domestic services is often the only jobs black women can find - here they face extreme exploitation: lower wages, ^{than} most urban workers, extremely long hours of work including weekends and public holidays, no law to protect and constant personal humiliation from the "madame".

In many cases women are the only breadwinners. They have to see to the immediate domestic problems such as clothing for the children, paying rent, feeding hungry mouths, paying accounts and so on.

In addition to the exploitation suffered by all workers generally, women have their own added burdens. As child-bearers they are discriminated against.

Pregnant shop assistant for example, are transferred to the storerooms or to dispatch where they must work harder, simply because "it does n't look

nice for the customers". On returning after childbirth if she still has her job - the mother of a new born baby will often be treated like a new worker starting on the lowest grade. She might also have to start her pension savings all over again - and this is when she needs more money than before, because now she has an extra mouth to feed.

SEXUAL TOYS

They are used as the sexual toys of men at their work places - they must give their bodies to keep their jobs. Women are often abused sexually, both by their fellow male workers and by management. The promise of sexual favours is often the exchange for promotion to a softer job, or even for just getting a job.

Women also face a "second shift" that is, they work during the day in factories or the fields and then they have to do most of the housework during the early hours of the morning and at night as well, for which they are not paid.

To be continued : the reasons for women's oppression and women's resistance.

