



Maternity Rights: CCAWUSA Shows the Way

The struggle to prevent discrimination against women took a further step forward this month when CCAWUSA signed a Maternity Agreement with Metro Cash 'n Carry. The agreement provides for a wide range of protective measures and rights for working mothers, including the country's first health and safety agreement for pregnant and nursing mothers.

The agreement probably provides the largest package for working mothers yet negotiated. The most important aspects of the agreement are the following:

- * 12 months maternity leave with the guaranteed right to return to work
- * 7 of the 12 months are paid at 33% of normal salary; with UIF payments this amounts to 78% of salary for 6 months, and one month at 33%
- * paid paternity leave for the father of 3 days during confinement
- * R100 worth of baby goods free at any Metro Store
- * time off to facilitate nursing and to attend ante- and post-natal clinics
- * a comprehensive health and safety section
- * a clause stating that pregnant applicants will not be turned down on the grounds of pregnancy
- * a commitment to health and safety education for pregnant and nursing mothers.

Another important aspect to this agreement is that it is very flexible and has few preconditions:

- * It is the choice of the worker as to when she wishes to take leave and claim the 7 months paid leave, provided this is not sooner than 4 months before and not later than 8 months after confinement
- * If less than 7 months paid leave is taken then the balance will be paid out on returning to work
- * There are no preconditions to qualifying, with the exception of women arriving pregnant and those who fall pregnant during their first month of service, who will not qualify for paid leave and the free baby goods, but will otherwise

- maternity -

be fully covered by the agreement (including 12 months unpaid leave).

Proposals given to Metro were the result of lengthy preparations and research into the whole area of maternity. (See SALB 10.2 for the initial proposal submitted to Metro.) Special attention was paid to the health and safety of pregnant and nursing workers and their children and a medical doctor who is an expert in the field of occupational and child health was included as an advisor in the CCAWUSA negotiating team for part of the time.

The agreement is also significant in that Metro Cash 'n Carry is a major employer belonging to the Kirsch Group of companies which also includes Checkers. Negotiations are now about to begin with Pick 'n Pay, Checkers and Frasers Ltd. The union has already negotiated maternity agreements with OK Bazaars (which was the first full maternity agreement negotiated in South Africa), Woolworths, CNA and Makro. The union intends bringing these agreements into line with the Metro agreement.

CCAWUSA sees the fight against sexual discrimination, of which maternity agreements are a large aspect, as an important and valid part of the overall struggle for improved conditions of work and for increased workers' control in the workplace.

(Jeremy Daphne, CCAWUSA, February 1985)