

1. WOMEN AND WAGED

Translated from:
«Les femmes et le
salarial»

LABOUR

by a woman in the Women's
Liberation Movement in France

The movement for the liberation of women is directly linked to the question of women working outside the home. Historically, it was the great number of American women going into production during the second world war, and then their brutal expulsion between 1945 and 1947 that was the determining factor in the appearance of new forms of women's organisation.

But if women have begun to struggle, and organise as they go into production, will the demand for work outside the home be their objective? In fact, women want the tasks and domestic services that they perform as housewives inside the home to be recognised as productive work. They are not unemployed people demanding a job, but producers without an income, who demand that they should not be obliged to be "the dependent" of someone else, father or husband.

WHY DO WOMEN GO OUT TO WORK ?

As an answer we will give the results of a C.F.D.T (one of the three French Unions) survey of shop assistants:
-35% work from absolute necessity,
-60% to improve the family income,
-5% because they like the work, so as not to stay at home, or in order to be independent.

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It is, then, a tiny minority who have the choice between working and not working outside the home. For the majority, the question is settled by the insufficient income of their husbands or by inflation. If we look at the number of women working, in connection with their husbands' jobs, it is clear that this is the determining factor.

Etudes et Conjoncture (published by the National Institute of Statistics
December 1964)

<u>Husband's occupation:</u>	<u>Percentage of women working:</u>
farmers	59.4%
agricultural labourers	17.5%
management of industry and trade (shopkeepers etc inc)	40.3%
professionals and top management (e.g. doctors, lawyers..)	22.8%
junior management (e.g. teachers etc)	37.2%
employees (office workers, etc)	37.9%
industrial workers	28.7%
service industries (cleaning etc)	40.5%
other categories	19.5%

It is thus professional men's and workers' wives who work least outside the home, as opposed to those women whose husbands have an intermediate position. But of course they stay home for different reasons: we have to consider here the family responsibilities of most working class women. (only 6% of women who have three or more children go out to work.)

Can this presence of women in production be claimed as a victory by women's movement? In 1968 in France, 40% of women had jobs. In other words, 1/3 of the labour force in France were women, (that is 7,000,000 "employed" women). To explain these figures, we have to consider less the demand for the "right to work" and the pressure of women than the shortage of workers threatening capitalist development. The shortage of manpower seems in fact to be the bottleneck of expansion. Foreign and female labour were resorted to for the same reason.

In France, the shortage was felt more than elsewhere just after the second world war, and it is there that the percentage of working women is highest. And what is the situation now?

"...If the birth rates remain low, Europe and the United States could

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have a serious crisis of labour power by the end of the '70s. Some experts go as far as predicting a shortage of several millions of workers in Britain and West Germany. It will then become an urgent necessity to take full advantage of a reserve army of workers still for the most part insufficiently used: women." *Entreprise* 8 April 1972.

The same article gives the latest figures for women's employment in France which are still very high compared with other European countries: 46.6% of women are working outside the home today. Women, then, constitute the only reserve labour force still available. As the examples of Sweden and Japan show, the shortage of workers has undeniably been what drives development forward, and it will play the same role in the future. But we have to be more precise; because the majority of single women, for whom work outside the home was an absolute necessity, were already working, it was in fact only the married women who were a potential source of labour power. The difference in the number of women working in the different countries of the O.C.D.E corresponds in fact to a difference in the number of married women working. 33% of women have paid jobs in the US, 45% in Sweden. In France, one married woman in three has a job (34% according to *Le Monde* 19/4/72 and 45% in Paris and the surrounding districts and in Basse Normandie, areas which have the highest proportion of women working.

This is not at all accidental.

"...Contrary to a very common opinion, it is wrong to consider working women a passing reality which will disappear as soon as the general standard of living is high enough. On the contrary, we see that it is in the richest countries that women's employment has developed most quickly over the past few years.."(OCDE, *Seminaire syndical sur l'emploi des femmes - Paris 1968 - Rapport final*).

In the US the women, whose employment was promoted by the war, withdrew from it when the war was over. But this doesn't mean that the conditions of production and employment were the same as before - especially in France. In fact, the employment of women just after the second world war was higher there than in any other European country. When we still look at the female work force as something to fill the gaps for the capitalists, as an industrial reserve army, we are several years behind the capitalist planning.

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It is certain that among those who cannot find work there is always a large proportion of women. Does this mean that they are discriminating against women, refusing to let women work? If that were true, a woman would only find a job after every man had one. Whereas in fact there is not only one labour market, which discriminates against women, but two labour markets, each with its own specific function for capital (in the same way we have to distinguish between the national labour market and the labour market for immigrants; and between French women and immigrants, inside the female labour market. (We will come back to this). There are of course sectors common to both sexes. To speak of two labour markets first of all brings up the division of industry into sectors: women work in two kinds of industry; on the one hand traditional industries such as clothing, textiles, leather and food, which are often declining sectors. On the other hand, they work in expanding industries like electronics. But this division between labour markets, which is becoming sharper and sharper, corresponds to a division in gradings and wages—women have their special place in the hierarchy. For the same reason we cannot say that women are expelled from production so that men can take their place: capital cannot directly replace women workers by men who would be more costly, who do not have the same characteristics, who above all are more ready to make demands. When women are the first to be laid off in periods of recession, this is not because of discrimination, but only takes place to the extent that the recession affects those branches of industry where they are in large numbers. (textiles for example)

The question now is why women are employed most in declining sectors. One could say that in the textile industry, they carry on a type of production which originally took place within the family unit, and that the areas of women's labour can be explained by the survival of an ideology in which the woman is seen as a housewife... Although the ideology exists, there is a more important factor: the low profits in the sectors where women are concentrated may make it impossible to attract male labour by high wages. Women's jobs have these characteristics: they are badly paid, and involve little responsibilities initiative or qualifications. They demand chiefly strong nerves and

Manual dexterity; the work is fragmented and consists purely in carrying out orders.

A P.S.U report gives these significant figures:

male workers: 5,179,600

female workers: 1,178,600

Among the male workers.....23% are O.S_(I)

.....43% are O.P_(I)

.....6.3% are supervisors

Among women workers53% are O.S

.....18% are O.P

..... 2.3% are supervisors

And according to an inquiry by the National Institute of Statistics, into wages in 1968:

- a woman at the level of junior management gets 75% of what a man in junior management gets.

- a female office worker gets on average 77% of a male office worker's pay.

- a female industrial worker gets 67% of a male worker's pay.

This is not the place to explain why a hierarchy of wages and skills is necessary to the life and the survival of capital... but to show why women always find themselves at the bottom of the sale (and there the exception confirms the rule). Because woman is identified with the image of the wife and because the wife's function-producing and reproducing labour power in the home for nothing is not recognised, the woman's wage is only considered as: money to make up the man's wage. It is the husband's pay which is supposed to cover completely the reproduction of labour power and the maintenance of the family. This state of affairs affects even the single woman: independent as she is, she too is the victim of the wage hierarchy. There is an interaction between a job's becoming women's work and its losing value in the scale of wages. Teaching in France is an example: at the moment when teachers lost their social status and professional prestige, there was a large movement of women into education; and from that point, there was a tendency for the pay of teachers to drop in relation to that of other professions. This is also true of public employees in general. (I) O.P (ouvrier professionnel): skilled worker - O.S (ouvrier spécialisé): unskilled worker

EQUAL PAY

The demand for equal pay does not in any way solve the problem of the gap between men's wages and women's wages. Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome of the E.E.C lays down the principle of equal pay for women; but the disparity remains under cover of legality, because occupational categories and job evaluation intervene in determining wages. Women always have the lowest gradings, and the employer can always play on contracts and laws in order to class women's jobs as inferior.

Up to 1960 in Italy, women workers even had a classification entirely apart from that of the men—the consequence of which was of course lower wages. If the pressure of struggles put an end to this archaism, it is because it was impossible to maintain it indirectly (through bonuses and piece work for example).

Moreover, in France, equal pay applies to the Guaranteed Minimum Wage (S.M.I.G.) but not to the part of the wage over this minimum.

The unions have very quickly realised that unequal pay between men and women raises in fact the problem of the pay slip and the way in which wages are "calculated" (that is : justified) c.f. the O.E.C.D report quoted above.

"... In the present situation the form and validity of the recognition of female work is based not on the precise analysis of the evolutionary tendencies of structures of work in general than on the priority, the invocation of "civil and legal" imperatives.

Precisely in applying the rules of wage parity between men and women, we see the limits of the policy of upgrading women's work in terms of strict equality, that is to say an attempt which in its basis and its methods, still starts off from the classification of the tasks of the woman accomplishes and refers to the grading attached to the work a man does in order to classify work accomplished by a woman."

For the unions, at the present time, bringing equal pay into effect requires a definition of "the new elements of modern work": it involves a new evaluation of jobs performed which takes account of technological progress. The unions realise that muscular strength is always given more weight in calculating wages, than manual dexterity and strong nerves. Now it is clear that these latter are the qualities that

are more and more required. At the moment when work takes on new characteristics (monotony, repetition), capital will be led to link the wage with other criteria than simple physical strength, for example how attractive the job is, boredom, etc.. The question is whether this new evaluation will change anything at all for women.

An employers' report of 28.9.71 envisages the creation of a 'bonus for boredom', but they make clear straight away that it would only be paid to those categories that truly suffer from the monotony of industrial work. Now, according to the same report, women do not suffer from it, since they have not complained as the labourers (O.S.) have. It is clear then that the new job evaluation will maintain, by different means, the same play of wage inequalities.

THE QUESTION OF SKILLS AND GRADINGS IN WOMEN'S JOBS

What the unions do not see is that women's wages are not the result of a badly conceived method of calculating a week's pay, but the fruit of capitalist logic: the way capital speculates on the lack of organization of women workers; and if women workers have no tradition of struggle, this must be seen as a direct result of the place society reserved for them.

It is the same with the question of the training and qualifications required for women's jobs: qualifications and high wages don't always go together. But what does go together is women's work and low wages. That is why it is wrong to define women, as the unions do, as 'technically marginal' and to assume that extending job training would make a difference to their situation.

"Women are sometimes more competent than men", Entreprise concedes; "statistics reveal that in France white collar women have a higher standard of education than their male colleagues. More than 54 p.c. of women employed in offices have higher qualifications than the necessary minimum as against only 45 p.c. of the men. Paradoxically, men continue to monopolize the managerial positions."

Since co-education has not modified the distribution of economic roles, training women professionally would not push them up the scale. In fact, we know that masses of young girls still take

C.A.P.'s (technical diplomas) in sewing, which were originally intended to feed the textile and clothing industries, although the demand for labour in this sector has dropped in relation to its supply. Why then, is this inappropriate training continued? Because sewing develops manual dexterity and after the C.A.P. the young girls find work only in electronics, where their employers as they reap the benefits of their training, can consider them unskilled workers (and so pay them an unskilled wage): they don't have C.A.P.'s in winding.

To define women as 'technically marginal' is to cover up two facts: one is that women's place in production is not any way marginal, but on the contrary is essential for capital (social capital, capital which is no longer concerned with whether any particular individual is productive, that is gives value to the money of an isolated capitalist, but concerns itself instead with the mean social productivity, to which each individual in the social factory contributes); the other fact that this definition hides is that the specific place of women is linked to the general evolution of the structures of work. In the double movement of over-valuing certain jobs and down-grading others, women, like immigrants, have been assigned the 'unskilled' jobs. And don't reply that now at last more and more women have access to certain 'creative' jobs. It is quite clear that they have access to these jobs just to the degree that they cease to be creative. The practice of giving women unskilled jobs regardless of any training, is growing. And we can state this law: every time women have access to a new sector of production, it is because the jobs there have been down-graded and therefore require only a minimum of training or simply training on the job.

If the jobs most women do in industry do not require any specific training, why are women still given one? It does not answer this question to note that the students who prepare C.A.P.s help, in the course of their training, to maintain their technical colleges. It would be more appropriate to pose in a general way the problem of the training of the workforce in school and of capital's interest in maintaining absolutely inadequate teaching. One fact is proved, in any case, training is a considerable factor in binding workers to a job. And this is at the

Intended for them,
Present time the employers' major problem to obtain the adhesion of workers to their jobs; to make them accept the necessity of passing through waged work to get a living.

THE CRISIS OF THE UNSKILLED WORKERS AND THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN

The '60s saw a workers' offensive which the employers and the bourgeois press called the 'problem of the unskilled worker' (O.S., the French abbreviation for ouvrier spécialisé). The O.S. is not a specialized worker, but a worker whose machine is specialized. Faced with work which is more and more abstract, monotonous, and fragmented into small operations, he replies with absenteeism, sabotage, and wild cat strikes which escape union control. May '68 is only one episode in the continual struggle of the O.S., the moment when, in posing the problem of political power, the struggle is revealed as a political crisis. From that time two kinds of reports have piled up on the desks of the employers, the economists, and the union officials: reports on the unskilled worker and reports on the employment of women.

This is an employers' report of 28.9.71: "The problem of the O.S. in France does not have the same characteristics in both sexes. The relatively low employment of women, women's low technical qualifications, their traditional adaptation to simple and monotonous work would seem to show, in particular, that as far as they are concerned, the problem only exists in a much milder form".

Solving the problem of the O.S., which for capital means reestablishing its control over working class movements and so restoring the conditions for acceptable profits, demands several initiatives: the first is to restore workers' adhesion to their work by concessions in such matters as wages, individual promotion, working conditions, and even the running of the factory while using a 'human relations' policy to help the workers to adapt to the factory. And also to reestablish control over the workforce, while at the same time giving more responsibility to the workers. A difficult solution at least for the time being, as it involves the complete restructuring of the enterprise.

The second initiative, which can be taken at the same time, is to turn to another kind of labourforce; it grows clearer every day that the immigrants are not what the employers hoped they would be: they also suffer from the monotony of industrial work and begin to fight; and racism makes it impossible to employ them more generally. This is a problem which obviously does not arise with women workers who moreover 'enjoy repetitive work'.

According to the employers' report already quoted, "we have found that women seem to accomodate better than men to the monotony of certain jobs. We have to ask, therefore, if it would not be proper to encourage their employment. This plan often comes up against the resistance of managements, who consider the employment of women expensive, because of absenteeism for instance... The difficulty/of recruiting men will lead employers to favour women (especially as against foreign workers). This consideration will make them look again at the jobs to adapt them to a female workforce..."

Let us consider this last point: in the movement, women's struggles are often compared to the struggles of foreign workers, usually on the basis of an analogy between racism and sexism. It is with the question of work that we see most clearly what this analogy is based on: they are both linked to the same economic reality, to the same plan of capital modifying the workforce by taking on foreign workers and women workers.

If we look only at the factories this strategy will not strike us so forcibly. The number of women in industry has only increased by 50,000 in the last 50 years, according to a CFTD report of 1968. But hour hypothesis is confirmed if we consider that women work mainly in the tertiary sector:

out of 100 women going out to work in '62: 19 were in agriculture
28 in manufacturing industries
53 in the tertiary sector.

The so-called tertiary sector consists of shops, banking and insurance companies, social services, administrative and office work, teaching, etc. And the number of women in this sector has increased

y 460,000 during the same period. This is not an accident: today at the level of training, most women are preparing for jobs in the sector. This does not correspond to a preference for that type of jobs, nor to a special taste for typing, but to the general evolution of work available. Generally, office jobs are increasing, and there is a movement towards 'tertiarisation'. It also corresponds to the progressive disappearance of part time jobs in industry, while these jobs are increasing in the shops and offices. This is why women are more and more important in this sector. If, then, capital's plan for the employment of women is to integrate them more and more into the labour market, this is on a general level, and not only in industry. The significant figures are those that show in every country of the O.E.C.D., that the number of women working for a wage has grown, and continues to grow, in relation to the total number of women who work outside the home (which includes self-employed women, as farmers or shopkeepers).

The development of waged labour is certainly a general phenomenon of the present time, but it is even faster in the case of women than in the case of men. In France, an inquiry made in '62 found that out of 100 women who worked outside the home 69 already had wages. Just as capital has 'freed' the man from housework in order to make him available for industrialisation, it can also make women leave the house by socializing housework and the care and education of children. From July '72 the govt. in France is giving women who work 'for necessity' an allowance for the care of their children. Such a measure, by its very restrictions, shows how capital is trying to find a completely new workforce while maintaining the family unit which is an essential element of social stability. After refusing to recognize the productive role of the woman in the home, capital is ready as soon as it is necessary to bring into question, within certain limits of course, the ideology saying that women are inferior and function purely as consumers. It can then recognize the woman as a complete economic unit, that of the producer-consumer-wage earner. And it is not because this term applies equally to men in capitalist society that equality - in the sense that we, the women, mean it, not as capital

means it -will be achieved.

We must not forget here the economic function that women's demand for free choice in birth control may have for the employers: they can foresee that this factor, if it leads to the spread of contraception, will result in a growing number of women looking for work. More and more women will keep their jobs when they get married, or go back to work at about 35. But how will they contrive to integrate the married woman into the labour market? In 1968, the unions made the following predictions: If there is no great change in French legislation (that is, if there is no new rise in subsidies and allowances for married women, and if contraception continues to spread), the number of women in production will grow, and the percentage of women in the whole of the work force, which is now 35% could reach 50%.

We have seen the methods advocated in the employers' plan at the point where it recommends the employment of women: increasing the number of those jobs which women occupy; or changing jobs normally given to men so as to make them suitable for women. The cost of this operation will be less than the cost of the strikes and conflicts provoked by the male workforce. This is a part of the capitalist plan of restructuring labour but in fact the massive influx of women onto the labour market poses problems not only for the organization of work: capital wants above all not to have to take on the cost of setting free this labour force. For example, the employers will probably try to get rid of costs like maternity protection. In Italy this has already been done, this protection is now financed by the society as a whole, that is, especially by the workers. It is the social services which have taken on these costs, and to balance this the employers have suppressed the clauses on celibacy in employment.

THE DIVIDING LINE BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE JOBS IS MOVING,
BUT NOT DISAPPEARING.

How do women benefit from working outside the home? We have seen that, with the exception of a minority, they do not have the choice. Does it bring them anything, beyond the satisfaction of feeling oneself no longer the 'dependent' of a man? The report of the Union Seminar of the O.E.C.D. countries includes this disenchanted

atement: "The transition of women from their household jobs to aged labour has resulted in a rise in the gross national income ; but society did not benefit very much from this development, as a great number of the services which used to be performed by the housewife are now taken care of either by the social services or by new capitalist enterprises: in both cases, for society to benefit, the workers must give back a part of their wages at the moment when they purchase these services or through taxes.

In France, the system of progressive income tax cuts off a large part of the family's second income... Moreover, it is clear that women have not found well paid work or responsible positions in the tertiary sector any more than in industry. The dividing line between men's and women's work has moved; but for all that it has not disappeared. This shift took place at the same time as the general downgrading movement. The dividing line reappears at another level: the fact that women go into a field that was traditionally men's never means the end of discrimination .

And what are the perspectives?

To go back to the union's report:

"..In manufacturing industry, the future can already be seen clearly. In the course of the next ten years, in the highly industrialised countries , manual jobs will become less important compared with technical jobs. The demands for unskilled and semi-skilled workers will drop sharply, and we will see an equally sharp rise in the demand for workers who already have, or are capable of acquiring a technical knowledge, theoretical and practical. The level and type of education and training which now qualify women for jobs, even on a modest level, will no longer be sufficient for many of the jobs of to morrow."

But don't worry: automation brings two kinds of jobs:

- some which involve responsibility and demand high qualifications;
- others which generally involve only repetitive operations.

We can be sure that a new dividing line between male and female jobs will coincide with this division. In Sweden, women already have jobs supervising automated processes. And the advertisements say:

" from now on , young girls, think of the future, and become a punch

card operator in the computer industry. You will always have men for engineers, technicians or supervisors... as well as the boss! "

As for those who think that women leaving industry will be able to fall back on their traditional stronghold in offices, the imminent automation of office work will probably cut down the jobs available in this sector. Moreover, in a redistribution, they will probably not give blue collar jobs to men and white collar jobs to women more systematically than they do today. No doubt, capital will maintain a labour force in certain sectors where the work demands above all synchronised movements and reflexes (they are beginning to take women in preference to men on assembly lines and quality control) And such a development would only make trouble for capital by introducing a rigid factor into the labour market. On the contrary, technical development will allow women access to a growing number of jobs (at least those that don't require any training). Industrial work, it is said, is becoming more suitable for women; in other words, with machines being used more and more, physical strength is less and less necessary.

MAINTAINING THE PRODUCTIVE ROLE OF THE HOUSEWIFE
AND THE FAMILY UNIT, WHILE STILL FINDING A WAGED LABOUR FORCE

The essential point for capital is to make sure that the woman continues to take care of the housework (perhaps making her husband share it if she manages this feat) and at the same time to get the benefit of the surplus value she produces in her work outside the home. In the case of a farming household, this can be done without going to another place: it is up to her to arrange her timetable and get it all into a day. For the employers, it is clear that most of the problems facing the female work force in fact affect only the portion of that work force which is waged, those women who work outside the home and must keep strict hours. As women who work outside are housewives at the same time, they are tied to moderate hours: they cling especially to their free saturday and most of them refuse to work more than 30 hours a week outside the home. Improving the conditions of work would probably not make them accept longer hours.

Given this, management can envisage a variety of solutions, from the "à la carte hours" system, to extending part time work or adjusting the hours of work to fit in with administrative, social, commercial services (e.g. shops...).

In 1961, 8% of the working population in France did part time work- that is 5 to 36 hours per week. This figure represents mainly married women. But at the present time, this system is spreading (in France as in Sweden and West Germany) and capital, looking for labour power, is discovering two other categories besides women: students, the handicapped, male workers with family responsibilities etc. . Today, reformist politics consists in demanding the extension of this solution which in fact is only a solution for capital- better: an arrangement serving as a transition towards the full employment of women.

"Intensifying full time employment, that is what real progress is" (Gubbels: La citoyenneté économique de la femme)
This does not mean that part time work will disappear soon and completely. It could continue to exist in the various sectors and branches where it suits the demands of the work in the tertiary sector in particular. If we believe what the unions and the employers representatives say the ratio of full time to part time workers even tends to a stable point of equilibrium which has already been reached in certain countries like the U.S and which will be reached in the other developed countries in the course of the next few years.

But faced with this perspective the unions' position consists precisely in demanding that women work full time, for fear that the system of part-time work might lead to a devaluation of all female work. In the name of equal rights, and the unionist ideal of full employment, it puts forward 'the woman's right to be fully a worker'. As if women, between their part time jobs and the housework, did not already work far longer hours than the 40 hour-week. Let us look again at the figures: in France, 45,000m. hours a year of unpaid household labour, for 43,000m. hours of waged labour done by men and women. Women are never unemployed in the sense that they cease to work and to be productive.

The truth is that the housework is not paid and that often they do not even have the right to an employment benefit if they are dismissed from a part time job. This is something we could raise a demand about.

It is clear that, by the very fact of their basic principles, 'the right of everyone to work' and to work full time, and the defense of the whole waged labour force in one union front without distinction of sex, the unions would not be able here either to represent the interests of women as women - since for this they would first have to recognize women's real economic role - or to ensure, by their actions, an end to discrimination. For they are reduced to recognizing what capital has understood for some time: the considerable economic potential that the female workforce represents, the irreversible nature of the employment of women, and its extension to more and more kinds of work. The union sees the woman with a job as just a waged worker like anyother; it is not capable of grasping t^{he} relation of her work outside to her role in the family unit, or the discrimination of which she is a victim at every level of society. Similarly, it sees the immigrant only as a worker like the others.

Now, since capital, which can only survive by exploiting and dividing its eternal enemy, the labourforce, takes advantage of a physical differentiation in both these cases to legitimize its divisions and hierarchies (the social division of labour, the hierarchy of power and wages), reformist politics are from the outset doomed to failure: discrimination between sexes, like that between races, can only be abolished by abolishing its cause, capital. And waged or not, a woman has no more hope of managing to integrate into male society than a black person does into white society, as long as this remains capitalist society. Any political objective which claims to improve women's situation by improving their working conditions outside the home, but does not recognize the reality of women's productive role or the oppression at every level, looses all credibility: women can only see it as a search for a new balance between formal equality and actual discrimination.

WHAT'S THE SITUATION OF THE MOVEMENT ?

Today, the Women's Movt. shows by its very existence that reformism has lost its credibility. It leads directly to a revolutionary perspective, but not just any revolutionary perspective. If all the parties and groups of the far left have more or less accepted the idea that the question of women is politics, and sometimes even go as far as to offer their 'support' (paternalistic of course), they have left the problem of women's struggles untouched; and this is not because they have simply forgotten it. What is the most exploited sector today? The answer is well known and unanimous: the immigrants. Here we would like to point out that this includes a certain number of immigrant women (no, these are not only the wives of those rare foreign workers who come with their families, but women who come alone and find jobs in France). How many of them are there? No doubt there is a very marked preponderance of men in the contingents of foreign ^{ers} who have come to look for work in France, but it seems, from the new figures we have, that the proportion of women in the total number of immigrant workers has been growing since the post-war period. A population study of the seasonal migration of Spanish grape pickers in Languedoc-Roussillon shows that the percentage of women increases near the borders, and goes as high as 45 p.c. in this region.

As well as doing seasonal labour in agriculture, the immigrant women work as waitresses, factory hands and, most often, domestic servants. A large number of the people who work in hospitals are W. Indian women. Most of them are not married and go back to their countries after a few years of work. Since they suffer from the double handicap of being foreigners and women, the question of social promotion is settled for them.

To organize their struggle, if we refuse to purely and simply forget their existence, as a number of leftists do, is to solve the problem of struggling in all places of work - the home, the factory, the office, the shopping centre, etc. For it is obvious that the Women's Movt. will have failed completely if the struggle it develops results only in making the French woman leave her kitchen and imprison

a Spanish housekeeper in the same ghetto. But, they say, even if women open up a revolutionary perspective by their own movement they cannot have a revolutionary consciousness, because they are still in the margins of politics. How could they struggle for the end of wage slavery ?

However, if capital has brought a growing number of women into the wage structure to take unskilled jobs, to do work which is more and more abstract, fragmented and badly paid, women must already have forms of struggle against capital's hold on them: and in fact the employers' state, in the Report quoted above, that absenteeism is higher among women than men. This could of course correspond to their family obligations, to the domestic work and responsibilities which still fall entirely on the woman of the household.

Contrary to common opinion, a number of studies show that the rate of absenteeism and job leaving is not always higher among married women than it is among single women. So, we find again the refusal of work, spontaneous and collective at the same time, which is typical of unskilled workers and which is a problem for capital today. And this in spite of the low level of organization among women, and their lack of 'political consciousness' and traditions of struggles. Thus the phenomenon is linked to the structure of waged work rather than to the family situation.

But is the task of the Movement limited to organizing the struggle in workplaces outside the home ? Today, the social fabric as a whole is linked to capitalist production; the entire society is a factory. In this context the woman's work is productive everywhere, whether it is giving value directly to an employer money or to the wages the employer gives her husband (and which must be considered as another form of investment; investment in consumption, in the reproduction of labour power). It is everywhere, then, that we must recognize the social power of women. Now the Women's Movt. is entering the area of struggle, in which up to now the left has failed; organizing the struggle on a social level. This is why it must make its own autonomous analysis. In fact, it is up to the Women's Movt., in the present situation, either to lead women to a new form of oppression, or to open the way for new analysis and make room for real revolutionary 'politics'.

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