

Anarchist-Communist Discussion Group

June 2nd, 2010

Discussion topic: Women and Work

We're in the 21st Century and has gender equality really been achieved? Are women equal inside or outside the workplace? It is clear to us that the answer is no. Let's take a brief look at a few reasons why.

The 'gender wage gap'

According to information obtained by the CTU "gender pay gaps in the public service range from 3 percent up to 35 percent, from 18-24 percent in Crown research institutes, and in public health one District Health Board reported that women earned on average 69 percent of men's full-time equivalent earnings".

New Zealand women earn at least 12% less (in average hourly earnings) than men. It's as if from 18th November until the end of the year women are working for free.



Gender and unpaid work

While approximately 60 percent of males' work is paid, almost 70 percent of females' work is unpaid. Not only do women suffer with receiving less pay than men, they also come home to do more work and for this they are not paid. Most of the unpaid work women do constitutes looking after children and household chores. Mothers do 2 hours of unpaid work a day more than fathers. Men still work these 2 hours but it is paid and outside the home.

Issues relating to gender inside and outside of the workplace

How women's work is seen and what this does to their self esteem is inexcusable. Both men and women themselves may believe that the work they do has no value as it is unpaid. In turn men think that their work is far more important because it is paid for. This gives

men a sense of entitlement to relax when they get home even though both genders have done the same amount of work for that day. Men also earn more in general so this adds to the fact that they will feel



their work holds more significance than that of women's.

In the workplace, women have to endure sexual harassment and bullying because of their gender. Again, according to the CTU, "women in the public sector are underrepresented in senior management, part-timers are disadvantaged and workplace cultures inhibit women's full participation. Opportunities for participation and progression for women are limited".

Another area of concern is the fashion industry. Women working in fashion stores can often be discriminated against on the basis of their appearance and will be refused work if they don't look 'slim and sexy'. They are also regularly pressured into wearing the store's latest fashion clothes, having to first purchase the garments themselves. So they earn really low wages, and then have to spend those wages purchasing the latest fashion to wear while slaving away in the store. Of course, no-one says 'if you don't wear the clothes you will be sacked. It's more a case of, 'if you're not wearing the clothing you're obviously not committed to the company; you don't receive advancements, pay rises or promotions'.

As you can see, women do not have a fair deal; in fact it is appalling that this situation can continue. Women do just as much work as men and deserve to be paid equally for it.

Some Questions

Will better pay or promotion for women to management positions mean an end to sexism in the workplace?

Can gender equality really be achieved under capitalism?

Will women's liberation only really be achieved in struggle, shoulder to shoulder, with the class struggle, to end all forms of oppression and domination?

We think that women's liberation i.e. the end of sexism and patriarchy will ultimately come about through the struggle to abolish capitalism and its replacement with a libertarian communist classless and stateless society, based on solidarity, co-operation, the self-management of workplaces and the community, free association and mutual aid.



The Anarchist-Communist Discussion Group meets at 7pm on the first Wednesday of every month at the WEA, 59 Gloucester St, Christchurch. All welcome!

Organised by Beyond Resistance and the Christchurch branch of the Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement

<http://beyondresistance.wordpress.com/>

<http://awsm.org.nz/>