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# WOMEN IN THE CLASS STRUGGLE



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## Women in the Class Struggle

"Hurry up, girls, hurry up! you seem to be half asleep!" I'm not going to have it! If you can't get some work done you'll have to clear out."

This kind of thing is a common occurrence in a small millinery workroom of about a dozen and a half workers. It is an example of the driving and slavish conditions existing in hundreds and thousands of workrooms, factories and shops where girls and women are employed.

Complaints among the girls are just as common regarding the monotony of the long hours and the work, the lack of sufficient leisure, the weariness caused by the slave-driving, the speeding up, and the insufficient wages.

The increasing employment of girls in industrial life generally is accompanied by the increasing prosperity of the drug manufacturers and an ever-increasing output of "Iron Jelloids, Pink Pills," etc.

There is little doubt regarding the purchasers—for a visit to Rotten Row reveals the methods used by the daughters of the rich as a means of securing health. So-called tonics in the form of drugs for working girls—and fresh air, good food, ease, culture and wholesome exercise for the daughters of the rich.

The majority of girls and women to-day spend long days on making, with skilled fingers, beautiful things—but for the women of the wealthy class and the profit of the boss.

Many things have happened latterly, and conditions have altered and are still changing. Reduced wages for the men-folk, increased spells of unemployment, sometimes long periods, has forced the working girl and her mother to seize any opportunity which offers itself to increase the family income.

It is true to say that the industrial and domestic lives of women have suffered correspondingly as their men-folk have suffered. Few working girls are able to be independent



of the family income. Their meagre earnings merely supplement it and enable all to go on existing.

Many working girls look forward to marriage at some future date as being a way of escape from their lives of drudgery. But unfortunately, they are disillusioned. The man they marry is a wage earner, dependent on his wage for his own and his wife's existence, and despite his desire to shelter her, she must share his burden under capitalism, and her share is the most unenviable one of making £1 buy 30/- worth of goods.

The palm of the landlord, the grocer, the butcher and the baker is ever waiting for her small housekeeping money, and their fists are soon in evidence if they have long to wait.

Unemployment, eviction, house shortage, life in inconvenient rooms, let at exorbitant rents, hardship and poverty is the inevitable lot awaiting millions of future working-men's wives, and already wearing out the hearts and minds of millions of women of the working class to-day.

The idea of "strikes" and "politics" is very obnoxious to the women and especially to the girls of the working class. And yet, where their menfolk have secured better conditions for themselves in their working lives, they have secured them by uniting and organising to demand and enforce them. They have acted upon their interests as workers. They have opposed long hours and lack of leisure, short wages and lack of means, by forming themselves into a union with their fellow workers. Where the men have failed, they have failed because they were not organised, and have not been united in their demands against the boss.

Politics are the every-day concern of working people, and when the working women and girls become conscious of the fact, that their interests are all one and unite against the boss, whose interests are opposed, only then can they secure any amelioration of their lot in life.

To-day we see two great forces of society, the capitalist class and the working class, standing in a fighting front against each other. On the side of the capitalist are all the "comfortable" people, the laws and the courts, the army, navy and police, the church, the schools, the big newspapers and all the immeasurable forces of society are controlled by them.



On the side of the working class there is nobody but the workers themselves. They have their trade unions, political parties, and other organisations.

But inside the working class camp we see many who are not conscious of the bitter struggle waged between the two classes, and by that weaken the fighting strength of their own class. Especially the working women are often those who weaken their own class.

Eight years ago, on the 8th March, 1917, the workers of the world were fighting each other at their master's command. Hunger, misery, disease and death was the daily lot of those at home, when there rallied in Petrograd a few thousand women to protest against these horrors and the tyranny that subjected them to these conditions.

These women were clubbed and beaten—and yet, their demonstration was the beginning of the great revolution that overthrew Tsardom and culminated in the great day of October, when the workers took the reins of government into their own hands, to change the system of slavery and build up their own Communist society.

In memory of this starting point, this day, the 8th of March has been chosen by the Communist International to rally the toiling women of the working class of all countries to a realisation of their conditions.

They meet for a great International protest against this system of slavery, against all the suffering, which under a capitalist society affects mainly, the women of the working class.

We know that the women of Russia were active in the Revolution. Have they gained by it?

There was just a short time ago, a delegation of British trade unionists who went to Russia to enquire into the conditions there. We know by their report that the life of the Russian working class women has been completely changed by the Revolution. They no longer are beasts of burden, as they were under Tsardom, and as women generally are in a capitalist country. They are considered fully equal to men in a social and political sense, their hours of work are less, their domestic drudgery has been reduced to a minimum



by great changes in housekeeping; and one of the greatest achievements is the care of pregnant women and the children.

The woman expecting a child has to cease work six weeks before birth and not start again until six weeks after birth, receiving in the meantime, her full wages, and also money for milk and other nourishments during her confinement. When the mother is working, the children are kept in a creche attached to the factory, so that the woman can nourish her child. The children receive all the care and medical attention in the creche under the supervision of trained nurses.

Must not we women in the capitalist countries think how we can change our lot? Must we not try to find means to fight against our miserable conditions, which reduce millions of women to a status of permanent slavery? And how can we fight, and how can we win?

The struggle which the working class is carrying on is also our fight, we must fully take part in it. We must cease being a handicap to our class. We must become comrades and fellow fighters with our working class brothers. We must take our share in the struggle for freedom. The woman worker in the factory plays an important part in the life of the country.

The miners are rallying to the fight, the railway workers are putting forward their demands, the engineers and other sections are trying to improve their conditions—are the women to stand behind? Must we not consider how we can help to carry the struggle on to victory?

New wars are being prepared; the Government of Great Britain, like every other capitalist government, is increasing the most deadly armaments day by day. Again the day is near when they will take your husbands, your sons, your sweethearts and your brothers from you for the sake of their profits.

We must prevent this. The women of the working class of Great Britain must realise their great task in the coming struggles. We must join the trade unions, we must join the working class party, the Communist Party.

The working class of the world has one great fighting force, the Communist International. The Communist Party is a section of that force in this country which incessantly



is calling upon the working men and women to take up the fight for a better state of society. No woman must think that her part in the struggle is of no importance.

The Communist Party has no illusions about the bitterness of the struggle that is before us. It values the tremendous forces which capitalism can draw upon. It knows that there can be no truce, no talk of harmony between capitalists and workers, no industrial peace, while the capitalists control the means of production. Only when the women play their part in the struggle is the victory over the enemy assured.

Never will be forgotten the part that women have played in the long years of struggle for freedom in Russia. And many are the silent and heroic deeds of the British working women performed in the hard fights of the British workers.

The struggle becomes fiercer every day. Whatever you have done in the past, it is not enough for to-day. Every one of us must increase his or her efforts. Every one of us must rally round the banner of the Revolutionary Party.

Working Women of Great Britain, get into the fight! Rouse your working sisters! Line up in the great army for the fight for a happier life for you and your children.

JOIN THE COMMUNIST PARTY.