

IN PHOENIX

and dancing competition.

"While we were there it rained and we had to shelter under the mango trees at the dam. But we carried on with the fun!"

It was a day enjoyed by all.

Many more events have taken place. The Annual General Meeting was held in February at which the Secretary, Treasurers and other office bearers are elected. Then in May there was a jumble sale which raised R50.00. Handwork groups and keep-fit classes continue, and yet another areas has come to ask for help in setting up pre-schools.

As one can see, there is always work to do - but it has big rewards!



WORKERS, BUT MOTHERS TOO

Monica works in a factory. She is a single woman, living on her own in town since she arrived to look for a job. She started work as a cleaner in a clothing factory and was working well so that she could be promoted to a machinist. The pay was very low and she just managed to make ends meet. She was lonely in town but soon made a few friends. She became friendly with a man who lived near her rented room.

In a few months Monica found she was pregnant. She told the man, but he just laughed and said it was not his business. He had asked Monica to marry him, but once he learnt of her pregnancy he stopped visiting her.

Monica saw that she would have to care for the baby on her own. But she didn't mind. She was a working woman and would not have to worry about money since she could earn. But as the months went on and Monica began to grow bigger the supervisor at the factory came up to her and asked her when she was going to leave work. Monica said: "I'm not leaving work - I'm going to leave my baby



by Käthe Kollwitz

with my mother and return to work."

"Oh no!" said the supervisor, "that's what you think. The rules here say that a pregnant woman must leave work. Once you have had the baby you can come back here and try for a job. If we have one and employ you, you'll be lucky."

Monica couldn't believe her ears. Hadn't she worked as hard and well as anyone else? Why was she being treated like this. Surely as a woman she had a right to have a baby and a right to keep her job?

The machinist next to her overheard what the supervisor had said, and at lunch time she spoke to Monica.

"I had the same problem," she said, "my husband and I decided to have a baby after 2 years of marriage. I was then working at another factory and my husband was also working. We had planned that we would save for the baby and once I fell pregnant I would stay at home until the baby was a year old. I fell pregnant and decided I would leave work by my 6th month. But when I was only 3 months pregnant my husband lost his job and became unemployed. Our rent went up

too. We decided that I couldn't leave work but would have to find someone to care for the baby from when it was 2 months old. I spoke to my boss and told him I wanted 3 months leave to have my baby. I knew I had to do this even though I didn't know who would look after my baby when I got back to work.

The boss said: "Take your leave, but you will have to reapply for your job. I can't afford to keep your job open for 3 months. My worry is to pay my staff, my rent, and make my profits.

And so I went to have my baby - at the same time worried sick about how we would manage and who would care for the child

once I was able to go out again looking for work. After a month of walking around from factory to factory I found a job - but my husband wasn't so lucky. A neighbour cared for the baby while we were both away - I at work and my husband looking for a job. Life is hard for us - the bosses seem to think we shouldn't have babies. But they have to accept that we will because we are not only workers - we are also women. Of course we must be able to have children."



MATERNITY BENEFITS FROM U.I.F.

The story of Monica and her friend is the story of almost every woman worker who needs to work for survival, and, if she is of child-bearing age, could fall pregnant.

But why should a woman worker face so much insecurity and fear, and not have the choice of keeping her job. The stories of these 2 women raise many questions for women workers.

What we need to fight for is the right of a woman worker to come back to her job when she has a baby; and to have financial support (maternity benefits) while she is on leave. She needs the right to have and care for her baby, and the right to return to the same grade of work at the same pay without losing out on any benefits. And furthermore she needs good child-care facilities and time off to look after sick children.

If a woman has these things it will help her to be more independent. She would be more able to cope with other problems she has to face, like being left by the father of the child, from dealing with the problem of an unemployed husband, rent increases and child-care.



WHAT IS U.I.F.?

All workers, except farm workers, domestic workers, and seasonal workers have Unemployment Insurance Fund (U.I.F.) money deducted from their wages every week. Workers can claim from this money when they lose their jobs. Women workers can also claim from U.I.F. when they go on Maternity Leave to have their babies. U.I.F. is run by the government. While a fund of this kind is necessary, the present fund is not nearly good enough.



WHO CAN CLAIM?

Women who have worked for at least 4 months before they leave to have their baby can claim Maternity Benefits. Those who can't claim are women working on farms, domestic workers, migrant workers, and workers who are only employed for a few months every year. You also won't get U.I.F. if your boss is paying you more than one third of your normal weekly wage (one third is equal to 33%).



HOW MUCH MONEY WILL YOU GET?

Maternity Benefits pay 45% of your weekly wage. That is, for every one rand that you were getting before, you will now get only 45 cents. For example, if you were getting R55.00 a week, you will now only get R21.00 on Maternity Benefits.