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Spanish state

Are women being sent back to the home?

- IV Online magazine - 2012 - IV454 - November 2012 -

Publication date: Wednesday 28 November 2012

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Send women back to the home. This is apparently what the present policies for a way out of the crisis are trying to do. These policies have a clear ideological orientation, both economically and socially.

To the extent that they are cutting basic public services, such as health and education, and various social benefits, such as the Dependency Law [1], there are all kinds of care work, invisible but necessary, which eventually fall back, for the most part, on women. The frontal attack against a Welfare State that is in a poor state, as well as the transfer of the cost of the crisis to the popular sectors, lands on our backs.

It is not for nothing that the capitalist system is perpetuated to a considerable extent by the unpaid domestic work that we women, do, mainly in the home. A huge amount of unpaid work, which is absolutely necessary and which capitalism needs in order to survive.

Scarcely come to power, the PP government announced a reduction of €283 million in an already very anemic Dependency Law, putting it on the verge of disappearing. This is a measure which, in addition to leaving some 250,000 people without help and making it almost impossible to provide care to new beneficiaries, has increased pressure on women. The care that is already no longer provided by the public administration falls back into the private domain, in the home, and particularly on the mothers and daughters of dependent people. The wellbeing of the family is maintained by an increase in domestic work.

If we analyse the figures concerning inactive persons for 2010 provided by the National Institute of Statistics (INE), 96.4 per cent of those who stated that they were not seeking employment for family reasons (parenting, caring for sick adults, people with disabilities, etc.) were women. And insofar as they have children, their rate of employment decreases. Without children, women's employment rate stood at 77 per cent, while with children it was 52 per cent. On the other hand, the male employment rate was not affected and it even increased in the case of men with children. Conclusion: the articulation between waged working life and private life is achieved through exclusion from employment, precarious work and/or a frantic and untenable rhythm of life for many women.

Other measures taken by the government, such as the freezing of pensions and the lengthening of the period of calculation for pension contributions, also have very negative consequences for us. A greater presence in the informal economy and very often an intermittent working life, because of care of dependents, make it difficult to achieve the minimum number of annuities to qualify for a pension.

Women hold the bulk of poorly paid and socially devalued jobs. Out of all part-time contracts, 77.6 per cent are held by women. And the precariousness of employment is even further encouraged by the latest reform of the labour laws, making it more difficult to ensure our autonomy and the articulation with personal and family life. Thus, it is important to note that both sexes are not on an equal footing on the labour market. Women earn on average nearly 22 per cent less per year than male colleagues, according to the latest Annual Survey on Salary Structure, published in 2009 by INE, and this discrimination increases with the level of education.

In addition to these cuts in our social and labour rights, we must confront a growing reactionary offensive against our sexual and reproductive rights. The proposed reform by the PP of the Abortion Law, which wants to limit even more the conditions, the time limit and the cases concerned in having an abortion, and pushes us several years back, is only the tip of the iceberg of policies which seek to impose a heterosexual model of sexuality centred on reproduction and to control the reproductive capacity of women. They do not want us to have the right to decide about our own

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bodies and our lives, and this brings the threat of a criminal punishment in the case of abortion.

On this November 25, we claim this day against sexist violence in order to make visible a violence against women that is invisible but daily and persistent, and which is becoming sharper in the current context of the crisis. In the second quarter of 2012, complaints of macho violence increased by 5.9 per cent compared with the first three months of the year. And women who suffer from these situations are less and less helped and supported because of reductions of public resources.

CiU [2] called elections for the Catalan Parliament for today, 25 November, and the electoral junta banned the demonstration which was due to take place and which, anyway, is maintained. But, as noted by the Women's Section of the Federation of Neighbours' Associations of Barcelona: "It is not the demonstration of feminist collectives which coincides with election day, on the contrary it is that the election has been called on the 25 November". A fact which proves, once again, that political interest in this issue is equivalent to zero.

The current crisis seeks to send us back to the home and to make us take on our family roles again, catalogued by gender in a retrograde fashion. This is a full-scale offensive against our economic and reproductive rights. But we are not going to take it lying down. It doesn't matter if it displeases some people, but it is we who decide. Women sent back to the home? Not even in your dreams!

[1] The Dependency Law, which came into force in 2007, guaranteed that all those who found themselves in a situation of dependency had the right to be cared for by public services.

[2] Convergence and Union, the right-wing nationalist party that is in power in Catalonia