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The Afrikaner Women Of The Garment Workers Union, 1918-1939

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workers who occupied these jobs went to fight in the First World War. The short boom in 1919/20 meant that women could retain their jobs once the war had ended.[14] From 1915/16 until 1919/20 the total number of women employed in the manufacturing industry as a whole on the Witwatersrand nearly doubled from 1 147 to 2 232. The majority of these women, about 90%, were employed in the manufacture of clothing, in the preparation of food and drink and in the printing, chemical and leather industries.[15] The clothing industry employed about half of all the women taken up in the manufacturing industry, thereby becoming the largest employer of white women on the Witwatersrand.[16] Even after the war and boom, the proportion of women to men within the clothing industry continued to increase steadily. Whereas in 1915/16 the ratio of female to male garment workers was 1,0:1, this rose to 1,6:1 in 1922/23, to 2,08:1 in 1925/26, 2,86:1 in 1929/30 and 3,32:1 in 1932/33.[17]

Several factors facilitated the encroachment of female garment workers upon this initially male-dominated industry. The clothing industry had to cope with seasonal fluctuations and keen competition from the local coastal areas as well as the Orient.[18] Therefore the employment of a cheaper labour force consisting mainly of women, coloured at the coast and white on the Reef, contributed to the curtailment of costs.

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[14] Carnegie Commission, *Poor White*, vol. V, p.3.

[15] H Pollak, *Women*, Addendum, Table 8, p.6. The exact percentages are 1916/17 91,7%, 1926/28 92,1% and 1929/30 91,7%.

[16] Ibid., p.6. In 1916/17 it employed 49,9% and by 1932 55,1% of all the women in the manufacturing industry.

[17] See Table 8.

[18] At the time the coastal areas were operating under a Wage Board Determination and not an Industrial Agreement, and factory owners there could pay much lower wages to the then mostly coloured labour force. M Nicol, 'Riches from Rags: Bosses and Unions in the Cape Clothing Industry, 1926-1936', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2, April 1983, pp.245, 247.

In addition, the capital/labour ratio seems to indicate that a capital deepening took place during the boom years of 1918/20 at the expense of white wages. The capital which was available was used for expansion and improvements in the clothing industry, rather than for a real improvement of wages. Whereas the total white wage bill was about a third of the total annual expenditure excluding that of fixed capital, during 1916/17 and 1921/22 and 1922/23, it declined to a quarter (25,2%) in 1918/19. Total annual white wages as a percentage of the total annual expenditure including fixed capital fluctuated around 20% between 1915/16 and 1923/24, but dipped to its lowest level (18,4%) in 1918/19, the post-war boom period.[19]

The depressed economic conditions of the latter half of the twenties, aptly called the 'Trough of the Twenties', demanded maximal industrial efficiency,[20] reinforcing the tendency towards employing female labour, especially in the clothing industry. Fewer men were employed at lower wages. The number of women employed in industry increased steadily, whereas male employment and wages declined. The decline in male employment and increase of female employees accompanied extensive mechanisation of the clothing industry during the early twenties. Between 19. /20 and 1922/23 the total horse power used on engines and ma-

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[19] Capital/Labour Ratio of the Clothing Industry on the Witwatersrand

Year	Fixed Capital Included	Fixed Capital Excluded
1915/16	19.6%	32.4%
1916/17	21.6%	34.5%
1917/18	19.3%	27.8%
1918/19	18.4%	25.2%
1919/20	19.3%	26.2%
1920/21	21.2%	29.1%
1921/22	20.6%	33.8%
1922/23	20.1%	33.5%

Percentage of the total annual white wages expressed as a percentage of total expenditure. Note: It was not possible to compile the capital/labour ratio for the rest of the 1920's, as the breakdown of expenditure as supplied by the Bureau of Census and Statistics did not extend beyond 1922/23. Bureau of Census and Statistics, *Special Report No.26 of Office of Census and Statistics,* 1925 .

[20] H. Houghton, *Economy*, ch. 2. See also H.A.F. Barker, 'Economics,' ch.2.

chines in the industry and the total cost of light, fuel and power more than doubled. The corollary of this was that the expensive male craft workers who had traditionally dominated the industry experienced a sharp reduction in numbers - from 833 in 1919/20 to 636 in 1922/23. The number of cheaper unskilled or semi-skilled women employed in a rapidly expanding industry increased over the same period from 871 to 1 039.[21] As in nineteenth century Britain,

> The new wholesale men's trade, with its minute subdivision of process and its use of the sewing machine seems to have taken them (women) on in increasing numbers.[22]

Between 1922/23 and 1927/28 the number of women employed more than doubled and then quadrupled by 1932/33 when 4 337 women were employed as garment workers. By 1938 7 237 women were employed in the industry.[23] In all, the number of European males remained relatively unchanged from 1933 to 1938.[24]

The growth of the white female labour force and the decline of the male craftsmen who as skilled operatives earned much more than the females, resulted in a drop in the average annual wage in the clothing industry during the twenties. From an initial average annual wage of £82 during the First World War, the artificial protection and inflation caused by the war and the resultant expansion of the industry by 1919/1920 doubled

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21 See Table 8.

22 D. Bythell, *The Sweated Trades*, p.76. The Carnegie Commission also found that the supply of female labour had increased considerably during the years prior to their investigation, but that wages were still very low. Carnegie Commission, *Poor White*, vol. I, p.218. Coyle also links female labour with labour-intensive processes. A. Coyle, 'Sex and Skill in the Organisation of the Clothing Industry' in J. West ed., *Work, Women and the Labour Market*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982, p.22.

23 Table 8.

24 Ibid. In addition, the number of non-European males trebled from 1932 to 1944/45. The number of black women increased fourfold from 1932/33 to 1944/45, an increase which pushed their proportionate representation in the industry from 35,6% to 44,2%. GWU, Cbc 1. Report no. 303, Board of Trade and Industries, re Clothing Industry, 1947, p.86.

the average wage to £161. The short post-war boom led to a further increase in wages, which reached £194 in 1921/22. The depression of the mid-1920's resulted in a steady decline of the annual average wage to a low of £1.6 per annum in 1928/29. During 1929/30 wages increased marginally to £132 per annum. The effects of the Depression, the partially successful clothing strike of 1931 and the strike lost in 1932, with its resultant 10% reduction in wages, are reflected in the all-time low of the average annual wage of £102 in 1932/33. After the Depression, from 1934 onwards wages improved slowly to £117 in 1938. (See Table 8.) This trend is also clearly visible in Illustration 5. During the thirties maximum weekly wages for females rose slowly from 45/- in 1932 to 55/- in 1939 and minimum wages rose from 18/- in 1932 to 23/- in 1939.

The question of why white women specifically were used as employees in the clothing factories on the Witwatersrand is difficult to answer.[25] Some suggestions can, however, be made. An examination of the population figures of the Witwatersrand for the period, shows that the White women on the Witwatersrand formed the largest *female* population group at the time. During the twenties and thirties coloured, Asian and black women formed only a very small percentage of the total population of the Rand. In 1921 there were 111 708 white females, 28 735 black women, 2 610 Asian and 8 247 coloured women on the Rand. No comparative figures exist between 1921 and 1936, when the black female population had increased to 107 286 compared to 196 450 white women on the Rand. There were 15 271 and 5 361 Coloured and Asian women respectively. The very availability of white women may thus provide part of the answer.[26]

However, no definite answer has as yet been found as to why black men were not employed extensively as machinists in the factories. They were

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[25] For some discussion of the question, cf. L. Witz, 'Servant', pp.41-44.

[26] See Table 2 and Table 8 for the number of black women in the clothing industry during this period.

used as pressers and in cleaning and layout operations, but not in large numbers.[27] It seems possible that the 'civilised labour policy' of the post-1924 Pact government may have had an effect in encouraging some clothing manufacturers to employ whites. Information on this subject is sparse. However, in 1919 an indication of state intervention in the clothing industry was given by the *Rand Daily Mail*, which related, in connection with a strike involving 88 women and 24 men at the clothing factory of J. Henochsberg & Co. in Johannesburg that,

> in 1917 the Railway Administration, with the idea of fostering local industries, allocated Mr Henochsberg seven-eighths of its whole contract. Sweated labour was prohibited and the contract had to be carried out by White labourers.[28]

Between 1929 and 1933 ten other clothing factories on the Rand, apart from Henochsbergs, also contracted to the government for the "cut, make and trim of stock-size garments". The most important of these factories were the Clothing and Shirt Manufacturers and the Powerplus Clothing Manufacturing Co.[29] In November 1929, with the opening of the New York Clothing Factory in Germiston, the Minister of Labour Colonel F.H.P. Cresswell,

> paid tribute to the clothing industry when he said that the proportion of Native labour in the secondary industry to European labour was very low.[30]

In 1931 "Superior Make, White Labour" was cited as the reason for the government's choice in awarding its contract to the Clothing and Shirt Manufacturers.[31] Likewise, Benjamin Jacobsen, a partner in Powerplus,

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27 In 1925 the first Industrial Agreement for the Clothing Industry excluded Africans from being machinists, cutters and tailors. This clause was never inserted again. L. Witz, 'Servant', p.44.

28 *Rand Daily Mail*, 'Tailors Want Higher Wages', 16.10.1919.

29 CAD, ARB 563. 'Three years running contract for cut, make and trim of stock size garments', 1.10.1929 - 30.9.1932.

30 *Germiston Advocate*, 8.11.1929.

31 CAD, ARB 563. 'Three years running contract for cut, make and trim of stock size garments', 1.10.1929 - 30.9.1932.

testified before the 1932 Conciliation Board that since 1926 his policy had been: "For Government contracts I only used Europeans".[32] Mr J. Kramer, director of the African Clothing Manufacturers, at a meeting of parents of garment workers during the 1931 strike, also maintained that,

> The clothing industry had been built up by the Nationalist government, by its protective policy.[33]

Protective state policies were not the only contributory factor stimulating white female employment in the clothing industry. On the Witwatersrand, as in the garment industry world-wide, the notion existed that women in particular were naturally more suited for employment in labour-intensive industries, for they possessed 'nimble fingers.'[34] This notion served as a convenient explanation for the relative ease with which such workers would acquire a proficiency in industrial operations in the factory. However, this 'inborn' ability or 'nimble fingers' of these female workers was not a natural inheritance. Rather,

> they are the result of the training they (the girls) have received from their mothers and other female kin since early infancy in tasks socially appropriate to women's role....the making of clothes is not foreign to her (the garment worker) because it constitutes an important part of her domestic duties.....every girl who leaves school is more or less proficient in this type of work.[35]

This training was taken into account when women were selected as the labour force for the clothing industry. The skill, acquired at home and

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[32] CAD, ARB 559. B. Jacobs, Witness at the 4th Meeting, Department of Labour, Conciliation Board, 21.9.1932, p.8.

[33] *Rand Daily Mail*, 'Support of Parents', 6.11.1931.

[34] See also, 'Nimble Fingers and Other Fables', ch.2 in W. Chapkis and C. Enloe eds., *Of Common Cloth: Women in the Global Textile Industry*, Amsterdam: Transnational Institute, 1983; P. Thompson, *The Nature of Work*, London: Macmillan, 1983, p.197; D. Newman, 'Work and Community Life in a Southern Textile Town', in D.J. Leab ed., *The Labour History Reader*, Chicago: University of Illinois, 1985, p.434 and D. Elson and R. Pearson, 'Nimble Fingers Make Cheap Workers: An Analysis of Women's Employment in Third World Export Manufacturing', *Feminist Review*, no. 7, Spring 1981.

[35] GWU, Ccb 1.4.1. Report of the Industrial Tribunal to the Minister of Labour on the Reservation of Work in the Clothing Industry in the Union of South Africa, p.23.

in school, therefore was the basis on which the employment of Afrikaner women in the clothing industry rested, for "there is not unskilled work. Every operation in a factory requires skill to some degree."[36] In 1937, a report on Housecraft schools summarised the situation that had developed,

> Those with a flair for dress making can always find employment in dress making establishments or in workrooms attached to the large stores, in fact the demand for those trained at the schools on the Reef is so great that it is difficult to meet it.[37]

Among the women interviewed for this study, Mrs S. and Mrs P. recalled how they learnt to sew at home. The former remained at home sewing with her mother until her marriage and did not become a garment worker until her husband lost his job. Mrs P. went to work sooner,

> Ons (was) maar by die huis trapmasjiene gewoond, en hier's dit nou elektrisiteit. Jy het al jou aandag en verstand nodig om daarmee te werk, maar jy leer, dis vreemd maar jy gaan maar aan, want jy het dit bitter nodig. Jy gaan maar aan.
> (At home we were used to tread machines, and here it is now electricity. You need all your attention and intelligence to work with it, but you learn, it is strange, but you keep going, because you need it badly. You just go on.)[38]

Finally, the absence of stringent apprenticeship regulations for women acted as an incentive for young, newly arrived Afrikaner girls to find employment in this sector. The Carnegie Commission maintained,

> Obviously this is one reason why the daughters of poor people from the farms are beginning to occupy an important position in our factories, for on the whole there are not the ordinary apprenticeship regulations for female workers.[39]

The picture that emerges, is of a large white female labour force which developed in the clothing industry as a result of the large number of white women workers on the Witwatersrand, their economic hardship and

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[36] GWU, Bca 4. Commission of Inquiry, Evidence S. Sachs, 1948, p.965.

[37] CAD, UOD 92. Report, Training at Housecraft Schools, 22.10.1937.

[38] Interviews 22 and 28.

[39] Carnegie Commission, *Poor White*, vol.I, p.210.

the the need to supplement or replace the income lost by the male members of the family. In addition to the absence of stringent apprenticeship regulations, the deskilling of craftsmen, the 'civilised labour policy', and the notion of 'nimble fingers' facilitated the employment of a female labour force in the clothing industry.

Exploitation in the Clothing Factories.

One additional and absolutely central factor which contributed to the employment of Afrikaner women as garment workers was their vulnerability to exploitation. As we have seen, large numbers of Afrikaner women flooded onto the Rand during the inter-war years and had to contend with dire poverty at home. Poverty propelled them to find work where and at what price they could and to retain such work regardless of circumstance. Hence they were willing to work under very bad conditions and initially to condone labour malpractices such as outwork, piece work, speeding up and underpayment.

Many garment workers spent most of their working lives in appalling conditions in the clothing factories on the Witwatersrand. Conditions such as these seem common to most clothing industries. In Great Britain during the 1970's clothing factories were still,

> ....hidden from view, in back streets, garages and derelict warehouses. They are overcrowded, cramped, excessively noisy, and often have leaking roofs.[40]

Similar conditions prevail in the garment industry in New York. It is,

> one of New York's lowest paid industries and the majority of its workers are semi-skilled, mass-production sewing machine operators, working in ancient, dingy, dirty factories.[41]

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[40] B. Hoel, 'Contemporary Clothing "Sweatshops": Asian Female Labour and Collective Organisation', in J. West ed., *Work, Women and the Labour Market*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982, p.80.

[41] A.H. Stromberg and S. Harkess eds., *Women Working: Theories and Facts in Perspective*, New York: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1978, p.348.

Pollak painted a similar picture of the clothing factories on the Witwatersrand which she investigated during the Depression. They were all overcrowded, except for a few new, large factories, and very dirty, inadequately lit, badly ventilated, and very hot in summer.[42]

As early as the mid-twenties, C.F. Glass, then Acting Secretary of the Industrial Council for the Clothing Industry, complained to the Inspector of Factories of the filthy conditions in most of the cloakrooms and toilets at the factories. In addition, the factories he had visited had very cramped floor space, very bad lighting and ventilation, and inadequate dining facilities.[43] In 1931 Sachs also maintained that,

> There is not a single factory on the Witwatersrand which provides anything like a decent rest room for the girls.[44]

Cloakroom and toilet facilities seem to have been bad everywhere. Some cloakrooms contained only a long bare table, with some benches or soapboxes provided as seating. At times there was no seating at all, and other rest rooms were so small that all the women employed at the particular factory could not enter at once.[45] At one factory women had sixpence deducted from their weekly wages for the use of the toilets and at the New York Clothing Factory, toilets were locked an hour prior to the end of the work day on Saturdays.[46]

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[42] H. Pollak, *Women*, pp.102-108.

[43] GWU, Aab 1.59. Letter, C.F. Glass to Inspector of Factories, 7.9.1925 and 1.3.1927. E.g. in 1929 workers at the Boston Reef Clothing Manufacturers already complained that the whole service was unhygienic, the supply of drinking water was unsatisfactory and the way in which the tea was made by adding tea to cold water and then boiling it, was "unwholesome". GWU, Aab 1.9. Complaint to Boston Reef Clothing Manufacturers, 15.3.1939.

[44] GWU, Dac 2.7.10 and Dac 2.8.1. Letter, S. Sachs to Secretary, Witwatersrand Trades and Labour Council, 1.10.1931.

[45] H. Pollak, Women, pp.171-3.

[46] Ibid., p.177. GWU, Bbc 1.23. Letter, S. Sachs to Inspector of Factories, 1934. cf. GWU, Baa 1 and Bbc 9.2.1. 6th meeting Central Executive Committee (hereafter CEC) GWU and 12th meeting Germiston Branch GWU, 13.3.1939 and 22.5.1939.

During the thirties the previously tacit acceptance by garment workers of these circumstances slowly turned into a refusal to tolerate such exploitative working conditions. For example, Germiston workers at the Germiston Clothing Factory at first complained that the girls and the black workers had to drink water from the same tap, that girls sometimes were pushed out of the way, and that the tea had been repeatedly warmed up in the same containers. In response to these complaints, the owner, Mr Kramer, retorted that if the tea was bad, the girls should add more milk and sugar.[47] In 1939, in an effort to combat such exploitation, some 100 workers employed at the Avondale Factory also elected a health committee to see that the toilets and cloakrooms were kept in good order. It was decided that members of the committee would take turns to watch the toilets during the day to see that they were kept clean by the users, for it was felt that discipline was necessary for health.[48] Moreover, in May 1940 workers at the Alba Clothing Factory went on strike to improve conditions. Their employer, Mr Jacobs, agreed to provide lights on the stairs and fans on the shop floor, to keep cloakrooms and lavatories tidy, to let the workers themselves make their tea and not "to interfere with the privacy of the workers", a vital consideration in the lives of these women.[49] Despite these efforts the problem was not wholly solved, for Factory Inspector L.E. Orkin informed his superior of the "difficulty to enforce cleanliness and good housekeeping in the factories and to get factories to undertake welfare measures not prescribed by the act".[50]

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[47] GWU, Aab 1.9. Complaint to Boston Reef Clothing, 15.3.1939. GWU, Bbc 9.2.1. 13th Meeting and 43rd Meeting Germiston Branch GWU, 29.5.1939 and 30.1.1945. Later, when coloured women had entered the industry, the number two branch in Germiston also complained that at the Progress Clothing Factory, where the cloakrooms were filthy, only the European women were given tea. GWU, Bbb 1.2. Meeting Germiston no.2. Branch GWU, 29.1.1942.

[48] GWU, Bbc 9.5. S. Venter, Report, Branch Secretary Germiston, 1-14.2.1939.

[49] GWU, Baa 1. Special Meeting CEC GWU, 13.5.1940.

[50] CAD, ARB 2017. Letter, L.E. Orkin to Chief Factory Inspector, 3.2.1940.

Until the mid-twenties, one index of the vulnerability of Afrikaner women to exploitation was the continued prevalence of outwork. During the early years of the Witwatersrand clothing industry, scores of women kept their families from destitution by contracting as outworkers to numerous clothing manufacturers in the city.[51] Outwork, the traditional solution of the search for cheap labour,[52] was a system which allotted work to women to do in their own time and at their own machines and which paid them a certain amount per finished garment. However, this system led to numerous malpractices and in 1926 C.F. Glass negotiated with the Minister of Labour to abolish the outwork and regularise the production of clothing in factories. As a result, outwork was abolished in the 1926 Agreement for the Transvaal Clothing Industry.[53]

However, such were their circumstances at home that, when outwork was stopped in 1926, many outworkers protested vehemently about the loss of their livelihood which had caused "very distressing and heartrending hardships for many married women and widows dependent on this type of employment."[54] Married women with children to care for saw outwork as a viable alternative, because it partially solved problems with

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[51] GWU, Cca 2.1.4. A list of outworkers in Johannesburg, probably drawn up in 1927, noted the names of some 220 outworkers. E.g. Blieden & Co. of Market St. employed 21 women, whilst Katz & Zack of Commissioner St. employed 71 women and M. Horwitz of President St. employed 32 outworkers, of whom 24 were women. Lists of Outworkers (1927?), also list February 1927, attached to letter, Divisional Inspector of Labour, R.H. Miller to Secretary Industrial Council, 11.2.1927. From a list Miller compiled for the last quarter of 1926, it is evident that the majority of these outworkers lived in Vrededorp, Fordsburg and Jeppe.

[52] A. Coyle, 'Sex and Skill', in J. West ed., *Work, Women*, p.17.

[53] GWU, Aab 1.115. Letter, C.F. Glass to F.C. Croft, 16.2.1926. GWU, Cca 2.1.4. Correspondence, C.F. Glass and the Department of Labour, April-June, 1926. Also, GG 1586, GN 1910. Government Gazette, 22.10.1926.

[54] GWU, Cca 2.1.4. Letter, F.G. Hall to Chairman, Wage Act Inquiry, 8.7.1926 on behalf of twelve women. cf. *The Social and Industrial Review*, 'Outwork in Transvaal Clothing Industry', vol. 2, no. 11, November 1926, p.956.

[55] S. Alexander, A. Davin and E. Hostettler, 'Labouring Women: A Reply

childcare.[55] Hence, in July 1926 some twelve women sent a petition to the chairman of the Wage Act Inquiry in Johannesburg to protest against the termination of outwork.[56] Mrs Haywood of Vrededorp, one of the signatories of the petition, was greatly perturbed by the fact that her source of income would stop once outwork was no longer supplied to women.[57] Despite the prevailing bad working conditions, she could not do without this supply of employment, for her husband was out of work, and there was no one else in the house who was working. She could not go out to work either, for she had no one to care for her numerous children.

The case of Mrs De Lange graphically illustrates the vulnerability of women who, for the sake of their families, had to tolerate the harsh working conditions they experienced as outworkers. Mrs De Lange, "honest and industrious and trying to earn a honest living",[58] did not stop at the petition, but in August 1926 wrote directly to the Prime Minister about the stoppage of outwork.[59] In 1927 she appealed to the union as well,

> The state I am in at present is terrible, the boy out of work, also no money coming in at all.[60]

She was in dire straits, for she had been served with a notice by G.E. Symons & Co. of Mayfair to pay for arrears of rent, as well as by Bourne & Co., the agents for Singer sewing machines, for the £12.15.0 which was

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to Eric Hobsbawn', *History Workshop Journal*, no 8. Autumn 1979, p.176.

[56] GWU, Cca 2.1.4. Letter, F.G. Hall to Chairman Wage Act Inquiry, 8.7.1926.

[57] Ibid. Letter, Mrs A. Haywood, Vrededorp to Factory Inspector J. Sommerville, 13.7.1926.

[58] Ibid. Testimonial, G.E. Symons, Estate Agent, Mayfair, 5.7.1926.

[59] Ibid. Correspondence, Secretary for Labour to Industrial Council, August 1926.

[60] Ibid. Letter, Mrs De Lange to C.F. Glass, Acting Secretary Industrial Council, 16.2.1927.

owing on the sewing machine she had purchased. Unless she paid regular instalments of 10/- per month, she was threatened with repossession.[61] C.F. Glass found her outwork to do, but at a regulated wage to be paid via the Council. Consequently, in March 1927 she received £1.15.0 for five dozen gaberdine trousers she had made.[62] It would seem that women such as Mrs de Lange, who made 60 pairs of trousers per week, most probably took up outwork because they were,

> accustomed to low pay, anxious for work which they could combine with domestic duties, (and) lacking other ways of adding their mite to total family income.[63]

Women in full-time employment in the factories were equally vulnerable to exploitation. In comparison to wages earned by outworkers, the women who worked on a piecework basis were worse off. Sonia Maisnick of Germiston, employed at the African Clothing Manufacturers since 1922, testified at a meeting of the Industrial Council in March 1926 that she machined 118 pairs of trousers per week for a wage of £2.4.3, which amounted to about 3d. for a pair of 'cottonade' trousers. (In contrast, though, it should be noted that Mrs De Lange made gaberdine trousers.) Ivy Morrison, also from Germiston, received £2.2.0 for machining 112 pairs of trousers and, like Sonia, usually worked through her lunch hour in order to finish her assignment. They therefore worked non-stop from 8 am. to 5.40 pm. every day, and Saturdays until 12.30 pm.[64]

Piecework pressurised the women to do more work. However, during the Depression they were also forced to speed up their production and produce

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[61] Ibid. See relevant correspondence between Mrs De Lange and Symons & Co. and Bourne & Co., 1927.

[62] Ibid. Shirts were priced at 10/6-12/6 per dozen and trousers at 9-11/- per dozen. Correspondence, Industrial Council, February 1927. The Council also organised the payment for outwork done by Mrs A. Beulich and R. Thorne for G. Berman in February and March 1927.

[63] D. Bythell, *The Sweated Trades*, p.163.

[64] GWU, Cca 2.1.6. Minutes meeting of Industrial Council for the Clothing Industry in the Transvaal, Germiston, 27.3.1926.

more than they did before. Consequently, in 1934 a dispute broke out at Maxim's because the women were "now chased to do more work than before."[65] In 1937 41 women at the Tiger Trading Co. testified that they could not manage the amount of work they were given to do every day. Mrs L. Wehmeyer declared that her output as a jacket machinist had at first been 68 per day, but that it had reached 100 per day.[66] Likewise, 40 pairs of trousers per day were demanded of Mrs Edith van Rensburg (29) and Rena Karelse (20), but they found that they could only manage 35.[67] They earned £2.15.0 and £2.12.6 respectively per week. In later years Mrs S.M.J. Jonker testified that,

> Ek meen dit was uitputtend om sulke lang ure te werk. Werksters werk teetyd en etenstyd om hulle kwotas uit te sit.
> (I believe it was exhausting to work such long hours. Workers work (through) tea time and lunch time to produce their quotas.)[68]

Finally, women who did manage to retain their jobs and complete the work assigned to them, were often underpaid, paid less than the wages stipulated in the agreement, or made to sign that they would work for less than the regular wages. During the 1920's the women were regularly underpaid. In 1926 the situation in Germiston was investigated by the Industrial Inspector, E. Winter, who found that, for example, Mrs Joey Schoeman, a fully qualified and experienced tailoress, was consistently underpaid to the extent of a third of the wages due to her.[69] The Council brought the cases of eight women who had been paid only half the wages they were entitled to, to the attention of the Public Prosecutor.[70] In

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[65] GWU, Bbc 1.50. Letter, S. Sachs to Chairman Industrial Council, Bespoke Section, 19.7.1934.

[66] GWU, Bbc 1.2. Affidavit, L. Wehmeyer, 14.7.1937.

[67] Ibid. Affidavits, Edith van Rensburg and Rena Karelse, 14.7.1937.

[68] GWU, Eab 2.6. Testimony, S.M.J. Jonker, Wage Board Investigation, 1955/56.

[69] GWU, Aab 2.3. Affidavit, J. Schoeman, 19.4.1926. E. Winter, Report on Investigation into Wages Paid in Certain Bespoke Tailoring Establishments in Germiston, 5.5.1926.

[70] GWU, Aab 8.3. Letter, Industrial Council to Public Prosecutor,

addition, in 1927 the Council filed charges against the Matz Brothers for the underpayment of Marie Frey (19) and Gertie Mill (15).[71] In 1929 Sachs, after his appointment as General Secretary of the GWU, set out to examine wage registers to expose the underpayment of workers.[72] Consequently, the owners of S. Malk & Co. were warned that the GWU would consider legal action against them if they did not give their workers the rises they were entitled to and continued to underpay them.[73] After the Depression underpayment remained rife. In 1934 Mrs P. Donaldson of Fordsburg, for instance, signed away her three monthly rises due to her, to "save her children from starving",[74] while Sonia Hack's wages were reduced from £2.10.0 to £2.0.0.[75]

Home circumstances made many garment workers extremely vulnerable to exploitation in the work place. They had to keep whatever employment they could find and hence worked under appalling physical conditions. They went as far as to protest against the abolition of outwork, one of the more notorious forms of exploitation in the clothing industry, and tacitly condoned other malpractices such as piecework, speeding up and underpayment.

Germiston, 20.5.1926. cf. GWU, Aab 2.3 for further evidence in this regard.

71 GWU, Aab 2.3. Charge in the case of Rex vs A. & G. Matz, 1927, and Statements by Frey and Mill, 21.3.1927.

72 GWU, Aaa 1. Minutes meeting CEC GWU, 22.4.1929.

73 GWU, Aab 1.17. Letter, GWU to S. Malk, 5.6.1929. In addition, the union sent reports to the Public Prosecutor in Johannesburg detailing the underpayment of women workers. GWU, Bbc 1.50. S. Sachs, Private and Confidential Report on Dispute in the Clothing and Shirt Manufacturers, to Public Prosecutor, July 1931.

74 GWU, Bbc 1.23. Correspondence, Mrs P. Donaldson and S. Sachs, 7.8.1934 and 9.8.1934.

75 GWU, Cca 2.2. Affidavit, S. Hack, 10.12.1937.

Conclusion

Poverty and an insufficient income of the family as a wage-earning unit, forced the garment workers to leave their homes and take up industrial employment. The majority of these young women found work in the clothing factories, where a specific set of circumstances contributed to their rapid expansion and consequent need for cheap labour. Government policies and traditional notions of women possessing 'nimble fingers' also played a role in the preferred employment of white women. However, in taking up employment in the clothing factories, prospective garment workers were confronted with and were victims of exploitation. Not only did they work under very bad physical conditions, but they were subjected to numerous labour malpractices, such as outwork, piecework, speeding up and underpayment. Yet, at first they did not resist this exploitation, because as major breadwinners in their families, it was crucial that they should retain their jobs. Initially, as women workers they also did not have the trade union representation or the power to confront employers to change existing conditions. This situation was greatly reinforced by the destitution which faced scores of garment workers at home.

CHAPTER 3

THE URBAN AFRIKANER FAMILY

Families with Girls and Girls without Families

Introduction - One Less Mouth to Feed

Garment workers at first passively accepted the appalling conditions in the clothing factories, because they had no trade union organ sation behind them and because dire poverty at home forced them to find and keep whatever employment they could procure. Moreover, in this impoverished environment the wage-earning family unit was the unit for survival. In view of the diminished ability of men to provide for their families, women played a vital role as wage-earners, either as wives or as daughters,

> These young women did not come to the Rand for adventure and romance, but to earn a few shillings for themselves and to help their parents.[1]

The role played by Afrikaner women in these communities can be related to their manner of insertion into and initial exposure to the urban environment. Three types of migration can be identified. Firstly the garment workers came to Johannesburg as members of a family, usually as relatively small children. Secondly, they came as newly-weds with their husbands and finally as single girls in search of employment.

Several women interviewed for this study were part of a family migration to the city. For example Mrs H. du Toit, who was born in the Pretoria district, came to Johannesburg when her father became a miner. Mrs A. du Toit and Mrs Pennells, both born in Potchefstroom, came to Johannesburg with their families when their fathers had to find employment in

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[1] S. Sachs, *Garment Workers*, p.18.

Johannesburg. Likewise Mrs E , born in Ladybrand, came to Johannesburg when her father lost everythi and brought his family to the city in search of a new life. Severa garment workers did not come from the surrounding Transvaal countrysi , but from the Cape. The fathers of Mrs S., Mrs Bosch and Mrs Van de Westhuizen, who were born in the Cape, became miners on the Rand, and herefore could poss bly have afforded the cost of a relatively more dist nt migration for the whole family. A few garment workers came from the O ange Free State as well.[2]

A number of garment workers who were terviewed, migrated to the city as newly-weds when prospects for both hus and and wife on the farm and in rural towns proved to be gloomy. In thes towns young men and women had a limited range of employment opportunities. Due to a lack of employment possibilities in the rural areas the newly- d Mr and Mrs Herman could not remain on the farm,

> Jy weet, hulle was ook 'n groot familie.....en die p s het naderhand te klein geword vir almal om rond te boer. Hulle as nie baie tevrede nie...maar...kyk, ons was ons eie base en moe veg vir ons toekoms.
> (You know, they were also a large family...and the farm later became too small for all to farm on. They were not very satisfied..but...look, we were our own bosses and had to fight for our future.)[3]

In the rural towns, occupations such as clerical and secretarial work were not readily available for young women either, primarily because of their lack of education and also because clerical work as still a predominantly male preserve. In addition, their limited education, mostly standard six, prevented them from moving into more skilled occupations.[4] A limited number could find employment at the rural general

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[2] These women came to the Rand as very young children when their fathers took up employment on the Reef, mostly mining. See Table 1.

[3] Interview 13.

[4] For a more detailed discussion of this topic, see A. Van Niekerk, 'The Social Origins and the Role of Kinship in the Employment of White Women Workers at the Zebedelia Citrus Estate, 1926-1953', paper presented to the African Studies Institute Seminar, University of the Witwatersrand, April 1986.

dealers and 'tiekie' bazaars. For example, Mrs Lategan, prior to migrating to Johannesburg, worked at a general dealer in Kroonstad, Mrs Pa. at one in Warden and Mrs P. at a 'tiekie' bazaar in Vryheid.[5] But for the rest there was nothing.

Their husbands could not find adequate employment either. As already mentioned, Mrs Herman maintained that her husband's ancestral farm had become too small to provide a living for all the children, while Mrs Britten and her husband could not make an adequate living in Potchefstroom, where their families were still residing. Mrs V., Mrs P., and Mrs Labuschagne as newly-weds, followed their husbands to the city where the latter had already obtained employment.

Poverty and boredom inspired some single garment workers to migrate as well. Tamara Hareven, who investigated the working and family lives of American textile workers at Amoskeag, Manchester, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, identified a similar pattern there,

> Many were driven into the factory system by the deprivation and tedium of farm life.[6]

Contrary to her initial belief, Isabel Bertaux-Wiume also found that the bright lights of Paris did not serve as an attraction to young French migrants leaving the countryside. Rather,

> ....what seemed to them essential was not where they were going, but what they were leaving, what they found hard to stand: farm life, village life and sometimes their family too.[7]

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[5] Interviews 17, 22 and 24.

[6] T. Hareven, 'Family Time and Industrial Time: Family and Work in a Planned Corporation Town', in *Family and Kin in Urban Communities, 1700-1930,* New York: New Viewpoints Division of Franklin Watts, 1977, p.121.

[7] I. Bertaux-Wiume, 'The Life History Approach to the Study of Internal Migration', in D. Bertaux ed., *Biography and Society: The Life History Approach in the Social Sciences,* London: SAGE Publications, 1981, p.254. Of the garment workers interviewed for this investigation, none referred to this aspect of the city, but all spoke about it in terms of the employment opportunities it offered.

Thus, for example, Mrs Deysel recalled that she had nothing to do on her father's impoverished Bushveld farm, and left for Johannesburg to find employment. Johanna Cornelius, Anna Scheepers and Mrs Spangenberg all came to Johannesburg on their own to find employment.[8] They had felt redundant while living with their parents and needed to take the burden of their keep off their parents. Johanna Cornelius said of her first wages,

> How proud I was on receiving my first week's wages. So proud indeed that I wrote home telling my father that he now had one less mouth to feed. I built great castles in the air, for 18/- seemed a lot of money to me.[9]

Nevertheless, the meagre wages paid to garment workers enabled them to establish themselves independently of their parents and lessen the financial burden on them.

It is this poverty and the way it framed and intervened in the lives of Afrikaner women garment workers at home, in contrast to conditions at work, that is subject of this chapter. First their efforts as young mothers with dependent children to care for will be analysed. The garment workers' role as daughters will then be examined to gauge further the extent of their contribution to the economic survival of the family in the city. Finally, I will look at the precarious situation of young single girls in the city. They found themselves in a very marginalised position and if misfortune befell them, some garment workers were confronted with the threat of prostitution. The presence and incidence of prostitution will then be analysed to see whether it was indeed the evil spectre the middle class made it out to be.

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[8] Interviews 35 and 26. GWU, Bch 1. H. or J. Cornelius, 'Why I Left my Home on the Land to Come and Work in a Factory', 1938.

[9] GWU, Bch 1. H. or J. Cornelius, 'Why I Left My Home'.

The Garment Workers as Mothers

The labour of the garment workers as mothers became indispensable to the economic survival of the family, because the fathers and sons were not always able to bear the responsibility alone.[10] The Carnegie Commission reported that the women of poor white families had a crucial role to play in the survival of their families. In volume one Grosskopf expressed the opinion that,

> On the whole the female members of the poor rural families in the bigger towns command our highest respect... Not only the mothers, but the daughters as well, greatly contribute to the advance of such poor families in the towns... it depends very largely on the womenfolk and especially the mother, whether the family sinks lower or rises.[11]

Mrs M.E. Rothmann, co-author of volume five, concurred,

> It seems that a family with a sterling father but a weak mother is more liable to sink than one with a worthless father but a respectable mother.[12]

Wives and daughters therefore had to provide for their families when their menfolk earned very little or nothing.[13] Said Mrs Spangenberg of women whose husbands had low earning power,

> Ons moes werk. Daar was nie anderste nie. Sy salaris was klein...Ons moes almal uitspring om by te bly....vandag werk vir môre se pap om te eet.
> (We had to work. There was nothing else for it. His salary was small....we all had to jump in to keep up.....work today to have porridge to eat tomorrow.)[14]

To which Mrs Viljoen added,

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10 In 1900 the Rowntree survey of working-class families in York found that, "In the poorest families the women's wages might be the only income and certainly was essential", as quoted by A. Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', p.33.

11 Carnegie Commission, *Poor White*, vol. I, p.219.

12 Ibid., vol. V, p.34. She was a well-known Afrikaans author who wrote under the pseudonymn MER.

13 The Transvaal Clothing Manufacturers Association (hereafter TCMA) maintained that of the some 16 000 workers in the clothing industry, 95% were Afrikaners and that vast numbers of these women had dependents who could not survive without their incomes. CAD, ARB 1024. Memorandum, TCMA to Minister of Finance and Industry, 16.10.1939.

14 Interview 26.

> Daai jare was daar nie so 'n ding dat 'n vrou kon bekostig het om by die huis te bly nie. Sy moes werk, want die man het ook maar baie min geld gekry.
> (Those years there was no such a thing that a woman could afford to stay at home. She had to work, because the man also earned very little money.)[15]

The same experience is reproduced in the life histories of other families. In 1923 Mr G.C. Beetge, a passenger transporter from Germiston, was earning £1.5.0 per week and because he had to pay four pounds per month in rent, was heavily dependent on his wife's wages and sorely missed them when she lost her job with a local tailor.[16] Other women whose husbands lost their jobs for a variety of reasons, also had to see their families through extended periods of unemployment. The Martins family provide an example. They had migrated from the Orange Free State to Germiston where Mr Martins became a miner, employment which he lost during the 1922 strike. They were then supported by his wife, who was employed by a tailor.[17]

Women whose husbands lost their jobs due to the Depression, seem to have suffered most. Anna Cilliers van Wyk, Mrs Eunice Sellers, Bertha Sourgen, and Susan Anderson, seem to have been the sole supporters of their families. Mr van Wyk had been unemployed for a year and Mr Sellers had been unemployed for two and a half years before he deserted his wife prior to the birth of their child. Mr Sourgen and Mr Anderson were both unemployed. The plight of the Andersons is worth examining. Mrs Anderson had resumed work after the birth of her first child in June 1932, she almost immediately went on strike from July to September 1932 (the general strike) and then only did she return to work.[18]

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15 Interview 31.

16 Rand Afrikaans University, History Project Archive (hereafter HPA), *Ons Vaderland*, 'Slumvegters', 5 June 1923.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

Ill health of the male providers of the family caused similar problems. Mrs Durandt of Fordsburg, who had a new-born baby and a husband confined in a home for the chronically sick as dependants, wrote to the GWU in 1931 stating that since she did not have an income any more, "We have absolutely nothing in the house to live upon".[19] Mrs Spangenberg recalled a Swanepoel family arriving in Germiston in search of a better life. Mr Swanepoel, a sickly man, had failed at farming in the Pietersburg district and had come to the city in order that his wife and five daughters might find employment in the clothing factories. On the same day, Mrs Spangenberg related, all six Swanepoel women succeeded in finding work in the local factories.[20]

Finally, women whose husbands were employed in occupations which were subject to economic fluctuations, such as the building trade in particular, were the mainstay of their family's economic survival. The work record of Mrs Van der Westhuizen, whose husband was a bricklayer, was closely related to her husband's erratic pattern of employment. She would work for some nine months and be home for three to five months when her husband was fully employed. However, she would always return to work at the same factory, at first the Alexandra and later the Pax clothing factories in Germiston. The work record of Mrs Harmse, whose husband was a furniture-maker, indicated similar intermittent rest periods.[21]

Mrs Pa.'s husband combined these disabilities. He was a builder who was often ill with a lung complaint during the winter months. Due to his ill health and the precarious nature of his trade, he could not always work. Consequently, she became the major provider of the family. Once,

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[19] GWU, Bbc 1.29. Application for Confinement Allowance, Affidavit, Mrs F. Durandt, 1931.

[20] Interview 26.

[21] Interviews 30 and 12.

during the late thirties when the building trade was more prosperous and her husband was fully employed, she could stop working,

> Nee wat, ek was moeg. Ek wou 'n bietjie gaan rus. My man het goeie werk gehad, toe het ek gaan rus. (No, I was tired. I wanted to rest a bit. My husband had a good job, so then I rested.)[22]

Not all garment workers could afford to stop working. Mrs Joey Dickson's husband was a casual labourer on the railways and she had been employed in the clothing industry since 1927. When Mrs Dickson fell ill in 1938 and could no longer support the family, they were plunged into dire poverty. She reviewed her working career,

> I've been working now on (sic) eleven years and I don't think one year's leave would make me any poorer than I am.[23]

Life histories of the women interviewed, reveal that only four of the garment workers did not return to the factory after their marriages. Two of these were married to miners, one to a teacher and one to a stock exchange worker. As has been indicated in chapter two, the majority of the other women were married to railway workers who were mostly employed in unskilled positions. The balance were married to men employed in the building and related trades, transport, and other occupations such as butchers, artisans, or post office workers. (See Table 4.)

Generally the garment workers married young, much younger than the average marital age for white women in South Africa at the time.[24] A breakdown of the marital age of the informants reveals that the majority married at 19, with five marrying at 20 and four at 21. Two each married

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[22] Interview 22.

[23] GWU, Cca 2.2. Letter, Mrs J. Dickson to J. Cornelius, September 1938.

[24] *Marriages per 1 000 in the Union 1921-1940.*

Year	per 1000	av. age of bride
1921-25	8.04	25.11
26-30	9.28	24.72
31-35	9.30	24.89
36-40	11.50	25.24

M.J.M. Prinsloo, *Vrouearbeid*, p.353.

in the later age groups.[25] These considerations reinforce a picture of garment workers who from an early age, first as daughters and then as mothers, saw to the survival of their families. Divorce and widowhood exacerbated this position, for then garment workers had to care for their children single-handedly. During the inter-war years the national figures for white divorced and widowed women increased markedly. From 1918 to 1921 the total number of divorced women increased more than fourfold and from 1921 to 1936 this figure doubled. Correspondingly, the total number of widows in the country did not increase as dramatically. From 1918 to 1921, as well as from 1926 to 1936, if compared to the increase in the total number of divorcees, the increase in the total number of widows was relatively small.[26]

Johannesburg had its fair share of divorcees. In 1937 alone *Die Kerkbode* cited 787 divorces and 758 orders for the restoration of conjugal rights, in contrast to a total of some 400 in Cape Town for the same period.[27] A number of these divorcees could be found in the ranks of the garment workers. Of the women interviewed for the study, six were divorcees and were the sole supporters of their families.

It appears that adultery, abuse, desertion and drink were major causes for the break-up of marriages of garment workers. In her study of working-class communities in the East End of London before the First World War, Ross found that

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[25] Only two informants remained single and seven had remarried, either as divorcees or as widows.

[26] *Total number of divorcees and widows in South Africa, 1918-1936*

Year	1921	1926	1936
divorcees	4 787	5 270	10 900
widows	55 913	62 219	82 850

Bureau for Census and Statistics, *Union Statistics for 50 Years*, Government Printers, 1960, p.A-15.

[27] *Die Burger*, 'Mense Trou vandag te maklik' 1.12.1937, as quoted by *Die Kerkbode*, 'Egskeiding', January 1938.

> Domestic violence was extra-ordinarily common in London...it often erupted when husbands tried to enforce control over women under circumstances which persistently undermined that control....[28]

Likewise, Dulcie Hartwell maintained that an estimated 25% of the garment workers experienced problems with their husbands,

> They would come up with blue eyes and bruised all over and sometimes they had obviously been bleeding from the battering they had had and tell us that they were scared for their lives and what must they do. The husband comes to the factory drunk and starts demanding to be allowed into the factory and all this sort of thing and the boss threatens to sack her if the husband comes in.[29]

Heavy drinking caused considerable problems in the family as well. In 1938 the South African National Council for Child Welfare expressed its concern about the effects of drinking on a father's wages, which would decrease to such a degree that the mother did not have enough to feed their children adequately.[30]

Many garment workers took such marital problems to the GWU, where committee members would make every effort to assist them. Mrs Lategan recalled that they helped many mothers "....met hulle kinders...met swangerskap, jy weet as hulle nou in die moeilikheid is, of hulle mans het hulle geslaan," (...with their children....with pregnancy, you know if they are in trouble, or if their husbands hit them.)[31] Anna Scheepers recounted how union officials once helped a woman who had been locked in her flat by her husband, to escape through the fan light. In addition, the union would often give advice on marital problems. They often pro-

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[28] E. Ross, 'Survival Networks: Women's Neighbourhood Sharing in London before World War I', *History Workshop Journal*, no. 15, Spring 1983, p.8.

[29] Interviews 35, 36, and 34. Not much research has as yet been done on the causes and prevalence of divorce during this period, but it could prove to be an interesting avenue for exploration.

[30] CAD, VWN 679. Minutes Meeting, South African National Council for Child Welfare, 22-24.6.1938.

[31] Interview 26.

vided assistance in divorce proceedings and took abused and neglected women to the union doctor to have their cuts and bruises treated.[32]

Marital difficulties presented but one aspect of the obstacles which confronted these women. Garment workers, whether married, divorced, widowed or single parents encountered a range of problems when faced with the care of their children while they had to go to work. Most had children within the first years of marriage but, so precarious was the economic situation of the garment worker mother, that most went back to the factory after their marriage and the birth of their children.[33] The standard practice for a married garment worker was to work until a month or two prior to the birth of her child and return to work three to six months, or even a year after the birth.[34] In contrast to the large families into which the garment workers had been born, mostly 10-12 children, the families of the garment workers were smaller, usually consisting of one to three children. Mrs Deysel, who had ten children, was the sole exception, but she had had them while not working, and only returned to the factory after the birth of her youngest child. Mrs Spangenberg was the only woman who had had more than three children whilst fully employed in the clothing industry. These findings, it would seem, correlate closely with studies of migration which maintain that amongst other factors, migration decreases fertility.[35]

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[32] Interview 35.

[33] In his work on the English working class during the nineteenth century, E.P. Thompson remarked that the birth of each new child at first put great strain on the resources of the family and the mother's ability to contribute financially. However, when the children began to earn an easier phase followed. E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p.83. Likewise, it was found that women in the British coal mining industry worked at particular stages of the family cycle, for example when their children were small. S. Alexander, A. Davin, E. Hostettler, 'Labouring Women', p.176.

[34] E.g. Interviews 26, 12, 13, 8, 30 and 31.

[35] Interview 7. I.J. van Eeden, *Migrasie*, p.161.

Garment workers usually left their children in the care of their mothers or mothers-in-law, and sometimes in the care of women in the neighbourhood or domestic servants.[36] In the early thirties Mrs Bosch took her child across the street to be looked after by her mother. In winter she used to leave her to sleep there as well, to prevent taking the child out early in the morning.[37] Mrs Lategan's mother and later her mother-in-law, who lived elsewhere in Johannesburg, looked after her child during the week while she was at work, returning the child on weekends. Mrs Lategan described her feelings on leaving him to go to work for the first time,

> Ek was gewoond om self agter my kind te kyk en hom self skoon en netjies te hou en als, en dit was vir my swaar om hom te los bedags. (I was used to looking after my child myself and to keep him clean and neat and everything, and it was hard for me to leave him each day.)[38]

Mrs Spangenberg, whose mother spent seventeen years with her, clearly outlined the division of labour in the home between mother and daughter. Her mother was,

> ...net verantwoordelik vir die tyd wat ons as werkvrouens uit die huis uit is. (...responsible only for the time that we working women were out of the house.)[39]

It would seem that although she was absent the whole day, Mrs Spangenberg still retained the female authority in her home.

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[36] Interviews 32 and 13. Some of these women, although working-class women themselves, were able to afford domestic servants. This could be attributable to the extremely low wages paid to black female domestic workers at the time. E.g. in comparison to a weekly white female wage of up to three pounds per week, Elizabeth Tshayinca, a Johannesburg domestic worker, earned between one and two pounds per month during the early thirties. S. Gordon, *A Talent for Tomorrow: Life Stories of South African Servants*, Johannesburg: Ravan, 1985, p.71.

[37] Interview 2.

[38] Interview 17.

[39] Interviews 32 and 26.

Mrs Viljoen's mother ran a boarding-house in Hillbrow and used to look after her grandchild whilst Mrs Viljoen was at work.[40] Mrs Harmse, in contrast, used to take her child to the crèche in Fordsburg, one of the very few in Johannesburg.[41] Mrs Viljoen also recalled women working with her who would make the journey to Fordsburg to deliver their children at the crèche, before returning to the centre of town to take up their work in the factory. Mrs Dickson's experience further illustrates the difficulties encountered by working mothers. When she returned to work after the birth of her first child, she had left it in the care of a domestic servant, an arrangement which she felt had contributed to the neglect of her child. Johanna Cornelius informed her of the existence of two crèches, one in Fox Street and the other in Fountain Road, Fordsburg. These charged 6d per day and cared for children until 6.30 pm. In addition, she sympathised with her dilemma of having to leave her child in the care of others,

> Ek verstaan goed waarom u so bekommerd oor die babetjie (sic) is en simpatiseer met u dat u die kind in iemand anders se oorsig (sorg=sic) moet laat terwyl u moet uit om te help om die inkomste van die gesin op te maak. Maar dit is maar die beloop van die werkendeklas totdat die kapicalistiese sisteem kan vernietig word. (I can well understand why you are so worried about the baby and sympathise that you have to leave the child in another's care when you have to leave to augment the income of the family. But that is but the course of working-class life until the capitalist system can be destroyed).[42]

In some cases, however, domestic servants would be entrusted with the care of the children. Mrs Herman used to employ women who lived on her parents' farm in the OFS on a six-monthly rotational basis.[43] In addition,

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[40] Interviews 31 and 12.

[41] By 1944 there were only six nursery schools in Johannesburg which could cater for only 220 children and cost 8 000 pounds per annum to maintain. GWU, Bcf 2.1. Minutes meeting Shop Stewards Committee, 7.2.1944.

[42] Mrs Dickson felt that crèche care could perhaps be better than the care a domestic servant could and did give her first child. GWU, Cca 2.2. Letter, J. Cornelius to Mrs J. Dickson, 12.9.1938. cf. Correspondence, J. Dickson and GWU, September 1938.

[43] Interviews 13 and 31.

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