



SHARING THE LOAD

*An exciting new book with a vision
of the new South Africa*

No such thing as "women's work?"

The union challenged the idea of childcare and housework being "women's work." They saw that this was part of women's oppression.

They saw that men have a responsibility to share the load - of children and housework. Fathers as well as mothers have the right to be parents - to time off at the time of birth, and to time off to see to their children when they are sick or in need.

This was the beginning of the demand for and winning some parental rights. SACCAWU forged ahead. The book tells of how the union did this.

The home front

The book is also a story about love. Josephine Sithole and her husband Christopher began to have problems in their marriage because Josephine was getting involved in her union. Christopher talks about how he felt at the time. "I knew things were not right with Josephine and me... I felt like I wasn't important to her anymore. She was spending so much time with the union people, and when she came home she only had time for the children. I felt confused - while I knew I was not playing my part with the kids

and the housework, I was hurting inside. I felt I had lost control of my wife, my family, and my house." Josephine and Christopher talk about how they sorted things between them.

"Fathers as well as mothers have a right to time off at the time of a birth and to time off to see to their children when they are sick or in need."

"Today there are few men who share, but in ten years time there will be many more."

How to put words into action?

The book takes a hard and clear look at how women are oppressed in society, and why this has led to so few women in leadership positions at all levels in the union. It also points to the fact that real equality means having to

change many things so that women can be equals, both in union life and in home life. In this chapter many problems are raised, and possible ways of solving them are written about.

Georgina Mbileni, who was interviewed in the book, spoke at the launch of the book in Johannesburg recently. She said: "With time all these things that are being started will work. It is still a new idea, but people will get used to the idea and accept it. Today there are a few men who share, but in 10 years' time there will be many more!"

A book of hope and debate

SACCAWU hopes that the book will raise debate. This, it certainly will do. It is a book of challenge and inspiration. It puts gender equality on the agenda and is valuable for anybody involved in the struggle for human rights.

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