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8th March – Self-determination of our freedom

FdCA Gender Commission statement

Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici

6th March 2006

We are witnessing the preparations for a clear and determined attack on the freedom and self-determination of the women who live in this country, an attack which is aimed at several fronts but which has the sole objective of reducing the public voice and presence of women.

One of the prime areas where women's freedom is worse threatened is in regard to sexuality, with the ongoing demonization of free and responsible sexuality with regard to contraceptives and to the use of Law 194 of 1978 concerning voluntary abortions.

Always foremost in the minds of the Right and the Catholic church, this attack on women's freedom to responsibly and autonomously manage their relationships and their sexuality is now at the centre of a mad rush to gain control of public funds in order to ensure that the private clinics, financed by our money, are run according to the demands of the church and a certain political ideology, yet another attack on the public healthcare system. The latest affront is represented by the attempt to introduce into public

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clinics volunteers from Catholic structures whose task would be to provide information contrary to women's freedom to choose when and how and, above all, if they want to get pregnant or not. Should this happen, it would be a gross violation of any form of respect for the protection of the freedom to choose and of the privacy of those women who decide to make use of a public clinic in order to obtain information regarding contraception or regarding the possibility of voluntarily having an abortion.

But the worst attack in terms of sexuality is still the one which was introduced thanks to Law 40/2004, the law on Medically Assisted Procreation (IVF treatments). This law places women in a second-class category as they can no longer freely have access to the available forms of IVF treatment, and therefore cannot freely decide if, how and when to have a baby and become mothers. With this law, women's health is entrusted to medical decisions, with the loss of any form of self-determination and with the health of the embryo being placed over and above that of the woman.

All these attacks on women's freedoms are taking place in a context where pay parity is only a mirage, where increasing labour precarity mostly affects women, where young female university graduates struggle to find work which suits their qualifications, are underpaid and often exploited, and where young women can no longer have children simply because their precarious economic situation forbids it.

Violence against women in the family and in society in general is also at extremely high levels and rising. The national press regularly reports on cases of violence, but these are only the tip of the iceberg, with many many more cases going unreported every day. Of those reported, we should remember the one of the girl from Biella who was killed by the man who had raped her years before and who had persecuted her for years without anything being done to stop him. Not to mention the case of the decision by the Court of Appeals which decided that sexual violence is to be considered

less serious if the woman involved (and in this case it was a minor!) has already had sexual relations.

We must fight these attempts to force women out of public life, back into the sphere of the private and the family, the battle cry of a fake traditionalist ideology which is nonetheless a capitalist one, as women get forced back into the private domain only in moments of economic contraction and social difficulty. We demand the right for women to enjoy a public voice and to take back their freedom, starting from:

Freedom of choice in our relations and in our sexual lives
Self-determination for every decision regarding our bodies and our lives