

insecure in a society where they are struggling for rights which are often mistaken for privileges. All the oppressed, whether in a family, an institution or in a class dominated society, know only too well what it means to be "invisible". When the racist regime in South Africa states that it represents the people of South Africa—the real, indigenous, blacks and the majority know very well that to the racists, people are only white people; the rest are sub-human.

### OUR COLONIAL HERITAGE

In Kenya today, we ourselves have discarded colonial terms and coined new words and phrases which are more in keeping with the prevailing historical conditions. Harambee is the best known, but they range from karafu, wabenzi, democrasia, ukoloni, mambo leo, wanyonyaji, wananchi, wenyenchi, magendo and of course, nyayo. Although we know that the word native only means original inhabitant,

because of its racial and oppressive connotations, we refuse to be called natives.

We assert quite rightly, that those people who continue to use these words are still imbued with a colonial and oppressive mentality. Thus any group of people engaged in the process of liberating themselves have to develop a new terminology reflecting their new awareness and clarity of their line of action. And so it is with women too. No longer can women tolerate words which claim to address them but in fact oppress them.

### WOMAN INCLUDES MAN AND SHE INCLUDES HE

Many people feel that it is too difficult and awkward to change the language. New words such as chairperson, person power, s/he, people (instead of men) and Ms. are surely not difficult if one has the correct attitude. If one can learn to say 'Mhe-shmiwa' instead of 'boy', one can certainly begin to use language which not only

includes women but treats them as the other equal half of the human race. In fact it is the female terms which are all inclusive and could therefore be seen as being more "correct" if they were used for referring to both sexes. For example, 'woman' includes 'man', 's-he' includes 'he' and 'fe-male' includes 'male'.

Socialists have no difficulty in addressing men and women as comrades. Even difficult words such as 'proletariat' and 'bourgeoisie' and phrases such as 'national liberation' and 'cultural imperialism' have become common in our vocabulary. Language, like the society it helps to develop, is and will continue to be, in constant change. New words are coined everyday and old out-dated words are replaced by more appropriate ones.

Those who resist this change cannot claim to be neutral—they are actively supporting the status quo. By using non-feminist terminology when they are aware of its oppressive

nature, they reveal themselves as sexists. Sexists are those people (men and women) who advocate inferior roles for women simply because they are women, and thus strive to maintain the dominance of the male sex. Like racists who advocate superior roles for whites and inferior ones for blacks; and tribalists who advocate tribal supremacy.

Language as it has developed reflects the contradictions in the social relations of production i.e. the development of class struggle. Class contradictions in the present capitalist era are manifested in sexism, racism and tribalism.

Language as we have seen, is also an active tool for educating the people and raising their awareness. Those who are involved in the struggle for liberation have therefore to take responsibility for inventing appropriate terminology to fit the new conditions and to accelerate the changes already in process.