

Discrimination against women is unconstitutional

Why these tax laws then?

Marietjie Kamazuka, an office cleaner at a big clothing outlet in Windhoek is married to Siegfried and they have two young children. Siegfried is a motor mechanic and earns quite a good salary at the garage where he has been working for nine years. He earns nearly three times as much as she does.

But unfortunately, Siegfried is often a bit irresponsible with the money he earns. In the community, Siegfried is regarded as a successful man, earning a good salary.

Marietjie knows he is a good worker and that his employers trust him. Since the start of their relationship Siegfried had been spending a lot of money in the bar on Friday nights, and on his motor car which he considers as his pride and joy. She never wanted to alter his habits, as she believed he was allowed to enjoy the money he earned.

So Marietjie accepted the custom that all the money she earned should go to the upkeep of the household; buying the food, clothing and paying the school fees for the education of their

children with only infrequent and varying amounts of money coming from Siegfried.

Because Marietjie is a married woman she pays a larger part of her salary towards the country's income tax system. Marietjie didn't know what the reasons for this was, but accepted it as one of the laws of her country.

According to this law married men can claim their children as dependants and thus get tax discounts for them. Married women cannot claim their children as dependants. Furthermore, if Siegfried and Marietjie own the house they live in, and even if it is in Marietjie's name, Siegfried will get the tax deduction.

Married women do not even fill in their own tax forms. They do not have their own income tax number, but are included in their husband's. If it so happens that a woman paid too much income tax in a year, the state will refund her husband, not her.

The income tax law seems to be a law with strange devices that puts married women in positions where they do not have control over the money they earn. Wouldn't it be better if this law considered married women as individuals and not 'under' their husbands?

