

**WAGES FOR
HOUSEWORK**

WOMEN SPEAK OUT



**May Day Rally
Toronto**

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INTRODUCTION

This past February a group of eighty-five women, from six countries, met for two days in Montreal, Quebec, to discuss how to organize together to get wages for housework for all women. We chose May 1 -- a day of international workers' struggle -- as our first common effort at a public mobilization for wages for housework because all over the world women have been saying that society rests on our labour and that we, like all other workers, need wages to fight against our exploitation.

The very fact that we were meeting together expressed our greatest strength: that in many parts of the world we are, simultaneously, identifying our condition of powerlessness with the unwaged work that we all do in the home -- and are fighting against it.

In this pamphlet we have collected all the speeches given at the May Day rally in Toronto, as well as a number of materials from other wages for housework rallies in Italy, Britain, and the USA. We place them side by side because they represent a new level of power for us all: in spite of our differences in language, nationality, and culture, our needs as women are the same and our fight together for wages for housework will undermine the divisions which have thus far weakened our struggles.

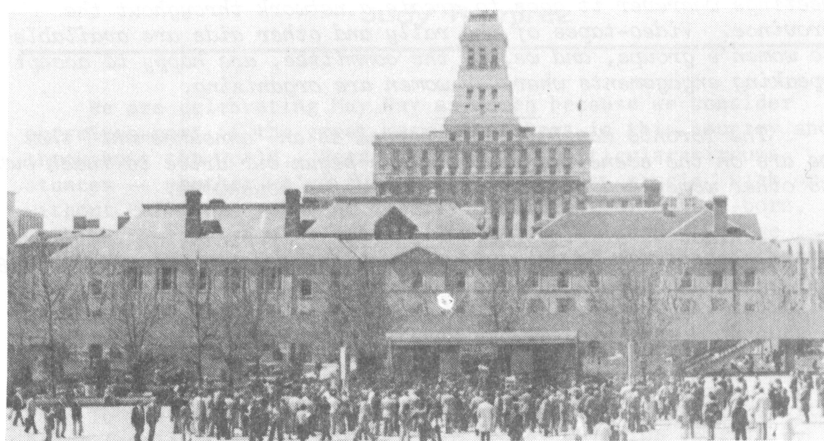
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When we returned from Montreal we had two months to organize the May Day rally, and for the 15 of us in the Toronto Wages for Housework Committee it meant an incessant flow of activity. We rented a small office in the attic of a women's centre, and each of us contributed a minimum of one day's pay per month to meet expenses. By stealing time away from housework, paid work, and "leisure" hours, we each worked as hard as our resources allowed, discovering all sorts of "hidden" skills and talents.

We prepared and distributed 5000 leaflets and posters, in four languages (English, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese), and at the rally itself passed out 1000 more. We went around speaking to a number of women's groups -- tenants', daycare, employees etc. -- and to thousands more in two phone-in radio shows for 2 1/2 hours each, and one brief television appearance.

Two weeks before the rally, there was a full-page article on the first page of the "Women's Section" in the Toronto Star titled "Should housewives be paid?". It presented the Committee's position and spoke about our rally and the international network of wages for housework groups. For the next three days the tel-

ephone in our office rang constantly -- women calling from all over the city saying "right on", "it's about time", etc.



Marianne Langton

At noon on Friday, May 2, City Hall square was full of sun and full of people. Many were from nearby offices having lunch, many were en route to government offices, and some were there specifically for the rally. It began with live music, and soon we were speaking to a crowd of 250 people. Many of them were women -- secretaries, clerical workers, immigrants -- all of them listening intently and taking our leaflets away with them.

Eight of us spoke directly from our daily situations. As nurses. As students. As waitresses. As office and factory workers. As full-time housewives. As welfare mothers. As lesbians. Each of us linking ourselves to one another, and one set of introductory remarks linking our fight for wages for housework to the struggles of other workers and other women all over the world. The rally lasted 1 1/2 hours, and during that time, we spoke to approximately 500 people.

The media was there and we received wide coverage; several radio news spots that morning announcing the rally, 5 or 6 radio interviews in the course of the rally, national TV news coverage (5 minute report), and 3 local TV news items. Since May 2, there has been a two-part news program on wages for housework, based on our rally -- six out of the eight people interviewed were favourable! and a national Gallup Poll was conducted with 49% of the population in favour of a wage for housework. Already we have reached many more people than were there with us on May 2, and we are continuing our organizing to extend the movement for wages for housework to all women in all situations.

The "Women's Liberation Bookmobile" which is touring all of Ontario this summer -- both rural and urban centres -- is stocked with materials on wages for housework and is holding public meetings wherever it goes to create a network throughout the province. Video-tapes of the rally and other aids are available to women's groups, and we, in the committee, are happy to accept speaking engagements wherever women are organizing.

The Toronto May Day rally served as an "announcement" that we are on the scene and that we have begun our drive to reach out to other women and organize for wages for housework.

Contact us at P.O. Box 38, Station E, Toronto, or telephone us at 922-2084 (Tuesdays and Thursdays 10.00-6.00pm), or 537-5148/532-4647 (any evening).

The Toronto Wages for Housework Committee
June 1975



OPENING REMARKS

--Judy Ramirez

We are celebrating May Day as women because we consider ourselves part of the great mass of workers in this country and throughout the world. Regardless of our particular circumstances -- whether we're full-time housewives, single, with or without children, young or elderly, immigrant or native-born, lesbian or straight, we are all housewives. Because we are women, we are all identified with the work of servicing others, looking after their physical and emotional needs, and providing this society with people who can function from one day to the next because we are there to renew and restore them with our labour.

To the degree that this work has been made synonymous with being female, it is considered our "role" which we fulfill by working for husbands, children, patients, supervisors, and people in general "for love".

This set-up turns housework into a huge layer of invisible work which our entire society rests on -- without it, men wouldn't get to their offices and factories each morning; children wouldn't get to school; hospitals, restaurants and offices wouldn't function. We know it's work because we're exhausted at the end of the day. But our work is invisible and we're expected to do it as a labour of love and as a matter of course because it is unwaged. If you don't have a pay cheque to show for yourself, you can't possibly be working.

But we are here today to denounce the deception of women's work, to refuse the identification between that work and our "nature" as women. Because we're tired of spending our lives in the service of others "for love".

We have borne the effects of our wagelessness for too long. Our dependence on a man's wage -- or on the State for charity -- has meant the subordination of our personalities and our sexuality to the needs of everyone around us. We have had to give up the right to our time and our energies in exchange for survival. How many of us would be -- or have been -- destitute when our men have decided to leave us for younger women or because we weren't "towing the line"? And how many women on Government Benefits have had to suffer invasions of privacy, demeaning questions on how their time and money are spent? And what about

those of us who thought we were escaping the fate of being "only housewives" by continuing our education and getting special training only to face the fact that 3% of women ever get near a management job and that for us to become "professionals" means to take jobs in nursing and teaching which are, as we all know, traditionally low-paid female occupations.

But we aren't just sitting around watching it happen. All over the world women are rebelling. After a decade since the women's movement began, internationally, the fall in the birth-rate in many countries is a sign of women's refusal to increase their work-load by having more children. The current activity surrounding abortion in Canada, in Italy, and elsewhere, is building our power to determine the quantity and the conditions of our work. High divorce rates show the leverage many of us have gained to leave intolerable situations; it's like walking off the job in industry when conditions are too dangerous. The rise in female crime rates (mostly thefts) show that whether they give us a wage or not, we don't want to do without.

But we know that when we fight back they try to make us pay. And for many of us the conditions of our struggle are de-sexualization (frigidity), alcoholism, depression, child-battering, insanity. These refusals on our part to function -- however involuntary they might seem to be -- are our way of saying "no" to society's role for us, and to the State which keeps it alive and well in legislation, education, manpower planning, welfare policies etc. etc.

Our refusal to accept our role and our work, and our demand for wages, is part and parcel of the struggle of millions of other workers around us, both male and female. We are all living through a crisis which in Canada is saddling us with unemployment rates of 8½% and which means that, in our thousands, we have the threat of wagelessness hanging over our heads. And 8½% is only the national average; people in Windsor, in auto and auto-related industries, are facing 25% unemployment rates, native peoples 40%, and in the Atlantic provinces 18-25%. All this while corporate profits are "healthy", as they say in the financial reports, and while the tax structure springs new loopholes to keep it that way every day. While workers face inflation rates of 10-12% (which is forcing many a housewife to protect her family's standard of living by shoplifting) corporations get away with paying only 12% of the tax burden to the 50% paid by the mass of individual workers.

But the response of workers all over this country is clear -- every one is demanding more -- a bigger share of the wealth, crisis or no crisis. The longshoremen in Quebec are defying back-to-work legislation because they want a 60% wage increase and a guaranteed 40-hour pay-packet regardless of whether or not

there's work. The message is clear: our needs, and not whether they can provide work for us, is the basis for our demands.

And this is the general climate among the one million workers in Canada who are negotiating new contracts this year. One million workers, all of whom are in a "catching-up" mood, demanding raises of up to 71% over a one year period like the postal workers. Even workers who have not been traditionally militant are in on this. Nurses are saying, "We're tired of the blackmail -- we can't afford to work for love", and by just threatening a strike, won a 44% wage increase recently in Winnipeg. Civil servants who make up fully 75% of these one million workers are getting more and more militant in their demand to catch up with workers in other sectors.

We're all getting wise to the fact that we -- you and I -- are not the State (contrary to what Laura Sabia says), and that this society is run on the "adversary system", with the corporations' profits and the State's control over us pitted against our needs for more money and our fight for more power over our own lives.

In this context of stepped-up expectations and struggle, we are here to say that as women, as unwaged housewives, we have more "catching up" to do than anyone else. We are no-strangers to crisis because as the least powerful workers in this society, we are always absorbing the shocks in the system. When food prices go up, our working hours increase because we run around looking for bargains which then take longer to cook. And when this coincides with high unemployment levels, we are also the first to get expelled from the labour force to become unwaged full-time instead of part-time.

Those of us who hang on to our jobs are often -- like the great number of immigrant women in this city -- doing essential jobs that are so heavy and low-paid that no one else would take them. There are thousands of immigrant women on three-month work permits that work ten to twelve hours a day for pay below the minimum wage because permits are not granted for the better jobs and, however miserable their situation is here, it is better than going back. Immigration policy blackmails women into the worst jobs around, and keeps them so busy, also in their homes by not providing necessary social services, that it is often impossible to organize a struggle. Many who might be here today in response to our publicity in four different languages, are locked up in sweatshops while many others are afraid to leave their homes because their husbands might find out and make trouble.

And there are still others of us who are offered "new job opportunities" -- even during a crisis -- because the men

are trying to make a fight for a better deal and we are used as a pressure on them to stop. They just opened the mines in the Yukon to women to "alleviate labour shortage problems". When they need us for hard dirty work, the whole femininity mystique can be easily disposed of! They'll use the impetus of our own struggle for liberation to tie us to a second job on their terms.



BETTY BURCHER

Wages for housework as an international movement is organizing against all that. Like the longshoremen in Quebec, we don't care about their work, we want the money. Here in Toronto the women on Family Benefits in the Mother-Led Union have said clearly that they aren't interested in legislative schemes that will help them "work their way off welfare" because "if work was the way to get off welfare, there certainly wouldn't be any mothers on welfare!" In other words, not a second low-paid job in order to join the ranks of the "working poor", but more money for the work they're already doing in their homes.

In Germany last year, 3000 immigrant women working in a factory went on strike demanding five days' pay for four day's work -- the fifth day was for housework in recognition that that too is work.

Three years ago in England, when the government tried to take the Mothers Allowance away from the women and re-route it through the man's wages, 50,000 women signed a petition which stopped them.

Last year in Italy, the government and the Vatican held a national referendum against the divorce law, counting on the support of the so-called "backward" segment of society, that is, women, who, as it happens, turned out en masse to vote for it. These same women are now making a fight for abortion rights, and many of them are organizing from within a national campaign for wages for housework.

We in Toronto, who have also begun to organize against the unwaged housework we do as women, and therefore also against more work at low wages, can see the international dimensions of this struggle because women from all over the world live in this city. This makes visible the fact that, despite very real differences of language and culture, we are all in the same situation as women and we all need more money and less work.

In the coming months we will continue to build, in Ontario and throughout Canada, what we are beginning here today -- a movement of women who are tired of staying "in our place", and who do not see liberation as coming from more work.

In June of 1973, 800 women at the Feminist Symposium in Montreal, passed a resolution demanding wages for housework from the State. Today, we are beginning to actively organize our struggle to back up that demand with increasing numbers of women in Canada and internationally.

More than any other workers, we want to "catch up", because we are starting with nothing. Our wages as women, as housewives, are long overdue!!

Telegram from POW
read at the Toronto rally

WOMEN IN ENGLAND AND ITALY MARCHING WITH YOU FOR WAGES FOR HOUSE-
WORK. WE ARE EVERYWHERE AND WE WILL WIN.

Power of Women Collective



Marianne Langton

WE ARE SAYING NO TO LOW PAY
AND NO TO NO PAY

--Liz Jansen

I am a nursing student. What do I do? I work 60-70 hours a week, schoolwork, and I don't get paid for it. But that's not all I do. Friends didn't believe I worked as much as I said I did, so I counted the hours I spent. In addition to the 65 hours of schoolwork, which includes classes, hospital time, and homework, add in these hours: 28 hours to cook and eat, 3 hours to do my laundry, 3 hours to do food shopping, 3 hours a week getting to and from school, 56 hours a week for sleeping, for a grand total of 158 hours. 158 hours out of a total of 168. That leaves me 10 hours of free time, 10 lousy hours spread over seven days.

The nursing course used to be three years of training in a hospital school. We were given room and board, in return for slave labour for the hospitals. Now we pay to learn and the hospitals still get us as free labour. I want to get paid to learn. I'm being trained to work for the hospitals, I'm being trained to care for the sick people in this society and that training is work. I want to be paid for it!

Okay. I finally graduate, and I start making some money. What do I do as a nurse? I do housework. Sure, we learn a few skills, like giving needles, but really what we do is housework. We care for the young, the sick, and the old. For example, we as women used to look after our elderly in our homes. Now they are shipped off to nursing homes and hospitals.

Hospital work is waged housework. It's fragmented and divided among different people -- laundry, kitchen, housekeeping, nurses -- but it's still taking care of people, making sure they're washed and fed and that they get better, so they can go back to work.

Nurses and auxiliary hospital workers have been paid low wages because we are expected to take care of patients out of love, just as all women do at home for their families. We are trained to accept no pay as housewives, and low pay when we work out of the home. We are saying no to low pay and no to low pay. Last summer when nurses and auxiliary workers threatened to go on strike for higher wages, the hospitals said, "What about the patients?" And we said, "Dedication doesn't pay the rent." By threatening to break the emotional blackmail of love, we got our 30 to 50% increases.



The Public Archives of Canada

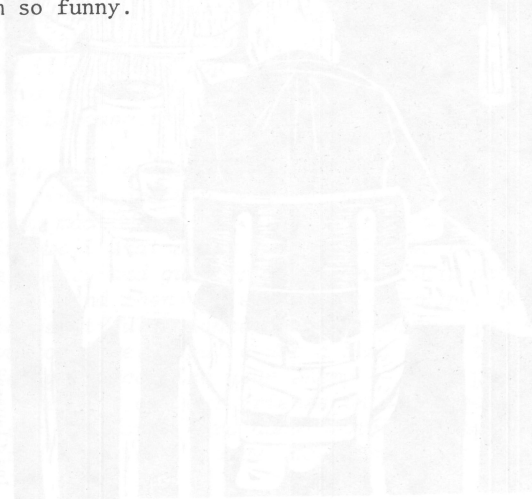
When a man learns to be a cook, he starts from scratch. He learns to cook fast ... sloppy ... but fast. He learns how to do his job, take his money, and go home. He would never cook at home if he didn't have to. Eight hours a day is more than enough.

When a man leaves a job, the next man to take his place is either trained in a government-financed school or he brings with him years of experience. The hotel has to respect this experience by paying for it.

As male cooks and waiters are always at each others' throats, the chef, the man who controls all the cooks, spends several hours each day taking orders from the waiters and giving them to the male cooks. As the authority in the kitchen, he sees that antagonisms are kept down.

As women we are taught to not fight, to not get angry at others, or if we do get angry to internalize our frustrations. This saves the hotel money because if we take it out on ourselves rather than get into fights, they don't have to supervise us so much. Not to mention that the men are much more "productive" if they have someone to dump on when they are feeling put down.

As women we are refusing our role, our housework as much as we can, but often when we are alone in the kitchen we seem defeated. An older woman's personal refusal is simply seen as bitchiness, whereas my anger is "amusing" ... it's laughable. As one powerless punk, I seem a little bit hopeless. But with the power, the international power of wages for housework, it doesn't seem so funny.



THE CRISIS OF SOLE-SUPPORT MOTHERS

-- Sallie Shun

I am a sole-support mother. I recently took on a job -- a second job. I did it because I have two children to support and I needed the money. I already had one job -- I was a housewife and a mother but that job was not recognized as work and therefore I didn't receive a wage.

Before, when I was married, my husband paid me something out of his wage which made my job seem worthless and gave him power over me. Then after the divorce I was given some money by the State, but they didn't pay me a wage for my job. Instead they gave me welfare and then they had direct power over me.

When I was on Welfare I joined the Mother Led Union and I want to read you a letter that I wrote to the Premier of Ontario, William Davis, as a member of the Union.



Ina Clausen

Dear Sir:

I feel good because I'm organizing; it's the first time for ages that I've felt I can do something and because we're doing it they tell us that we're dreadful and we're not good mothers and we don't care about our kids and what are we doing out in the streets shouting and screaming. Well I'll tell you, Mr. Davis, we're doing it in response to your organizing. You want to know about your organizing? You are organizing poverty. You say there's an economic crisis. Well we're sick of hearing about your crisis, Mr. Davis; we've got one of our own. For some of us it's called starving, for others having nowhere to live, for others having to give up our kids or have them taken away, for others it's lying and cheating the welfare to make a few extra bucks, for others it's prostitution. Yes, Mr. Davis, I'll bet you've never heard of the welfare prostitutes -- women who sell their bodies so that their teenage daughters can have a winter coat and keep up with the style.

The list is endless, Mr. Davis, and the one thing that's common to us all is a lot of hard work -- for we do work, not a regular eight-hour day with pay, but often 16 hours without pay. You don't recognize our work as work, Mr. Davis -- you give us welfare; we're charity cases, welfare bums; you expect us to work for love. Well have you ever tried living on love, Mr. Davis? It hurts! It hurts when you send your kid off to school with holes in his boots, and when he wants to join the school choir and you can't afford the uniform and you can't afford the day trips, and you can never afford a holiday. And when you get up every night with the baby and then there's the next day and night and the day after that and you're there by yourself and it's always you that has to do the work and you can't afford a babysitter or private daycare and you can't get state daycare because they tell us that we don't work.

And after you've said no to the swimming lessons and the judo and the cinema and you've taken all the blame, you begin to feel pretty mad, Mr. Davis. And you go to bed and lie there and you think well what about me -- I do all this work, I live in all this misery and guilt and you know that people call you a welfare bum! And then you start to get angry, Mr. Davis, and the anger is beautiful because, when it comes, you know that it's not you to blame. You're not a bum. For the first time in your life, you recognize your enemy -- it's you Mr. Davis, you and all the rest of your friends in the government and the big businesses who don't care about mothers, and who don't care about children. You don't care about any of us workers.

So, when you talk about your crisis, I always cringe, Mr. Davis, because I know that what you're talking about is taking something else away from me. We have to cut back social services, we have to cut back education and health care, you say. Well, what does that mean, Mr. Davis? It means that you want us women to absorb your crisis! Well tough. It's like I said before: we've got our own crisis, it's an economic crisis, it costs us a lot. Only this time, Mr. Davis, we know where it's coming from and we intend to do something about it!

We want more money and a better life -- we want to regain our dignity. Pay us for the work we do in the home. We demand:

1. Parity with foster parents
2. A higher earning capacity for Benefit mothers
3. Free 24-hour community-controlled daycare

As I said before, I've just come off Welfare -- I took on a second job. I work in a Distress Centre for women and children. The women who stay with us there come from situations of marital breakdown. They have often been married for ten to fifteen years. They have nothing to show for it. No home, no furniture, no dignity, no money. When they leave, they move out into apartments with their children -- the Welfare gives them beds and a welfare cheque that is nowhere near enough to live on. Whereas for the ten to fifteen years that they were married they were middle-class housewives -- today they are the welfare mothers. It happens all the time and it's time we women did something about it -- whatever we are doing, whatever situations we are in, we are all exploited in the same way -- as unpaid houseworkers.

Because I am now a community worker it isn't to say that I am not still a housewife. I work for eight hours in the Distress Centre and then go pick up my children and go home to work for another four to eight hours. The two jobs, right, one paid, one unpaid! If I lose my job I may end up on welfare again.

If the women in the Distress Centre had been paid for the work they had done in the home they wouldn't be on welfare today. There would be no need for Distress Centres. I say pay us for the work we do in the home. And I say I will be my sisters' keeper when I say WE WANT WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK!



Marianne Langton

THE HOUSEWIFE'S LAMENT

Gaily $\text{♩} = 72$

GUITAR - 4 & 5 (WALTZ TIME)

BANJO - 1 (WALTZ TIME)

The musical score consists of four staves of music in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 3/4 time signature. Chords G, C, G, D7, and G are indicated above the notes. The second staff continues the melody with chords C, G, D7, G, and CHORUS. The third staff features chords B7, Em, D7, G, C, and G7. The fourth staff starts with a D7 chord and ends with a G chord. The music is written in a simple, rhythmic style characteristic of early 20th-century sheet music.

One day I was walking, I heard a complaining
 And saw an old woman, the picture of gloom.
 She gazed at the mud on her doorstep, 'twas raining
 And this was her song as she wielded her broom.

CHORUS:

Oh life is a toil and love is a trouble,
 Beauty will fade and riches will flee
 Pleasures, they dwindle and prices, they double,
 And nothing is as I would wish it to be.

There's too much of worriment goes to a bonnet,
 There's too much of ironing goes to a shirt,
 There's nothing that pays for the
 Time you waste on it,
 There's nothing that lasts us but
 Trouble and dirt.
 In March it is mud, it is slush in December.
 The midsummer breezes are loaded with dust.
 In fall the leaves litter, in muddy September
 The wallpaper rots and the candlesticks rust.

CHORUS.

There are worms on the cherries and
 Slugs on the roses,
 And ants in the sugar and mice in the pies,
 The rubbish of spiders no mortal supposes
 And ravaging roaches and damaging flies.
 It's sweeping at six and it's dusting at seven,
 It's victuals at eight and it's dishes at nine.
 It's potting and panning from ten to eleven
 We scarce break our fast till we plan how to dine.

CHORUS.

LESBIANS WANT WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK TOO

-- Ellen Woodsworth



I am an average woman. I am a housewife. A woman who has swept floors, smiled to get jobs, served tea, worked in offices, serviced men and others in a million and one different ways. I am also a woman who has constantly struggled since I was young to have more time to live the life I wanted to lead -- to do less of other people's work and more of the things I wanted to do. And struggled for more money and time to do them. I am a woman who hates all the things about my life that make me feel less alive. I am a woman who loves other women. I am a lesbian.

I am a woman who gets whistled at on the streets, a woman who can only get poor-paying jobs, finds food prices too high, and can't find a place to live that I can afford. I am a woman who wants to have children but who doesn't have the money to support them. I am a woman who has to constantly fight to have loving relationships. Like all women I have to live in a closet, masking my real needs and strengths. And like all women, I grow stronger with every step forward that we take.

But there are some things that make my life different from other women's. I can't legally be openly affectionate with the women that I love. I can't legally work in the civil service. I can't cross the border. I can't love another woman until I

am 21. I can be fired, evicted, harrassed, and I have no legal rights. All of these things make my life a struggle.

But the greatest obstacle in my life is that society says that I am not a real woman. Society says that a real woman is a woman who services men emotionally and sexually. The main reason why society is so harsh on lesbianism is that as long as this society gives women no choice but to be slaves to men, then it gets a lot of hard work done for free. No wonder everyone is taught to see women loving women as perverted. They don't want us to point out the work involved in heterosexuality. They don't want us to be with each other because that will mean we won't be serving men, and we just might get together with each other to change our lives.

And this has really been a big problem in my life because it makes me and all other women see women caring for other women as sick and unnatural. This keeps women from getting too close to each other.

But what I have come to realize is that this is what society tries to do to any woman who steps out of line. They say we are crazy and give us tranquilizers and shock treatments. Or they call prostitutes who get money for their work the dregs of the earth. And they call women on welfare who ask to be paid for the work they do parasites. How many times have we been told that we were too masculine or unlady-like? Or that what we need is a "good lay", when what we were saying was that we want to live our lives our way -- not the way that men or bosses or society would like us to.

So, lesbianism is used as a threat to keep us in line. It sure used to work on me. Everytime someone called me a queer, I used to work extra hard to prove that I was really just a nice sweet girl and didn't like other women. But now many women -- both straight and lesbian -- are saying that we do like other women, and we are refusing to be nice and sweet any longer. We are struggling to take control of our own lives. We are standing up for each other. We are refusing to let these words divide us any longer. We are saying that we are lesbians and that it is possible to love other women. We are saying that women are far out. We are saying that as women we want to put our energies into growing with other women.

What I know now is that I will no longer stay hidden from and separated from other women. Because my life is being controlled by that same system that is controlling every other woman's life. I know now that any woman who points out by her existence and actions that she wants more from this society than she is getting will be told she is sick. I am saying that we know now that what is sick is the way society uses us to do

all its work that we don't want to do. All the work that we don't get paid for! And all the work that we are underpaid for!

As a lesbian, I am refusing one area of the work that women are supposed to do -- the sexual and emotional support of men. I know that by refusing that work, I am saying we can all refuse that work that society expects of us. But that still leaves all the other work that we all do. I am still a housewife. We are all housewives. And we have no choice until we have the power to refuse that unpaid work.

I know that I still cook, clean, get ready for work, and can only get women's work. As this is the basic condition of my life, I am joining with all other women to fight for the wages that we are all owed. What I realize as a lesbian is that I don't want to service men in those ways any more. I want to refuse working conditions which make me subservient to a man. Working conditions which isolate me from other women. Working conditions that have kept my life so private that I didn't know other women's lives and struggles were so much like my own.

The fight for wages for housework brings together women who are married and who are single; heterosexual and lesbian; young and old; and of every race and nationality. We are all going to fight until we get back all the money that we have worked for. And until nothing again is called natural that doesn't make us strong.



SMILE HONEY

--Ellen Agger

I've been working as a waitress for some time now. I "chose" this job because I have to eat and pay the rent and I have no other skills besides the skills of being a woman, a housewife. And that is what waitressing is all about. It is the work of serving and satisfying other people, only on a public instead of a private scale. That is why I call it housework. All women are taught to do this from the day we are born. In fact our very identities are tightly bound up in this work, whether we are secretaries, mothers, nurses, waitresses, or full-time housewives. But one of the local steak-houses says it best in a little folder sitting on every table in the restaurant:

In most restaurants the responsibility for pleasant dining finally comes to rest on the "waitress". She is the one who can really make a guest feel at home -- welcome -- wanted. Only she can create the genuine atmosphere of friendliness and hospitality. Her personality and attitude will either bring him back for another meal or send him away for good with burping indigestion.

The good "waitress" is mother, hostess, saleslady and "public relations agent", all in one. She must be a happy person herself, she must like people. She must be service minded. She must have developed social skills "plain good manners" if you please. Her personality must emanate charm, friendliness, and genuine desire to please. She must have a high degree of selflessness.

Now for heaven's sake let's not call a lady like that a "waitress" -- she's a real HOSTESS in every sense of the word.

Therefore, we no longer have waitresses -- each and every lady in our employ is truly a HOSTESS.

What makes me most angry about this type of work is the unrecognized part, the part that is supposed to come naturally to us. You feel the anger first when you go for the interview and the manager asks you to take off your coat and turn around. You feel it when you put on your uniform and have to listen to all the comments about how nice your legs are or your ass is. You feel it when the customer says "smile honey", like you were some dog doing a trick for money. And you are.

The system of tipping does several things. One, it means that your boss gets away with paying you minimum wage or close to it, if you are unionized. After all, you girls get all those tips. It also means that how much you earn depends on your

I WANT MY WAGES RETROACTIVE

--Babe Jackman

The fact that I am so nervous being here will give it away that I have been a housewife for a long time. I have been married for 28 years, and I am not used to standing up and expressing my own ideas. I am usually Bill's wife, or Reni, Marji, Barbi, Bernard, Theresa or Joey's mom.

I love my husband and my six children, but that's not the point. The point is that I resent being told I haven't worked since I got married. I haven't collected a wage, but I have certainly worked.

I started out making one bed, doing the laundry, cooking and cleaning for two people. As my family grew, my workload increased, my hours became longer -- often through the night if any of the children were sick -- and my responsibility became greater. If I worked for a company, my wage would have become higher. I would have received some fringe benefits and longer holidays.

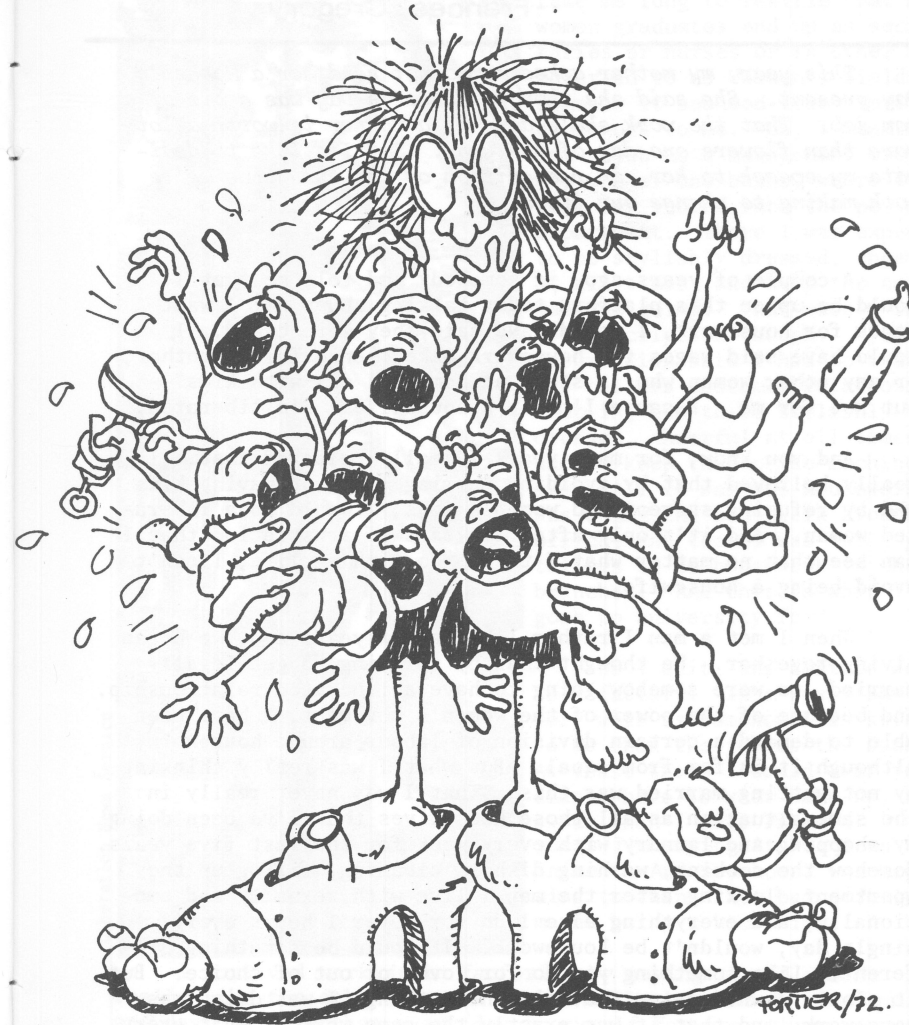
The only Christmas bonus we get is triple the work load, and our holidays just seem longer when we are washing diapers without a machine and cooking on a single-element hot plate.

If I were to apply for a salaried job now, I would have to put on my application that I have been unemployed for 28 years. Imagine! I am not even a Canadian Labour Force statistic unless I take a second job. What we do is never considered work. When one of my sons was little he said, "When I get as big as you mommy, I'm not going to do nothing and not get any money." Our job will never be considered work until we do get a wage.

Society has brainwashed us into thinking our floors have to always shine, our dishes sparkle, our bathrooms be odour and germ-free, our meals gourmet delights and our hair and make-up perfect.

All the while we remain the smiling loving wives and the gracious hostesses. Maybe I could create a superwoman comic, but if we're so super, why aren't we rich?

When I first heard about wages for housework, I was at the Feminist Symposium in Montreal with my daughters two years ago. I wanted to shout and ask if it could please be retroactive. I have such a lot of wages due.



I'M NOT A HOUSEWIFE--I'M LIBERATED

--Frances Gregory

This year, my mother asked me to not send her a Mother's Day present. She said she thought Mother's Day was a bit of a con job. That the work she's done as a mother is worth a lot more than flowers one day of the year. So, I'd like to dedicate my speech to her, in recognition of the struggles we're both making to change our lives.

A couple of years ago, if somebody had told me that I would be up on this platform today talking about why I want wages for housework, I would have said they were crazy. I would have said wages for housework makes sense for my mother, or any other woman who is stuck at home all day with kids -- but not for me. Because I'm not a housewife. I'm liberated!

And you know, for many years I really believed that. I really believed that by avoiding marriage, by not having kids, and by refusing stereotyped women's jobs, I would be a liberated woman. And it's only after 27 years of frustration that I can see that no matter what I try to do with my life, I can't avoid being a housewife.

When I met a man I rather liked a few years ago, we began living together. We thought that by refusing to get legally married, we were somehow going to have a liberated relationship. And because of the power of the women's movement, I have been able to demand a certain division of labour around housework, although it is far from equal. But what I was really thinking by not getting married was this. That I was never really in the same situation as all those housewives that I've been doing my shopping and laundry with every week for the last five years. Somehow the cooking, washing dishes, cleaning, fixing up the apartment, looking after the man I live with sexually and emotionally, and everything else I do for several hours every single day, wouldn't be housework. It would be something different. Like something you do for love, or out of choice. But it slowly dawned on me that all these things I was doing was housework, and that it was exactly the same work as what every married woman does. And that in fact I am a housewife just like them.

Now a lot of people think that women will be liberated when they all go out and join the paid labour force. Even though for the vast majority of women it just means a second job to add to the one they already have in the home. Well, for a long time I agreed with that. So I set off for university where I expected



Liberation News Service

to be trained for a job in the foreign service or something equally exotic. Well, it didn't take me long to realize that most women graduates end up as secretaries or nurses or in other areas referred to as "women's fields". Somehow it sounded like glorified housework to me. So, I managed to get a job as a management trainee for one of the banks, where I was promptly routed into the personnel department. There I was expected to be stylishly dressed, cheerful at all times, and keep the coffee machine going. That wasn't in my job description though. My job description said I had to teach new tellers customer relations. That is, how to be stylishly dressed, cheerful at all times, and to keep the coffee machine going. All it was was housework. I was doing the housework around the office, and then I was telling tellers to do housework in their branches. And this is what I had gone to university for?

So I quit, and went to work in a factory. In a way I saw factory work as somehow less stifling to me than the job at the bank. At least there I could wear jeans, didn't have to wear make-up, could swear when I felt like it. I guess I'm saying it was less "feminine". And somehow I was beginning to think that being feminine meant being a housewife.

I survived working in factories by saying that I wasn't really like the other women I worked with, because I could quit any day. I said that every day to myself for over three years. Three years of wiring record players, putting little discs in hydro meters and other equally repetitive, mind-numbing tasks. The work itself of course isn't housework. But the boredom and the isolation of working by yourself all day, not being allowed to talk to anyone certainly reminded me of housework. And at the same time, of course, I and all the other women had to go home exhausted every night to cook and clean and to do

A LETTER TO ALL GOVERNMENTS

The women of the world are serving notice. We clean your homes and factories. We raise the next generation of workers for you. We serve our men so that they are able to work for you. Whatever else we may do, we are the housewives of the world. In return for our work, you have only asked us to work harder.

We are serving notice to you that we intend to be paid for the work we do. We want wages for every dirty toilet, every painful childbirth, every indecent assault, every cup of coffee and every smile. And if we don't get what we want, then we will simply refuse to work any longer.

We have brought up our children to be good citizens and to respect your laws and you have put them in factories, in prisons, in suburban ghettos and in typing pools. Our children deserve more than you can offer and now we will bring them up to expect more.

We have borne babies for you when you needed more workers, and we have submitted to sterilization when you didn't. Our wombs are not government property any longer.

We have scrubbed and polished and oiled and waxed and scoured until our arms and backs ached, and you have only created more dirt. Now you will rot in your own garbage.

We have worked in the isolation of our homes when you needed us to and we have taken on a second job too when you needed that. Now we want to decide when we work, how we work, and who we work for. We even want to be able to decide not to work at all -- like you.

We are teachers and nurses and secretaries and prostitutes and actresses and child care workers and hostesses and waitresses and cooks and cleaning ladies and shit workers of every variety. We have sweated while you have grown rich. Now we want back the wealth we have produced.

We want it in cash, retroactive and immediately. And we want all of it.

BRISTOL LEAFLET

A WOMAN'S WORK IS NEVER DONE

May Day is International Workers Day. We are women and we are workers. But when we work outside the home we get low wages, and when we work in the home we get NO wages.

A baby sitter gets only 30p an hour, but how much do you get? Evening cleaners get only 70p an hour. But how much do you get for cleaning the house?

The GPO charges 18p for an early morning call (and they don't make breakfast). How much do you get?

WHO ELSE WORKS LIKE WOMEN WITHOUT PAY?

And after you've done all the housework, what jobs can you get outside the home? Cooking, cleaning, nursing, typing, unskilled factory work.

Most men get £45-£55 a week for factory work. How much do you get? How many men work in your typing pool?

Men get paid overtime, but when we get home and start our second shift, our housework, we don't even get the basic.

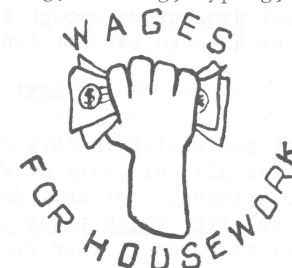
THE MEN DON'T GET MUCH, BUT WE GET EVEN LESS.
THEIR JOBS ARE AWFUL, BUT OURS ARE EVEN WORSE.

And now there's a crisis, we're supposed to work even harder, so we can all manage on less. That's our first job, to keep ourselves and everybody else fit for work, so that business shows a profit.

Inflation means we have to shop around more for bargains, which means more work, we have to buy cheap food and spend more time cooking, we have to pay tax at 25% on the tools of our trade (fridges and washing machines).

WE WANT THE PROFITS BACK IN WAGES. WE WANT HIGHER WAGES OUTSIDE THE HOME AND WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK IN THE HOME.

Bristol WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK Group
79 Richmond Road, Bristol 6 (Phone 422116)



NEW YORK LEAFLET

LIFE OR JUST SURVIVAL?

Old or young, senior citizen or school children, we all spend all our time working or being prepared to work. Our lives are not our own. From the time we are born until the day we die we have no control over our existence. Even before we start school we are trained in our homes by our mothers. They know what lies ahead: years of discipline and work in school to prepare us to "earn a living". Then we work all of our adult lives to earn just enough to survive, while corporations make millions off our backs. Those of us who have not been crippled or killed by work arrive at sixty-five to find that we still haven't earned the RIGHT TO LIVE. After they have sucked our energy, our time, our lives, we are thrown out of work, because we are no longer productive enough for them, and they care less if we starve or have to eat cat tuna to survive.

WE WANT OUR MONEY BACK!

All the wealth in this country has been produced by us. Yet, after all our years of work, what do we have in our hands? We have nothing. Not only do we get a pittance to live on -- social security which today is being eaten up by inflation -- but they threaten to take even this away. And they think they can get away with this because they think we're too old, that there's no fight left in us.

WOMEN: WE'VE ALWAYS WORKED
WE'VE NEVER BEEN PAID
WE NEVER RETIRE

All of our lives we have worked in our homes raising and maintaining the workforce (ourselves, our husbands and our children), caring for the young, the old and the ill. But since we were never paid for all this work, we are not even entitled to Social Security. Unlike men, women never retire. We work until we die, taking care of our husbands and even our grandchildren. If we never knew it before, we know it now: WE CAN'T AFFORD TO WORK FOR LOVE. It is not too late to get some of what is coming to us.

THE GOVERNMENT OWES US OUR MONEY!

Because: We worked long hours and grew old to make them rich.
They've been parasites on our labor.
They got men's labor for a pittance.
They got women's labor for free.
And now they cannot cry "poverty" with us!

MONEY -- NOT WORK!

WE HAVE WORKED ENOUGH. We have spent our lives working for them. Now they owe us our lives, not just a struggle for survival. We want money for each moment we spent producing for them, whether we were on the line making cars, or whether we were home making the workers who made those cars.

WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK

FOR ALL WOMEN NOW

Means We Won't Have To Worry About Survival
When We Are Sixty-Five!

-- New York Wages for Housework Collective
Call Joan - 499-0144
Diana - 625-0780

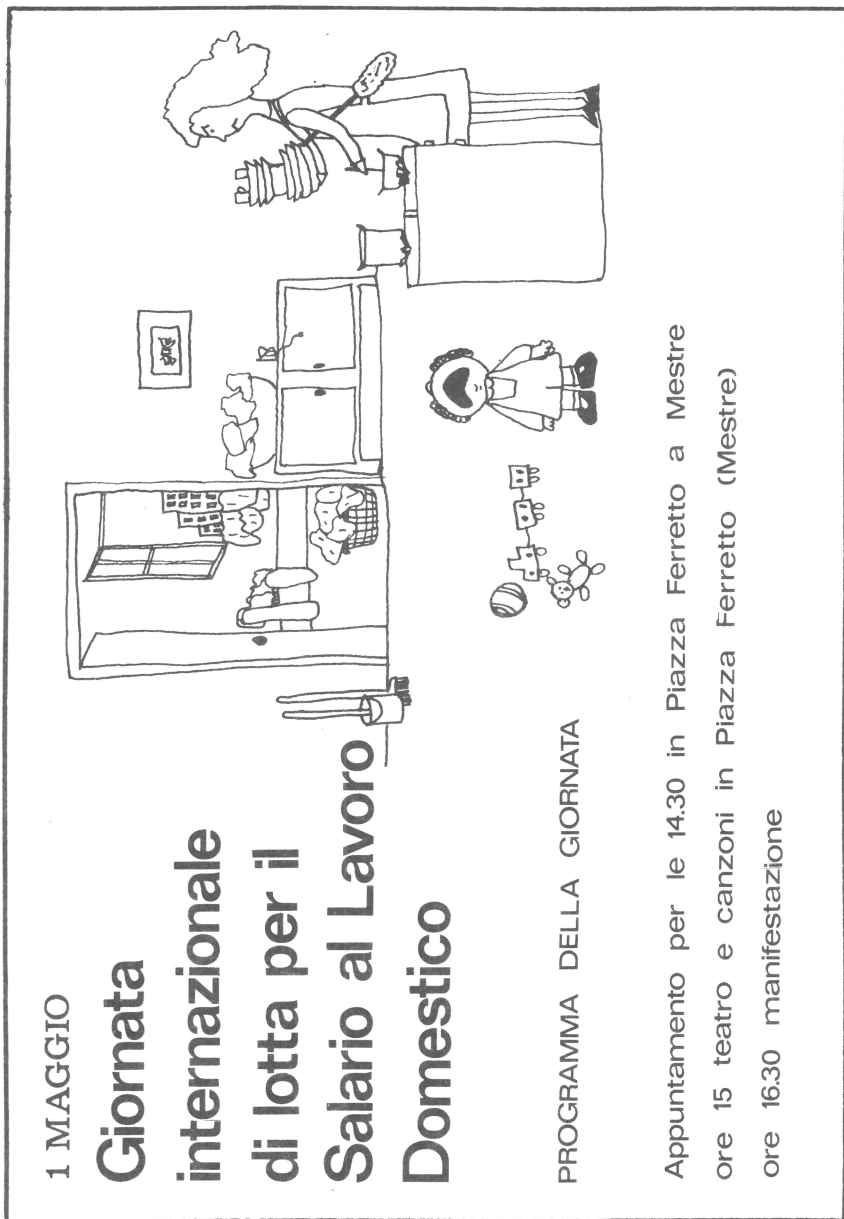


LNS Women's Graphics

1 MAGGIO
**Giornata
internazionale
di lotta per il
Salario al Lavoro
Domestico**

PROGRAMMA DELLA GIORNATA

Appuntamento per le 14.30 in Piazza Ferretto a Mestre
ore 15 teatro e canzoni in Piazza Ferretto (Mestre)
ore 16.30 manifestazione



FOR MORE INFORMATION AND OTHER WAGES FOR
HOUSEWORK LITERATURE CONTACT:

The Toronto Wages for Housework Committee
P.O. Box 38
Station E
Toronto, Canada

The New York Wages for Housework Collective
c/o Silvia Federici
491 Pacific Street
Brooklyn, New York
U.S.A. 11217

The Power of Women Collective
c/o 64 Larch Road
London NW 2, England

WAGES DUE SONG

Words and Music by
Boo Watson and Lorna Boschman

1st verse Talking:

Well if women were paid for all we do... I'll tell you one thing that's true as true
We wouldn't be free but I'm telling you... There'd be a lot of wages due.

Musical notation for the first verse, including lyrics: Well there'd be a lot of wages due for every time we smiled. Just in order to get a tip or two to make it almost worthwhile. Well there'd be a lot of wages due for every time we're raped. And there'd be a lot of wages due each time that we es-

1. Fine to: 2nd verse
caped. Now-----

Musical notation for the second verse, including lyrics: What do you think would happen if we women went on strike? There'd be no breakfast in the morning, there'd be no screw at night. There'd be no nurses treatin' you, there'd be no waitresses servin' you, there'd be no typists typin' you o-o-o. It'd be all right. There'd be no mothers nursin' you, there'd be no wives waitin' on you, there'd be no daughters pleasin' you o-o-o. It'd be all right.

2nd verse (Talking)
Well if women were paid for all we do, just think what it would mean to me and you.
We'd have some money and some power, too. Now ain't it amazing.....

Musical notation for the end of the second verse, including lyrics: ...What wages do-o-o-o-o.