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Why Wages for Housework International Is Not a Participant in the
Socialist Feminist Conference

The structure of this conference is not compatible with our political perspective. The panels and workshops force us to discuss our problems and struggles as if each were separate, in fact following exactly the divisions that capital uses to divide and exploit us. There is no place for us to meet around what we all have in common, to meet as women in order to build the power of every woman against capital, our struggle against our wagelessness.

For instance:

We cannot divide our theory from our strategy (as they are divided here in the workshops and panels). Our need for a theory is not a need in itself, but a need to determine where to attack and around what to unite. For the same reason we cannot divide our theory/strategy from "the economy", since this is our battlefield: our loss is the labor we are forced to give to capital, our power is the money we win back.

Most of all, we cannot choose to divide our strategy between the "community" and the "workplace". This is precisely capital's division between the unwaged and the waged workers. The community is every woman's place of unwaged work. Every job for wages is a second job. Our wagelessness and resultant powerlessness in the home determines our weakness on the second job. It has meant that we can be shoved around--from home to factory and back--at Capital's whim. Our strategy should not be to maintain the division capital has created; our strategy must be to unite our struggles against our work, both waged and unwaged. Wherever we are we need more money and more time, which is our life.

We cannot accept that housewives are a "special interest group", as it has been proposed by the organizers of the conference. All women everywhere are housewives. All over the world capital profits from our unwaged labor. The struggle against that work is crucial for the whole working class. Unless we abolish this work for free, the working class will always be divided against itself--waged vs. unwaged, employed vs. unemployed, working vs. retired, men vs. women, parents vs. children, white vs. third world. This is how they manipulate us, and we can only end it by ending our wagelessness.

That struggle against our wagelessness, the source of our lack of power, is not just a theory but a reality: all over the world women are refusing work and demanding time and money. We were told that we would be liberated by going out to work. Now we are laid off. Enough of Capital's plans. We will not fight for their jobs--we have enough work already. All the same we will not listen to any man or woman who tells us to "join" the working class by getting a second job. The second job has been the alternative offered by those who proposed to integrate "socialism" and "feminism". Liberation through more work is directly against our needs.

The autonomy of our struggle, the guarantee that we attack our specific exploitation as women, means much more than just meeting without men. (Although this is a minimal condition to build our power.) It means that we are attacking the hierarchy of power within the working class, the wage division within the working class, we are attacking Capital's way of ruling. Our relation to other sectors of the working class is the struggle itself.

For these reasons we are not here as part of a coalition of socialist feminists groups.

We welcome any woman who is interested in our campaign for Wages for Housework to see the women at the Wages for Housework literature table.