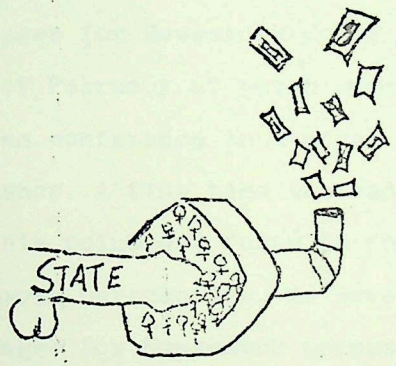


# THE WAGES DUE COLLECTIVE

Introduction  
Fucking is Work  
Wages Due Song



- Ellen Agger
- Eorna Boschman
- Judith Quinlan
- Boo Watson
- Ellen Woodsworth
  
- 275 Jarvis St. Apt. J Toronto
- 406 Bloor St. E. Apt F Toronto
- 633½ Queen St. W., Toronto



## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WAGES DUE COLLECTIVE

We are the Wages Due Collective from Toronto, Ontario, Our group has been meeting for four months. We are all lesbian feminists and have worked in the women's movement.

We have been meeting once a week and in the past two months we have also been meeting weekly with the Toronto Wages for Housework Collective. We were involved as individuals in planning a public meeting about Wages for Housework on the 31st of January. The Wages Due Collective and the Toronto Wages for Housework Collective are sponsoring a public meeting on the 26th of February at which women from the P.O.W. will be speaking. At the lesbian conference in Montreal this January, we held a Wages for Housework workshop. A fine time was had by all.

At this point our focus is on understanding and developing the Wages for Housework perspective. We have collectively written a paper on lesbians and the Wages for Housework perspective. It is called "Fucking is Work" and will be presented for the first time ever at this conference.

Eventually we plan to organize women in both waged and unwaged situations.

We have written a song about the wages due to women, which we will share with you later (the song, not the wages!).

We believe that by the next conference groups should have papers and positions on nationalist struggles for liberation, and how they fit in to the International Network. We would be happy to discuss this question with anyone who is interested.

And now, here is our statement:



## FUCKING IS WORK

Wages for Housework recognizes that doing cleaning, raising children, taking care of men, is not women's biological destiny. Lesbianism recognizes that heterosexual love and marriage is not women's biological destiny. Both are definitions of women's roles by the state and for the advantage of the state.

Wages for Housework says that to fight against our roles is to fight against our work is to fight against the state. This doesn't mean that if we merely readjust our roles, without recognizing the work contained within them that we are fighting the state. In fact the state often readjusts our roles for us. But it does mean that whenever women deviate from roles set out for us by the state, it creates the possibility within the class of women to see the roles and the work as they really are: serving the state.

We do not think that lesbians are special cases. We think that all women are special cases in the definitions of the state. This is what keeps us divided. We recognize that all women are houseworkers, and as lesbians we can clarify certain forms that this work takes, and therefore define certain struggles that we can take against our work, against the state. By uniting our struggle as lesbians with the struggle of all women, we can win.

Capitalism has institutionalized relationships between men and women in the form of heterosexuality. And the only legitimate expression of this form is marriage. In marriage the woman supports the man to work harder, to buy a bigger house a car etc., and to subjugate her needs to these needs, which are capital's. Marriage is also the institution for the socialization of children to be good workers for capitalism, and this too is the work of women. Further we are brought up to believe that our work in marriage is our biological nature and therefore unchangeable.

All women are socialized to be heterosexual and to get married. Women who are called lesbians and women who are called straight are all existing for the same purpose in the eyes of the state - to serve capital through serving men. This is what we mean when we say all women are straight. Being a lesbian does not free us from our roles as houseworkers.

One of the services that women perform for men and the state is fucking. Our job as cunts is separated from loving or having children. Having children is a separate job which only happens to require fucking as a prerequisite. Loving is something we do in spite of capitalism, not because of it. Loving only serves the state when and if it is a prerequisite for fuckingsmen. Fucking gives men pleasure and a feeling of power that they need to continue working for capitalism. The state convinces us that fucking is a labour of love in the same way that it convinces us that making breakfast and raising the kids is a labour of love. We may enjoy cooking eggs and we may love our children, but those facts don't change the fact of our work as long as this work serves the needs of capital.



It is the existence of lesbianism that makes fucking visible as labour. Also a woman who refuses to fuck is refusing part of her work as a woman, and is therefore waging a fight against the state whether she recognizes it as such or not. A woman who demands money for fucking is also waging a battle against this work whether she recognizes it or not. Both lesbians and prostitutes challenge the state by their mere existence. Both lesbians and prostitutes build the power of women by their existence. We can see how threatening prostitution and lesbianism are by how much money the state saves in free fucks.

The state tries to co-opt this struggle against fucking by either making it illegal or institutionalizing it. Prostitution is either illegal or state-run. Lesbianism is illegal if we are under twenty-one, we cannot work as civil servants, we cannot legally cross borders, we cannot legally have our children, we cannot legally defend our right to work for wages or rent a place to live.

At this point in time the state uses heterosexuality to serve its own purposes. Unless we make our struggles against the institutions of heterosexual love and marriage in a clear class context then the state will be able to co-opt them. Up until now the general struggle against marriage has taken the form of the free love movement and open marriage. Neither of these forms, because they are led by men, understand that fucking is work, and that liberation for women does not come through more and easier access to fucking. Hippies and the revolutionary youth movement have isolated themselves by thinking that they have created something which gives them more freedom. In fact they have created something that gives women more work.

Wages for Housework must take up this struggle, recognizing that lesbians, celibate and 'frigid' women and prostitutes are waging a battle against fucking and therefore against the state.

Lesbianism is women loving women. It is a form of social relationship between people of equal power. It strengthens the power of the class by being a gut expression of class solidarity. It is a form that we can use and work from in learning how to struggle with each other as women. In this way it serves all women. It is an expression of self-love and confidence in women. This is what we mean when we say all women are lesbians.

As lesbians we know that we can survive without the approval and recognition of a husband, because we have already survived illegally and underground for centuries. The danger for us lies in what we do with this knowledge. Lesbians can serve the state by saying that we want to be responsible citizens with just a few more civil liberties (like the gay liberation movement is doing). Or we can set out to prove that we can be truck drivers and executives (like the status of women groups do), as if we didn't already know that we can do anything we want. Or we can isolate ourselves in groovy lesbian ghettos and die slowly because of it (like lesbian separatists are doing). All these things do is give more power to the state by focussing lesbianism on individuals and trying to find individual solutions rather than taking our power and strengthening it and that of all women by using it to attack the state.

Sexuality is used to divide women. Straight women think that by associating with lesbians they are losing power. They act this out by



hating, fearing or ignoring lesbians. Lesbians think that by associating with straight women we are losing our identity. We act this out by refusing to struggle with straight women. But as long as any of us react to our powerlessness as women by refusing to unite with women we are losing our only potential power and serving the interests of capitalism.

Lesbians are used as a threat to all women to keep us in line. We must take this threat and turn it around against the state. We must take the definitions of lesbian, dyke, queer that they lay on us, and define them for ourselves. This is why it is important for women who are lesbians to be visible within the Wages for Housework movement.

As lesbians become visible we are able to point out to all women that there are alternatives even now, under capitalism, to our role as men's fucks. This gives us the possibility of more choices, which gives us the strength to fight our work even at the level of relationships with individual men. Men are threatened by the possibility of 'their woman' becoming a lesbian. We can use that threat by never denying the possibility. We are not saying that all women should come out. When the power of women's liberation made it possible for lots of lesbians to come out, it wasn't the coming out as lesbians that was the main point, it was the power that made it possible that made it important.

Another thing- We do not think that the definition of bisexual is useful to any of us. It is no threat to the state. In fact the syate is encouraging it these days in an attempt to weaken the power of lesbians. Because of this, defining oneself as bisexual erodes the power of lesbianism. This system has divided men and women to such an extent that loving both equally (which also assumes equality between men and women, which isn't true), can only be an extremely unsettling and schizophrenic position for any woman to be in.

In conclusion then, we feel very strongly that as lesbians we have something to contribute to the building of our power as women. First, we can contribute the definition of fucking as work. Second, we contribute the power of loving women. In return, we gain from the increase in the general power of the class, and hopefully the support and understanding of our straight sisters, which we need to break down the isolation that the state imposes on us. This paper is an attempt to start some dialogue on this subject. We cannot afford to ignore it, because we are lesbians.

The Wages Due Collective, Toronto.



THE WAGES DUE SONG

<sup>G</sup> If women were paid for all we do <sup>C</sup>  
<sup>D</sup> I'll tell ya one thing that's true as true <sup>G</sup>  
<sup>G</sup> We wouldn't be free, but I'm telling you <sup>C</sup>  
<sup>D</sup> There'd be a lot of wages due <sup>G</sup>

<sup>D</sup> Well, there'd be a lot of wages due for every time we smiled <sup>C</sup> <sup>G</sup>  
<sup>D</sup> Just in order to get a tip or two to make it almost worthwhile <sup>C</sup> <sup>G</sup>  
<sup>D</sup> There'd be a lot of wages due for every time we've been raped <sup>C</sup> <sup>G</sup>  
<sup>D</sup> And there'd be a lot of wages due for each time we've escaped <sup>C</sup> <sup>D</sup> <sup>G</sup>  
<sup>G</sup> Now what do ya think would happen, if we women went on strike  
<sup>D</sup> There's be no breakfast in the morning. There'd be no screw at night. <sup>G</sup>  
<sup>G</sup> There'd be no nurses treatin you  
<sup>C</sup> There'd be no waitresses serving you  
<sup>D</sup> There's be no typists typing you ooooo It'd be all right <sup>G</sup>  
<sup>G</sup> There'd be no mothers nursing you  
<sup>C</sup> There'd be no wives waiting on you  
<sup>D</sup> There'd be no daughters pleasing you ooooo It'd be all right <sup>G</sup>

<sup>G</sup> If women were paid for all we do <sup>C</sup>  
<sup>D</sup> Just think wgat it'd mean to me and you <sup>G</sup>  
<sup>G</sup> We'd have some money and power too <sup>C</sup>  
<sup>D</sup> Well ain't it amazing  
<sup>C</sup> <sup>D</sup> <sup>G</sup> What wages do ooooo.



- 1) Peseo introduttivo Anni 60 Silvia
- 2) Peseo welfare Silvia
- 3) You cannot make cars z Silvia già tradotto da Silvia chiedere a H. Alba
- 4) Rapporto Confeienza Montreal 1973 già tradotto
- 5) Mainwirdes Report già spedito, da tradurre in Italia
- 6) Perché marciare (Volantini Los Angeles) come i marciatori già spedito tradotto da Resi
- 7) Wages due Statement da tradurre in Italia  
dato a Laura
- 8) Wages for schoolwork by Beth Rosenthal
- 9) Peseo New Orleans (Feminist Picket Lines) da tradurre in Italia  
dato a Laura
- 10) Volantini dati a Laura (se volete usarli)
- 11) Fotoграфия da mandare

M. Rossi



nota bene

① Il peso nella Conferenza di New Orleans è stato eliminato. Cioè, non è mai esistito, si trattava di ricostruire i fatti, cosa che si è rivelata quasi impossibile almeno a breve scadenza.

In ogni caso non era una conferenza x workplace housew.  
ma una conferenza di wifebate domestiche.

② Le donne della Wages Due Collective hanno riscritto il loro peso, vedete quale è meglio + tradurre.

3) Puoi aiutare la Coda con le traduzioni? La Pen<sup>ne</sup> farà qualcosa e io tradurrò i miei pezzi - Se le altre potete pensarvi.

Premetto che tutti i pezzi in inglese vi arriveranno entro la fine di maggio. Dalla fine di maggio in poi non spediremo niente che non sia tradotto.

4) Il rapporto su  
Montreal 1975  
essie ma in  
Inghilterra

Baci Silvia

Chiedetelo a Peter Hall (in Larch Road)



presente è stato scritto da un gruppo di uomini di  
levarsi nella prospettiva del salario più basso  
non pagato etc. — C'è una conferenza di ~~Massachusetts~~  
cercare di trascinare l'housework del bio fut. di usbr.

Questo è stato circolato in questi giorni durante l'otto  
a Brooklyn College, ~~the~~ University of Massachusetts (Amherst, Mass.)  
(New York)  
contro i budgetanti di status fissando da tutte le parti —

Vedi tu se vuoi usare, a me pare molto buono

sit quietly in classrooms for long periods of time and not cause a disturbance. We are to listen attentively and attempt to memorize what is being said. We are to be obedient to teachers. Not surprisingly, the different categories of schoolwork used to be called Disciplines. That the meaning of being a good student is to be a well-behaved student applies clearly to the lower grades of students is obvious, but it also holds true at the university level. As students, the measure of our self-discipline is the measure of our general productivity within the school-factory.

The specific aspect of being a student is the learning of certain technical skills that makes us more productive when we work in specific jobs that require these skills. It is important to note that this aspect is subordinate to the general one of self-discipline. For example, what good to capital is an engineer who speaks Chinese and can solve differential equations if he never shows up for work. It is also clear that when you are interviewed for a job, no one cares what you know specifically, but rather how malleable you are in adapting to new job requirements, i.e., how well-educated you are.

#### WHY SCHOOLWORK? THE PERSPECTIVE OF CAPITAL AND THE LEFT

Most economists agree: "Schoolwork is both a consumption and investment good." So their answer to the ~~school~~ question: why go to school is: the schooling that you get has this marvellous two-sided good about it for not only do you invest in yourself in such a way that you can expect to get a high paying job in the future but also it is fun! This is a far cry from the days when investment was abstention, but can we take this stuff seriously?



## WHAT IS SCHOOLWORK?

Going to school, being a student is work. Schoolwork is forced work. Like all capitalistic institutions, schools are factories. They are places where we are made to work to prepare ourselves to do more work. Not only are we trained to take our future "position in society" but we are also being programmed to go to our "proper place". The school factory is an essential step in the selection process that will send some to sweep the streets and some to supervise the sweepers.

This work is not called work because it is not waged and we have been taught to believe that only if you are paid do you really work. And so schoolwork seems to be a personal choice done for fun and profit with a little spiritual development on the side. Every student knows how wrong this is, yet what makes schoolwork doubly oppressive is that by making you see schoolwork as something you "choose to do", you are forced into forcing yourself to do it.

So the essence of schoolwork is self-discipline. We are to learn to sit quietly in classrooms for long periods of time and not cause a disturbance. We are to listen attentively and attempt to memorize what is being said. We are to be obedient to teachers. Not surprisingly, the different categories of schoolwork used to be called Disciplines. That the meaning of being a good student is to be a well-behaved student applies clearly to the lower grades of students is obvious, but it also holds true at the university level. As students, the measure of our self-discipline is the measure of our general productivity within the school-factory.

The specific aspect of being a student is the learning of certain technical skills that makes us more productive when we work in specific jobs that require these skills. It is important to note that this aspect is subordinate to the general one of self-discipline. For example, what good to capital is an engineer who speaks Chinese and can solve differential equations if he never shows up for work. It is also clear that when you are interviewed for a job, no one cares what you know specifically, but rather how malleable you are in adapting to new job requirements, i.e., how well-educated you are.

## WHY SCHOOLWORK? THE PERSPECTIVE OF CAPITAL AND THE LEFT

Most economists agree: "Schoolwork is both a consumption and investment good." So their answer to the ~~main~~ question: why go to school is: the schooling that you get has this marvelous two-sided good about it for not only do you invest in yourself in such a way that you can expect to get a high paying job in the future but also it is fun! This is a far cry from the days when investment was abstention, but can we take this stuff seriously?



Let us consider the "consumption" side. Since by consumption good the economists mean something that is enjoyable, pleasurable, and satisfying, then anyone calling schooling a consumption good must be kidding. The constant pressure to finish assignments, the hassle of schedules, the stupid sleepless nights to study for exams, and the rest of the self-disciplining that goes on immediately quells any possible fun. It is like saying that going to prison is a consumption good because it is a pleasure to get out!

Surely one might say that there is some enjoyment going on in school, but it isn't the education rather it is the struggle against that education that's enjoyable. It is the trips you take to get away from classes, the love affairs that are so distracting, the meandering conversations in bars, the demonstrations that shut it down, the wrong books read and the right books read at the wrong time: all that you do not to be educated. So on the consumption side, the conclusion is exactly the opposite of the economists.

What about the "investment" side? All throughout the sixties economics professors, bankers, "guidance" counselors agreed: school was a good personal investment. The idea was that you should treat yourself like a little corporation, a mini-GM, so that you could invest in yourself by going to school in the same way a corporation buys machines in order to make a bigger profit operating on the principle: you have to spend money (invest) in order to make money. If you could raise the money (and the stomach) to go to school either by getting a loan, or working a second job, or getting your parents to pay, you could expect to make a profit on that money because you could expect to get a higher paying job in the future due to your increased schooling. In the heyday of what they called "the human capital revolution", learned economists figured that you would get a better return in investing in your education than if you bought GM stock. This was capitalism for the working class with a vengeance!

Aside from the distaste that this "investment view" might cause---for if you are a corporation then one part of you is going to be a worker and another part of you is going to be the boss over that worker---one might wonder whether you actually get more money from going to school in the long run. In the sixties everyone assured you that you would, but in the "crisis-ridden" seventies all bets are off. The authorities are now saying that their previous analyses were all misconceived, that you cannot expect any such "good return" to your investment in yourself. Not surprisingly it now turns out that you are not a better profit making operation than GM. At best all that can come up with is a possible increase in what they called your "psychic" income in that if you get more schooling you might land a "nicer" if not a higher paying job; but even this is not guaranteed especially since all the "nice", "clean" jobs are becoming uncertain, harder to do, and even dangerous, e.g., teaching. It seems that students have been misplanned.

It is obvious to every student that this "investment good" attempt to make you see the wisdom of working for free or even paying to work in school is a phoney. So it is getting harder and harder to convince anyone to shell out money for schooling on the basis of the fairy tale of you as profit making corporation. So now both sides of the economists' claim collapse, but in the midst of this debacle schoolwork gets a new defender from what might seem to be a surprising quarter: the Left.



The "socialist" teacher and the "revolutionary" student have become the staunchest defenders of the public university against "budget cut-backs" and the like. Why? Their story goes something like this: education leads to the ability to make more and broader connections in your social situation, in a work, education makes you more conscious. Since the public universities open up the possibility of having a highly educated working class, these universities make it possible for the working class to become more class conscious; further, a more conscious working class will pay less attention to the merely "economistic" demands for more money and less work, and pay more attention upon the political task of "building socialism". This logic gives the Left both an explanation of the university crisis--capital is afraid of the highly conscious working class that the university was beginning to spawn--and a demand--more schoolwork and not less! So in the name of political consciousness and socialism these leftists intensify schoolwork (which is just wageless work) and frown upon student demands for less of it as capitalistic backsliding. At a time when all the usual defenses of the free work done at schools are being exposed, the Left now seizes the time as its chance to lead the working class out of its "materialistic" sleep to its higher mission: the making of a socialistic society.

But the Left runs afoul of that old question posed to previous enlighteners of the working class: who shall educate the educators? Since the Left does not start from the obvious: schoolwork is unwaged work, all its efforts lead to more unwaged work for capital, to more exploitation. All its attempts to increase class consciousness remain oblivious to capital's control on its own ground and so the Left ends in consistently supporting capital's efforts to intensify work, in rationalizing and disciplining the working class. So the "building of socialism" becomes just another device for getting more free work in the service of capital.

So capital's and the Left's defense of the wageless character of school work just fall on their face.

#### STUDENTS ARE UNPAID WORKERS

Ironically, we students who consider ourselves as one of the more advanced sectors of the working class, still belong to the ranks of unwaged workers. Not only are we unwaged, but in most cases we end up receiving a negative wage, for we are forced to pay our employer for the privilege of maintaining our job. The absurdity of this is even further magnified by the very high productivity requirements which are constantly being imposed on us (exams, quizzes, papers, etc.) and by the way we are being programmed so that we impose further productivity requirements on ourselves (extra credit work, outside reading and thinking for our classes--not for ourselves, on-the-job training, student teaching, etc.) All this work for free.

Of course, we are told that it will all be made up to us in the future. They say that we will be given this meaningful, high-paying job with a secretary. Our free work will not be in vain. But, as we know even before we joyfully dance out of this factory, there is nothing to look forward to but a very depressing job as hotel clerk in the local Holiday Inn, or, at best, as a secretary at our old workplace within the university.



Even if we have endured all that training longer so as to have earned a higher degree, our chances no longer come cozing out of a cornucopia. In fact, we will probably have to endure many weeks without income since as students we are not eligible to collect unemployment benefits. We are made to suffer what other workers would not tolerate, i.e., losing a vital source of income without receiving any compensation.

X Apart from this missionary life and dubious future, students must work in many cases more than the usual 40 hour week. We "need to work" an additional job or two outside the school in order to pay for the "luxury and privilege" of working inside the school.

Of course, for some students, subsistence and tuition are at least partially taken care of by a dear relative. As unwaged students, however, we are in a relationship of dependence to our parents or other benefactors that leaves us powerless. Further, if a whole family sacrifices--the mother gets a second job and the father sweats--to pay for our schooling our parents are weakened in their struggle against work while we are blackmailed in accepting the schoolwork without resistance. Even though we do as much work as the waged, we are made to be dependent upon them; for with the exception of those students who do receive wages (in the Armed Forces, in the "enlightened" Lompoc Jail in California, in private corporations' training programs, in Manpower Training) most students get no wage at all for the schoolwork they do.

Not only is all this imposed work bad enough, but what we receive in return for our labor power in the waged part of our work day is only minimum wage or less. Since the labor market is saturated with students looking for a second or third job, capital imposes minimum wages and benefits upon us. On one hand, we are forced to work for nothing, and on the other, we are forced to work for almost nothing.

The lack of a wage makes summer vacations a contradictory experience for us. Since our schoolwork is unpaid most of us work during this so called vacation. Even if we take the time off, we have no money with which to enjoy it. To sum up, students are deprived of paid vacations and what is an unpaid vacation?

The reality of the situation is one in which today students are already starting to get paid for schoolwork. One of the prime examples is the Armed Forces, in their ROTC program that pays \$100 a month plus tuition for studying. Some corporations pay their employees to attend night school or continue studying towards advanced degrees. ~~Even jailers at the Lompoc Jail are paying some of their prisoners to do schoolwork at the University of California.~~



## WAGES FOR STUDENTS

WE ARE FED UP WITH WORKING FOR FREE  
WE DEMAND REAL MONEY NOW FOR THE SCHOOLWORK WE DO

We must force capital, which profits from our work, to pay for our schoolwork. Only then can we stop depending on financial aid, our parents, working second and third jobs or working during summer vacations for our existence. We already earn a wage; now we must be paid it. Only in this way can we seize more power to use in our dealings with capital.

~~Some colleges and prisoners are already paid to study in the universities. Why doesn't the state pay the rest of us? Do our work any different from theirs?~~

We can do alot with the money. First, we will have to work less as the "need to work" additional jobs disappears. Second, we will immediately enoy a higher standard of living since we will have more to spend when we take time off from schoolwork. Third, we will raise the average wage in the entire area affected by the presence of us low-cost workers.

BY TAKING TIME OFF FROM SCHOOLWRK TO DEMAND WAGES FOR STUDENTS, WE THINK AND ACT AGAINST THE WORK WE ARE DOING. IT ALSO PUTS US IN A BETTER POSITION TO GET THE MONEY.

NO MORE UNPAID SCHOOLWORK

The WAGES FOR STUDENTS students



### III. (MENTAL DISCIPLINE FACTORY)

Written 1965  
By H.S. student

Wm Hall

It is morning. The Weatherman declares daylight and places the sun (rain, snow, clouds, etc whichever is most appropriate) in the sky. And like mechanized clock-time, the earth tick-tocks around ~~to~~ the sun again.

John Doe belongs to Unit 12 of the Elm City Mental Discipline Factory. He is our Example for the day. John is Average or was until he went Wrong. He was sitting in our physical-need room with his fellow mass productions, pencil in right hand, paper on table, mind on his own work, busy.

By the way, for some background information. The original excuse for our physical-need room's existence was, "for producing and distributing <sup>(of)</sup> food to supplement our ~~disciplinatory~~ <sup>(work)</sup> teachings with physical encouragement and semi-satisfaction." But its purpose now is a gathering place for John Does who aren't scheduled for anything more important. Here we teach them obedience, a very very very important



of overall <sup>mental</sup> discipline.

But about John Doe, He was alright until he developed the audacity to get up and go right over to our water fountain and drink 2 huge quips of water, completely filling his mouth and quenching his thirst enjoyably at our expense.

Now, you've all been duped to realize that is not the purpose of our water fountains. You've been programmed to understand they're for disciplinary temptation and have a part in our plan only for that purpose. You have to master your thirst, not like John. He is bad - bad, bad, bad. One of our supervisors had to have him escorted to the medical surgeon who promptly sewed his lips together.

Some of us think John's punishment was too slight for such a disgraceful show of disobedience. ~~But~~ We do still believe in mercy: Principle is principle but what is principle worth if humanity is ignored.

Study significance for lecture tomorrow. ~~at 10:30~~ ~~the~~ ~~following~~ ~~writing~~ ~~but~~ ~~target~~ ~~of~~ ~~others~~ ~~people~~



MRosa 3

New York, May 17

Dear Sisters:

This letter is an attempt to correct the selective picture of the Montreal Conference portrayed in the document of the Montreal Collective. However, it is also an attempt to discuss some basic problems which concern all of us, and which neither the Montreal document, nor that of the Philadelphia Collective seem to recognise. I must add that I have listened to the tapes of the conference, and this made it very clear for me what were the problems that plagued us throughout the conference.

The main problem is that at the conference women participated who had very different expectations as to what the conference itself was supposed to accomplish. On one side, there were women who were not sure about wages for housework, what it means and whether they want it. They had come to the conference to find out. It is clear from the tapes that this was the case with some Montreal women, who insisted that it was premature to discuss organisational matters because, supposedly 'the perspective is not developed yet'.

On the other side, there were women, like myself, who had not come to Montreal to discuss what is wages for housework, but how to organise a struggle to get it. Some of us have been discussing wages for housework for several years already, do not have any doubts left, feel this perspective is as developed as it can be at this stage, and are anxious to move.

Unfortunately these differences were not taken into account when the conference was organised. It was a serious mistake we all made, and for which we paid a high price. These differences in expectations explain why there was so much tension and irritation throughout the conference, some women feeling cut short in their questions and others feeling unnecessarily slowed down by questions that to them appeared out of place. For this to them was not an exploratory conference to find out what politics to choose, but it was a conference to organise a well developed political perspective which supposedly we had already adopted.

It is crucial that in the future, when we organise a conference, we make it absolutely clear on what premises we get together and what we hope to accomplish. For example we should decide whether women who have not made up their mind about wages for housework should come or not; and whether some parts of the conference should explicitly deal with questions such as: "what does it mean to ask for wages for housework?". We could make provisions so that questions could be raised, without



preventing those women who have already made a choice from proceeding on a different level.

The second problem that plagued the conference is that there were women who had a different view of wages for housework, but would not admit it, thus causing a lot of confusion, delay and, consequently, anger. When I say 'a different view' I do not mean a difference on minor details, but a different political perspective altogether.

The difference consisted in that some women see wages for housework as a consciousness raising instrument, a new way of looking at things, but would rather forget about the money because such a demand would be 'economistic'. As Susan Wheeler told me: "I do not like the button with the fist full of dollars because it suggests a 'quantitative' demand, rather than a 'qualitative' demand". Sounds familiar? This is what the left has been telling us. As another woman put it (in a speech): "To me wages for housework is not a matter of going this or that, but a way of understanding ourselves".

For these women wages for housework means everything except the wage, and this is the fundamental difference between us. This is not a question of tendencies within-gg perspective, but a totally different perspective which uses wages for housework to propose a typically Leninist framework: the economic demands on one side, and the more political ones on the other, the latter depending on our 'raising the consciousness' of other women, and possibly ours as well.

In relation to this I want to make two points clear:

- 1) This is precisely the type of difference on which we cannot be tolerant, because it is impossible to be in an organisation that moves in two opposite directions at the same time.
- 2) There is nothing 'sectarian' about this, unless clearly defined politics are considered sectarianism.
- 2) If some women cannot see that this is a major political difference they should say so and many of us will be ready to discuss it. But this should not be the topic for an international conference where women come from far away to discuss organisational proposals with women who have already made a choice.

In any case, if we want to avoid the frustration we all felt in Montreal, the most urgent step is to be really clear about what we want.

Are some women still uncertain about wages for housework? They have all the right to be and should have the time needed to decide. But they cannot expect to slow down the work other women are doing or planning to do, because-- I will never tire of repeating it-- some of us are sure and want to move.

Are there women who do not agree we should demand wages? They have all the right to disagree, but they should say so openly, without mystifying their disagreement and then leave, because we are not in the same struggle.



Anger, heavy words, which is what some sisters call 'intimidating tactics', could be easily avoided if some people were more clear about what they want and why we are together. It is rather frustrating to travel miles to get together with your 'sisters' and then end up by having the same discussion you usually have with people in the left, or with people who never heard about wages for housework before.

Both in the Philadelphia and the Montreal document we are told that the 'dynamics' of the conference were politically incompatible with wages for housework. Neither document says why; so I hazard my own interpretation. They were incompatible with wages for housework not because some women spoke loud and got angry, but because others did not speak loud enough. Opportunism is certainly incompatible with our perspective and in Montreal we saw an abundant dose of it. We saw women who out of fear of losing the power which the network expresses ~~was~~ refused to voice their political disagreements, denied that they ever existed and for the second time chose public silence and private gossip instead of an open confrontation.

It is sad that these things happen; it is even sadder that when some women react against this type of political dishonesty their sisters accuse them of authoritarianism, sectarianism, stalinism or what have you.

This brings in the question of the expulsion and of the 'manipulation' to which some of us supposedly subjected the others. The Montreal document claims that the discussion around the expulsion (not to mention the entire conference) was manipulative and that decisions were made on the basis of 'loyalty'. It is not clear whom the Montreal women refer to, except, obviously, themselves. But if they voted in favor of the expulsion only for fear that they might be expelled, the question arises 'who manipulates whom?'

As for intimidation, here the memory of the Montreal women is short. There were women who voted against the expulsion (one from the New York Collective). Moreover, I personally insisted that the new women who had not been in New York, and did not know the background of that unhappy situation, should not feel pressured into making a choice. As for those women who voted in favor, they did so because they had completely lost trust in the Book Group. It is unfortunate we had to come to that decision, and especially that the political issues involved never came out completely in the open. But again whose fault was this?

To conclude, I want to say a few things about the public meeting, or 'who controlled whom'.

I am not interested here in discussing 'mistakes'. We all make mistakes and hopefully will be able to learn from them. Again, the Philadelphia women are right, some mistakes could have been avoided if we had had some discussion on procedures. But for the moment I only want to mention some decisions the Montreal women made which indicate a peculiar view of what is wages for housework and whom they are trying to reach.



4

Even before the meeting started I and other women had the clear impression that many concessions had been made to attract the local left. For example, the meeting was not advertised as a wages for housework meeting to attract people who otherwise "would be turned off" because "they already knew about wages for housework" (this is the explanation that was given by Susan Wheeler to me, Beth Ingber and Judy Ramirez). But the significance of this "omission" became even more clear at the meeting itself, when we saw the men walk in. None of us had been told that men would be present. Again, who controls whom? If I and other women had known that the men were present we would not have participated in that meeting, not because we don't speak in front of men on principle, but because we don't invite men to the meetings we organise. It is one of the major premises of our perspective that there are hierarchies of power among women and men and that, consequently, we need to discuss our problems etc. among ourselves. It is one thing to go to speak to a mixed audience when we are invited, it is a totally different thing to invite ourselves men to our meetings. This "mistake" was particularly upsetting in that situation, when women had travelled from all over to get together and we could have used that time to discuss our internal problems. We had accepted the idea of the public meeting only because we understood how important it was for the Montreal women to use the power of the international to attract new women. But the meeting was planned in such a way that necessarily it had to become a show for the local left. In this context, it was clear throughout the public meeting that the chairwoman was willing to let leftists in the audience give us raps about their politics, though I continuously pressed her to accept only questions relevant to wages for housework, and not statements of principles. This is standard practice with everybody from every political shade. There is nothing sectarian about it. It is simply a question of not wasting our time, our energies, opportunities for more fruitful discussions, and most important not allowing people to disrupt our meetings.

I fully agree with the Philadelphia women that we need more clarification on how to function organisationally. That this was not discussed before Montreal was a serious mistake for which we are all responsible. It must not happen again. The Philadelphia women are right that we in proposing that we exchange materials before to discuss organisational questions before we get together in Chicago.

At the same time, the mistakes we have made ~~should not~~ must not be used to blur the serious differences that clearly have emerged among us around wages for housework. The price we would pay is at least another Montreal conference, and after listening to the tapes I am sure that this is the last thing we want.



In this context, the Montreal Collective must explain to us why they have included the address of the 'Book Group' in the mailing list and why in the first place they have decided to ignore the decision made in Montreal by the majority of us ?

Love and power

Silvia Federici  
New York, May 20, 1975



M. Rosa

To: All Wages for Housework groups present at the February conference in Montreal, 1975.

We would like to emphasize that this paper is only the beginning of the kind of discussion we think we need to have. It represents an attempt to set out the basic parameters by clarifying what we consider to be the underlying political principles:

- 1) Politically: How to broaden and develop our perspective by including all the dimensions of human liberation; how to articulate these values coherently, in a way that speaks to the needs of women without becoming obscure.
- 2) Organizationally: How to structure our network and our local groups in such a way that we can co-ordinate our international struggle effectively without stifling discussion and political initiative at the base (or, how to reconcile base autonomy with the necessity of building a strong, coherent international struggle).

\*\*\*\*\*

When we first read and heard about the Wages for Housework perspective in Montreal, all of us experienced a "click"; for, we recognized in this perspective the solution to our malaise with the feminist movement of the '60's and saw in the perspective an analysis which at last linked the liberation of women from their "feminine role" and so-called "biological destiny" to their crucial role in the overthrow of capitalism. All of us saw the Montreal conference as an important moment in the development of our struggle - the opportunity to come together to work out an international strategy, to define immediate goals and to consider local struggles within an international perspective.

Since the conference we have all spent a considerable amount of time in discussion. We believe that the conference has set important precedents which we must carefully evaluate and has raised political questions which are fundamentally related to the content of the perspective itself and which we cannot ignore.

However, before we can have any discussion about the events of the conference, or understand its political direction, we must realize our own place in history. Industrial capitalism has (almost) succeeded in making most people feel outside the historical process. The reality of having little or no control over our everyday lives has been quite effective in making us experience that lack of control; powerlessness and ahistoricity become part of our self-perception. The fact that we have come together to change the world has changed our relationship to the world, its history and its future. Our conscious relation to the historical process, however, may lag behind the actual change in that relationship. To prod it along a bit, let us indulge in a little sensitization to our own significance.

Our place in any history of the women's movement, or of anti-capitalist struggles in general, is already assured. Any article written in the past couple of years about the women's movement has had to deal with Wages for Housework, even where that treatment has been critical. The mass organized women's movement has been inactive for a few years now; we represent an attempt to build a new women's movement, organized internationally, around a perspective that has revolutionary implications for the entire anti-capitalist struggle. What we do with this perspective - how we develop it and how we organize around it - should now be our principle concern.

The reason we bring this up is that we feel it is important to stress the historical significance of our perspective, our group, and of the recent conference; to stress that we must think of ourselves and our perspective as a real political force. When we think of Lenin, he appears on a stage; when we think of our own meetings, we see ourselves in the basement of a YWCA, or in a small room of the McGill Student Union, arranging cold cuts for lunch or discussing

Sj...  
in  
Yor...

Typical leftist theory of the fundamental stupidity of the "masses",  
how did they discover this?



the price of pamphlets. It's time for <sup>you</sup> us to realize that we are "on stage" as much as Lenin and the Bolshevik Party and that every one of our decisions is of great historical significance.

It is within this context, that we have undertaken to write this paper. It now seems clear to us that all the problems raised by the Montreal Wages for Housework conference - those we discussed formally in our meetings, those we heard about privately, and those that were never mentioned at all - form a single, coherent issue with implications both structural (organizational) and political. The structure of the organization we build expresses the politics of those who build it. Articulating that content, and linking it to the structural form it assumes, would be a most valuable contribution to the development of our perspective - and indeed, our political future depends upon it.

### How Political Content is Expressed Organizationally

The way we organize our struggle reveals important elements of the world we want to build. Saying "we don't want to provide blueprints of the future society" forestalls any discussion of the basic values embodied in our perspective. Though evasion makes a critique of the values embodied in the perspective more difficult, it certainly does not render it impossible. These values become visible when we closely examine the organizational forms and political content put forward in any articulation of the perspective.

Unfortunately, the recent conference very rarely got beyond organizational forms and into political content. All the partisanship was played out on the level of these organizational forms. However, the choice of one type of structure over another is itself a value choice - i.e. it is not coincidental or arbitrary, but a choice between alternatives governed by the values held by those who do the choosing. A brief review of the events of the conference reveals this relationship between content and form.

### The Public Meeting

The Friday night public meeting should not be considered as something apart from the conference since it raised all the political and organizational questions which plagued the conference itself. There are obviously many questions which we must discuss for our future work in Montreal - the presence of men at meetings, the kind of publicity, and how to run the meeting itself. But we must keep in mind the central principle at stake here: the extent to which local groups are responsible for making decisions about their local meetings.

Considering the fact that the international network has never set out any "rules" for public meetings (and we would question the idea in principle if such rules were suggested, although we might agree with specific rules), the Montreal group was subjected to a considerable amount of pressure and criticism from a small group of women within the network. Yes, we do believe that there is such a thing as constructive criticism; but let's not confuse that with concerted attempts, made publicly, to wrest control from our hands.

Even though we made it clear in our letters that we certainly hoped that other women from the network would be able to come to that meeting; we also made it clear that this meeting was part of our own local work. Even before the meeting started, there were attempts made to exercise control over the running of the meeting.

The first instance of this was over the presence of men. Judy and Silvia went to Susan and told her that the Lesbian women from Toronto did not want to attend a meeting with men present. This is certainly something to keep in mind for future meetings involving these women, but Susan expressed the feelings of our group in maintaining that since our publicity had never specified that only women were invited, it would be a bad move to ask the men present to leave 15 minutes after the meeting was scheduled to start. At that point, it was decided (by Judy, Silvia, Clare, and Susan) to continue as



planned, with the men present. Then Frances proposed that only women be allowed to ask questions. This was not only inexcusable interference on her part, but a bad move because it divided the women present over the question of men - not a good beginning to a feminist discussion.

It then became clear that certain people in the audience as well as on the panel wanted to cut short any questions or comments that sounded even vaguely critical. We thought that this attitude at a public meeting, advertised in the mass media as it was, was extremely unrealistic at best, and authoritarian at worst. We feel that the attempt to cut short critical questions at a public meeting parallels developments at our own "internal" conference.

### The Conference and Political Differences

Throughout the conference there were a series of complaints which echoed informally through the conference, were embodied in the paper presented by the Philadelphia group entitled "Statement of the Problem" and occasionally, and in various forms, made their way into group discussion. The complaints seemed to focus largely around dissatisfaction with "the process", with the absence of "respect" shown to speakers, and with an "atmosphere" of intimidation.

So far, those who have spoken to the issues of intimidation etc. have seen the problem largely in terms of attitudes. We should all be gentler with each other, more respectful; those who provide the movement with leadership should respond to questions with greater patience and should expend greater efforts at formulating clear and unemotional explanations. We even have a detailed outline of procedures at meetings to further these ends (see the Philadelphia group's "Statement of the Problem"). It seems to us that there is a growing sense of "problem" but that so far no one has attempted to analyse the source of the attitudes which have been causing so much discomfort.

What we would like to suggest is that intimidation is a political stance; it is not a personal characteristic which Dale Carnegie can eradicate. It is part of an organizational strategy which sees political differences within a movement as a danger to that movement. Intimidation within the International operates to drive differences out of the International. Debate, if it is carried on at all, is then conducted across clearly defined barriers and is defined as a conflict between "them" and "us".

Such an organizational vision was manifested at the Montreal conference in the way political differences were posed. As we think back over the conference, we realize that there was a consistent tendency to polarize discussion by formulating issues in terms of simplistic dichotomies. Debate was stymied by focusing discussions on a false set of alternatives - a set of alternatives which did, however, ultimately serve to allow questions to be interpreted as opposition and differences of emphasis within the perspective to be interpreted as criticism of the perspective as a whole.

Even a brief review of some of our discussions reveals the way in which false polarities were used to "flush out the dissidents" as over and over again real choices and real discussion gave way to "are you for us or against us" votes. Such votes are tests of loyalty and they are manipulative. Divergent tendencies are either totally obscured or they are forced to express themselves as irreconcilable opposition, in which case they are dealt with as such and need not threaten the appearance of internal unity. Such tactics are part of an organizational strategy which sees no room for divergent tendencies within a single perspective.

Our discussion of the wage is a case in point. The vote which ended the discussion was taken on a motion which obscured all the tendencies which had appeared during the course of discussion. Instead of dealing openly with the different emphases which were appearing, the issue was posed in a simplistic polarity: Are you for or against the demand for a wage? Implicit in which is the question: Are



you with the International or do you take a stand against it and therefore outside of it? The divergent tendencies which were buried at the conference represent differences in emphases - for example, differences in the extent to which one emphasizes the non-cash aspects of the struggle in propagandizing, as well as differences in the extent to which one sees the revolutionary impact of the perspective as flowing automatically from the cash demand. These are the different tendencies which should be discussed at an international conference. They are tendencies which are inherent in the perspective itself as it has been developed out of our experiences as women and as members of the working class, and we must organize to deal with them within the International so that the perspective can be broadened and deepened to include all the dimensions of human liberation.

Far from setting the stage for such debate, the way in which questions were posed reflected a disturbing lack of political trust within the International. The underlying distrust intimidated and isolated new members, as well as many not so new members, and locked groups into badly defined positions. The result was that people chose to remain silent rather than to risk appearing suspect and; regardless of conscious intention, such situations are highly manipulative.

The question of leadership is intrinsically related to the different tendencies which we have described in our consideration of the discussion of the wage at the conference. Fortunately, or unfortunately, the emphases and tendencies within the perspective are embodied in people and political ideas do not have an existence independent of those individuals who hold them. Leadership emerges in the process of the development and clear articulation of a political position and this process was completely obscured by the way in which the leadership issue was raised in our discussion of organization. Once again, instead of dealing with the complexities of the issue, we dealt with a set of false alternatives: Leadership versus libertarianism or do you accept or reject leadership? Within these broad categories, the discussion of leadership could only be grossly simplistic and it was. Leaders were somehow equated with experience, knowledge, and "political clarity", endowed with "the responsibility of taking the initiative ..." (p. 5, Toronto statement on organization) and "helping" those who don't yet understand.

Within this context, questions become statements of ignorance and the refusal to respond to questions becomes poor educational method. Clearly, leadership has a responsibility to clarify; but it is also clear to us that the refusal to deal with points that were raised and the tendency to push these positions into an anti-international camp are reflective of neither personal style nor teaching methods. They are statements of a political position and part of a strategy to suppress differences within the International by building an organizational structure which must deal with divergence as irreconcilable opposition.

The debate which surrounded the expulsion of the Toronto group is most instructive in this respect. It has now become clear to us that it, too, was used as a test of loyalty thus completely obscuring the fact that we had never discussed an organizational strategy to deal with political differences. The fact that as an International we have never decided the use of expulsion as a political weapon was obscured by the way in which the entire issue was raised. The vote to expel was put as a test of faith; to vote for expulsion was to vote for the International. Opposition to expulsion became opposition to the International and it is significant that the vote was split, not between pros and cons, but between pros and abstentions.

We began this paper with our sense of the historical significance of what we are doing. The expulsion of the Toronto group must be seen within this historical perspective; for it is an important political precedent and sets the tone for future debate within the International.

While our own group never had any difficulty agreeing with the positions on class, leadership, and the International as stated in



the Toronto paper on organization, we did feel that the broad dichotomies which were posed somewhat oversimplified the problems of organization. It became clearer as the conference proceeded, however, that the real reason for basing the discussion of organization on that paper was, in fact, to finally settle the split which had arisen at the New York conference between the Wages for Housework group from Toronto and the group which was finally expelled. Presumably the Wages for Housework Group II hoped to force the other group into a clear admission of their political differences so that there would be a clear case for that group leaving the conference. The group was expelled, which suggests that their political differences from the perspective were quite clear and that those differences could not be contained within our movement.

The facts of the matter are, however, that no such clarity was established. The group which was expelled consistently claimed that the statement was false and, in the absence of any clearly defined position, after six frustrating hours, the group was expelled on the basis of "embryonic differences". We assumed that these differences were those which had already divided the movement elsewhere (eg. Italy) rather than exploring the concrete differences which so obviously existed within groups and between one group and another.

In the absence of clear political positions, we are left with a situation in which rumours are rife. There has been talk of a split within the New York group and we also know that there was talk of expelling another group on the grounds that if they did not seem too happy with the expulsion of the Toronto group, they must have held at least some of their views and therefore were a potential threat to the organization.

There are some basic contradictions within a movement which condemns Leninism and vanguardism and then expels factions whose political differences are at best undeveloped. These contradictions have returned to haunt us. Since all women are workers, we all have the duty to clarify our political differences. We have come to believe that expulsion on the basis of political differences without a clearly defined policy concerning the handling of political differences within the movement is the organizational expression of a political position - a position which is not in keeping with the content of our perspective and the objectives of our struggle. One cannot separate theory from practice; the content of a struggle from the organizational structure which mounts that struggle. But the relationship between the two is not automatic. We must set up safeguards against an organization which embodies political principles which are alien to our objectives and which reflects the capitalistic double-standard of saying one thing and, in fact, doing quite another.

This is not a plea for absolute tolerance. Clearly, there are some views which are incompatible with our perspective. However, it is also clear to us that there are some differences which are inherent to the perspective and which must be allowed to exist so that they can be dealt with within the perspective. The fundamental political question is: Are we going to build an organization which tolerates and contains such debate or are we laying the groundwork for an organization which must constantly act to remove such debate from within its framework.

Edie Farkas  
Dana Hearne  
Martha Shea  
Arlene Steiger  
Susan Wheeler  
Merylyn Wilk



Remarks on the "right to work"

To pose the "right to work" as a central demand for women obscures the basic fact which is at once the root and continued source of their oppression, namely, that women in the home are already working. Her exploitation consists precisely in the fact that her work is not recognized to be such -- under capitalism that means essentially that it remains unwaged. The social services which women provide in the home, in addition to the subjugation of her sexuality to the needs of the capitalist labour market (producing labour power) are activities which are vital to the functioning of capital and as such are in the interest of capital to organize in a profitable way. Capital has organized these activities into artificially privatized units divorced from socialized production. And a whole network of social and legal institutions developed to sanction this arrangement.

The essential point, then, is that women are expected to live their lives within the "private" and isolated confines of the home to produce (give birth) and reproduce (service) labour power for capital, for nothing. This came about historically with the first industrial revolution when the family lost its productive function in agriculture and artisanry (late 18th cent.) and production was reorganized with the factory at its center. At this juncture, men were "freed" for direct exploitation (waged labour) and women were kept in the home for indirect exploitation (unwaged labour). Since this fundamental division took place, capital has been able to pay the man and receive the labour of both the man in socialized production and the woman in privatized production. This has meant above all woman's total lack of power vis a vis capital, the real beneficiary of her position, and secondarily vis a vis men, the immediate beneficiaries of her position.

Women's lack of power vis a vis capital can be first seen precisely when she leaves the home to work in socialized production. Capital can dictate the terms of her entrance into the "labour force" at will -- the function of women as a reserve army of cheap labour (during periods of war etc.) is well documented. The fact that today women overwhelmingly work in labour intensive industries such as textiles, food and beverage, electrical parts, etc. and in "professions" which are extensions of her role in the home such as nursing and hospital work (care of the sick), school teaching (socialization) etc. indicates that capital (for reasons of its own) has slowly constructed special places for women in socialized production where her labour can be exploited directly and at a low price. Their ability to do this is linked directly to the powerlessness of women in the home.

Her unwages labour in the home, moreover, continues when she enters the "labour force" so that far from achieving liberation she is instead being doubly exploited by capital. Before choosing the "right to work" as a revolutionary demand for women, therefore, we must carefully analyze the role women have played and continue to play in the capitalist division of labour between factory and home. The two are inseparably linked and the lack of power in one leads to a lack of power in the other. The "working woman", with one foot in both spheres of production, is one of the most exploited sectors of the class as a whole.

The fact that capital has increasingly created jobs for women outside the home is a case of having the "best of both worlds". This is made possible for a whole variety of reasons including the increasing need for a second income and the widely felt urge to gain a measure of independence -- all of



which have made women good raw material for additional, more direct exploitation in socialized production. This means quite simply that capital thinks that it can have it both ways.

Women's liberation developed in opposition to this. Precisely when women began to realize that even after "leaving the home" they were still in a position of inferiority. Precisely at the point in which many more women were getting the opportunity to study and work, etc., they realized that rather than achieving liberation they were experiencing new forms of oppression and exploitation. The key to understanding why lies in the analysis of where she was coming from (unwaged labour in the home). Without it, the nature and depth of her exploitation under capital cannot be clearly grasped.

Judy Ramirez



WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK AT A WAGED WORKPLACE OR WHAT IS TO  
BE DONE WITH THE WAGE...

PLACE: Maimonides Community Mental Health Center in Brooklyn,  
New York

-Maimonides Community Mental Health Center is part of a voluntary hospital. The Center was established by special monies from Federal, State, and City governments.

-Those who work at the Center are considered hospital workers, not government workers.

-Since we are hospital workers many of us (excluding psychiatrists, nurses, some administrators and executive secretaries) are in District 1199 which is a nationwide hospital employees' union.

-Even though we are in the same union as workers in Maimonides Hospital we are separated from hospital workers because we work in our own building or in neighborhood storefronts, we hold our own union meetings, we have our own administration which is different from the administration of the general hospital, and our budget is separate.

-The Center is "progressive" considering other institutions. It is run by old leftists and liberals. It considers itself to be innovative, many young people work here and experience a relative freedom not afforded at many other workplaces.

-Compared to other institutions of its kind, Maimonides Mental Health Center pays extremely high wages in each job category.

-Given this backdrop it sometimes seems hard to find out who the enemy is or even who the boss is (we're almost all on first name basis). The blackmail is more insidious at a place like ours where we are manipulated into believing "we have it good".

-The Center operates much like a family. The men are at the head of the family directing the mothers and the children. Currently all the administration are male in a field (helping professions) which is traditionally female; and they treat the women as either children or as mothers depending upon where in the hierarchy one stands (social worker-secretary-food service worker).



SETTING:

-In the summer of '74 there was a major reorganization of all services. This reorganization opened up 12 new administrative or middle management jobs which were to be filled from within; since "we" had no extra money in the budget to hire new people.

-Some of these 12 positions had already been in existence by the mere fact that someone was carrying these responsibilities, but now a formal titled position was created with a wage increase in some cases..

-Both men and women applied for these jobs.

-The selection committee which consisted of men only, hired 12 men to fill these jobs despite the fact that a number of women who applied were more qualified and had seniority.

-In addition some women who had been doing the jobs before the reorganization could not apply once the jobs were posted because of the unnecessary professional credentials now required of the person applying.

-Women began to meet to discuss the blatant sexism at the Center with regard to these twelve new positions.

-The union grievance machinery was put into motion since many of these positions if held by a former union member would remain in the union. If a non-union member got the job, then the job would not be a union position. This practice of allowing former union members, who move into administrative positions, to remain in the union is highly irregular, but nonetheless a precedent at the Center where many practices are different given the "progressive" nature of the place; typically one would not find administrators in the union along with the line workers.

-In the Fall a small group of women decided to ask the Director if we could have one of his staff meetings to take up the issue of sexism in the Mental Health Center, and we would chair this meeting. This was granted to us.

-This meeting began a series of weekly meetings at the Center.

WHEN WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK BECOMES A PERSPECTIVE

There were four of us committed to a Wages for Housework perspective at the Center. Through this struggle, two more women joined our Wages for Housework group. When this issue was brought to our attention we wanted to see how a Wages for Housework perspective would give form to this particular struggle. At first glance we knew that a demand



which would put women in those twelve positions would be reformist and not deal with the bulk of women at our workplace. We began to make an analogy between the family where women's work is not recognized, unwaged, and connected to our femininity (thereby being our blackmail) and the similar position held by women as wage earners in the family at the Center. We realized that much of the work we do at the Center is unwaged, connected to our feminine role and that we are treated as housewives on the job. The Mental Health Center profits from this extended family situation by extracting more surplus labor from us women by not paying us for this work. This analysis was presented to the staff during various meetings.

We raised demands that would talk to all women and not just those few who might apply for those twelve positions. The women staff (with the support of a few men) demanded from administration a full day off with pay to hold a conference on Sexism in the Center. This day would be for all staff and would replace our normal day of work. The Center would be on minimal coverage for emergencies. The staff had the choice of working their regular job or attending the conference. A day with pay to organize for ourselves; a day with pay not to produce for capital, but to produce struggle.

We won this day and on Thursday December 5, 1974, 140 staff members, the bulk of whom were women, participated in a conference. There were four workshops which embodied much of the discussion of six weeks prior to the conference: Upgrading, Patient Care, Day Care, and Legal Rights. We came to the conclusion to have these workshops after weeks of discussion and analyses concerning women's role at the waged work place, our relationship to our women patients, the need for day care and certain immediate legal actions we might take.

Many of the Wages for Housework women saw as our main focus the upgrading workshop since we felt that it was here that the Wages for Housework perspective spoke to the majority of non-professional women staff who make up the bulk of the Center's staff. We pointed out how upgrading is an illusion for it serves to keep women pitted against each other. Only a small proportion of workers can enter these upgrading programs and thereby move up. Those women who do move up the ladder are used to regulate and control other women with whom they work. Upgrading programs also give the illusion that you can make it in a "fair system".

It was in this workshop that we raised the demand of an end to unwaged work, wages for students, a fight for inversely proportional raises (whereby the wage differentials which



benefit men who got the highest wages would be reversed ... instead women who make up the bulk of low paid workers would begin to get a higher percentage of the wage increment), a possible job action where we would refuse to do work that we now do for nothing. (This would include everything not written in our job descriptions such as making the boss' coffee, serving him, acting as a public relations person when that isn't your job, etc.), a woman's watchdog committee to deal with grievances that women and men have because of the treatment we as well as men get when doing work associated with a woman's role. (This committee will have a majority of women and some men on it.) Equal vacation with pay for all employees (four weeks) and time and a half for overtime for all workers.

It is important to note that there was a heated debate in this workshop and at prior staff meetings on the role of the Union. It became clear much to the dislike of some union delegates, that the union was seen as an organization to which we would turn to get what we needed when we needed it. But, if it tried to stop us we would not let that happen. Women spoke out saying in the past they raised certain issues i.e. need for a pay increase, more vacation leave with the union, but they got nowhere. Women who were not in the union were concerned because the union doesn't consider you a worker if you are not a member of the union. Debate regarding the role of the union has come up over and over in this struggle and it seems evident that this is an autonomous struggle to the point that we will give direction to the union if we need them. Our meetings are kept separate from union meetings and at union meetings we invite non-union workers in by vote from all of us. The union grievance machinery has added seven women to the committee by decree of the workers to keep the delegates and union machinery working for us!!

The women in the Day Care Workshop made recommendations demanding twenty four hour day care for women employees of the hospital and the Mental Health Center. This would be paid for by the hospital and operate all day and evening since there are night workers as well as day workers who could benefit from this. An addition was made to this proposal, to include the children of volunteers and students who are unwaged workers in this institution, and if there is space community women who are at home with their children could make use of this service.

Legal rights workshop set up a mechanism for pursuing the channels open to us to fight the discriminatory practices of the Center. This included hiring a woman lawyer, raising the funds, first from the Center staff, and filing briefs.

Out of the Wages for housework analysis it became apparent that our women patients hold the lowest position



in the hierarchy of this "family" ... the Center. These women in effect are rebelling against their exploited position and their work. They come to us as patients and we offer them a speedy return to the position against which they rebelled in the guise of mental health services ...unwaged work at home, or "upgrading" by joining the low waged work force. The Wages for Housework perspective helped us see the connection between us and our patients-between our exploitation at the Center and the exploitation of many of our patients. This perspective allowed one therapist to see the similarities between her own position in the Center and her patients. She therefore brought her women patients to the morning session of this conference. Out of this workshop (Patient Care) came the beginning of a discussion about how to work differently with women and children, the need for a separate women's service. Finally a most important proposal which acknowledged that many women (such as secretaries) function as therapeutic agents and they should no longer do this without getting recognition and pay.

At the end of the day, all the workshops joined for a meeting to vote on all the proposals which were formulated in each workshop and to set up action committees to work on these proposals. At this time we posed to the staff that we should demand from administration two hours off with pay each week for any staff member who wishes to work on any committee. It will take a lot of work to implement and fight for those proposals and we refuse to do it on "our time" because "our time" is "their time" and we are going to make them pay for it. This proposal was passed. \*(see last page) In addition we will have a newsletter which will keep us informed of each committee's progress.

We also voted on and passed a motion to inform the workers in the hospital of what is going on at the Center. We will set up an information table at lunch time and distribute our newsletter to workers in the general hospital with the hope of spreading the struggle.

At the end of the day, a group of men were excited enough about the outcome of the conference to start a men's group. Prior to this day they had been very skeptical, but now saw their own self interest at stake.

Just as Marx is a tool to look at struggle, so is Wages for Housework perspective. As this struggle at Maimonides unfolds, for we are only beginning, we have come to value more and more the Wages for Housework perspective. This is a perspective that makes links where none seem possible. For example, if we had taken the route of only fighting for a reopening of those twelve positions so that women could take those jobs, we would have involved very few women. Most women can not, and



will not ever be able to apply for those positions. However when we begin to talk about our work, and how much we do that is unwaged, and how our femininity is connected to that, we can begin to make an alliance where none seemed possible. Secretaries could speak out and talk about their problems and so could professional social workers and psychologists. There was the beginning sense of unity where before there was mistrust, jealousy and silence. We talked about the different privileges affords us by the institution which divides us, e.g. "professionals" get four weeks vacation and "non-professionals" two to three weeks. We listened to all these differences and together made demands that would benefit all women. We shared vignettes with each other concerning how we are treated like housewives at work no matter where we are in the hierarchy.

Much energy and excitement has been created. Women are taking it upon themselves to do little works of sabotage. One secretary is refusing work that she considers not to be work that she should do even though she has been doing it for years. She refuses to get patients' charts for therapists and then search out a psychiatrist to fill out a prescription for these patients. She is not a therapist and will no longer be the handmaiden for the therapist. In my storefront the women are refusing to do the typing for the men, make the coffee and clean. An executive secretary walked off the job the other day to have an interview for school and insists on getting paid for this time away from her desk. Certain staff members are filling out their time cards so as to include lunch as a paid hour since we realise that most of the time we eat at our desk and produce for them during our lunch hour. One woman has told an administrator that she will no longer do his secretarial work because her other boss pays her for one job and gives her work for two and one half people, therefore she refuses to take on his work as well. Women have come to meetings many times in direct defiance of their bosses who tell them not to take a lunch hour after our meetings. Our meetings until now have been held during lunch hour. These are individual acts and they go on every day now. There is also a spirit of power that has come out of this full day conference. When women begin to come together there is a strength and it has just begun to show itself here at Maimonides. We have just begun and there is no telling where we will go.

Brooklyn, January 1975

Jane Hirschmann

with support from the Maimonides Sisters, Emily Schneider,  
Barbara Reiter Silverman, Beth Rosenthal, Ceci Sisane,  
Hedda Matza



ADDENDUM

At the time of this writing we have won a major victory. Two hours of work with pay for all staff members to work on any committee except for Legal and Fund raising committees. The Director of the Center will not pay us to raise funds to take legal action against him. He figures the committees probably are safer for him. He doesn't recognise the power we insist on building and not through legal channels. Another development has been the reopening of eleven of the twelve jobs. What this means exactly is still up in debate. At a future writing we will discuss this development and others.



January 1975-October 1975

This paper will attempt to give you (1) a brief history of events, (2) analyze the Wages for Housework group's role vis a vis these events, and (3) make some general comments regarding the role of such institutions within a larger framework of social control in communities and the use of wagelessness.

The Sex Discrimination Committee (for background information as to its formation, goals, and victories from Aug. 1974-Jan. 1975 see Anthology, "Organising on the Second Job") was most active during Jan., Feb., and March. Different sub-committees eg. Secretaries, Mental Health Workers, etc., made various demands and with the help of the larger group (Sex Discr. Comm.) certain of these demands were met. However, in March the Sex Discr. Comm. began to question its role and purpose as a committee operating with many people who held different politics. It became evident that there was a need to look at who was involved with this committee and what they wanted to do because only the Upgrading Committee and its sub-committees seemed to be functioning. As women in Wages for Housework, we were most active in the total workings of the Upgrading Committee because it was here that we best articulated our perspective. However, resentment built since this committee became the total work of the Sex Discr. Comm. since it involved the most numbers of women, had strategies for moving forward, and consumed the most time of its members. It was at this point that many people, outside of the Upgrading Comm. and its work, saw the W.F.H. groups as a definite political perspective (which they were in opposition with) operating within and even penetrating the Sex Discr. Comm. However, they could not label and clearly see other perspectives. We had to make clear that everyone had a politic whether they gave it a name or not. There were people who were members of a workers' caucus (radicalize the union, workers' control) present, members who believed in the fight for the Equal Rights Amendment, or the liberal N.O.W. approach etc. We had many meetings to try and clarify this. Several times W.F.H. was picked off because we had a clear politic (I'll go into detail in Section 2 of this paper).

Around April-May talks began about budget cuts. The New York City Dept. of Mental Health would cut the Center drastically. It was said that community programs would be hardest hit. We never got any official word, however. Panic began and as it got closer and closer to July 1, the new contract year, more information filtered down only to panic us more. Finally we found out that the budget would be cut by \$2 million or 1/3 of the budget. We demanded union meetings regularly to find out what was happening. Each week a new lay off list leaked out until finally 137 people got walking papers. In



July-August we went out on strike for 3 weeks demanding no cuts, no lay offs, no one goes back to work, unless we all do. The union was with us for about one week and then helped to split the workers so that we would go back to work and they could get back to their business of helping management do its job efficiently. (ie. figure out who had more seniority and who would bump whom out of a job) We lost the strike, lost 1/3 of our co-workers, and lost all the gains made by the Sex Discr. Comm. We were told, we who remained were lucky we had our jobs and had better tow the line or else.

The Sex Discr. Comm. continued to meet after the strike with very few women, some had been laid off, and most were afraid to be active again. We were defeated- our 2 hours had been taken from us, our grievances over looked, and as far as administration was concerned they would make sure we would not cause trouble again. They began to harrass women in all sorts of ways...

1) assigning women to do jobs where they would be more controllable, 2) asking women who had a co-ordinating function and no longer in it, to take a cut in pay, 3) changing women's work assignments without discussing it with them, if they choose not to do it they would lose their job, 4) curtailing services in the playroom which is used by staff and women patients, as well as informing women staff members that they could no longer use the playroom for their children, 5) switching staff lines of female workers to other program budgets thus jeopardizing their future job security beyond this year's contract, 6) firing all women who had any position of authority (and happened to be active in the Sex Discr. Comm.) even though minimal as it were, 7) offering women a few administrative positions (some of the original 10 that we had contested in the Fall of '74 because they had been given to men) without a wage increase. In addition it was clear to us that men were being given preferential treatment.

Obviously this all out attack on women at the Center was launched and continues because we had attained a certain level of power. The administration needed to put us in our place and take back all the gains made by us during the year. They will use any tactics possible.

Our weekly luncheon meetings, the only free time we now have, (and we are being assigned to take certain lunch hours so that we can never meet as a total group) we use to complain about the latest harrasments. But what has begun to happen was that women who could not attend or did not choose to, sent



ord to us of what was happening to them. We decided that we needed to make a documented list of these issues and harrasments and hold a meeting where we would confront the boss. At the writing of this paper, we held such a meeting, it was packed with women staff and some patients with their children, and we let the boss have it. We used such threats as the union grievance machinery, a class action suit, and withholding our clients' receipts so that the agency doesn't get the monies it's dependent on. This was a moment of our power, What will happen beyond this I'm not sure.

I would like to stop here and analyze the role that the 6 of us from Wages for Housework played during this entire Sex Discr. Comm. struggle (Aug. '74-Oct. '75) We are only 3 now since one member was laid off, one was a student and is no longer with us, and the third woman remains sympathetic to us but is no longer active in our committee.

### Section 2

In August of '74 when the Sex Discr. Comm. first began three of us who had been at the Center a long time and were seen as activists and leaders in past struggles were drawn into this issue. Since we were also part of Wages for Housework we took time among ourselves to discuss what the W.F.H. perspective would say around the issues being raised (see Anthology "Organising on the Second Job").

Our first mistake was that we did not from the beginning of this movement present ourselves as a W.F.H. group. Rather we spoke as individuals, and when we spoke (6 of us) we spoke the same tongue. We did not identify it as the W.F.H. perspective. Many of us wore our buttons and were known to be in a W.F.H. committee, however, it was never clearly stated to the whole Sex Discr. Comm. At the all day meeting on women we had a table where we sold our buttons, literature and posters, but we still were not clearly upfront that what we were demanding was W.F.H. Also we did not meet on a regular basis to discuss how we would operate as a group within this struggle because we were not acting as a group even though we were. We were clear as to the W.F.H. perspective which allowed us to analyze the situation and support one another, however, by not meeting and coming forward as a group, much resentment and confusion built up. We also didn't meet because of time pressures. Things moved quickly and there were so many meetings to attend that we felt pressured. This clearly was sloppy work on our part. In addition, I think we felt that meeting seperately would make it look like we were "organizing them". This is the hang up of our Left past. We did not see that we had a right to meet, evaluate where we were, and organize ourselves. This all depended on our seeing ourselves as a group, not just



Individuals with same politics, Everyone else saw us that way, but our Libertarian background prevented us to see this and act on it.

We acted similarly within the W.F.H. committee. Since we did not see ourselves as a group we did not use our committee as a reference point. We did not bring what we were doing to the larger committee for discussion, assistance, and close scrutiny. We talked with members of the committee informally, but we never saw it as a major piece of our political work in the committee. This was a big mistake because had we seen it differently, the committee would have acted on our behalf in many arenas. We could have made certain judgements and acted on them independently of where the women at Maimonides were, eg. had we seen ourselves as a separate group operating within the Sex Discr. Comm. we could have leafletted the hospital even when the Sex Discr. Comm. wasn't prepared to do so. The W.F.H. committee could have also been a presence in the Maimonides community, thereby bringing a level of power to our "inside" work.

On the other hand, I would like to say something about the functioning of our committee. We were in a stage of development where we did not have a division of labor based on political accountability to each other. Our Libertarian functioning at that point made it possible to act as if whatever anyone did became their private property not to be challenged by others. Therefore, the work of the Maimonides women was hardly made politically accountable to the committee nor viewed in the light of building our campaign.

At Maimonides we were seen as having a line (less work, more money etc.) which we did have, and we were seen as a group trying to convert everything into our perspective. We did try to do this. We wanted to see everything within our perspective and make the struggle a W.F. H. one. Without a strong campaign being built on the outside, in the community, we could not do this because there was no alternative for women. Had there been a power base on the outside, an alternative for women, we then could have said we were a group demanding the wage, made an analysis of Sex Discrimination at work, point out strategies to be used at work and point to the power being built autonomously in the community by our network. This did not happen and we needed the power of the campaign to do that. Since this was not the case, we operated as individuals who brought different ideas to this struggle but not putting forth the wage demand for housework, rather we worked within the confines of the workplace which was rather limiting and at times confusing. We did not find all the articulations of W.F.H. on the second job.

We were constantly being attacked for being a group who was trying to turn everything into W.F.H. When in reality nothing was wrong with that had



Page 5

been more out front about it from the beginning. We were carrying the vestiges of our Left history. We were afraid that we would be viewed as a Left Sect group trying to take over a struggle. Rather than seeing we were women who had a life investment in stating clearly what we believed in. We discussed mid-way how to "go public" without being defensive. However, the moment never came because of fear and reluctance on our parts, and finally we were singled out in a meeting that was called to discuss the politics operating in the Sex Discr. Comm. We prepared for this meeting, and stated clearly who we were, and demanded that each person or group do the same. We were very clear that everyone, whether in a group or not, had a perspective and that we were not the only ones operating in this Committee. We got support from many women there.

On the more positive side, since we spoke sense to many women, and individually said we were with W. F.H., we became identified and many women liked what we had to say. We greatly influenced the direction of the Sex Discr. Comm. (see Anthology) We asked women to come march with us on International Womens' Day and they did. We also invited women who expressed interest in W.F.H. to come to a public meeting. As time went on women began to bring our analysis into their thinking, demands, and actions. (secretaries refusing work, demanding re-opening of the playroom, including lunch time as part of the paid work day, etc.) Women would talk about their wageless job at home and its connection to the treatment we get at work. During the strike we were put into positions of leadership because of a certain amount of trust that had been developed and a sense that we would not sell people out because of the ideas we had.

In summation I would like to review the major points that we have learned to date with regard to organizing around the W.F.H. perspective on the second job.

- (1) Don't put all your energies into making the struggle at the paid workplace a W.F.H. struggle unless the campaign in the community is built, active, and highly visible so that the women struggling at the second job gain support, strength, and power so as not to be isolated and picked off.
- (2) Clearly identify yourself as W.F.H. at the start and let women know what the campaign for the wage is all about.
- (3) Acting as a W.F.H. group within a struggle at the workplace with your co-workers will force you at times to make separate political choices and decisions from the larger body. At this point you will have to decide whether you will lose your credibility with your co-workers by taking another direction or whether strategically it would be correct and beneficial to go ahead with your separate plans. We at Maimonides tried to solve this dilemma by picking an arena within the Sex Discr. Comm, namely the Upgrading Committee,



best articulate our perspective and raise demands consistent with our politics.

(4) Organizing at the second job has its contradictions and limitations because at times you will be waging a struggle for survival and at other times a struggle to defend the level of organization and power already built. During the strike we were fighting for our jobs. In principle we would be fighting for less work and more money and the eventual end to work. However, under capital we have to fight sometimes for things that we are fundamentally opposed to. We learned that at a paid workplace where gains were taken back by the bosses, this fight for survival took precedence over former struggles. But to see this merely as a fight for jobs would be misleading. Fundamentally what we need in those jobs is the money not the work. We also had gained a certain level of power and internal organization (Sex Discr. Comm.). We were also waging a fight (through the strike) to maintain our internal level of organization and to minimize our losses and the disorganization brought about through the lay-offs.

### SECTION 3

Maimonides Community Mental Health Center (C.M.H.C.) is a perfect example of how unwaged labor is organized and controlled in the community. In 1965 the Federal Mental Health Act established the C.M.H.C. movement and its monies. Our Center became the maven in this effort to use Mental Health funds in preventative ways to help people with their social problems in order to alleviate future mental health problems. So we organized wageless people into action groups to fight for their needs-welfare rights groups, senior citizens, tenants action groups, parents' action groups around school issues, youth councils, day care mothers, and ethnic groups. This in effect organized groups of wageless people into controllable units, not expressedly though, under the illusion that we as paid community organizers were helping them to organize to solve their problems. We were social agents who helped channel potential revolt into a form that the State could handle. We didn't realize this at the time. Many community people had to spend hours doing volunteer work in their organizations and resented the fact that many of us were paid to do what they did for nothing. Also a volunteer organization for all units of service was established in the Center. Neighborhood people gave their time and worked in different places, where needed, and for free. When I was hired in 1970, I met some angry community people who were sick and tired of doing the Center's work for free and wanted to be paid and trained to carry out programs that they defined as needed in their community. So I helped them organize and they won \$50,000 to hire their own community people to run all sorts of community programs-social action programs included Welfare Rights, Day Care Center,



Co-Op etc.-service programs included a school for retarded children, day  
ps, tutoring programs, etc. They now have (or had before lay-offs) over \$1 mill.  
the Center's money. They got hardest hit during lay-offs. Community programs are  
no longer needed because the purpose they served in the '60s of control is now  
in the '70s being replaced with other forms of control, i.e. hard drugs, unemploy-  
ment, courts, prisons etc.

In the Youth Center (part of Maimonides) where I now work, we are suppose to  
service the "street kids". When we opened in '73 there were Italian and Puerto  
Rican gangs, and we were there to intervene. We did our job well. Today no more  
gangs in this neighborhood. Instead we created a family atmosphere where we became  
the loving "good" parents who always took care of the "bad" kids. The kids named  
the place "All in the Family". If that doesn't say it! We organized recreation  
activities for them, ran to court and school with them, and gave them a place to  
hang out. We also used them as volunteers and showed them how good it is to be  
"useful" and if you try you can be like us-social workers.

Another form of control besides us for these young people is the Courts.  
This comes in the form of a certificate called P.I.N.S. (Persons in Need of Superv  
When a mother can't control her youngster, she brings the kid to court and says  
"he/she won't listen to me, comes in late, doesn't go to school, steals etc. I do  
know what to do". So the court says P.I.N.S. certificate, sends them home for 6  
months with a threat that they have to come before the court again and if things  
don't improve they are sent to a detention home, supervised by the court. These  
places are well known to delinquent youth, they have friends in them and have been  
in and out of them for a long time. The court tries to use its higher authority  
(through P.I.N.S. certificate) to scare rebellious youngsters into being good. It  
never works though.

There are so many examples to cite of how our place works in collusion with  
other institution to control and organize unwaged labor. The point, however, is  
that when we had layoffs and a strike for three weeks, the community did not rush  
out to support us because they know that the game is up and that our "efforts"  
have not really benefitted them but has ripped them off. The Director of Volunteer  
(a paid worker) put a sign up after the strike that said, "Volunteers will not  
be used to do the work of laid off workers." The Director of Personnel was furious  
and took the sign down.

Also the C.M.H.C. has attempted to buy off a number of potentially rebellious  
community people by giving them jobs at the Center. The all out use of para-  
professionals came about in the '60s with the huge influx of anti-poverty monies  
to rebellious communities. People took the jobs but were always furious that so  
many professionals not from the neighborhood were making much more money than the



yet they were doing most of the work because when in crisis you turn to community people who best know their own people and turf. They are always used to calm the storm. This splits community people from each other. Once they were all wageless; now you have some who get a bit more than the other—a wage. This is a good way to create internal splits in a potentially hostile neighborhood. Get the wageless fighting among themselves by buying off a few and creating resentment and jealousies. Also use once wageless community people to control each other, through giving a few a low wage.

Our Center is not altogether typical of other mental health institutions. In other such places the forms that the control takes is more subtle. They don't use community people in such vast numbers nor do they organize social action programs to the extent that we do. However, by being progressive and in the "vanguard" of the mental health movement, we at Maimonides could win a number of victories in the community. This naturally resulted in lots of layoffs, a closing down of community programs, and an attempt by the bosses to take back all that had been won by workers and community people.

Jane Hirschmann  
 Brooklyn, New York  
 October 17, 1975



*This leaflet was written by the Power of Women Collective in England on the occasion of a demonstration they held in front of the Italian Embassy in London to protest the closing down of an abortion clinic in Florence, Italy and the arrest of the staff members.*

\* \* \* \* \*

On January 12th, police invaded an abortion clinic in Florence, Italy, and arrested the gynaecologist, Dr. Conciani, and four women assistants. Seven women were awaiting abortions, already under anaesthetic.

Who benefits from these actions and laws? Worldwide, the State, the Church and big business are trying to regulate women's reproduction, to make us have children or prevent us from having the children we want, when, where and in conditions that they dictate.

- \* They say they're against murder - but they force us into backstreet abortions that murder us, and plan or turn a blind eye to the genocide of famine.
- \* They make us work, wageless at home and for pennies outside, and then expect us to pay hundreds for the control of our bodies.
- \* When we want to have children, we don't have the money to keep them, the housing to shelter them, the time to enjoy them.
- \* When they want us to have children it is for their own ends -- to expand the workforce, to expand production, to increase profits, and they want us to bring them up free, for "love".
- \* When too many people are their problem, abortions and sterilization are condoned. In Pakistan recently even the Catholic church has advocated forced abortion and sterilization. "It need not be a repressive sort of thing," said a missionary. "But it must be compulsory."
- \* They try to make us think that getting an abortion in Britain is easy. Anyone who's met unsympathetic doctors, hospital bureaucracies, ruinous private clinics, knows it isn't. And now a powerful lobby of MP's, churchmen, leading industrialists, are pouring money into a campaign to make abortions even more difficult to obtain.



THEY'VE NEVER LET US DECIDE. EVERYONE'S LIFE IS SACRED BUT OURS.

NOWHERE IN THE WORLD WILL WE ACCEPT THEIR PLANS FOR OUR BODIES. NOT WHERE THEY PAY US TO HAVE CHILDREN AS IN FRANCE AND ESPECIALLY EASTERN EUROPE. NOT WHERE THEY PAY US NOT TO HAVE CHILDREN AS IN INDIA -- WITH TRANSISTOR RADIOS. EITHER WAY, WE REFUSE THEIR PRODUCTIVITY DEALS. IF WE HAD OUR OWN MONEY, WE COULD DECIDE. AND THAT IS WHAT WE WANT.

WE DEMAND THE RELEASE OF THOSE ARRESTED IN FLORENCE, OF THOSE 263 WOMEN ON TRIAL IN TRENTO, ITALY. WE DEMAND THE RELEASE OF ALL WOMEN'S BODIES FROM THE CONTROL OF ALL STATES.

Power of Women Collective



FOR THE WOMEN AND SOCIALISM WORKSHOP, OR JUST TO THINK ABOUT

PAGES FOR HOUSEWORK-- a Socialist Feminist Perspective

We are all houseworkers--the wageless slave of the male laborer. We have been socialized since birth to believe that being a good wife and mother, doing the cooking, cleaning, sewing, supporting family members in times of crisis, and making love are our instinctive inborn female characteristics. Such being the case, we should do all these things for love. Nobody in her right mind would accept hours and hours of unwaged work unless she believed that it was natural, unavoidable, and even fulfilling activity.

WE SAY NO: What we do is WORK and we will no longer do it for love, only for money.

It is in the very nature of capitalism that our work, as work, should be hidden for it benefits capital to get this work done for free. Our free labor goes to reproduce capital in two ways: First, through our uteri, we directly reproduce future workers who are fed into the capitalist system. Second, we provide many free educational and social services in our homes--socialization of children is only one example.

Many of us who are single women do not identify with the housewife because we think we have escaped it. But we haven't because it is in the very nature of housework that it defines us no matter where we go. The jobs we are slotted into are extensions of the work we would be doing at home--e.g. Teaching, nursing, secretary, social work, etc. The fact that we are salaried is not of great significance since the pay is low and the status even lower. The way men relate to us on the job is very similar to the way that they treat their wives-- we are their "office wives". We can't escape the fact that we are all destined to be housewives either in fact or in kind.

To ask for wages for housework will by itself undermine the expectation society has from us, since these expectations-- the essence of our socialization--are all functional for our wageless condition in the house. The demand for a wage makes our work visible, which is an indispensable condition to be able to struggle against it both in its immediate aspect as housework and in its most insidious character as femininity.

We see this demand as an ATTACK on capital and its division of labor that goes from the home to the school, to the workplace, and back to the home again. We see this demand as a way to unify women with a class perspective because we identify with the lowest status and most exploited part of our own womanhood as defined by capital--the existence of the housewife in all of us.

(Women and Socialism workshop is from 3:30 to 5 on Saturday)



no more work for free

NO PAY ON THE FIRST JOB - LOW PAY ON THE SECOND

Because we get no money for the work we do at home, we are forced to take a second job. But because we work for free at home they can afford to pay us pennies on the second shift. And most of the time we are still doing housework on the second job - waitressing, nursing, cleaning, clerical work, looking after people.

NO MORE WORK FOR FREE

We want money without having to do more work. From now on they will have to pay for every minute of our work. We refuse to carry the burden of the social services they save on our backs.

we want wages for housework

WE WANT WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK FROM THE EMPLOYERS AND THE GOVERNMENT

WORKING FOR NO MONEY - THIS HAS BEEN OUR "CRISIS"

ALL OVER THE WORLD WOMEN ARE FIGHTING AGAINST THE WORK WE DO

WE REFUSE WOMEN'S WORK

WE REFUSE WORKING FOR FREE

WE REFUSE BEING DEPENDENT

WE REFUSE OTHER PEOPLE CONTROLLING  
OUR MINDS AND BODIES

There are groups in many countries fighting for wages for house work. THIS MONEY BELONGS TO WOMEN. WE NEED IT. AND WE INTEND TO GET IT.

NO TO MOTHER'S DAY - NO TO THE GLORIFICATION OF OUR WORK

WOMEN UNITE - WE HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT MILLIONS OF SINKS,

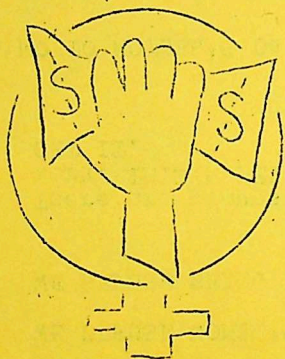
MILLIONS OF MOPS, millions of diapers, millions ...

WAGES  
FOR HOUSEWORK  
N.Y. COLLECTIVE

CALL 625 - 0780

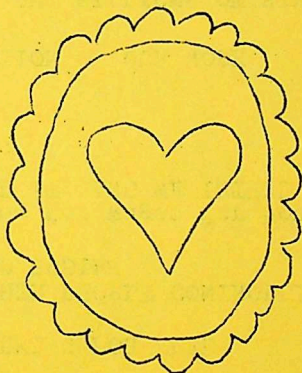


# WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK



WOMEN

MAYDAY  
OR  
MOTHER'S  
DAY ?



For us too mayday must be a day of struggle against our work. In the past the men went to the mayday parade, we stayed home with the kids and cooked. They -"the workers"- went to celebrate their struggles. We -the women- stayed home and continued to work. THIS MUST COME TO AN END.

## HOUSEWORK IS WORK

Let us call mothers, wives, singles, grandmothers, daughters, sisters by their true name : HOUSEWORKERS. Some of us do a lot, some of us do a little, but we all do housework. And not because we like it. They train us for housework and tell us it is our destiny because they need our work. They force us to do it because without housework everything would come to a halt. There would be no workers. There would be no profits.

## ALL WOMEN ARE UNWAGED WORKERS

We work from morning to night but at the end of the week we have no money to show for it. After decades of workers' struggles in the home we are still working for free. And we have never known the eight hours day. This is what is glorified on Mother's Day, our unwaged work, our slavery and dependence, our selfsacrifice.



The reason given for this absurd and anger-provoking practice was that if a woman had to bring her children with her to collect unemployment compensation her "availability for work" was called into question.

Well, we had a few questions for LDES.

We gathered first at Lafayette Square, then marched full force with kids and picket signs (and kids with picket signs) into the claims office of LDES. We handed out information sheets about our protest to the people in the waiting area and with little delay were told we could talk to the office manager, Mr. Gilmore.

As we crowded into his office and hallway, Mr. Gilmore stood behind his desk in obvious consternation. We told him we were very concerned by his office policy concerning women with children and pointed out the flagrant contempt it showed for women and the children.

Gilmore denied that such a policy existed. Astonished at this lie (for there was no doubt that it did exist), we pressed him with questions on cases we knew about. He then said it had been a policy until two weeks ago. Another lie. We pressed him harder.

Without admitting to the harassment policy, Gilmore explained that "availability for work" was a condition for collecting unemployment compensation and a woman could not go for a job interview at a moment's notice if she had children with her. That's the law, he said.

they took up space and made added demands on the air-conditioning system, and they tended to make noise. This seemed to us to be the real basis for the office policy of "no children."

Poor Gilmore really opened himself up to the furious attacks of feminist mothers.

At last, he asked us what we wanted him to do, and we told him once again.

About this time, Mr. Killeen, the metropolitan area supervisor, squeezed into the room and tried to act as conciliator. He was sure it was just a misunderstanding that could be straightened out. He would not admit to the policy either. He said that mothers could bring their children to the claims office if they HAD to. We let him know that this was not good enough (even if it were true). We did not want women to be told anything about bringing their children for this in itself was harassment.

Killeen and Gilmore both assured us, finally, that the matter would be taken care of. We are watching this office and, so far, this matter has been taken care of. However, we will continue to watch.

THE JERRY

11:30 a.m., Tuesday, June  
a group of New Orleans  
feminists descended upon the  
Louisiana Dept. of Employment  
Security at 735 St. Charles.

We had been informed from  
several sources that LDES had  
a recent policy of "discouraging"  
women drawing unemployment in-  
surance from bringing their  
children with them to the  
claims office. Women with  
children were being harassed  
and intimidated with threats  
that they might be found in-  
eligible for unemployment  
compensation if they brought  
their children again to the  
claims office after an initial  
warning.

per il fascicolo USA

Introduttore in Italia

But how is a woman out of a small week babysitting  
expenses going to pay for the  
of set up a child that the burden  
We employed the care of a woman  
could argue, no problems instead  
a day, give that money at least  
interview notice a woman could  
threaten and he for with LDES.  
This claims office could a job in-  
cussion was not a job in-  
of being questioned with in-  
was so pummelled quiet children  
repeatedly explained and, because  
At one point, in his confusion,  
he somehow let slip that children  
ward a boomer in the office.