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POWER of WOMEN

15p



EDITORIAL

Living through crisis is not new to women. Even in "normal" times, women all over the world have to cope with one crisis after another just to survive. Prices are a crisis. Finding housing is a crisis. Rent money is a crisis. Bringing up children is a crisis. Depending on a man is a crisis. Getting money of our own is a crisis.

What's new is that this time the State is in crisis too. It is not simply that the women and men of the mining areas would rather see the pits collapse than accept the present conditions of their lives.

It is also that engineers, railwaymen, electricity workers and workers in the service industries are refusing to work hard and long hours – at the same time they are demanding more and more money.

It is also that the refusal of women to lower their standard of living by any means at their disposal – including squatting, shoplifting and knocking it off the rent – is becoming more and more rampant.

It is also that the refusal of schoolchildren of all ages to be disciplined into being well-behaved workers at the disposal of capital is becoming so violent that there is much talk today about the "crisis in the classroom".

Teachers are refusing to teach, either by leaving for other jobs, "playing truant" themselves, or by organising in their staffrooms against the increase in teaching time caused by the shortage of teachers – in turn caused by the militancy of the pupils.

Nurses, bus drivers, postmen, streetsweepers and many others are leaving their jobs for more money elsewhere.

Young people, especially Blacks, are drawing strength and sustenance from their communities and refusing to hold a steady job at all.

The whole fabric of society seems to be falling apart. Some time soon, more and more people are saying, something's got to give.

The ruling class wants women to help it through its crisis.

It wants us as housewives to absorb the economic blow to the working class by doing more work for less money. Squeezing seven days' meals out of three days' wages. "Shopping around" when prices go up, washing clothes by hand. Doing without the things we need for ourselves. And as a special favour to the State, using a dustpan and brush instead of an electric Hoover.

It wants us as waged workers to carry on working in cold, unlit shops and offices, or to work twice as hard for less money in factories with a three-day week.

It wants us as "the public" to clamour for the miners to go back to work.

It wants us as wives to keep our men and children in line.

Women everywhere are rejecting this role, this work, and this sacrifice. Wherever struggles are fought and won women are central to them. But the problem for us is that when there is a victory our demands as women are not met even if they have been put forward. We need autonomous power to make sure that they are.

In many ways we face the greatest difficulties of all. First, whether we do the one job at home or do two jobs, we work around the clock. Surviving is a fight in itself for each of us, and leaves us little time to unite our struggles.

Second, in many of the jobs we do, as hospital workers, teachers, and above all as wives and mothers we face a kind of blackmail. It is hard to resist because our striking would hurt people who depend on us.

Third, the trade unions have helped further to separate men from us, confining men's struggles to certain issues and tactics, and shutting women up. When miners' wives

organised their own groups to take part in the last mining strike on their own terms, the unions disrupted their meetings and confiscated their mail, as always depriving both them and the men of a crucial source of power.

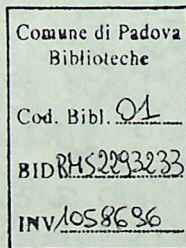
Fourth, to fight the work we do at home we have to fight the ruling class as a whole. We maintain ourselves and service our men to work for the ruling class, we give birth to and bring up children who will work for the ruling class. We shop for goods at prices set by the ruling class. When we fight against this labour we take on the State, which represents the power of the ruling class as a whole.

And yet we are doing it.

We have confronted councils and landlords and organised rent strikes. We have confronted the racist and sexist housing and education authorities. We have confronted the law to protect our children from their discipline. Teachers and hospital workers have, like other women, confronted their employers, refusing to be blackmailed. We have confronted our husbands to demand more time and money for ourselves. We confronted the Government in the fight to keep our family allowance. Unsupported mothers and wives of men on strike have fought the social security system and won. And in Northern Ireland women are confronting the State in all its armed might. We are fighting with guns, with bombs, with rent and rates strikes, through street demonstrations and protest marches, through keeping our families alive, at home and in the prisons. We are rejecting the traditional role and work of the housewife in the home.

This is the beginning for the power of women. The outcome of the crises, the crisis we have faced every day for decades and the crisis the State faces now, depends on how this power develops. During the miners' strike we will be asked to support our own side, the workers' side. And we will, as we have always done. But this time we want not only our side to win, but for us as women to win. So in this crisis we will support the men by making our demands as workers in the home, the factory and the office. We demand wages for housework. We demand that employers and their government pay us for the work we do free. We want money of our own. We know that the money we are demanding back is our own. As women we are ready for a fight, against the work they say is ours and for the money that is.

The Power of Women Collective



Northern Ireland . A Woman's Place

Before we went to Northern Ireland we were cautioned by more than one person not to talk about Women's Liberation. 'It's irrelevant; there's a war going on. Women may have time for that later.' We were there only a few days and spent most of the time with Catholic working class housewives. Every woman we met asked us about the women's movement.

Our first encounter with British occupation was this side of the Irish Sea. At Heysham as we boarded the ship our car was searched and our names and dates of birth made their way, we assume, back to the army computer.

We arrived in Belfast at dawn. At that time of day the town looked particularly depressing. It was clear that well before 'the troubles' started it was a city devastated by poverty. Now houses and shops are boarded up or bombed flat. Barbed wire and corrugated iron were everywhere. Ramps every so often in the road presumably to slow traffic and so stop quick getaways; barricades of oil drums or concrete to stop cars being left (with bombs). How much of this is for 'protection' and how much just to make life more difficult is hard for 'outsiders' to say.

More mobile objects to make life difficult were armed patrols; 'pigs' — saracens, jeeps and other army vehicles — and soldiers pointing rifles at you. We were frequently stopped (day or night) at road blocks. The car was searched and identity taken once again. Side streets in the centre of the city were blocked to traffic. It is here where there are shops and offices, and not on housing estates, that protection is concentrated.

The Power of the Ghetto

The housing estates themselves were ghettos more literally than we had expected. Each was a self-contained community where it was impossible to live for any length of

time without knowing everybody. Lifeless statistics on high unemployment and low wages could be grasped visually. It was as if somebody had crammed as many as possible into the smallest possible area. Plans like this can only be directed at people who can't afford to get away from them.

But there's another side to the ghettos. They are a natural organisation. The fact that the women and children all know each other and are always there makes them the backbone of any resistance. The armed struggle protects the community, but the community protects the armed struggle. We were told that even a woman who is not sympathetic to armed resistance is prepared to open her door to protect a member of the IRA — "Any woman on this estate will."

The women are withholding rent and rates en masse, and refusing to pay for electricity, water or gas. There's very little the State has been able to do; when they cut off supplies people know how to turn them on again. And people in Northern Ireland have lost the fear of "breaking the law". We heard about the special Act to deduct bills outstanding from Social Security, Unemployment and Sickness Insurance, and Family Allowances. This could be very effective if the State were prepared to enforce it; they have to decide if it's worth even further antagonising the Catholic community.

Already every second of the day is shaped by the presence of the foreign army. Armed foot soldiers patrol the estates and carry out periodic searches of the houses, usually before dawn. The children are frequently stopped. A seven-year-old: 'They give us sweets and ask if our mums and dads are in the IRA.' The women — mothers, sisters, daughters and girlfriends — who have family imprisoned or interned spend a lot of their week preparing food parcels and making long journeys for visits, spending two or three hours in the waiting rooms at Long

Kesh and Crumlin Road or Armagh jails. One woman we met made two visits a week to her two sons interned in Long Kesh, and one visit to a third son in Crumlin Road. Of about £25 a week that she, her husband and four other children had to live on, £15 went on parcels; fags, food and clothes for the three inside.

Women's activity, despite this burden, is extending. Until recently only men were "lifted"; now there are over 60 women political prisoners in Armagh jail. But it's still safer for women to be publicly involved in politics. Protest marches are made up predominantly of women, girls and boys. This shift to open dependence on women has meant above all that women no longer have time for their traditional work in the home, and they are increasingly proud of it. "I haven't baked since the troubles started." "Neither have I." And they all laughed. A number of women made clear that they are not going back to the kitchen when "the troubles" are over.

This of course implies that women will refuse to have families of 10 or 12 children. Young women discuss this. These, remember, are Catholic women, many of them religious, many of them regular church-goers. But they demonstrate growing opposition to the Catholic Church as women and as *Irish* Catholics. Like Catholic women elsewhere, many use birth control. The Church's position on this, together with its refusal to support the struggle and sometimes its un concealed opposition to it, is beginning to provoke open attacks on the Church. We were surprised to find no hostility to Protestant people; on the contrary, Catholic and Protestant women were linked as women living through "the troubles". Women practising birth control and opposing the Church's domination in other ways are some of the most hopeful moves towards removing barriers to working class unity in Northern Ireland.

Everything is Changing

The women in Belfast are largely in the home (though as we've tried to show this has an entirely different meaning there). But young girls who don't emigrate take jobs in shops and factories at wage rates as low as those in London five or even ten years ago (this is also true of the men). Because of discrimination and intimidation even fewer women are going out to work. We asked if women were organising in factories as they were in the community, and a woman told us: "We tell them not to work. We tell everybody to come out of the factories and go on the S.S. so they can take a full part in the struggle."

It was not surprising then that the women jumped on wages for housework as a very practical perspective. "What's that button — wages for housework? I support that. I hardly do any."



So what are our tentative conclusions? First we must make widely known what is happening to women in Northern Ireland and what they are making happen. But to do that we have to place their struggle as women in an entirely new context. It's not "irrelevant" to the war, as we were told before we went, and it's not just "relevant" to the war either. It's crucial. On the one hand, women are bolder in their actions, and are depended on to be more openly involved. On the other, the conflict between their feminist needs and the power of the Church is breaking new ground in the history of Irish working class struggle. Women are increasingly aware of the power their crucial role gives them.

At the same time young people and children (who went on school strike while we were there) have carved out their own importance. How important can be judged by the fact that 12 schoolchildren are now interned. Men and women, adults and children, old and young, see each other more and more as political comrades. In this way the family is transformed into a political unit where the traditional power relations are undermined.

The struggle in Northern Ireland is an offensive based in the community, not in the factory. In the past unemployment — lack of wages — has been its weakness. It was always assumed if you're not in the factories you can't have power. But the people of Northern Ireland have shown the power the community can have through armed struggle. Women too can find a power base in the community, where we are wageless but never unemployed (we're always working in the home and not getting money for it). Women in Northern Ireland have found that base. They are at a higher stage of struggle than we are, and this has resulted in their rejecting the work in the home. But they don't consider the factory as the alternative. No one we met, man or woman, thought she was making a struggle for jobs *outside* the home. They have taken arms, and are challenging State power. They have gone on rent strikes or left their jobs and are claiming the wealth that has been stolen from them many times over. They are not 'unemployed'; they are busy and on active on their own behalf.

It's not so surprising then that, despite the suffering, the grief for the dead and the constant tension, we found people, and most especially women, really together. It's clear to them that whatever happens now, there's been a break with the past, they are developing and changing, and nothing will ever be the same.

Some women from the Power of women Collective,
November, 1973

The above article first appeared in the December 1973 issue of Spare Rib.

INTERVIEW WITH A SHOPLIFTER

When was the first time you took anything from a shop?

As kids we were always stealing from Woolworths — it was a game we enjoyed. It was useful experience because later in life I remembered that and then I knew it was possible. I don't know anybody who didn't nick things from Woollies as a kid.

Do you still regard it as a game?

No. I didn't think of taking anything again until I had a baby and I was living on the S.S. I was always having to struggle but at first I didn't take anything because I lived in total fear of the authorities. Being completely alone I didn't even discuss it with anybody else. There was never any worry about it being wrong or anything like that, just the terrible fear of getting caught. I was so convinced that the State was all powerful that I half expected the sky to fall in if I as much as looked at things I couldn't afford. I believed the snoopers saw all. That was before the days of the Claimants' Union. The shop assistants in the department store always looked at me as if I had no right entering their beautiful and splendid shop. One day though a friend of mine came over to see me and after we had been

to the launderette we went around the shops with our kids and she began to talk about nicking stuff. It was all a bit veiled and indirect but her words gave me a tremendous feeling of confidence. She had just said that it was terrible to see all this stuff sitting there in the shop and us with nothing.

After that I began to lose some of the fear. Now I find that you can chat freely with friends about what you've got and how, and it's accepted. Some people go on afternoon sprees and get clothes and everything.

Is there any item you can get easier than others?

Well I suppose books remain the easiest of all but I've known people get meat from under the butcher's nose! It's funny — some people can get just anything while others can only get things they are not desperate for. I remember a time when we were really desperate and could not even afford any food. I was cohabiting, the SS knew and my bloke hadn't got a penny. I was very depressed and each day he went into a particular shop and got some mince or fishfingers and a few basics to eat. I only seemed able to get stuff we didn't really need.

Do you get great satisfaction out of it?

Well, yes and no. Yes inasmuch as you get stuff you haven't paid for, but on the whole no because I know that the stuff is mine anyway, that those people who own Tesco's and all those shops can so easily afford to lose the odd two or three things which it takes all my ingenuity to take. When you get home at the end of a little spree you flop down in the chair and think to yourself, "Well what have I got after all that work?" and you look in the bag and you know it's peanuts and for it you have probably risked prison. It just demonstrates to me how desperate we women are to get something of our own.

STATE'S RATE OF PAY

My husband, when at the Department of Health and Social Security on one of his periodic trips, was being asked about our financial position:

"Does your wife have any income?"

"No."

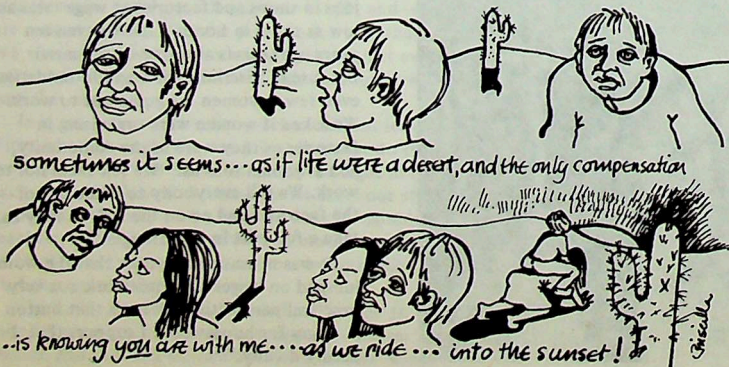
"Does she draw Family Allowance?"

"Yes."

"Well then, your wife does have an income."

"Oh!"

At the rate of pay which I get for the job that I do (illegally) my Family Allowance is the equivalent of one hour and forty-eight minutes work a week.



ON THE SPOT ●

WHEN THE MONEY COMES FROM THE STATE AND NOT THE MAN

I am writing here about some of the things I noticed as an unmarried mother living on Social Security because I think it is relevant to the discussion of wages for housework.

MY MONEY WAS MY OWN

When I was on Social Security I was better off in many ways than some of the other working class mothers who lived in my street. When I had to argue it out at the S.S. and demand money for my son's clothes I knew that I was facing the State, my enemy, my boss. It was a straightforward battle. No matter how intimately the State knew me through its files my relation to it was purely self-centred. I didn't have to consider anybody's feelings except my own and my child's, I had no sympathy for the S.S. I knew that they had the cash. A dependant woman usually a wife is in a very much more difficult position over money because she has to ask the man she lives with. No matter how small the amount of the money I had I always knew it was *mine*. For a wife things are not so simple. Very often when she demands a personal allowance or money for her children's clothes she has to face the fact that the man just hasn't got the cash, that he too wants to clothe the children but feels there is no money, or else she fears to put too much strain on him. For various reasons she is caught in impossible dilemmas. The only thing wrong with being on S.S. was that the amount of cash was always far too small and it was almost a job in itself to get the money. This I am sure could be put right if *all* women were in some sense on S.S. We would be very much stronger.

BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

Following from the fact that I was an economically independent person, albeit of slender means, my relationships with other people were of a quality which was radically different from anything a dependant can hope for. The hardship of being on S.S. is designed to push women into becoming the dependants of individual men so that the State saves a lot of money and gets two workers for the price of one but just the experience, the glimpse of freedom, gained through having your own cash, your own life in your own hands is something which is making unsupported mothers increasingly reluctant to go man hunting for husbands. The tendency seems to be to make the struggle against the State for more cash rather than relinquish a status which in working class terms is one of unparalleled freedom. When I say freedom I don't mean to glorify the hell it can be to be on S.S. but so far that experience is the closest we women have got to realising our potential as free human beings – it just goes to show how far there is yet to go.

MY TIME WAS MY OWN

Another factor in the contrast between the women who gets her cash from the State and the dependant is the way she spends her time. Like all mums the unsupported mother has a 24-hour day but I used to do the housework when I liked and not to fit in to the timetable of a keeper. I used to go out with my little boy and not have to be back for anybody. This made for a really relaxed relationship with my child and I really enjoyed it. Instead of doing the laundry on a sunny day I used to go to the park and washed the clothes at night. I didn't have to do a lot of thinking and worrying about the clock. We had some good times. I am tempted to say that I was my own boss but to be more accurate it was like being a free lance worker – whereas the wife can be seen as a worker and her husband the foreman. I didn't have a foreman and it made a tremendous difference to me. With wages for housework I think to some large extent a woman living with a man would be able to get this kind of flexibility into her day.

The family is based on female poverty and nothing undercuts the hold of the family quicker or more effectively than *money for women*. It seems to me that there were great similarities between my situation on S.S. and the possible situation for all women if we got wages for housework. Two things make me think it would be even better:

1. we would be a greater political force so the militancy for which the Claimants' Union was renowned could actually be multiplied.
2. a wage is much more actual cash than the sort of allowances we get as unsupported mothers and the amount of the cash is very important: £25-£30 a week is the minimum we should consider to start with.

WHAT EVERY WOMAN KNOWS

'It is to me horrifying that the wife in the ordinary home has no claim to any independent spending money . . . unless she asks for it, cadges for it, wheedles for it, cries or whines for it.'

Mrs. Helena Normanton, QC, in evidence to the Royal Commission on Marriage and Divorce (1956) (the Morton Commission), Minutes of Evidence, 866.

'Seventeen years after the Morton Commission and a decade since the women's liberation movement, the married woman still has no way of ensuring that her husband provides her with an adequate allowance for housekeeping and moreover no right to any share in his earnings for her personal use.'

Ruth L. Deech, 'The New Law Journal', 6 December 1973.

COLLECTIVELY SPEAKING

The Collective has been using the last months to develop and clarify its political perspective, beginning with the questions that we as women in diverse situations face daily. We hope to use this page each issue to give some idea of discussions on key issues and the process by which we arrive at our conclusions. We've found that our theoretical premises and the actions we are working toward must not and in fact cannot be separated.

NOTES ON DISCUSSION OF PRICES

28 October 1973

Discussion began with a Bristol woman reading out the draft of a leaflet on prices that had been prepared in Bristol. Discussion focussed on the following areas:

Boycotting of supermarkets or of specific items

Someone told us about a boycott campaign they'd taken part in 10 years ago. Women all over the country had got in touch and planned to boycott one specific item of food each month. This wasn't too great a hardship: if you didn't have that one item for a month, you could manage. At first this was very successful as a propaganda campaign with a lot of press coverage. But after a while the press lost interest, and enthusiasm for the campaign dwindled. People didn't seem to want to keep it up. It seemed rather negative to be suggesting that people do without something, rather than positively having more.

Someone else described a campaign in their local area about two years ago. They leafleted outside supermarkets on Saturday afternoons. The trouble was that they had to run around doing their own shopping on Saturday morning, and then stand outside the same shops with leaflets in the afternoon. It seemed silly to be campaigning round shopping in a way that didn't actually affect our own shopping! And although women took the leaflets, it seemed rather pointless always to be handing out leaflets without having anything to propose to be done.

As to the recent boycotts in the US, they were successful in forcing down the price of certain foods, but the result was often that you couldn't buy those items in the shops at all, because the suppliers just held on to the goods and didn't release them until the price went up again. Ditto with government price controls in the US: if, say, flour prices are held down, you can't get flour.

Shoplifting

A number of people thought that the way this issue was dealt with in the draft leaflet was unsatisfactory: by talking about women being 'driven' to shoplift it suggests that shoplifting is 'evil'. In fact we all felt that there's nothing wrong with shoplifting except that you can get caught!

We discussed ways of supporting women who are caught shoplifting (e.g. demonstrations of support at the courts), and discussed the extent to which shoplifting can be a collective as well as an individual protest. It is obviously on the increase; introduction of store detectives and the new technology of detection are one proof. Many people felt that this fact demonstrates a collective response to price rises although at the moment it's not an organised response. We discussed instances in which mass shoplifting had been used very effectively. During the rebellion in Poland in 1971 housewives and students invaded the supermarkets, an action which was very similar to the 'looting' during the Black rebellions in US cities. These had a huge political impact as well as getting everyone free food and goods!

The feeling was that although this is the case, we can't really go round with leaflets suggesting to women that they shoplift, because in the present circumstances that would amount to suggesting to women that they do something they can get caught and fined/imprisoned for. That would be unfeeling and irresponsible, and we couldn't even help defend them. But some people suggested handing out leaflets saying, 'If you have just shoplifted, it's nothing to be ashamed of; all the goods in the shop are yours by right; you can tell your neighbours about it since they probably have done it too,' making clear that this is a political act which none of us considers immoral, and that though we may act individually, we are not alone. The more

we say openly we're entitled to everything, the better; women will be relieved of guilt and think of ways of taking that action in a more organised way.

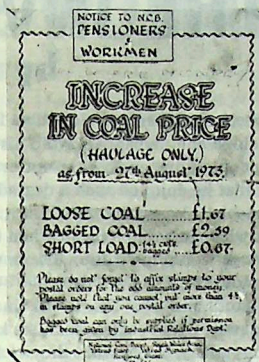
Should a prices campaign have as its aim government price controls?

The focus of most price campaigns is to bring prices down; one expression of this now is the idea of pressurising the government to bring in effective price controls. There was a long discussion round this. References to a paper by Helen on post-war Britain and the Welfare State were very helpful here. At that time the government kept on price controls in the hope that by holding down the price of food, etc., it could more effectively prevent wage demands in industry. This didn't work — people fought for wage increases anyway — so the controls were lifted. More recently the attempt has been to control wages in a different way, that is, via inflation; so that even when people win a wage demand the real wage doesn't rise because prices rise faster. This inflation is now 'a bit out of hand'; it's helped spark off wage struggles and has infuriated women especially. So the government is discussing price controls again. The problem with price controls is that if and when they work, they give the government more control over your wages, and you less. They decide for you what your wages will be spent on by lowering selected prices, and by effectively using more of your wage to pay for the subsidies. The question is: do we have



Photo by Fran

What is a Sex Object?

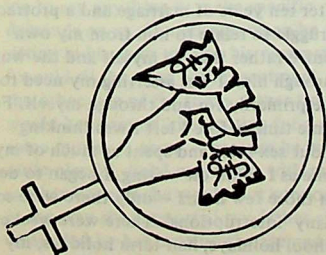


the money in our purses so we can decide how to spend it, or will they decide for us?

What should we aim at through a prices campaign?

If price rises affect women by reducing the amount of money we have to spend, and increasing our workload, then either prices need to be brought down or we need more money. Price controls could only be organised by the State, and paid for by making sure we don't get more money in wages (in terms of the wage packet itself, plus the wages paid via SS, social services, etc.). But the key question is how much money we can have under our own control. Food subsidies as the aim of a campaign, therefore, is not satisfactory. It seemed yet again that actually getting some money for ourselves as women is really the best way to approach the prices question.

What came out of the discussion was that the best way to confront the issue of rising prices is by demanding more money for ourselves, not by trying to bring prices down. We had come round full circle: we had begun with a number of people saying that although they thought a campaign on prices was a good idea, they didn't feel personally enthusiastic about it, didn't feel we could really get anywhere with it. Although everyone is pissed off with rising prices, nobody is fired by the idea of fighting to bring them down. Whereas if we deal with prices from the point of view of fighting for more money for ourselves, that seems altogether more positive, and is something we're sure we want!



Both inside and outside the women's movement, there is a misunderstanding of the phrase 'sex object.' A number of people, a large minority perhaps, limit its meaning to one sense only, epitomised in the bunny girl of the Playboy Club. This sense is associated with being whistled at on the street, with film stars who function as sex symbols, with commercial and media exploitation of the female face and form. Irving Howe, in his attack on Kate Millett, ended his review of *Sexual Politics* with the hope that his mother had been a sex object for his father in their early days of poverty. He meant, I suppose, that he hoped his mother had been attractive enough to inspire sexual desire (for what other joy could they have in those dark days?). It would seem that 'sex object' means a woman who is young, beautiful and to some degree accessible.

This meaning, in its variety of expressions, puts the emphasis on secondary sexual characteristics, on hair, skin, smile, legs, hips—and of course pre-eminently on the breast. This culture is said to be breast-fixated, and the strength of the fixation may be seen in its power to distort, even for women, the meaning of 'sex object.' But there are two other senses or areas of meaning which are deeper and broader in their effect on our lives. And they derive from our primary sexual characteristics, from our genital and reproductive organs.

You don't have to be young or beautiful (or both) to be a sex object. If you have (or have had) a uterus, if you have a vagina, you are defined as a sex object - and not just by whistles on the street, but by every institution and power that sees you as a woman. A plain, middle-aged woman, long a sufferer from cystitis, said on a television show recently in regard to sexual intercourse with her husband that because of the intense pain it caused her she 'got out of it' whenever she could. That illustrates what being a sex object means: that a woman has sexual obligations to perform which she has difficulties in escaping. The private act of channeling sexual energies, of cushioning the shocks and frustrations of the brutalized life of our times, is a social service required of females. I suspect that much even of the 'liberated' sexual activity of women today married or unmarried, is not really a result of free choice on their part. How great actually is a woman's power to refuse?

Irving Howe's existence proves that

his mother was a sex object in the other fundamental sense of the phrase. Bearing children may be the ultimate agony or ecstasy of our private lives, of our most intimate relation to Nature, but reproducing the species is a social as well as a biological function. For centuries population has been regulated by the State; now there is a world-wide orgy of planning the reproductive function itself: how many, where, what kind of births will be encouraged or permitted, interfered with or made impossible. Brazil hopes to become a 'great power' by means of the uterus; the imperialists use birth control for genocide of 'undesirables.'

And the State intervenes, beyond the moment of birth, into the related function of rearing and training the product of the uterus. Its interest is fundamental because the product is the commodity basic to the reproduction of capital itself, labour power. There may be conflicts among the ruling class on how best to intervene, but they take the question seriously. There is no fooling around. Whether by family allowances, a tax-credit system, free abortion, or the provision of day nurseries, the State tells us what it wants and how we are to fulfil our function.

Under capitalism all of us, men or women are objectified, dehumanised, made into things - commodities for sale. But in addition women suffer an objectification which is sex-related, whether our function is to inspire lust, satisfy it, or give birth and training to the basic commodity. All of these together make us sex objects; if one is more important than the others, it is the last, not the first.

PATERNAL DEPRIVATION

'Much concern is expressed by social workers etc regarding the effect on a young child of maternal deprivation, whereas very little information is forthcoming in relation to paternal deprivation. No advice or information was available to me from any of the official bodies e.g. probation service, regarding the likely effects on my child or how I could minimise these. I did find a booklet at Strangeways Prison stating to the effect that it is not always advisable to bring young children to visit their fathers in prison, but that the choice is left to the individual. However, it made no reference as to the possible effects of totally separating a child from his father for a number of years, should the individual decide that the child should not visit the prison.'

— 'A Prisoner's Wife and Poverty: the other side of the coin.' Published by PROP, 339a Finchley Rd., London, N W 3. 10p.

THE INVISI

by Evely

When I was a child I usually played with other girls, I tried to pretend the boys weren't there. Perhaps I was hoping that if I ignored them long enough, fiercely enough, they would disappear. When other girls stood around in groups saying they wanted to be boys I thought them stupid. Wanting to be a boy meant acknowledging that boys were in some way better than girls. I never played with boys unless I was desperate, they always reminded me that I was just a girl when I was doing my strenuous best to forget it. I was often quite frustrated because most of the other girls were less adventurous than I was, but I 'grew' up in a rough part of East London so there was usually someone for me to play with. I was energetic, sexual and given to endless fantasising and reading. I had a secret sexual relationship with the girl across the street until she went to secondary school. Only her sister knew about it because she kept watch for us, or sometimes she joined us.

But I was unhappy with role-playing even then although I did not identify it as such. I could not ally myself with either side. I liked other girls and always had friends but I also felt angry, even contemptuous when they were too taken up with doll playing and mooned around all the time. My younger sister was a tomboy but again I used to get angry when my parents went on about it as if she was a particularly clever kind of doll. I never wore shorts because I would not admit that being a boy is better than being a girl. Refusing to admit the differences between men and women led me precisely nowhere. It confused me, and made it difficult for me to relate to either sex.

Throughout my life the pattern of my relationships has been of close intermittent friendships with other women that I missed (increasingly) when they ended. And of being infatuated, 'falling in love' with men, and every one of those relationships was frustrating to me and therefore painful. It was the kind of feeling that set my daydreaming, that made me see myself as I imagined he saw me, that made communication between us even more difficult and far from being integrated into my life was a serious interruption of it. But when one of those 'relationships' ended I always recovered very quickly (not painlessly) and felt better for it. They were not serious, only serious interruptions.

The men I made friends with and the men I had sexual feelings for, or who aroused sexual feelings in me, were never the same man (except once, with my husband, I still have only a very partial understanding of that relationship). Even the friendships I had with men were dishonest because they always, at some point, began to take

me away from myself. There were always subtle reminders from him to me that he was a man and I was a woman and although 'that kind of relationship' did not exist between us, it might have been better if it had. I often detected faint amusement that I should presume to be his equal. It seems to me that men have expected me to serve them body, mind and spirit, otherwise they feel cheated, all of them: husband, son, father, lover, friend, no difference.

One very close friendship I had with another married woman, about five years ago, was disrupted when, as always, my husband changed his job. I almost left him then. I was very angry and I missed Jessie very much. For several months I felt a strong feeling of loss that was intensified by my own feelings of passivity in the situation: because the break had been made without my/our consent, without any recognition of us as people in our own right, without even any awareness that a relationship between two women could be anything other than a way of



... meaningful relationship, non-meaningful relationship, meaningful relationship ...

passing the time. I stayed because I had a young child, no money of my own, and being in that position I was afraid of the alternatives. I could have taken a job but I had just left work after several years and I wanted to spend time with myself and my son. Also, I could not earn much money and neither could my husband. He earned enough for us while we stayed together. So he bought me my little bit of time and he bought me as well, as his wife. I unconsciously tailored my identity to suit my role. I convinced myself that with this one man I could make what I wanted, a sexual relationship between friends, while at the same time the only part of myself that existed

for myself was when I could grab a few hours alone and manage to avoid his and other people's demands. I am not even saying that he enjoyed such a degraded relationship, I know that he did not.

But what do women mean when they say a wage would institutionalise housework? Housework is the oldest institution in the world and what it *is* is our financial dependence. Other social pressures kept me in my place, that's what they're for. I am not discounting them, they are all the more reason for getting our independence. If I had left my husband at that time it would have been because I felt that I could not be myself and his wife, both at the same time, because I was expected to love whatever I had started — in this case a friendship with another woman — at the drop of a hat, and because he assumed I, putting his needs first, would follow him. I would have earned myself the instant label of lesbian. I didn't want that either. I did not then realise that whatever a woman does, unless she is being supportive and masochistic, there is a name for it, a bad one. Now that I am a lesbian woman I want wages for housework for myself. I am essentially the same woman as when I lived in a nuclear family. I work and I do housework. That most of it is for or with other women does not mean it is not work. Or does housework only exist according not to who does it but who it is done for, my housework therefore not counting because it is mostly for myself and other women, and women don't count? And I need the money — but not on condition I accept one of their definitions of me. I want it whether I define myself as lesbian, single woman, wife, mother, widow, grandmother, old age pensioner. I don't want money for being old (and useless, according to them), nor do I want money, like the unsupported (we all are) mothers for being a mother (and temporarily useless), nor for being disabled — except that we are all of us all of those things; we are all useless, unsupported and disabled. And for that I want money.

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I separated from my husband last year after ten years of marriage and a protracted struggle to relate to him from my own centre rather than to myself and the world through him. I was asserting my need to live primarily for and through myself. For some time before I left I was thinking about sex-roles and spent as much of my time as I could on writing. I began to depend on those few hours — only there were so many 'interruptions'. There were weekends, school holidays, half-term holidays, my son wanting to come home for lunch or reluc-

BLE WOMAN

n Farrar

tant to go to school at all, my husband expecting his time off to coincide with mine (which is after all one of the reasons for living with people), there were callers. They were tied to their clocks and I was tied to their clocks. I tried every conceivable routine, I tried saving time, cheating time, I got up early, I stayed up late. Any time I did get for myself had to be 'used' and not 'wasted', I exhausted myself not only by looking after other people's needs and relating to those people, but because I was relating to them (which I wanted to do), looking after them and still trying to give my own needs equal consideration. I withdrew labour, I tried getting them to do their own work but that was work in itself. Being male they assumed I was readily available to them, but the fights I had for my own time never really got off the ground because I was isolated from other women who thought the way I did, because I had no money of my own, and because of the demands - school and job - the State was making on them, and, through them, on me. I could have taken yet another job, given up writing - what's in any extra bit of slavery? Who needs time anyway? (Now that I am on SS the State assumes that I am readily available. I am supposed to sit in my flat 24 hours a day being available for work. Last week I did not go for an interview for a job because (I said) a pipe burst and I had to wait for the plumber. They took it very seriously: if I was waiting for the plumber I was not available for work. Why didn't I ask a kind neighbour to come in and wait for the plumber for me?!)

I have always had a man - father or husband - to act as mediator and to protect me from seeing my own powerlessness. From an early age I identified my father as my enemy. Towards him I felt enormous anger and resentment because of his authority and because he disrupted my relationship with my mother and sister. When he was at home, as soon as he came home, even when he was presumed to be coming home, we were all supposed to centre our attention on him rather than on ourselves or each other. He was very disruptive, just by being there, without needing to say anything or make specific demands on us. Sometimes, when he was sitting in his chair reading his newspaper, I would sit, burning with resentment, on the other side of the room. Other times I would hang round him waiting for a smile, some money, a game - because he was quite playful. But I was angry with my mother because she would not support me in the way she supported my father and frustrated by her because she seemed to have no needs of her own. Her vulnerability

and her passivity frightened me, with good reason. With her different ideas of us she made my sister and myself into rivals and I think now that that teaching affected my sexuality, in an adverse way, more than all the bad/mis/non-education I otherwise had. It was from her 'teaching' that I acquired, at a deep emotional level, an idea of myself as a sex object in competition with every other woman, including her. I am beginning to realise that I have deeper feelings of anger, hatred, guilt and also love for my mother than I ever had for my father (or for any man, except perhaps my own child). The socialisation we get as women, to expect little or no support from anyone because we are destined to become supporters, is as harsh as anything dealt out to boys - as well as being socially very useful to other people.



I was never able to admit until recently how far my father's presence invaded the house, my mother's life, my sister's and my own. I was made impotent by my own anger and the guilt I felt about it, guilt which arose because I could not separate the man from the power he had (feelings transferred entire to my husband). My father was also warm, demonstrative and generous. Often I rejected his warmth because I rejected the conditions on which he was offering it to me. I did not want to be angry and full of hate but I was. I sometimes thought that compared with my father my mother was mean in giving herself while at the same time resenting that she had used up her entire life on this family of which I was part! When my father looked me up and down approvingly one day and made approving male noises (I was about 14/15) I was so enraged that I hit him. Life was a running battle with him for my freedom and as I got older I 'won' more and more often. It was a question of him or me.

I have so often been faced with two alternatives, euphemistically called 'choice', both unacceptable, one less unacceptable than the other and that's called 'action' or 'making a decision'. Take the 11+: if I failed that would be the end of me I reckoned, I would be condemned to my mother's life of working and waiting,

working and waiting at home for my father and for us, working in a factory getting eyestrain and raw fingertips to ease the family budget. If I passed I would be making myself different from all my friends, leaving my family behind me, joining the people my father never stopped complaining about. (My father complained about the 'master' and the Tory Party. My mother complained about everyone, including my father.) In thinking about this question of alternatives I realised that our basic social division is the division of labour and the sex-role stereotyping and socialising used to enforce it. These are not barriers that can be crossed by individuals - I cannot do or be whatever I like - or by individual female/male couples, as I did not understand when I was married. And two women step outside the power structure which still continues to oppress us, perhaps more so, by ostracising us, by voyeurism and ridicule. It's like being a child again (still). There's always someone there to spoil it. In my battles with my father my mother stood between us trying to do the impossible, trying to support him and trying to support me, both at the same time. In the division of labour created by men with power (which obviously exploits and oppresses most men, like my father) women embody that division. We are women - one side of the fence, but we are male-identified - the other side of the fence. So what was my mother to do? Support me, who she is? Or support my father, who she also is because he represents her interests, her survival? She could not often stand up to my father but sometimes she got very angry on my behalf and accused him of being possessive and interfering (never on her own behalf). I am not suggesting that ideally she would always be on my side. 'Ideally' there would not be sides, not rigid social divisions of female v. male. At the same time I don't see how the interests of women and men can express themselves in identical ways at this moment in time. For most of my life I have gone on thinking that this family infighting was my peculiar bad luck, but this capitalist sexist society depends for its survival on relationships between women being disrupted, or given second place by women themselves from the very beginning, making it almost impossible for any of us to relate on a human level. Somehow we have got to make it possible for women, for all of us, to begin to live with self-interest and still survive.

I went to grammar school knowing that, unlike my friends, I had a future. Even so, in the mornings when I waved goodbye to my mother, I felt miserable and lonely. 'It's all very well for her' I thought 'going back indoors in the warm.' How I wanted to stay - but I was going to be Someone, and when I waved goodbye to my mother I was waving goodbye to being like her. The choice is to be a woman or a person,

and I was going to be a Person. At home I began to withdraw. My mother was the origin of my feeling self, my feelings connected me to her, and expression of them, recognition of them even, could only weaken me because they were pulling me back into a weak and oppressive situation, her situation, also mine. My feelings, my creativity were withering away inside me but I was frightened of them, they could destroy my motivation. I would not, soon could not, let go. It is not only women who have this struggle, I have watched my son oscillating between closeness to me and a contradiction – a powerful male identity. Suppression of one's 'femaleness', of one's feeling self, is an inevitable part of male identity, inevitable in a society where women are powerless. I remember the game we played as children, trying to get away from our own shadows. The only way you can do it is by standing in shadow, not such an idle metaphor to those of us who've done it, whether in a marriage which disintegrates into an idyll in the dark of loneliness and self-deception, or in pursuing 'independent' lives where the spectre of housewife will not die down. Or being gay, where, because I reject women's work of serving a man, I am not seen as a woman at all. After all that, I was just as vulnerable as my mother before me.

It was not until I joined the women's movement last year that I could begin to accept what now seems obvious: that my feelings for other women, which had never been sexual, not since childhood, were a much better basis for relationships than 'falling in love' which was a surrender to someone more powerful than I was. Accept too that because I won't limit my feelings according to convention I am a 'lesbian', in itself a socially imposed limitation. When I was a child I had a recurring fantasy of living with lots of people, of non-specific age and sex, in a house by the sea, where the sun always shone, and everyone was happy and liked doing all the things I liked doing. One of my deepest needs has always been, still is, to have integrated relationships. For years I tried to pretend that my husband and myself were two free and equal people – unlike every other married couple of course. I thought that if I wanted something enough I could make it happen. Slowly, as I was questioning my/our roles, I grew more and more conscious of the freedom and closeness I felt in my friendships with other women. When I met gay women at a WL conference I identified with them almost immediately. I had a vision of freedom and free relationships that role-playing and everyday life made nonsense of. And now, living with other women, a lot of our time and energy is still absorbed by the business of staying alive.

Money and work are the worst problems, trying to find a job that does not absorb your whole life, that gives you

enough money to live on, is not too alienating. I am less able to put up with boring, alienating work than I used to be – and less willing. How can we centre ourselves on the place we live in and the people we live with when there is this constant pressure to 'work' to survive? I think of myself as a feminist, and part of my feminism is in living together with other women, but it doesn't matter what I think, other people will identify me as a lesbian unless I am going to dissimulate and connive with their assumptions about me. Self-respect is very difficult if you are always pretending to be someone other than yourself. Life is inauthentic, but for some women it is necessary if they are going to keep their jobs. And it is ironic that in healing a split in myself – an emotional life with women, a physical life with men – I should be forced into leading a double life. So 'work' amounts to ripped-off time and energy, boredom, for not much money, in order to have my identity undermined. I want the power to refuse that work, or at least to refuse total dependence on an oppressive situation.



ME AND MY SHADOW

Living on SS is no solution. They don't give you much money and poverty is deeply restricting - it prescribes my awareness of myself and my possibilities. It's bad enough for Male Genius to starve in his garret. His sex are rich and (culturally) powerful, and there is usually a supportive female figure - or several - hovering in the background of his life. They hassle you by trying to force you into shit jobs, by making you sign the register every week, by reminding you that they can always withhold the crust you have screwed out of them: just in case you are in danger of forgetting your own powerlessness. The Art of staying on SS: the right smile (or tear) at the right time to the right SS officer can work wonders. I am still playing their

game. And I know the rules, and I've been to CUs, and I've spent endless hours arguing with endless SS officers. Always whichever way I turn I am faced with their irreducible power.

As well as outside work - as part of outside work - there is housework, shopping, cooking, washing-up, washing, sewing, etc., which are not performed to satisfy my private needs and pleasures because privacy can only exist in a life based on my needs, my recognition of them, my communication of them, my acting on them. What we call privacy is merely resting up for the next day's labour (assuming you have time to rest which for 2/3 years I did not). I have been on SS for a year which has given me some breathing space and made me very aware of how my body was geared to respond to someone else's clock, to rise eat travel work eat work travel eat play fuck sleep, and the pattern is much the same whether I was 'at home' or 'at work'. I do not see my year as a long resting-up period after which I become an even better worker for man and State than I was before. I don't feel like going back, I feel like going on.

A few evenings ago I was sitting in a local pub with some friends when a young woman and man walked in. She had hennaed hair stiff with ringlets and white ribbons, a tightly fitted flowing dress, and she was very self-conscious. He had long flowing black hair, a monkey jacket, and very tight trousers that showed his prick off. She stood playing with her hair, her ribbons and her clothes, looking to see who was looking at her while he bought their drinks. 'And now' I thought 'they are going to sit down and communicate'. But the thought was really too bitter. They exemplified for me the barriers between women and men, and though individual female/male couples can differ from those two, they cannot escape.

I wanted to escape and I wanted to be myself and in relating to other women I have been more myself and expressed more of myself than I ever did with men. Bub because being gay is the most positive statement a woman can make about her own autonomy, society's attitude towards us is that we don't exist, which I think is a reflection of their attitude towards all of us, towards women. Living with a man can make us think we are much further on than we really are. It was not until I made a choice of living with women that I realised how much of my 'maturity' and confidence had been taken from the man I lived with and my presumed identity with him. Identifying with lesbians means, for a straight woman, a recognition of her own sexuality and potential gayness which may be something to do with the fear and anger we still generate. It means too a recognition of those feelings which have

their origin in the mother/child relationship, feelings we defend ourselves against in the attempt to defend ourselves against our own identity. I think it is necessary for feminists to recognise that being gay is a choice and not a fate though what individual people do about it is up to them. At the same time, realising that you could be gay is not the same as being gay, just as knowing that I could have and rear a child was not the same as doing it.

Being a lesbian and identifying as a lesbian is not the same thing: being a housewife and identifying as a housewife is not the same thing either. When I was a housewife to be seen as one, unprotected by my own secret identity and fantasies, would have been intolerable. Although I did not spend much time writing during those years 'writer' was my secret identity, my 'real' identity. It was a lifeline to me. I wonder how many housewives have a submerged identity, linked probably with sex and power, to compensate for their/our powerlessness and asexuality. Lesbians protect themselves by role-playing, by saying they were born gay (unlike other women), by saying they would prefer to be 'normal', by having worked through their lesbian hang-ups to re-enter the world as 'normal', even normal political people with a suppressed (in some way) lesbian identity, by saying that the person they are living with just happens to be female. Sometimes, when I am talking about lesbians, I have a strong feeling of unreality. I can't quite believe it is me I am talking about. It would be very convenient if a stereotyped butch lesbian would walk into the room so that I could project all my feelings on to her. We are all male-identified, being a lesbian is just another one of their patterns for us. I feel I am never seen.

If I try to communicate myself to another woman sooner or later the word 'lesbian' comes in, and that is not me, however you interpret it, it is just another one of their categories into which I

fit. We all compromise, being a 'lesbian' is a compromise. The other evening while I was talking to some friends about being gay, I had a sudden feeling for what it would be like to be myself and not be labelled 'lesbian'. But lesbian is not a label I can destroy by changing myself, by rejecting the label, by going straight (which for me would mean reducing myself), but only as we change, as we gain strength and power to define ourselves or reject all definitions: and that includes real social power.

If I try to communicate myself to another woman what I communicate is a man's perception of me. The same goes for her. If we are a straight woman and a gay woman their perception of us is a different one which makes it difficult for us to communicate. Not so long ago I was a straight woman myself - I am one of the people I have difficulty in communicating with. We have no language of our own because we have no perception of ourselves, only their perception of us. When we are coy with each other, or with men, what we are really saying is that we have no way of communicating other than by being seen. Because I reject being seen (defined) by a man, on a personal level as well! I am hidden behind a lesbian mythology of being predatory, warped, sick, immature, ridiculous and, of course, obsessed by sex. How far can I escape being what other people see me as? Why are there so many breakdowns and attempted suicides amongst lesbian women? Perhaps we should begin to put forward our own self-definition of us: active, desirous, critical, imaginative, humorous and sexual?

Being gay is part of my need to be a whole person, to be sexually and emotionally active and expressive. I want to understand what my sexuality means to me. There are a number of women in the movement who do not actually make love with other women who are defining themselves as lesbians. One of my dilemmas is that as a lesbian I am sexually defined, which I reject, but because I have been so sexually

repressed and so passive I am interested in my sexuality and my body. I want to have relationships with women for which there is no ready pattern or definition, of two independent identities relating to each other from choice. Being gay is being positive about women, not being negative about men. But a gay woman's freedom of choice is limited by insecurity by a low income and the possibility of losing even that, by the difficulty in finding somewhere to live, by the fact that few women ever come out as gay. In becoming a lesbian I destroyed for myself the last hope that it is possible for me, as a woman, to be an authentic, autonomous person in this society. It is a question of every woman finding the situation that suits her best. My feelings and my sexuality are more together than they have ever been, and I am beginning to be able to articulate what is happening to me, the way I and my consciousness are changing. But I live outside of society and, to some extent, of the women's movement, which has not yet come to terms with its gay identity. I am beginning to relate to the movement through the demand of wages for housework, which is directly about a fundamental shift of power from men to women - and the power of women is directly in the interests of lesbians because of the economic and social oppressions we suffer as women alone and, worse still, women together.

As a woman I have always been outside of society, but as a heterosexual woman I had some rapport with the world around me, or thought I did. As a lesbian woman and a feminist I have very little. Being a feminist is a lot to do with it, a feminist must perceive herself as an outsider. But feminism is a perspective, lesbianism is a way of being seen - more precisely, hidden. I feel most myself, most relaxed, I forget myself most with other gay women. But gay women's events often engender an atmosphere almost of desperation and a lack of continuity which comes from our position of being outside society and ignored by it, and also because so many of us, in becoming gay, have cut loose from our past lives or sometimes have been cut off. (I am not making a plea for social acceptance but neither do I want to glorify my position as outsider). As a woman who prefers relating to other women, sexually as well, I represent a threat to women whose life-styles and self-perception would be disrupted if they thought of themselves as gay. But then I find the idea of lesbianism threatening, the history of the oppression of lesbians, current beliefs, attitudes, etc., threaten me. Until quite recently I found lesbians quite threatening because they/we represent so much that is unknown. A lesbian identity has a certain fragility because it describes a relation, and however strong or productive or necessary that relation might be, this society is hostile to relationships between women and to relationships between equals (even, or especially, when



equal means equally oppressed) and does its powerful best to discriminate, disrupt, destroy.

When I'd been living with another woman for a month or so it began to seem like the most 'normal' thing in the world, and sometimes I get impatient so, I ask myself, what the flying fuck is all the fuss about? Then I go out and every step out of home I feel a bit colder, a bit less myself. There's almost nothing I can relate to, not without such an enormous compromise that 'relate' is putting it rather high. People are friendly because they assume I am like them and I allow them to do it. Even in the pub I must not allow myself to be too free in case I forget myself and show too much affection for another woman. Men might find us entertaining, or they might be hostile, women more so. Also, if it is a local pub and I am a regular I risk getting chucked out. I might meet up with myself in the Charing Cross Road, two women got up in phallic gear, bras and belts and stockings, probably into S&M. That's supposed to be me. I ignore it, I'd like to reject it and on more than a personal level. A few weeks ago I saw a feminist play on TV about two women who have an affair together (by Pat Hooker). It could be the first time I have been fed rather than ripped off by the media. The most difficult confrontation of all is likely to be a movement event where I, naively, expected to be myself, as if the fragmentation, the distortion of myself that I meet with almost everywhere should disappear miraculously. It is only at home that I can really be myself, which means that only at home do I really forget myself, not be self-conscious. Here I am free to be whatever I like, and with another woman mentally, emotionally, physically free. But the warmth, the humour, the spontaneity, the passion, the self-discovery that women can express, can give each other, can share, I have rarely met with outside of home. Confined to doors, it is like being under house arrest: wages for housework is spot on. Our feelings, our thoughts, our sexuality are as much privatised as our housework, as part of our housework. That's true for me whether I am living with a woman or a man. The contradiction is greater now that I am living with another woman because I am not protected by a member of the dominant (outside) culture, from which I am fundamentally disconnected.

For some time after becoming gay, if I recognised that another gay woman was interested in me and felt a response in myself (or vice versa) I felt afraid because I was afraid of my own sexuality. If a man makes a pass at me I am not afraid because my sexuality is not involved, only his. I am being used as a receptacle for his sexuality, that is the origin of my 'sexiness.' Remember the screen goddesses, sex 'symbols' (often rumoured to be frigid). Or, if they were difficult to contain as women, explained away: Garbo was gay, Mae West a man. I have never met a man capable of accepting

me as I am. How do you avoid 'let's pretend' (in the debilitating not the fun sense) when half the time you don't even know you are doing it or, when you realise, avoid making a relationship an exercise in consciousness-raising that makes men, as a sex, ever more inaccessible because it takes so much time and trouble getting close to any one of them?

At present I am living with another woman and beginning that relationship was very difficult. There was a lot of evasion from both of us, long conversations into the night about other people's relationships and our own past relationships. When we started sleeping together we kept promising to stop. Emotionally, sexually, mentally our relationship is the most challenging and positive I've had, but we had been living together for about six months before I felt I had got over most of my inhibitions about being gay (I could be wrong and I am still quick to get angry at other people's negative attitudes). I sometimes feel that the intensity of my feelings for another woman are a measure of the distance between us, of how we have all been reared in isolation, of how we all still live in ghettos. I feel a kind of desperation. Sex is one way of communicating; it can also be a way of hiding from the fact that you can't communicate.



Who needs society!

I think it is necessary for me to distinguish between feelings that make it more difficult for me to communicate with another woman, whether she is straight or gay, and feelings which help us to communicate. The forces in this society that negate me and destroy my spontaneity, are also in me. I am still very defensive even when there is no one to defend myself against. My own patterns of response are geared to a power relationship and this does not change overnight simply because I am not living with a man any more. It is not something I can ever be free of

within this society: it is based on power and I have to survive. Any changes I can make in myself can only be very limited ones however great they seem to me. I can't begin to recognise a million human possibilities until we can destroy the division of labour, sex roles, and homo-hetero-sexuality.

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Women living together and challenging each other is an important part of the movement. We all need as many alternatives as we can make, other than living alone or alone with a man, or living temporary lives until we can live with a man. And we need independence, however we are living, to give us some choices, some ability to resist. Part of being male-identified for me was that I wanted a woman to play a female role (for me), to be nice, warm, supportive, unobtrusive, tolerant, thoroughly self-repressive but above all nice. I still need warmth and support but realise now that they have to co-exist with growth and change and challenge. I was looking for a (mythic) mother figure, although I hated my mother's subservience and don't enjoy thinking about my own.

If my mother had not been so subservient, so dependent, so isolated (she worked outside of home too, for most of my life) my life would have been different. I have always been fairly independent. When I was married I too worked outside of home. For 3 years I was the family breadwinner. Going to work certainly helped me to keep some leverage in my relationship with my husband, but all it was doing really was stopping me from seeing the situation I was in as a woman and from developing my own life in the way I wanted to. The freedom I now have at home is mirrored, and invaded by, the lack of freedom I have everywhere else. Is my own body mine, even at home? I am still caught in the double bind of unfree because I'm housewife, and now, a housewife because I'm unfree. I see demands women make arising from our work situation outside home as secondary to demands made from our work situation inside home. The difficulties we all have in trying to live primarily for ourselves and support each other are derived from the division of labour and the hierarchical society it forces onto all of us. If we (women) are to begin a radical shift of identity, from others to self, to challenge men and male power we must have independence arising from the structure where the oppression originates, and if that factory (home) does not become ours, neither will any of the other factories become ours.

From the Radicalesbian position paper: 'A lesbian is the anger of all women condensed to the point of exclusion.' It's time we did explode.

" DIALOGUE "

There is not enough dialogue anywhere among women, and the feminist movement is no exception. We hope that readers will use this page not only to have a dialogue with those of us who put out the journal, as the woman this issue, but with each other.

Dear Sisters,

Julia let me read your draft paper and I am writing something about my position on the matter.*

I think that there is a contradiction between asking for a wage, as opposed to an allowance or a minimum income, and the desire not to relate the amount of money paid to the amount of work done.

I do not believe that discussions on men's struggles 'at the point of production' can carry on without mentioning who would be paid or the amount of work done. If miners say that the only real victory possible is when the pits are smashed and shut down forever, then they are not really in it for wages. They are using the wage struggle as incidental to a total revolution after which different structures would be brought into being. They struggle around wages because they are here and now waged miners. The lesson for the women's movement is to start from where you are at and talk about realities.

I think your refusal to discuss who the wages would be paid to disguises the difficulty of your position. As you say on page 1 'the wage is paid on condition that work is done'. If you do not want it paid on this condition then the alternative is to pay it according to a person's status, i.e. presumably it would be paid to married women who are not employed.

I don't agree that all struggle for self-gain is good. If the possibility of surviving without having to work is one measure of the success of the struggle then millionaires lazing on their yachts in the Caribbean must give you much satisfaction. Incidentally striking is not the same as opting out of production. When you strike you are exploiting the power you have arising from your work.

I am not part of the socialist left, but consider myself a feminist. I supported the Family Allowance Campaign. My position on tax credits is that I would welcome them if they were paid individually to everyone and paid out of higher taxes. I think this would be a good way to go forward from the position now, obviously not as a final solution.

Pip Sturt.

* This letter refers to the draft of an article, *The Mother, the Child and the Wage*, which will appear in a future issue of the Power of Women journal.

Dear Pip,

Your letter is important to me because it covers several areas which have been heatedly discussed within the Collective, as well as in the women's movement as a whole. I hope I can clear up some of my own difficulties in this reply.

You write: 'I do not believe that discussions on men's struggles "at the point of production" can carry on without mentioning who would be paid or the amount of work done'.

To take the second point first: the amount of work done. A wage is not paid according to the amount of work done. It is determined by the power of the worker. Does a car worker do more work than a miner, in order to get an extra £15 a week or so? Is a nurse lazier than a secretary, or a dustman more idle than a civil servant? High wages don't go to the deserving, they go to the powerful. A secretary gets relatively high wages because of the 'deplorable' attitude current among large numbers of young women that it is much more fun to switch from job to job than to be stuck with one boss for years at a time; the wages for permanent jobs have to be high to outbid the temp jobs: your money or your life. Car workers have high wages because their strikes cut directly into profits: 200 men can halt the company. We don't have wages for housework because there has never been any way of getting them, not because we don't do the work.

You say that the miners 'are using the wage struggle as incidental to a total revolution after which different structures would be brought into being'. As housewives, we struggle to escape our wagelessness, not in order to perpetuate the wage system, but in order to overthrow it. We cannot thoroughly socialize our housework until its nature and extent are recognized; we will not have the power to escape it

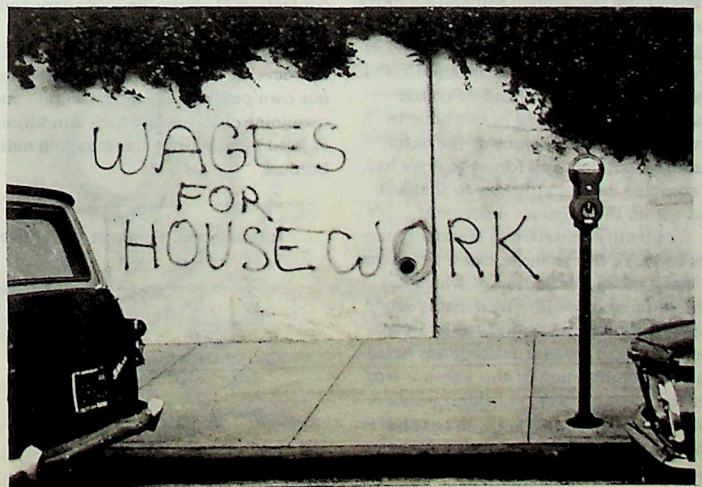
until we have the power to get it paid for, in money, at its value. Nobody is going to do that for us; it's all on our shoulders.

Who would be paid? Housewives aren't all 'married women who are not employed', and they aren't all mothers either. Every woman does housework. Single women work for low wages during the day, and go home in the evenings to cold, untidy bed-sitters and flats to cook their own dinners, wash their own clothes, listen to their friends' troubles, redecorate themselves for their men and rush out to the highly expensive late-night grocers for all the things they haven't had time to get during the day. Single women with children do all that, and more for the child, or live on S.S. if there is no nursery or childminder or convenient job around. Old women don't stop doing housework at 60 — they carry on until they drop, often still nursing a parent or husband, or taking care of their grandchildren. Housework is housework whether we do it for ourselves or for someone else, and in spite of child tax credits, communes and sensitive men, it is still the province of women. The work we do doesn't have to be measured — it's all out there waiting to be done.

To be sure, we are all in different situations with different needs. Women with children need realistic family allowances (how much does a first child *really* cost — £25 a week?), and the children themselves need money of their own. But nobody asks the striking miner how many kids he's got before they decide whether or not he 'deserves' a rise — and nobody expects waged workers to be waged according to their needs — that is not what capitalism is about.

A living wage for all (not a minimum, incidentally, or an allowance) does not stand in contradiction to wages for housework, but beyond. We are organising around the work we do, in order to abolish it.

With love from Caroline.



Berkeley, Calif. Photo by Cathy Cade.

INTERNATIONAL

The statement below was framed in the summer of 1972 when a group of women from four countries sat down to articulate their general perspective and approach to the struggles of women. Their approach and perspective are based on the revolutionary role of the autonomous women's movement. The statement speaks especially to those women in left parties and groups who have been taught to fear that if they devote themselves to the women's movement they abandon the working class and the class struggle.

Since that time, with the growth of the women's movement, the international nature of women's struggles has been given a different sort of recognition — by the ruling class. The Economic and Social Council on the Status of Women of the UN is putting on the agenda of the 25th session the idea of declaring 1975 'International Women's Year', complete with plans to divert, co-opt and cool out women in struggle. In the United States the National Organization for Women (NOW) is planning means to influence this whole brouha with 'counter-conferences' etc. At the same time, however, that organisation is hung up over the status of their own members in other countries; because of repressive American laws they cannot collect dues from or give direction to groups outside the USA.

The International Feminist Collective rejects such forms of internationalism. Our internationalism has nothing to do with the UN, with the collection of dues or direction of activities. The statement is one expression of the internationalism of women's struggle, that is, of the class struggle.

The IFC Statement

Apparently by chance but actually because each of us felt a need for such a contact, women from the women's liberation movements of four countries found themselves together in Padova, Italy, over a period of two days. These countries are the United States, England, France and of course Italy. All of us have had or continue to have contact with sections of the extra-parliamentary left and found that we had in common certain attitudes to that left and within the women's movement.

We identify ourselves as Marxist feminists and take this to mean a new definition of class, the old definition of which has limited the scope and effectiveness of the activity of both the traditional left and the new left. This new definition is based on the subordination of the wageless worker to the waged worker behind which is hidden the productivity, i.e. the exploitation, of the labour of women in the home and the cause of their more intense exploitation out of it. Such an analysis of class

presupposes a new area of struggle, the subversion not only of the factory and office but of the community. It also presupposes the struggle in the two areas of production, the home and the factory, as interdependent to communist revolution, and the destruction once and for all of the auxiliary nature of women's struggle within the struggle of class. This assumption of the auxiliary nature of women's struggle flows directly from the misconception that women's labour in the home is auxiliary to the reproduction and development of capital, a misconception which has so long hindered us all.

Within the women's movement, therefore, we reject both class struggle as subordinate to feminism and feminism as subordinate to class struggle. Class struggle and feminism for us are one and the same thing, feminism expressing the rebellion of that section of the class without whom the class struggle cannot be generalised, broadened and deepened. We believe that these two positions in the women's movement have been a response to the masculine management of the class struggle: either our uncritical acceptance of their fragmented political theory and practice, or our uncritical rejection of class in response to this acceptance.

While we place ourselves unambiguously among the revolutionary forces in whatever country we find ourselves, we reaffirm the necessity for the autonomy of the women's movement. This autonomy has appeared to be linked to a negation of the left. It is in reality the positive expression of the level of female struggle. It is because only an autonomous movement is looking for women's lever of social power that it offers the only possibility of discovering the aims, forms and places of that struggle, and thus the possibility of driving it forward. Therefore our relations with the left, while we may utilise information and contacts, will always be secondary and subordinate to that autonomy.

For these reasons we wish to maintain and develop our own international contacts, our own publications in translation and our own joint discussions which aim ultimately at joint mass actions transcending national borders.

International Feminist Collective

July 1972



SALT OF THE EARTH IN HARLAN COUNTY

Harlan County, Kentucky, is famous for its mines and its struggles. It is also famous for a song about those struggles, written by a woman. Its best known verse goes: 'They say in Harlan County there are no neutrals there. You either are a union man or a thug for J.H. Blair,' and the chorus goes on: 'Which side are you on, which side are you on?'

The unions which the mining communities built with blood and sweat in the thirties have long since passed to the other side. Many of the mines have closed. But those that are open still produce fighters, among the men and among the women.

Last July 180 miners at Brookside and Bailey mines struck, especially to improve safety. The local judge issued an injunction limiting the pickets to three at each gate. Day after day the miners stood helpless as 70 to 80 scabs went to work.

Then in October during a march to gain community support in Harlan town, a group of miners' wives decided to go to the mine gate 10 miles away. The first shift of strikebreakers came out.

'We talked to some nicely, some talked nicely back. Some got smart. That's how we got a fight. I tried to talk to one and he kept smarting back at me. I told him I'd fight him like a man if he wanted to — so we did. Then it just all started. Some tried to get through, and we wouldn't let them. So by Friday they gave up.'

More women came and met every shift with talk, fists, broom handles and switches. Soon no scabs were going in.

On October 12 the same judge — his name is Hogg — convicted eight miners and seven women and one retired miner of illegal picketing (dismissing a jury after it was clear that the jury was on their side). He sentenced them to a fine of \$500 or six months in jail each. They went to jail, taking 12 of their kids with them. That created such a stir that the judge suspended sentence after two days.

Five more women were arrested for lying down in front of a strikebreaker's car. From 50 to 200 people attended 'worship services' each morning near the mine gate, conducted by a minister who is also a miner. There were sympathy walkouts at other mines. A black miner transferred from another mine refused to cross the picket line of white miners. By 25 October 91 people had been arrested for one thing and another, and the scabs had vanished.

The community had weighed in and swung the struggle the other way. As one miner put it, 'If it hadn't been for the women, we'd have lost this strike.'

Leavin' Home

Dear Leavin' Home,

I have spent twelve years in school and am now completing a post graduate course, the end of seven years training to be a sculptor. I have always hated housework and do not expect to be treated differently to the men I work with. I have always been an uncompromising person and done what I wanted, maybe this is not true of the women in women's liberation. I feel that for me to identify with housewives as your demand implies would be a retrograde step. I have always thought of myself as a person rather than a woman, and I can't really understand why a woman should have to do housework. I live in a flat with two men and I'm afraid our housework is always rather neglected as there always seem to be more exciting things to do.

Yours Paula Picasso

Dear Paula Picasso,

You seem to have a very emotional response to being classed as a housewife, or a woman for that matter. In an undeniably male art world women rarely survive, having little support, money or indeed culture of their own. I think you will find when you leave college that your 'friends' will have support, especially domestic support from women. If you do not wish to be one of these you will have to fight hard. Unlike your friends you are not left with the choice to have a family, it's the old division: housewife or career woman. How will these restrictions (and isolation) affect your creativity? Do you think you can be free to be a person while your Sisters do not have the means to choose and while you have to make this quite unnecessary choice?

Yours, Leavin' Home

Dear Leavin' Home,

A housewife must be defined as a fluctuating commodity detained and crystallised in the ideological proletarianisation of the subjectivist counter-culture. Full notice must be taken of the integral effect she has on class recomposition in the effort of the class to transform itself transitionally through ideological control of the means of production. The housewife as non-productive unit must be transformed into an instrument of true revolutionary consciousness through her participation in destruction of reactionary bourgeois mentality when her unlimited heroism will be made visible through her integral participation in the transcendent deviations of the decomposed class.

Yours Nathaniel G.
Smith-Jones-Brown.

Dear Mr. Smith,

And you'll be the first to go.

Dear Leavin' Home,

I am a secretary and I live on my own. I earn enough money to support myself and pay my own way. I only do housework for myself so I don't see how wages for housework applies to me.

Yours, Disgruntled

Dear Disgruntled,

You do your own housework but you do it for others as well. It seems to me that only when you don't get paid for some of your housework at the office that you don't see any of it as housework and therefore do not expect to get paid for housework you do for yourself or for others. Your work at the office as a secretary — making the tea, typing out the boss's letters, making his lunch dates, arranging his entertainments like booking theatre tickets, etc., doing his filing, buttering up his clients, calling people on the phone, wearing the right clothes to present the right glamorous sex object image the company wants you to project — all these jobs are an extension of your woman's role. If you were married you'd be doing similar supportive organisational and decorative jobs in the home for your husband and family. The difference is that at home you'd call it housework, but you wouldn't get a wage for any of it. You don't seem to recognise the economic value of housework, otherwise you'd realise that most of the housework you do for yourself is really only servicing yourself so that you can go out and service others. If you got wages for housework you might question (and soon stop doing) the housework you do at work for free as well as your housework at home — question your woman's role. And you could choose not to spend so much time at work and therefore so much time preparing for work.

Yours, Leavin' Home



'If you'd only increase my house-keeping by a fiver or so, by this time next year we could easily afford a divorce, darling!'

Dear Leavin' Home,

I have been at home for thirteen years bringing up three children. Money has obviously been tight, and now that the youngest is safely into school, I'd like to go out to work. I'm worried about the idea of Wages For Housework because it sounds as though I'd have to stay home even longer — if I'm being paid for housework, I've got to stay home and do it, haven't I? I want to get away from housework for a change.

Yours Mrs. F. Daily.

Dear Mrs. Daily,

Even when you go out to work, you are still going to have housework when you come home. You'll be doing two jobs and only getting paid for one of them. Don't you want to be paid for both? Presumably at the moment your husband gives you housekeeping out of his pay packet each week. But you don't spend it on yourself — it goes on food, clothing, etc., for the whole family, doesn't it? So you are both working all week, but only your husband is being paid.

Remember, too, that when you do get a job, you won't be very well paid for it. Women's wages average one-half of men's — especially if the job has to fit in with school hours and holidays. You're going to need wages for housework as well.

Yours Leavin' Home

As a political animal, Enoch Powell has been described as lone wolf or rogue elephant. Here in South Eaton Place, he is a human being, the bread-winner basking in the amiable comforts of home, soothed by meals lovingly prepared. Mrs. Powell often gives him rice pudding before major speeches in the House of Commons. 'He likes it, and it's terribly bland. He often gets all tense and nervous, and his tummy is upset before a big speech'...

'She simply knows that she's a different being. She's the warmth, the coziness, the cuddliness, to come home to, which is what she knows he needs, and which she needs to be when he comes in out of the cold.'

From an interview with Pam Powell, wife of Enoch, 'Woman' 19 January 1974

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STATEMENT OF THE POWER OF WOMEN
COLLECTIVE

The Power of Women Collective started meeting as a group within the women's liberation movement about a year ago. The movement seemed to have reached an impasse. Many people were unhappy with the equal rights perspective embodied in the four demands (equal pay, equal education and opportunity, nurseries and abortion and contraception). This perspective did not seem to reflect either our needs or our possibilities. It reflected the idea, always strong in the movement, that women's liberation must come from a job outside the home.

The Collective did not see any jobs – for women or men – as liberation. We also rejected the racism of equating birth control with control of our bodies when population control is being used everywhere to deny Third World women especially the right to have children. We wanted a strategy that would not involve women in yet more work and would not give the State more control over our bodies.

Three things helped us to find a way forward. The women and men of the mining areas shook the power of the State and raised new possibilities for all of us. The pamphlet, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*,* analysed the way women function for capital and the power we have against it. Above all, the Family Allowance Campaign and the response that it met in the streets made it clear both that women are desperate for some money for ourselves and that we have enough work to do as housewives without holding down a second job.

The discussions in the Collective have therefore centred on the perspective of wages for housework. We are discussing what that perspective, and the struggle for that wage, means for us as women – the degree to which it uncovers how much work we do for capital, and at the same time the possibility of rejecting that work. We are discussing how the lives of all women living alone, with men, with children, or with other women, are determined by the unwaged work women do in the home and elsewhere. We are discussing what having financial independence from men, and being able to see ourselves as separate from men, would mean, both in terms of our personal relationships, and in terms of our ability to struggle against the work that capital assigns to us as women. Our perspective has given us a new understanding of what the class struggle is about – of the fight to work less and be paid more, and of the fact that women are central to that struggle.

We are a diverse group. This perspective has drawn us together, by giving a direction to all of our fights. We hope this journal will build our forces and help us find modes of practical struggle. We, especially those of us outside London, would like to see Power of Women groups started in our own areas.

Contact us at: Deirdre Parrinder,
120 Addison Gardens, London W 14
Suzie Fleming,
79 Richmond Road, Bristol 6

and send letters and articles to 6 Gladstone Street,
London S E 1.

*by Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James. Falling Wall Press, 79 Richmond Rd., Bristol 6. 25p. +4p. postage.

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JOURNAL OF THE POWER OF WOMEN COLLECTIVE Vol. 1. No. 2. July/August 1974

POWER of WOMEN

15p

Nursing Asian Women & Imperial Typewriters
Wages for Schoolwork Belfast
From Family Allowance to Wages for Housework



UNA HOME

Editorial

For Love nor Money

Nurses demonstrating in their thousands, nurses bearing and shouting militant slogans, nurses refusing to work – all indicate that a highly significant change has come about within one of the most oppressed groups of workers. All women must feel stronger and more powerful because of the nurses' fight.

When the miners shook the power of the State, we women were on their side. Power to them was potential power to us. They made it almost impossible for the State to govern, and when the State is weakened, those of us who seem not to have bargaining power begin to consider making our own struggle.

Now the nurses have given us something more, something the miners could not have given us. In threatening to strike, in considering it as a weapon, they have broken through a blackmail that is over all women. Because our work is looking after people, we have been told that it is too special, too important, too sacred to refuse.

Our work is servicing the workers on whom capital depends. We service them in the home without a wage and in the hospital for a low wage. Service work is housework is 'women's work'. The nurses and all other service workers in hospitals have begun, just begun, to demonstrate the power of the service worker, and overwhelmingly that is to demonstrate the power of women. Never again will people assume of women what they have confidently assumed in the past; from now on, as teachers, as office workers, as cleaners, cooks, waitresses, clothing workers, as mothers – who knows when we might walk off the job?

Service workers have much more bargaining power than anyone has ever assumed. In fact the nature of their work gives them staggering power. Were nurses, for example, to exert this power to the full and refuse to work, the implications would be enormous and unpredictable. The nurses are not likely to carry out this kind of action, but knowing that they have that

potential, are inventing other ways of making the State feel their power.

Whenever women make a struggle, a host of fixed ideas come crashing down. The struggle of the nurses has demonstrated that producing things and producing people are done on the same assembly line, the assembly line that is capitalist society. If production at any point is stopped, then production on the whole line is disrupted. That wasn't clear until service workers organised: the assembly line can be stopped in the most unpredictable places.

The one who seems to be furthest removed from this assembly line of workers who produce people and workers who produce things is the housewife. Unwaged, she seems to be producing nothing. Isolated, she seems to be outside the capitalist organisation of work, outside capitalism's assembly line. Therefore, we have always been told, not only is she powerless but she will always be so, because she can't organise.

The Cowley women have shown that this is not true. They came out for money, which they need, against unions, which they don't need – but the price of getting their money was sending the men back to work. They did not demand money in their own right as producers, as they will have to do. For though the men were striking, the Cowley wives were still working for British Leyland, and with the men at home, they were working harder than usual. This is the experience that organised them around their immediate needs. At the very least they disproved that they could not organise and they proved that their need was money.

The nurses, over the heads of the unions, are also making their own demands for money; the end of hierarchical wage differentials, paid eating time; they are discussing free child care and paid travel time to and from waged work. This recalls the demand thrown up during the miners' last confrontation for paid waiting and eating time. *But it is women who know best that the servicing of ourselves and others as workers is work itself and must be paid for.*

The Cowley wives and the hospital wives have spelt out to the women's movement the work it must do: to bring together two sets of women in struggle, neither of whom wants to do 'women's work', not for love nor money.

Power of Women Collective



'We hear you do the work when people go on strike.'

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Photographs in the nursing section by Barbara Evans and Esther Ronay.

The Power of Women Journal is on file at the International Women's History Archive, 2325 Oak St., Berkeley, California 94708.

BELFAST

'And the government
wants to keep her down.'

This speech was given by Rose Craig at a public meeting held by the Power of Women Collective on February 14, 1974, during the miners' strike. The theme of the meeting was 'Living Through the Crisis: Women in Northern Ireland and Britain'.

For myself, up until '69 I didn't even know a thing about politics, but then I seen so much trouble and so much bias in '69 with the police and Special Branch and B Specials that all of a sudden I wasn't just learning; I threw into my face what politics were and the different political organisations.

I had to help out in the district. My husband was across the water and I had three children; the youngest was a year and a half. A neighbour looked after those children while I helped in whatever way I could, by being a first-aider and also by going out whenever the police and the army moved in, any time there was rioting between both factions, Catholic and Protestant, as the government likes to put it. (Actually it was the government behind it all the time.) And I learned to be part of the district.

Before that I was just a housewife, a doormat, a yes-woman, and now I am able to think for myself a good bit better than I did then. I'm younger in my mind now through having to help people and through having to help everyone else. I realised I was needed very much, not only by my children but by the community. And it makes me feel good to think that I can turn round, if someone is injured or if someone goes into hysterics, that they can turn to me and I can go and help them.

A few times the British army have shot after me, whenever they've known I've went. In one case it was a woman who was waiting for an ambulance. She was expecting twins. And the army wouldn't let the ambulance into the district to take her out. And four men took the risk, a very big risk, in getting a loan of a mini-bus and taking this woman to hospital. We were in the hospital 20 minutes whenever the woman had the twins. Thank God they were all right. But the army stopp'd us on the way down and they knew this woman was ill. And they insisted on the woman getting out of the mini-bus and searching the mini-bus until in the end we just told them, right, youse take her in. If you don't let us go now, youse'll just have to take her. So they let us go on down the Crumlin Road to the maternity. And as I said, that woman had twins and they were all right. That was only one incident.

The harassment by the British army went on worse and worse, and the men have come to depend on the women more and more than they ever done. The women are now more active in every angle of life there. There's an awful lot of them now, they just more or less keep their house tidy but as for new furniture, new wallpaper, that's all something to be done later on whenever we've got ourselves straightened out. But at the moment we're needed very, very much.

And in this way I have a great sympathy with the miners and their wives because the miners get their strike money, their dole money, but it's less than what they were earning in the mines. It's their wives who get the cut, their wives who still have the same number of mouths to feed, the wives who still have the same problems at home. Miners can still go into the pub for their drink; and if his meal isn't there whenever he goes in, the poor woman's going to get it again. And now the government's going to turn round and Heath says that if he gets voted again they're going to stop the strike money for the women. Well let the women do what quite a lot of the women have done in Belfast. I don't know if it has been in the papers here. Whenever the National Assistance, or Social Security as youse call it here, was stopped, the women brought the children down and told the government: you look after the children, we can't.

They did. And they left them sitting in the Social Security offices. It hurt the wives to do this but they had to do it. Some-

times the women's husbands were wanted by the police for questioning, other times their husbands were in Long Kesh, and the government wanted them to take out separation orders from their husbands so that if they got released then the government could sue them for deserting their families. And they refused to do it. This has happened. And on top of that it cost the government £8.15 a week to look after each child if it is in a home, so you picture one family out of every street in a mining village, every week, bringing their whole family down and leaving it there. How much is it going to cost the government after about four or five weeks? You'll break the government quicker this way. They'll have to give in to you, so they will.

And another thing for women, well this is something I have thought about. We want wages, we want wages for our work. I can't even get the brew — brew is, by the way, unemployment money — because I have refused a job in a Protestant area, the Shankhill Road. I worked there before '69, I came over here in '71 with a friend to a protest, and our photo was in the *Sunday News*, which is a Protestant-run paper. And the people went to an aunt of mine, she'd a shop on the Shankhill Road; they recognised me and they told her that if I was seen on the Shankhill again I wouldn't come off it alive. So I can't go down the Shankhill. I explained this to the unemployment exchange, and they made me sign a form, on Tuesday there, that I refused to go into a district. I got a letter this morning to say that I have been turned down on unemployment benefit. Well, as it is, the doctor has put me on [health] insurance because I have had nerves and I'm awaiting trial.

Do you realise exactly what is expected of a woman and the government gets all this for nothing? First of all, she's a wife, secondly, she's a mother, third, she's a nurse, fourth, she's a teacher, fifth, she's a cleaner, sixth, she's a cook, seventh, she's a mathematician, and eighth, she's a dressmaker, and ninth, she's a painter and decorator in the home. And not a ha'penny does she get from the government for it. And the government wants to keep her down. So I say no, definitely not.



The end... Family Allowance

What follows is the abridged speech given by Priscilla Allen at the Family Allowance demonstration on 30 March, 1974, after the petitions with 50,000 signatures had been handed in to 10 Downing St.

I want to make two points about this occasion, the climax of our campaign and – in a sense – the end of our Family Allowance campaign. For many of us it has been a long struggle. It began 1½ years ago when the Heath government proposed the tax-credit scheme.

The Women's Family Allowance Campaign organised to fight the scheme. It was not only because Family Allowance was to be abolished. We looked deeper and saw that it was a scheme to make everybody keep at work and work harder. We said this and tried to get men to support our fight. We didn't get many. They – or rather the organisations that are supposed to protect their interests, the unions and the parties – either ignored us or worked against us.

So when we won a victory, it was a limited victory – and at the men's expense. We didn't kill the tax-credit scheme, but we got the recommendation that there would be cash payments to women at the Post Office still. If the tax-credit scheme had gone through, men would have had smaller paycheques. Then maybe they would have screamed – like they did when the clawback came in – when it was too late.

They didn't join us to fight the tax-credit scheme. They let the Heath government pit women against men. They let us be divided. That whole scheme is quiet now – I think it is just lying dormant. It may be revived. Sooner than we think.

Right now we have a new situation – a new government – a new sort of division. All during the tax-credit debate and during the talks on inflation and what to do about it, Labour Party spokesmen were crying: 'Raise Family Allowances!'

Then they got in. And they found a new division for us. This time it's old versus young. They say they can't raise Family Allowances because they want to give more money to pensioners. It's getting nasty. They want us to look as if we were against the pensioners.

But we reject this newest division as we tried to reject the other. We know what the game of division means. Divide and conquer. But we reject it. We don't think any government has the right to decide who is to survive and who is not, who is to suffer and who is not.



There is another part of this game of division besides 'divide and conquer'. It's the division of the loaf – I mean the loaf of social wealth – the total wealth that we who work have created with our work, but which is taken from us every day. The government – Wilson government or Heath government – they take a slice off the loaf and throw it out to us. They say this is all there is and we have to divide it among ourselves. If men get more, women get less, if women get more, men get less, if the old get more, the young get less – and so on.

You know what that's called? That little slice? It's called crumbs from the master's table. Well, we don't think anyone should have to suffer because we know that there's a whole loaf on the table – which we made – and we're talking about

dividing that loaf – not the measly slice they keep showing us. We've learned a lot in the Campaign about who our friends are and who our enemies are. We've heard their arguments and we've made our answers. And we've learned a lot more besides.

We know that old people and large families have a lot in common – poverty. You could say the deepest poverty is found among those who are too old to work and those who are too young, the children. Both are dependent, both helpless.

They say we should respect white heads, but does government respect them when they throw them on the dump after their working days are over, when they have been drained of their health and energy?

They say children are the hope of the future – they *are* the future. But does government encourage this hope, this future?

Wages for Housework Now!

We are learning fast. The campaign has taught us a lot. When the government began Family Allowance in 1945, it was because of this future as they saw it – in terms of their needs. They wanted healthy strong babies to take the place of the people killed in the war or made sickly by the depression. They were thinking of the future labour supply. Of that most precious of all products – people – the product that makes all the others, that produces all the wealth – the whole loaf. They were thinking of the factories and the kitchens of the future, of people to work in them. Family Allowance was supposed to help with providing food, clothing and shelter for new strong healthy babies.

But women – we saw it all in a different way. There's a lot more to raising children than food, clothing, and shelter. There's work. Our work. They told us to get our factories going – our body factories – to produce children. They thought of food, clothing and shelter. We did too and we ALSO thought of the work – which they didn't – they took that for granted – not only the body's work of carrying the child for 9 months, but the endless work of care and trouble and worry and drudgery that come after the birth. That's why women felt, I think, that the Family Allowance was *their* money. They bloody earned it, they felt, with all their work.

That and our campaign taught us new feelings about our work. We aren't concerned with the future work force. We're thinking about the work we do NOW. Not the work that will be done in future kitchens and factories – the work our kids will do – but the work being done NOW in present factories and kitchens by us, by our generation.

Children aside, we're keeping the whole system going NOW. Say, you're taking care of a man, keeping his house, washing his clothes, serving him meals and sexual tranquilizing (and taking care of yourself so that you can continue to serve) and he goes off to work with all your work on him or in him. And he *spends* it at work, as he spends himself in a factory or office. Then he comes home exhausted and you do it all over again so that he can go out the next day and do the same. That's what keeping the system going means.

So we can see that all of us women with or without children, married or not, are putting in all this free work NOW. We get a new sense of our rights and of our needs. A little taste of independence convinces us of how much more we need. We see we have a right not to be dependent on someone else financially, a right to suit ourselves sometimes, to find our own enjoyments like independent grown-up people. Rights because of our work. Rights because of our needs. It *is* our needs – and our power to speak of them – that make rights. Yes, NEEDS MAKE RIGHTS. These are some of the things we've learned from the Family Allowance campaign.

We can begin to discuss where we go from here. I think if this is the climax and an end of our campaign on Family Allowance, it is also the beginning of something bigger.

The beginning... Wages for Housework

On March 8, 9 and 10 – the weekend of International Women's Day – the women's group of Lotta Femminista of Italy opened their campaign for Wages for Housework in the Veneto area. There were films, speak-ins, meetings, a photographic exhibition, music, songs and speeches. It was not only the launching of a campaign for money for all women from the State. It was also a celebration, a celebration of the strength that we have gathered internationally to challenge the State with this demand, to make everyone see our invisible work in the home. From this weekend have come permanent Committees for Wages for Housework in different towns to continue and extend the struggle to all of Italy and a bulletin with news of the campaign.

We print below excerpts from one speech by an office wife, a secretary, one of that army of women who are chained for eight hours a day to a typewriter, a dictating machine, a telephone and a boss, and who go home at night to prepare themselves and others to work again.

I am a secretary and I speak for women like myself who have an outside job besides their housework. I want to say why I am in favour of this campaign for wages for housework and why, therefore, I'm taking part in this day of struggle.

Along with the women I work with, I have found it impossible to struggle to improve the conditions of our outside work. This is because:

On the one hand, women who take an outside job generally work for only a few years; they do it to put away money to get married, to save up for their dowry, to buy clothes, cosmetics – that is, all the equipment that enables them to get a husband. For women, outside work is temporary. It has been impossible to build a stable organisation for struggle with these young girls, who stay for a few years and then leave.

On the other hand, I found that some older women in outside work had to go back to their jobs because their husband's pay packet was no longer enough to keep the family going.

Women of a certain age, married, with children, with a house to keep going as well as their outside job, have never found the time to organise. And this is the reason for the weakness of women when, besides housework, they have to do outside jobs as well.

But what have they proposed to us up to now?

They have proposed emancipation through outside work. All of them – the reformists, the extraparliamentary groups – all, without even noticing, *without ever discussing the fact, without seeing, because they were men, that we already had a job: housework.*

And they've had the nerve to tell us that, simply because we are women. They never would have said it to men, and in fact they've never had the nerve to propose the 'emancipation of men' through 16 hours of work, eight for pay and eight for nothing! Only capitalism, in the early stages of industrialisation, has up to now managed to impose such a working day, on women, on children and on male workers.

They've told us also: 'Let's struggle for social services, let's struggle for nurseries', otherwise you won't be free – to work outside the home. It was taken for granted that only women with outside jobs would be allowed to use the nurseries, never housewives!

We've found ourselves struggling for nurseries in very small numbers and with no strength: so we got few and these are terrible. They gave us the OMNI nurseries, concentration camps for our children.

While we were at work they gave our children valerian, tied them to the beds, and we couldn't even find the strength to reject these ghettos, these 'social services'.

And as far as work is concerned, let's not mince words: *it's not work we need, it's money!* It is to get money that women take outside jobs – to have some for themselves, to give some to the family when their husband's pay isn't enough, because they're tired of asking others for money . . .

The problem then was to see on what ground we women, all of us, could struggle and demand money.

Then I discovered, we discovered, that the strength of women is enormous, that it could be enormous on just this ground of common struggle – housework, the work we all do that nobody had ever seen. On this ground we could manage to find the strength to go forward, to begin to organise, to carry on this campaign . . .

I also realised, and in part verified, that through this campaign for wages for housework we can find the strength to determine the conditions of our outside work.

I came out of the home to find an outside job in a condition of indescribable weakness. I had to take a job at 70,000 lire (£50) a month. And this was because behind me there were millions of housewives without even a penny, ready to take the same job, ready to compete with me – because that's how they've divided us – ready to work eight hours for 60,000 lire (£42) a month because 60,000 is better than nothing.

A condition of weakness again in the quality of the jobs we are forced to take.

I'm a secretary, which means being a mother, wife and

(cont. on p. 15)



WAGES FOR SCHOOL WORK

Below is a conversation with Gaye and Karen, two students from a mixed comprehensive in South London.

POW: We understand that you've been circulating a petition on wages for schoolwork. What gave you the idea?

GAYE: Well at school. Our teacher wrote an article for a magazine telling people that there should be wages for school-children and he gave us one to read, and we thought it was a good idea.

POW: Did you then just discuss it among yourselves?

KAREN: No. First of all we was talking about it to the whole class. And then me and Gaye, we set up petitions, and we asked people if they agreed that we should get a wage to sign a piece of paper, and it has on it: 'This is a petition for a wage for schoolchildren', and anyone who agreed would sign. And we went all round our school. For one lesson we spoke to a class, and we had a discussion with that class about school wages and did they agree. And they were asking us where would the money come from, questions like this.

POW: Did the teachers just let you walk in like that?

KAREN: We had to be careful. Like some teachers don't agree and they would have chucked us out of the class. So we asked each teacher first did they agree. And if they said yes, we said, well can we see your class? And they said yes. But if they didn't agree, we just passed them by. Most of the teachers said yes. It was only a few that said no.

POW: The first time you all went to a first year class to speak were you scared?

BOTH: Yeah.

KAREN: We were careful not to put them off it but not to give them false facts. We had to tell them what we thought. Like we said, school-leaving age has gone up. If it never, you could be out earning a wage. Or if you didn't go to work, you couldn't get a job, you'd still be getting money off the State, wouldn't you, like the dole. So you're staying at school and you're not getting paid. And if you was a fifth year, what was your idea, would you like to get paid for coming to school? And they said, yeah.

POW: What did they say was wrong with the idea?

GAYE: Where is the money coming from was the main one.

KAREN: And would the government tax their parents more. And we weren't really sure but we said we thought like Ford, the one who makes a lot of profit, like the rich people, they would get taxed more.

POW: Was the teacher there during this discussion?

KAREN: Yes. He was asking us questions, asking them questions, asking them to ask us questions, like involving us all. And like one child said, why not pay our parents that wage? But then the government would tax them, whereas the government can't tax us.

GAYE: And like, if we was naughty, they'd say, oh you're not getting your money today, and all things like these. Like if we had our own wage, we'd be independent.

POW: So how did you feel after this first session?

GAYE: Great.

KAREN: Yeah, you know, we thought, we put our feelings over and now we're getting moving. It's not just like our own opinions. Lots of people do agree and lots of people are prepared to come on strike or a demonstration, you know.

POW: Did you discuss that in the classroom, about strike or demonstration?

GAYE: We didn't say it was a strike. We said, it isn't just for skipping school or just for laughs; it's for those people who believe in what we're doing.

KAREN: It's not for kids who want to have a half-day off or something, just to go home and have a muck-about or just a lark. It's got to be dead serious. If they believe in it, then the

best thing is to stay at school.

POW: So then you went to other classes. What did they ask you?

GAYE: The pupils in the first year, they said, how much do we get paid?

KAREN: 'We want £10 a day' or something like that. But we said we don't know.

GAYE: Fifty pence a day to start off, and we thought, when the fifth and sixth years get it, then the fourth years will go on strike and they'll want it. And gradually it'll go all through the school. And they'll all want it in the end. And then they'll go on strike for more money when things go up.

POW: What did you tell people about signing the petition?

KAREN: Like we discussed the school wage matter, and we said, if you agree with it, sign the paper. But we said we won't show this paper to anyone so it won't like get you into trouble. And we said, we're going to go on a demonstration soon; would you be prepared to come? And most of them said, they would. And we said, you don't have to come; we're not pushing you to come, but it would be a good thing if you'd come and support us. And they said they would.

GAYE: The people that didn't want to come and support us, we got their names on another piece of paper.

POW: They were for the wage but they weren't for the demonstration?

KAREN: Yes.

GAYE: If we could get just a few people from all the schools in the south London area, and then one night we have a meeting and discuss when we're going out and then we'd print some pamphlets saying what day, and then we just distribute them all over the schools. And then on that piece of paper has the date that we're going on strike.

POW: What do your parents think about this?

KAREN: Well my dad said he agreed in some ways but he's not so sure because he thinks it'll come iike he'll get taxed more and that. And my mum, she agrees except that she doesn't know where the money's coming from either.

GAYE: Well my mum agrees with it. She signed her name and she said that if we had the march she would even come along with us. And my dad agrees. My mum said she would take off work that day and so would my dad.

POW: Do you think that your parents, Karen, who are not so much in favour of it, would try to prevent you from going on your demonstration?

KAREN: No. My dad said if ever I agreed with anything I should do it. If I knew all the facts, the proper facts, you know, and if I really agreed with it, I should do it. Like there was a strike for the Brockwell Three and I went on that. And I told my mum and my dad and they said, well if I really did agree, then I should go on strike.

POW: One of the problems that we've had in explaining wages for housework is that sometimes people ask us the same questions they ask you about school wages. And sometimes we can't give them an answer. But it still doesn't change our minds. What do you do when you can't answer?

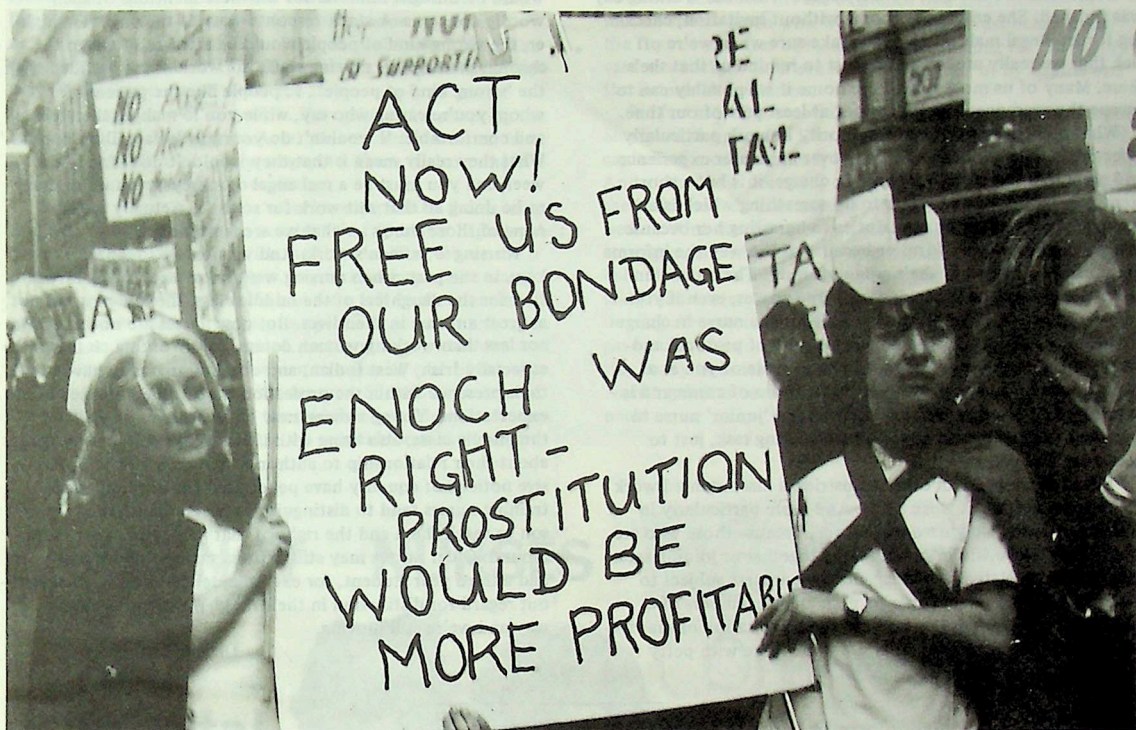
KAREN: Well we've just set ourselves up. It's not an organisation or nothing like that, you know. And so I say, well we'll open the discussion soon, we'll raise that question, I say, because I've got no answer for that question just yet.

GAYE: On Friday we was gonna go out and interview people in the park, men and women, to ask them what they thought of it. But we broke up early and so we didn't get the chance. But with a bit of luck we'll do it this Friday.

KAREN: We can go round the streets with a tape recorder and just stop a passerby and say, we believe in a school wage, and we'll say why we believe this, and that. And if they agree, you know, ask them their views on it.

(Continued on p.13)

THIS IS NURSING



When I first started nursing I was relatively naive about the workings of the hierarchical system; how it attempts and often succeeds in implicating even its lowest members in the process of control.

While still in Preliminary Training School – the 8 weeks classroom instruction which a student nurse received before being thrown onto the wards to work – I remember being astounded one afternoon hearing a student nurse, three months my 'senior', talking about relations with the ancillary staff, the women who clean the wards, wash the dishes, scrub the toilets, etc. With great viciousness she repeated the dictum issued to her by the ward sister: 'You do not take orders from them. They must take orders from you – don't forget that.' In fact the hierarchy of control of nursing and non-nursing staff are separate, but in day-to-day activity conflict and hostility often emerge – softened by some feelings of friendship and mutual consideration. This is the double-edged knife which the hierarchy wields and from which it seeks to derive its strength: you may be low, but there is always someone with even less status, less experience, less power than you.

A large portion of the nursing workforce is made up of training nurses. A student nurse is a student in name only, except for approximately 24 weeks of a 3-years' training. The rest of the time she is a working nurse, getting her training on the job, doing a 40-hour week, working evening shifts several times a week, and night duty often an 11 or 12 hour shift. She is often left in charge of a ward of about 30 patients. She works weekends and bank holidays and gets 3-weeks' holiday plus one week to make up for bank holidays. She does not get student holidays, she does not get extra time in which to keep up with her studies. She receives a shockingly low wage called

a 'training allowance' and gets less the younger she is. She pays full income tax. A first year student nurse, living in the nurses' home, may take home after deductions as little as £11 a week. Life and health are cheap at that price.

The buildings that we work in and live in are usually inadequate. Our wards are long, with 12 to 15 beds lined up against each side. It takes fewer nurses to look after one room full of 28 patients, so with chronic staff shortages it is impossible to create smaller wards. The wards are too small to fit a decent sized table – so the patients eat on or next to their beds, remaining isolated amidst a crowd even during the most social of activities. There may be 2 baths and 3 sinks for 30 patients; there are only 3 toilets and they may all be at one end of the ward and thus all but inaccessible to an elderly woman who needs assistance walking and whose bed is at the other end. The beds are too close together and may need to be pushed to the side to accommodate a dressing trolley. This is the room in which we do our work of caring for the patients; where we bump our shins and tear our tights when we try to squeeze between chair and bed to reach a thermometer; where we have to move a chair and heavy patient from one spot to the other to make space if we need it.

Nurses' homes are a reflection of the ward. Here nurses may share their toilets and baths with 15 or so others. Kitchen facilities are small and inadequate, shared by far too many people and we too must eat in our rooms near our beds because there is no place for a table. Our rooms are ridiculously small and cramped with standard furniture of bed, desk/dresser, and chair. The building is old more often than not, with long, cold, dark, high-ceilinged corridors – door after door and behind each door a cubicle which is supposed to be our home.

Theft is a tremendous problem in our homes. Like all poor people who find themselves in overcrowded, inadequate living conditions, we end up taking it out on each other.

The home is 'supervised' by a warden, often a nursing sister herself – so we may be under the sway of the same authority at 'home' that we thought we left behind when our working day was finished. She enters our rooms without invitation, checking for an illegal male guest or to make sure when we're off sick that we really are, or maybe just to remind us that she's there. Many of us move out of the home if we possibly can to escape the presence of authority for at least part of our time.

What makes the exercise of authority at work particularly effective is that it hides under the cover of greater experience and greater knowledge. For those in charge, it is but a short step from instructing a learner to do something which is an important part of her nursing duties to harassing her because of the length of her uniform or because of the way she informs the nurse in charge that she's going off duty. The unwritten rule is that when the 'knocking-off' time arrives, even if you are doing absolutely nothing, you wait for the nurse in charge to 'invite' you to leave. The numerous rules of protocol and petty demands and requests that may be made of you as a 'junior' nurse are the oil with which the chain of command is lubricated. It is a common experience for a 'junior' nurse to be asked to do the most absurd, time-wasting task, just to teach her 'her place'.

But in nursing like in other industries, a discontented work force is an inefficient work force. And more particularly in nursing, it is an inadequate work force, because those who are not 'happy' leave, either getting out altogether or joining agencies, where as relatively freer agents they are less subject to restrictions and demands than as permanent members of a hospital staff. There is pressure for a modernisation of management which rather than cowing the work force with petty tyr-

anny, will create the illusion of greater participation in management by the managed themselves.

These factors are the background against which the present struggle of the nurses is taking place. As recently as a year ago a nurse complaining about low wages and lousy conditions would be thought immoral for the mere mentions of such worldly concerns. A stock response was: 'If the pay were higher, the wrong kind of people would be attracted!' Given the chronic shortage of nursing staff, the world must be filled with the 'wrong kind of people' . . . people like the patients for whom you're caring who say, while you're making them clean and comfortable: 'I wouldn't do your job for a million pounds.' What they really mean is that they wouldn't do it for £11 a week and you must be a real angel of mercy or stupid or crazy to be doing all that shit work for so little. Actually we are none of those things – what we are is women.

Nursing is women's work. And women are low-paid workers. In the past, when nursing was almost exclusively a vocation for the daughters of the middle class, the low pay was not as great an issue in their lives. But now nurses are nothing more nor less than working women doing a job. Working class women especially Irish, West Indian, and other immigrants, have by their presence within the profession transformed our needs and expectations. Young women now entering, even those from the middle class, also bring with them completely new attitudes about their relationship to authority and their rights. Subversive notions of equality have penetrated the hospital and training nurses tend to distinguish between the right of a person to teach them and the right of that person to order them around. Older nurses may still express surprise that a first year and a third year student, for example, relate to each other without regard for distinction in their rank! We've come a long way and we're still moving.

Lizzie Stuart

Background

In every struggle, to know your history is to possess a weapon. This is especially true for nurses, because the history of nursing has been used to make an obstacle in the path of their struggle. They are told what the great heroines of the profession said they must do and say, they are told what is 'traditional' what has *always* been done, and thus the past is used against them. Not only the past but the present is obscured by the lies and half-truths that are told. We need to look into this history for ourselves.

The split is not new between doctoring and nursing. It goes back to ancient time and we can see it in modern tribes that retain ancient ways. Because healing as a mystery and an art has been associated with religion and power, it has always been removed from the more prosaic matter of daily care, of nursing. And in earliest recorded history, despite signs of an earlier opposite practice (like the wearing of skirts by priests), doctoring has been male.

Where doctoring or witch-doctoring exists and nursing is a separate craft, they meet over the patient's body. The doctor or witch-doctor comes in and either sprinkles the patient with a mixture of bone meal and manure or injects the latest antibiotic and dances out shaking his rattle or rattling his car-keys. Then the nurse takes over, takes care of the patient's daily needs, cleans and comforts, feeds and warms and dries. What the nurse enacts has been going on since people began to take an interest in each other's welfare. Somebody nursed Job; Achilles was nursed by Patroclus. Nursing, whether for newborn infants, the aged or the ill, is a common everyday human activity, like housework and often is part of housework.

Despite the Church's suppression of pagan healers, witches and wise women, it did not define nursing as a female occupa-

tion only. Hospitals run by religious orders of monks and nuns provided the only public nursing (nursing for the poor) sanctioned by the Church for most of the medieval period. We need not stop to question its motives here. In England before Henry VIII's time, public nursing was performed by religious bodies of men and women – sisterhoods and brotherhoods (hence the title 'sister' today). After Henry suppressed these religious institutions in the Dissolution, few hospitals were left in England. In London, for example, of the ten hospitals Henry suppressed, only two (St. Bartholomew's and St. Thomas, Southwark) were re-established, secularised, and endowed by 'citizens of London' for the poor. (Stow's *Survey*) Then nursing became a female occupation, carried out by charitable sisterhoods and their employees or apprentices. No secular organisation of men replaced the monks who had been nurses. As the occupation declined in status, it became a female enclave.

Public nursing became one of the most debased occupations in the country. As a special occupation, nursing existed mainly in urban centres, where in the eighteenth century it received through a system of apprenticeship which was itself corrupt and debased, a disguised form of slave-dealing, the outpourings of public asylums, almshouses, and workhouses, young girls and women who had no voice in the matter of their destinies. To be a public nurse was to be a whore, slut, a drunkard, a camp-follower or worse.

Private nursing on the other hand was insulated from the rude shocks that the public world was heir to. Nursing was part of the complex economy of the single household. Every housewife had her herb garden, her still-room for the preparation of 'home remedies', a skill and a lore taught her by her mistress in her days of housewifery apprenticeship (before that system decayed) or by her mother. In great houses where skills of maintenance were delegated to specialised persons or departments (the dairy, the bakery, the brewery, etc.), the occupation

of nursing was not debased. To be retained in any capacity by a great lord or a wealthy burgher lent respectability — and security — as in some sectors of private nursing today.

The rehabilitation of public nursing began in the nineteenth century and it is justifiably associated with the name of Florence Nightingale. An historical tide is often personified in the figure who rides its crest. But the tide she rode expressed a new phase in capital's development, when after decades of the most flagrant waste and ruin of human life and health, government became concerned about the future supply of labour power — the source of all wealth. From this concern spring the Factory Acts and Education Acts, the removal of women from mines, the redefinition of the wage, etc. From it also came reform of law, prisons and hospitals.

As the *Britannica* puts it, 'wars have expedited the development of nursing'. (!) It is no accident that Florence Nightingale's name is forever associated with the Crimean War, where she is credited with saving many lives. In previous imperialist wars, the wounded were expendable and were left to the mercies of a corrupt and self-serving corps of surgeons or to camp followers. If they were lucky, they survived. In the middle of the century the government called on a woman to organise care of the wounded in its latest imperialist venture. She didn't believe in the germ theory, but she had the middle-class ethos that 'cleanliness is next to godliness'. That she was able to make such an

impact given her scientific limitations, demonstrates how great the past dereliction had been.

She was able to accomplish her momentous work because of the forces behind her: (1) capital and capital's State, (2) the rationalising of the field of medicine which accompanied its scientific advances, (3) the existence of a great number of middle-class women who were revolting against being made the toys or parasites of men, who were longing for the significant work which their sex had been robbed of by capital and the industrial revolution.

We feel a double ambivalence towards Florence Nightingale. She saved the people's lives, but in saving them she also made capitalism more advanced, more efficient for later exploitation. And at the same time that she reorganised military medicine, she 'reformed' civilian nursing. She is said to have 'professionalised' it. And she did so on military lines. The image of 'ministering angels' and 'the lady with the lamp' obscures the hard cold facts of the military discipline, the machine-like precision, and a new hierarchy which she imposed on nurses. As she made nursing a 'respectable' occupation she and her followers also gave it a professional mystique which nurses are still combatting today in order to protect their own interests. Florence Nightingale has become a millstone around the modern nurse's neck.

Priscilla Allen

AGENCY NURSES

the hospital temps



The following are excerpts from 'Black Nurses: A Job Like Any Other'. It was written by the Black Women's Group, London, and appears in *Race Today*, August 1974.

We believe that the agency nurse has represented the spearhead for the force for change in the NHS. The attempts to victimise her are racist and anti-working class.

A significant number of black nurses are doing agency work. Nursing agencies have mushroomed in the last two years, and more and more nurses, particularly those who are married, are doing agency work as a flexible alternative to working in the Health Service. In the London area especially, the teaching hospitals rely heavily on agency supply easing their labour problems. For example, the last available figures from the DHSS show that on September 30, 1971, 'the equivalent of 2,720 agency nurses and midwives working whole time were being employed in the area of central London and the four capital and Metropolitan Regional Hospital Boards... 54% were employed in the teaching hospitals which employed only 11% of National Health nursing and midwifery staff' (Briggs Report on Nursing, 1973).

At critical points in the struggle, when the interests of two different sets of workers seem to clash, the stronger often win their case temporarily by excluding the weaker. The trade unions were formed in Britain to exclude women from skilled trades. The trade unions in the US were formed to exclude white women and all 'foreigners' and blacks from skilled trades. The nursing work force appears to be divided by different unions and professional bodies, but they are not. In this case the divisions between unions need not divide workers, and may even be helpful since nurses are getting together across trade union barriers. Non-trade union workers (and that includes agency nurses) are therefore not excluded by the workers' own way of organising. The divisions that are dangerous are between first, nursing and non-nursing staff, and second, NHS and agency nurses — divisions among hospital workers. They must come together and refuse these divisions that the government, unions and the left are trying to deepen. Racism and sexism are not about abstract moral attitudes but about whether you take position with black women, agency or non-agency, auxiliary, SRN or SEN.

The question of how much money the Agency nurse earns is wildly exaggerated and some Agencies operate a pay scale for white nurses and a lower one for black nurses. We were told: 'At the agency they said you were never to discuss your wages. I did and I discovered that Australian nurses were getting more.'

* * * *

The agency nurse has been singled out and made a focus for attack. The attack has come from within the 'profession', the union executive of COHSE and so-called revolutionary organisations. All have said that NHS nurses should refuse to work with agency nurses. At the time of writing, COHSE has withdrawn use of the strike weapon by its members, pending the Halsbury Committee Report, but their ban on working with agency nurses remains and is to become permanent. The National Rank and File Organising Committee, who produce Hospital Worker, have also called for a complete end to the use of agency nurses, and a recent report in Women's Voice, paper of IS Women, said: 'At our first meeting we decided that the best action would be to ban working with agency nurses. There's 300 in King's [Hospital] and £12,500 a week is spent on them - the hospital would collapse without them. Of course it's hard on them, but if they're bothered about the state of nursing they should be in the NHS fighting with us.'

The agency nurse is the first refusal to be tied to the hospital hierarchy, thereby confronting the blackmail which faces all nurses that they are caring 'professionals' and not workers. The issues which have created the agency nurse are fundamental to all nurses and in fact to all women. But the unity necessary to make a fight will come only when NHS nurses join with agency nurses to raise these issues.

Black nurses have been accused of not participating militantly in the present struggles. Such accusations, like those against agency nurses, are based on the racism inherent in the hospital hierarchy. Black nurses cannot know if the unity for which its nurses are calling is any guarantee that their specific grievances will be dealt with. They, more than white nurses, face the indignities of the ward from patients and doctors, and the entire history and experience which they bring to nursing causes them to proceed with caution. The attack on the agency nurse has confirmed that they have been right to be cautious so far about joining the struggle when they are not leading it.



WHAT NURSES ARE PAID

Main grades	Gross pay		Qualifications
	£ weekly	£ hourly	
Nursing auxiliary			No formal training
at 18	15.69	0.39	
at 21+	20.25 to—23.75	0.50 0.59	
Students			"Students" train for SRN "Pupils" for SEN
at 18	15.69	0.39	
at 20 at 21	18.00 20.40	0.45 0.51	
State enrolled nurse (SEN)	minimum 23.13 maximum 26.59	0.57 0.66	Two years' training
Staff nurse	minimum 25.73 maximum 29.82	0.64 0.74	SRN: three years' training
Ward sister/Charge nurse	minimum 31.38 maximum 40.32	0.78 1.00	SRN: line management course
Agency nurses ("freelance")			
SEN	—	0.85†	Two years' training
SRN	—	1.00†	Three years' training

† Typical rates.

The Financial Times Thursday May 16 1974

A national conference of the Women's Liberation Movement, held in Edinburgh at the end of June and attended by 900 women, overwhelmingly passed this resolution:

This conference gives full support to the nurses and all hospital workers in their struggle for better working conditions and pay in the health service. We recognise that the nurses' work and pay have been as they are because most nurses are women, and that the nurses are undermining the blackmail that all women face, in the home and out of it, and are fighting a battle for all of us.

WHY DIDN'T THEY COME TO SEE ME?

When I was a patient in the Whittington, I intervened to help some nurses, who were going to be demoted from SRN to SEN training. They had done seven or eight subjects and then were told that their English was bad. They couldn't even get to talk their case over with the matron - and this is something that happens all the time - you can never reach the hierarchy. You have to go through the sister tutor or to the ward sister. They said they tried making appointments to meet the matron, and their letters never got to him.

They weren't given a second chance, and some of them were told only the day before recess, which I felt was unfair. And the girls had failed only by one or two marks. Their practical work was really good; they were good nurses as far as relating to patients on the ward. I know, because I happened to be nursed by one or two of these girls.

I went round to every patient on the ward and asked, 'do you understand Nurse C***?' And they said, 'oh, perfectly.' And, 'she's the only one who does our eggs just right for us' and 'she's so good' and 'she is the only one who is considerate.' I felt that something must be done. And then I went to the sister in charge and I got a petition under way. I got all the patients to sign, and I went down the ward to get her to sign this petition. She said, 'Oh, why didn't the girls come to see me in the first place?'

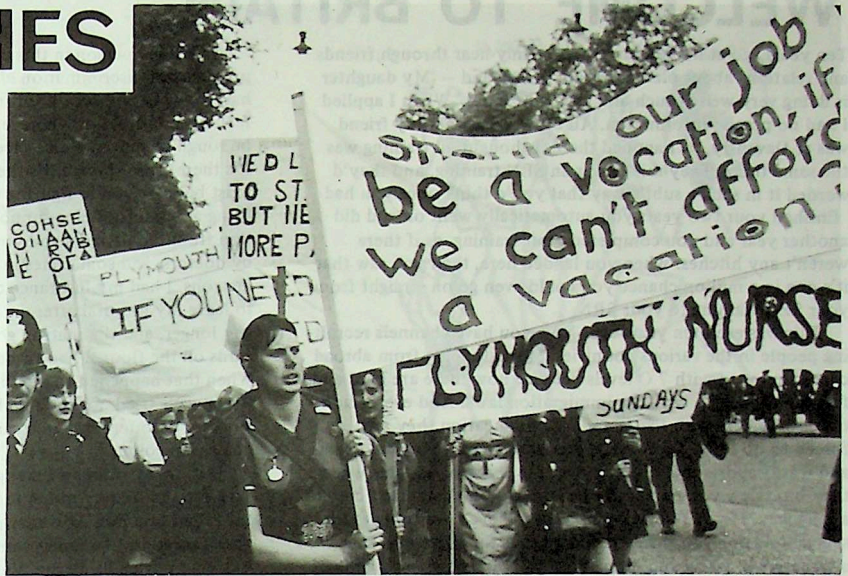
Then I went to the matron. He granted me an interview and I really went all prepared to fight. When I sat down he said: 'Before we go any further, I want to tell you that the girls are being given another chance.' It had been taken up with the nursing school.

At least I felt I'd won one battle. And really I am glad it has happened because when I go back into nursing full time, I'll be part of the system again. And I wouldn't be able to function in that kind of system. I would feel that my job was going to be trapping me.

MARCHES

London

On 6 June a few of us from the collective went on the demonstration organised by nurses to get more wages. They gathered at Cleopatra's Needle on the Embankment. We had never seen so many women together, not even on the Women's Liberation demonstrations. There must have been 6,000. The nurses were very interested in the poster/leaflet we had prepared and some of them pinned it to their aprons. A lot of them asked for handfuls to take back to their hospitals despite being told by senior nurses not to accept them.



It was exhilarating to be amongst a crowd so overwhelming female which gave voice to what we wanted as women. In this case the men wanted the same thing: more pay now. We found it funny to be marching to a park where no money is kept!

A variety of opinion was reflected all along the demonstration. People were divided in all sorts of ways – by age, rank, race, the hospital they worked in and even on the kind of demonstration they wanted – quiet and orderly or frankly militant. But as the march proceeded, feelings and ideas were shifting and developing. The nurses chatted to each other about their tactics.

The march filled the whole of Regent Street and traffic was brought to a standstill. In Oxford Street the passersby were impressed and sympathetic but probably didn't know what to make of the slogans and remarks coming from the co-ordinating committee's megaphone. They were asking people to join the march without giving any convincing reasons. They said: 'This is your National Health Service and you must be prepared to pay for it' – as if it was the people in the street who were preventing the nurses getting their money. In fact many of them were housewives, office workers and part-time women workers who are in the same boat or even worse off. The committee saw the need to speak to the people in the street and to other workers. 'More pay for all hospital workers', they shouted, but they didn't grasp what was common to all of us.

As we reached Hyde Park Corner, a shower of rain drove a lot of people away before the meeting inside the park started. Nurses sitting in groups on the grass were addressed from the mike attached to the co-ordinating committee's van. The male speakers were not well received. Willy Hamilton, M.P., warned of 'subversive elements' who might try to infiltrate the nurses' struggle. A union official, the only person on the demo to represent the Whitley Council, spoke of his 'concern' for the nurses. He went on so long he eventually got booed off. Then several nurses spoke and it was clear that it was they the audience had come to hear. They spoke of their need for more wages, their willingness to strike for it if necessary and the need for unity with other hospital workers.

A Royal College of Nursing nurse said there would be no health service if the nurses don't get a rise. The RCN Fair Play for Nurses campaign believed in a dignified and professional campaign – this despite the fact that young nurses wearing Fair Play for Nurses headbands were shouting and reacting to the speeches as loudly as anyone there. But another nurse got a

big hand when she described the unrealistic rents and conditions of nurses' homes: 'A 17-year-old student nurse,' she said, 'is old enough to deal with a cardiac arrest but apparently not old enough to have a man in her room if she so chooses.'

But the biggest applause was for the nurse who said she might be victimised for attending the demo (she must have been one of many in this situation): 'They took my name as I was going and now that I know they are threatening me with victimization I'm going to fight bloody harder than I did before.' Nobody minded the swear word nor thought it an insult to their 'dignity'.

Esther Ronay and Emma Wood

Bristol

On 1st June there was a nurses' march in Bristol—including nurses from all the hospitals in the area. The march was really huge for Bristol – it was the biggest march I've seen in the city except for last year's May Day march, and certainly the biggest march over an industrial dispute. About 90% of the demonstrators were nurses, mostly in uniforms and overalls. A really exhilarating sight, to see hundreds of nurses out on the streets in their uniforms, marching for more pay.

I only discovered afterwards that the march was planned as a silent march – a dirge for the death of the National Health Service. Some people were wearing black armbands (I had wondered why) but as we marched past the central general hospital, crowded with nurses looking out of the windows, all the people on the march didn't want to keep quiet about their protest, and were more concerned with their own needs than with the 'death'. There was a real excitement about that pleasure of shouting for the money!

The rally at the end of the march was a bit of a come down though. We all sat around, dutifully listening to the speeches of the appointed speech makers – all men, except one woman Labour Party candidate. Not a single woman nurse, and no mention of the struggle as a predominantly women's issue. Some of the women near us complained about this, but the nurses weren't sufficiently confident to shout for a woman speaker – though it's clear that will come. Once the nurses have been marching like that on the streets, there's no looking back.

Suzie Fleming

WELCOME TO BRITAIN

Ten years ago at home you would mainly hear through friends and relations about places to train in England – 'My daughter is doing very well at such and such a hospital.' When I applied I had no precise information. All I knew was that my friend was at Daventry, so I applied there. I thought all training was the same thing. They said it was an SEN training, and they'd worded it in such a subtle way that you'd think once you had finished your two years you automatically went on and did another year and you completed your training, as if there weren't any hitches. When you landed here, then you saw that it's one in a million chance you could even go on straight from your SEN training to your SRN.

This was even ten years ago. Now you have channels recruiting people in the various countries. Most students from abroad come equipped with 7 O levels because now there are hard and fast rules tying up with the immigration laws. And even when they come here with that standard of education they are forced to do SEN. To do SRN you have to pass hospital exams and ward reports that crop up over the three years, plus when they interview you personally how you present yourself counts a long way. If you're black you have to have something extra special to carry you through. Most times they give you the alternative of going and doing your SEN training – which is of no use in your own country – or being shipped back home right now. You can't go for a job elsewhere because you're on a student visa. With the new immigration laws you have to report every 6 months with your visa, and strict watch is kept on you. The immigration thing is really tied in very well with the kind of labour the hospital employs.

Most West Indian girls come here at 18. It's their first job they have ever taken in their life, their first introduction to the public, their first time away from their home and their family. They find themselves in a total lonely situation. They have to find their own sort of social life, make whatever they can. They might stay in their loneliness, or they might go out and find themselves a boyfriend. The next thing they're faced with – an unwanted pregnancy which often leads to suicidal tendencies. Can you imagine the fear to tell their parents? These girls' parents make a sacrifice or go through years of saving to gather up the money to send their child away to better herself, to find a job and to achieve a profession, a bit of status. Let's face it, in the West Indies, there isn't much of a chance for anyone getting her training.

If you fail to get your SRN and you have to go back to them, can you imagine the kind of shame and disgrace you'd be made to undergo? You'd be back home without achieving anything and you'd be worse off than before you left in the sight of the people, your neighbours and your friends.

* * * *

Often when people have children they will leave nursing or do one or two nights a week. They might do agency nursing because you can get higher pay, and if your kid is ill you can ring the agency and say look, I can't come in tonight because my kid is ill. No hospital will take an excuse that your child is ill. And if a hospital takes you back after you break your hospital service you only get the pay you first started at, not the pay you were getting when you left. But if you work for an agency you get no holiday pay, no sickness benefit, and your stamps can be defaulted. So in the long run the agency can be as bad as the hospital terms.

The majority of night staff are married, just getting through somehow. It's mainly black people, because of their social situation. They *have* to go out to work because the wages their husbands earn aren't enough to keep two people going. It ties up with your social level. If a black woman was in the position of getting some kind of decent income she wouldn't have to work at night. Most of the women say they have three or four kids and they just can't manage on their husband's pay.

As a black person in this country you're faced with the problems of discrimination *all* the time, on all levels. You just have to walk out your door to go to the shops and you can feel on the street or wherever you go that you either have to be rough or put on a nice face and swallow it. At the hospital it's there, even though it's the place where you think it shouldn't exist because you're fighting to save life and you see the human being as a human being supposedly. You get some discrimination from the patients and you are reminded of your inferiority by doctors, and sometimes in a very silent way by sisters, matrons. I had my insurance cards thrown at me when I wanted to leave my hospital after my SRN. I didn't want to stay on any longer, and the matron got furious with me and threw my cards on the floor. I had to bend down and pick them up. When that happened to me the impact really hit me, because I've always tried not to face the fact that people can be so base and low as to feel that one can be so superior to you because of one's skin colour.

During my training I met girls who, just out of their personal interest and liking for me, took me into their homes where I met their families. At Christmas time they gave me the feeling that I shouldn't be lonely, and these people's relatives were extremely friendly to me. English and particularly Irish people. I felt more than welcome with them and up to now I'm still in contact with them. But again, you chat and people say: 'Bernie, you're nice in your own right, but your friend, she's from Jamaica and she's nothing like you.' Which all brings you back to the deep-seated racism in everybody.

Going higher in the job is not really a possibility for the black nurse. You might get a sister's job, but discrimination is everywhere. In the factory too there are the same obstacles to getting a higher position. And anyway as a black person if you did join the higher position you'd be so removed from the rest of the black section of workers that it's a kind of dilemma to be in.

With the types of demands that the younger student nurses are making a change is bound to come in nursing. I wouldn't say right now, but it's in the making, if they break away from the professionalism and the business of going higher with their job.

Bernadette

Nurses have had little experience in unions and are not in any way pinned down to one way of doing things . . . Their organisations, which have been springing up overnight everywhere, are informal, unstructured . . . At the same time many nurses are still in the professional bag where even joining a trade union is making a class commitment that they are yet frightened to make. It is remarkable how, once the nurses join a union, they move almost with the same gesture beyond the union and see the real power they have as workers and the potential power other workers have. *Wages for Housework & the Struggle of the Nurses*, Power of Women Collective, June 1974



(Continued from p.6)

GAYE: And if they don't, we'll still ask them their views on it and why they don't.

KAREN: We'll play it back in school and maybe it'll give us some rough ideas what to do.

POW: I noticed that you say 'wages for schoolchildren' sometimes. Are you a child?

KAREN: No. For school pupils.

GAYE: Because we put it this way. If you're on a bus if you're over 14 you have to pay full fare. If you're over 14 and go to the pictures you have to pay full to get in. Well how come if we can't go out earning a wage or if we're going to school and don't get no money for doing work in school, why should we have to pay full fare in the pictures to get in and on the buses and trains?

KAREN: I typed out a thing and on it I put 'students' or 'pupils'. I never put 'children'.

GAYE: You know, like our fifth year, they don't stay at school. Although the school-leaving age has gone up, they try and get a job somewhere where the people will take them because they want to get paid, they want to be independent.

KAREN: There's a girl in our fifth year, there was a cafe over the road, and she used to work in there.

POW: After school.

KAREN: No, in school hours. And teachers used to go over there and they used to see her and they didn't say nothing to her.

POW: But a lot of people don't go to school at all.

KAREN: They prefer to get some kind of a job to be paid. But if they knew they was going to get paid at school, then they'd come.

POW: But aren't there a lot of young people who don't go to school and don't go to a job that's paying either?

GAYE: I don't know. Like my mate, she goes over the Oval House and that's like a place where young people go and they have drama over there, of a night time and of a daytime sometimes. And there's a free school and once it's legalised sort of thing, she wants to go there. She prefers to go there, because you can go in when you want and you can have what lesson you want when you want it.

POW: What do you think is the difference in the need for a wage between women and men of your age?

GAYE: I've not actually thought of that question. The boys, they get paid more anyway. From their parents. If they get a job, right, they'd get paid more anyway. And also their parents always give them more because they are boys like. It's the natural thing, boys can stay out later than girls.

POW: It's not a natural thing.

GAYE: Well it may not be natural but that's what happens. My brother is younger than me. And his last birthday he was 12 and I'm near 15. I had a big argument with my mum because in the weekdays I've got to be in at 10 o'clock. And they said that my brother's got to be in at 10 o'clock too. And I made a big argument about it. It's not fair at all.

POW: What about the amount of money that a woman spends? I notice, Gaye, you have eye makeup, and I know it's expensive.

GAYE: It's not fair though, really, because men get paid more. Yet they don't have to pay out for the little things like we have to.

KAREN: They don't wear tights either.

POW: Are you going to raise this in your campaign?

KAREN: Well I don't know, really. This really isn't a fight against men; it's just for the wage for all of us. The main point is they're fifth years and they've had to stay on.

GAYE: But there again the boys work the same hours as us and do the same amount of work, and if they say boys should get 10 bob extra, and the teachers agree, we'll fight against it.

POW: How much housework do you do?

GAYE: I have to make me bed every morning and change the sheets on a Sunday and dust me own bedroom. And then we



Drawing by Alexis Wood

take turns: it's either me mum does the washing up teatime or me do the washing up and she does the wiping.

POW: And what does your brother do?

GAYE: Go in the living room and watch telly

POW: So it's all thrown on your mother.

KAREN: Yes, but there again, certain people say what's a mum for? She's supposed to do the beds and the washing.

POW: Are you going to do it when you get married?

GAYE: If I have children, one does the washing up, one does the drying, one does the cleaning. But the point is that if my mum went in hospital my brother would know what's hit him, know what I mean?

POW: You're now fourth years. But you're fighting for a wage for when you're fifth years. Why not for all school students?

KAREN: Because in about the fourth or fifth year, you need more than what you really did in the third year and the second, because you really like more clothes if your mates have got clothes.

POW: What do you have for spending money now?

GAYE: I got two jobs. I'm partly employed in a doctor's surgery some evenings for about a fiver a week. And then I work Friday night for the tenants' association selling tickets for blind children.

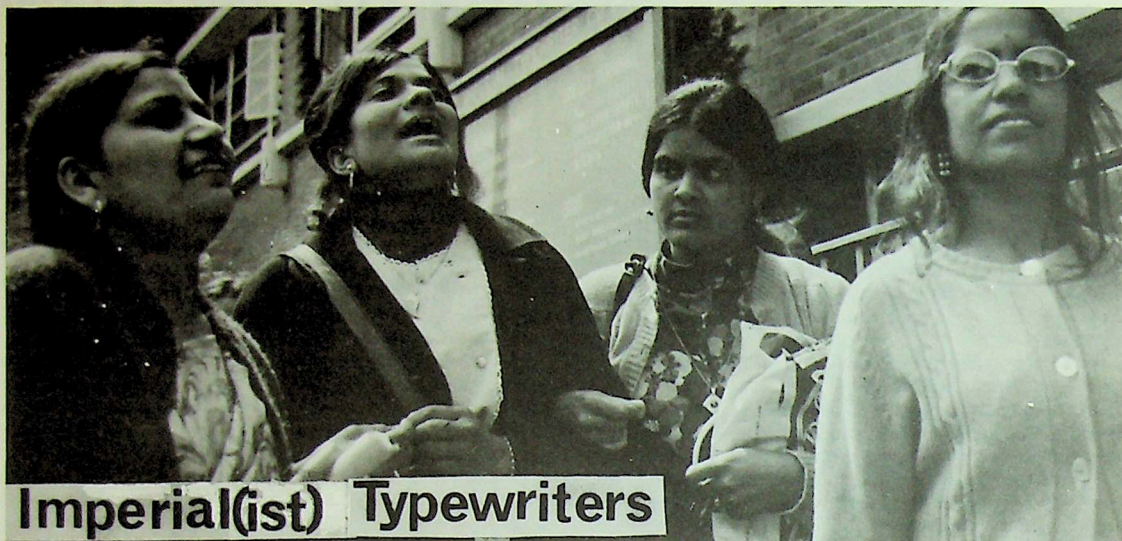
The government in the last ballot, they said that in September they're going to try and stop all jobs for children under 16. Like if you work in Woolworths, you've got to have a work permit. And that'll be more sort of towards a school wage, because they'll think, oh no, they've not got a job now, and they ain't got so much money, so what are we gonna do?

POW: Your mum has a job outside the home and she has a bit of cash of her own. If she was a full-time housewife you would be in trouble, wouldn't you?

KAREN: Yeah. But I don't get a lot of money, you know. I only get however much I need to go out, like a couple of bob a night. But my mum can't always do this. Sometimes she say 'You know, money don't grow on trees', and 'I only got a part-time job, you can't expect me to give you this, go and scrounge off your dad,' something like that.

GAYE: Yes, but if your dad only went to work it would have been worse still, because you only get that much money because they're both at work.

KAREN: Yes. And they give me the money because I need it. I'm not old enough so I can't get a wage from a job. So really, you know, it would be good if I had a school wage. It would make me more independent instead of having to say, oh mum, can I have some money, or dad, can I have some money?



Imperial(ist) Typewriters

'IT TAKES ACTION TO DESTROY MYTHS'

On May Day this year 39 Asian workers – 27 women and 12 men – walked out of section 61 of Imperial Typewriters in Leicester. Within a few days 500 workers from other sections had joined them, and at the end of a fortnight production was down to 50%. Their demands were fundamentally for back-dated bonus money that the company owed them and for an end to racial discrimination, perpetuated by both management and the union, on the factory floor.

Firstly, management had signed an agreement dated January 1972 which clearly stated that the basic wage was calculated on a production target of 168 machines a day; any worker who produced more than this was to be paid an additional bonus. Both management and the union had withheld this information from the workers and had told them instead that the target was 200 machines a day. It was only by accident that some workers from section 61 saw the 1972 agreement on the desk of Reg Weaver, the factory convenor. They immediately demanded the money they have been conned out of over the last two years. At a quick calculation the amount involved is over £400 per worker.

Secondly, the strikers pointed to the racism on the factory floor. The workers of section 61 felt that the quotas of production allocated to white workers and to themselves were imbalanced. They pointed out that of a total work force of 1,600 workers, of whom 1,100 are Asian, there is only one Asian shop steward. The rest are all white. A demand for the democratic election of shop stewards had been put to the T&GWU through the convenor. The union had not responded and the workers had become increasingly bitter about the whole set-up. The discovery of the 1972 agreement added fuel to fire. The union and its representatives at the factory had not only ignored the workers' demands regarding the election of shop stewards, they had collaborated with management to deprive them of money they had earned.

At the end of their tether, the workers decided to walk out and demand a total change. The union, true to its tradition in relation to black workers, promptly declared the strike unofficial and since then have encouraged management to use any possible method to smash it.

The strike at Imperial Typewriters is unique for several reasons. Without the support of their union and without any significant support from the left, the strikers have set their sights on winning. Over the weeks they have evolved new and creative forms of organisation. For instance, they have come up

with 'the grievance meeting' – a mass meeting of the entire strike force where men and women describe their experiences at the factory. They say what is wrong and what needs to be done. These sessions are taped and the strike committee then translate the tapes into a coherent series of demands. It is at these meetings that the women have voiced their demand for equal pay. And since they represent roughly half the strike force they have had the power to ensure that their demand is made a priority. The men know that without the women they cannot win. The whole hearted support that comes from them in relation to this particular demand is more than a gesture of solidarity. It is a recognition of power and therefore the basis for a real and meaningful unity.

We attended one of the grievance meetings and listened to several men and women describing life at Imperial. It was the women who laid a particular emphasis on all the other restrictions that made their day-to-day lives different from those of white workers – washing time, waiting time, tea breaks, lunch breaks, toilet breaks, etc. They were saying that their *total* experience is what makes life at Imperial intolerable. The fight for a higher wage is one aspect of their struggle. The other is a struggle against productivity deals and the speed at which they have to work in order to keep up with ever increasing targets. Not only do they want more money, they want more time. This is one of the women who spoke at the grievance meeting. She's a widow and the mother of three children. She joined Imperials three years ago at a basic wage of £13.50 a week:

I assemble motors in the store department. When I first started work here I had to make 14 motors per hour. But then they raised the target to 16 and then to 18 and so on. Now it's 22. To work at that speed we can't even drink a cup of tea. We have no official tea break but sometimes one of us goes out and gets tea for the others. But then if the Foreman sees us he starts complaining about us in front of all the other workers, and even the supervisor, saying we always waste time and talk too much. Anyway, we didn't complain about that. We complained to them about the target – we all said 22 is too high. However hard we work we can never make more than that – and unless we make more we don't get any bonus.

But on top of that if we make less than 22 – say 20 or 21 – they cut some money from our basic pay . . . We are mostly all Asian in our section but our shop steward is a white woman. She doesn't care and the Union doesn't care. I pay 11p a week to be a member of the Union but I really think it's a waste of hard-earned money. Don't get me wrong. I'm not against Unions – but our Union is no different from Management. And our shop Steward, she hardly ever talks to us. One day she told me she was going to a meeting with some other stewards but I know she went to the hairdressers. I'm sure the Supervisor also knew but he never said anything to her. She comes and goes as she likes. We can't see any difference between her and the supervisor. Yet she is with the Union and he is with Management. She didn't come

out on strike with us – she didn't even want to hear about it. There's another one just like her in my friend's department . . . I'm not saying that all Asians will make good shop stewards – some of our people are also like the white people – they take their side – Management's side – against us. But this way we are not represented at all . . .

I've been in Imperials for three years now. I know what I'm talking about. I have three children and I'm alone. My basic pay is £18 but the men get £25. There's a lot of difference between £18 and £25, isn't there? It shouldn't be like that – we do the same work after all. Why shouldn't we get the same money? And as I was telling you, in our section sometimes we get even less than the basic rate if we don't reach the target. I feel very strongly about this – how can I bring up three children on that salary? I had never worked before when I joined Imperials and at that time I was very relieved to get the job. I didn't really know what to expect. But now everyone says Imperials pays lower wages than other factories. If we don't get more money and if we don't get equal pay, I'm not going back into that factory. I'll look for another job. I know it won't be easy but I'll look.

Another woman we spoke to later described her working day from 6 am to 9 pm. As a woman in a Southall factory says: 'Equal pay? We do twice as much work, we should get double pay.'

I have to be at work at nine and before that – at 10 to nine – I take my son to school. I have to wake up at six o'clock every morning. I get all my children dressed and give them breakfast. Then I make my husband some tea. By then it's nearly eight o'clock. Then my husband goes to work. He has to be there at eight. After that sometimes I have to help my children with their homework – reading, spelling, things like that. Then at about 5.30 my 8-year-old son and nine-year-old daughter leave together for school. They go on their own. Then I have to put my two other children – one is 5½ and the other is four – in the nursery. After that I rush straight to work.

I work till three and my husband works till five. At three I go straight from the factory to get my two children from the nursery. And soon after I got home my other two children also came back from school. That's about four o'clock. I give them some milk and a wash and then start cooking because my husband eats everyday at six. So by six I must have the food ready. I like to put my children to bed early. So after cooking I give them something to eat. I like them to go to bed by 6.30, but sometimes it gets a little later. After that there are always clothes to wash and also the dishes. I like to finish all the work just before I sit down. We usually listen to the news at nine o'clock on the radio before going to sleep.

It takes action to destroy myths. The strike at Imperial Typewriters has put paid to several. East African Asians are not, as many predicted, merely a class of potential businessmen with petit-bourgeois aspirations. Neither are Asian women passive and docile, despite their confinement within a more traditionalistic family structure. The prevalent assumptions within the women's movement that black men are the most chauvinistic of men and therefore that black women are the most subjugated of women are too simplistic and superficial. The criteria normally used in assessing the quality of black man/woman relationships are derived from the white experience (and middle class to boot), and therefore the real substance of the power relation between black men and women is never even identified or understood. It is in fact a subtle carry over into the women's movement of the value judgment which all black people identify as racism. Consequently the revolutionary implications of the struggles of black women, especially Asian women, escapes them. Asian women are seen as the worst victims of male chauvinism and their absence from the women's liberation movement as a confirmation of this. As a result they have either been written off or showered with liberal sympathy. Both attitudes negate the reality of their struggle and on the whole their experiences remain a mystery to most white women. On the other hand West Indian women in Britain are not so easily dismissed. But then Black Power gave them a voice and focussed attention on that voice. Subsequently they are now being seen as a source of power for the movement as a whole. This is not to say that their struggle within the movement has been won – it has surfaced and been recognised if not understood.

It is true that in the past Asian women have come out largely in support of the demands of their men. They had no choice. The alternative was scabbing. The women at Imperial Typewriters represent a new and revolutionary tendency among black women. Virtually a second generation of Asian workers, the cheapest of cheap labour and in factory production for the first time, they have shown that they are aware of the score and less willing to take the horrors. Their militancy on the picket lines, their forcefulness at the grievance meetings and their determination to fight till the end are all proof of this.

Mala Dhondy

WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK *(cont. from p. 5)*

mistress, having to remember all the appointments; if the boss is hungry you have to phone the cafe, go and get his coffee and buns. And the list could go on and on . . .

This is my job, the work I do outside the home! The work that is supposed to emancipate me!

But how can I find the strength to determine the conditions of that work, how can I find the strength to get more money, what strength can I find to reduce that work, if millions of women at home go on being mothers, wives and maids for nothing? How can I find the strength to demand social services? How can I find the strength to demand nurseries while millions of women go on raising children for nothing . . .

We could get the strength to determine the conditions of social services and outside work only through the struggle for wages for housework: if we can make the work every woman does in her own home count, if we can get it paid for, we'll no longer be forced to do embroidery at home for 200 lire a day as we do in Sicily! Because that's the work they offer us. That's the money they give us. And they have the nerve to do it just because we are women!

I also realised this: that even if there was some chance of talking with other women at my job and trying at least to see how to organise against the conditions of outside work, we still weren't managing to organise ourselves, together with all other women, against housework. Housework always remains a nightmare for all women, married or unmarried, with or without children, young or old.

In the women's movement I found this chance to organise with all other women, and it became clear to us that wages for housework would be the only guarantee that we could determine the conditions of housework as well as those of outside work.

We're still dusting furniture with a rag in 1974. We're still doing housework in the most primitive ways! We still sweep out houses with brooms the way women swept caves millions of years ago! This work, housework, must change! We must find the strength to destroy it, to change it, to reduce the hours of this work, we must find the strategy of struggle through which we can break the chain of our exploitation from home to factory to office to delivery room. In wages for housework we have indicated this first strategy for the liberation of all women.

We've worked hard for this campaign because we believe in this struggle. We've distributed many leaflets. I've distributed them myself. There wasn't one woman passing on the street who didn't agree. All women think housework must be recognised, must be paid . . .

Young women, students, are subject to the economic black mail of their own parents, they have no way of expressing their sexuality, they can't travel, they have to learn to become housewives, they are utterly dependent on their families. This is to be a slave . . .

You needn't look hard to see in our faces, in women's faces, the life we lead! At 40 our bodies are deformed! This body bears the marks of hundreds of miseries, thousands of hours of work which we donate free to the bosses, which we

**WOMEN AGAINST WOMEN:
ANOTHER FORM OF RACISM**

It is always hard for us to see the connection between our problems and the problems of women in different situations. For example, single women who have no children find it hard to see what they have in common with full-time housewives and vice versa. Women who have a bit more power than other women tend not to want to identify with the rest, especially with the full-time housewife. How those of us who live with men and those of us who don't, those of us who do waged work and those of us who don't, can struggle together is crucial for the women's movement and we have therefore discussed this often in our collective. The view we have come to is best expressed in the statement printed below. This sister shows that to make a separation between our needs and other women's, however different they may appear to be, is the basis of racism.

* * * *

In the Power of Women group there are two black women . . . I myself am also a member of the Black Women's Collective. Our presence, and the experience we bring to the group because of what and who we are is, I believe, a fundamental source of power for all of you. That the reverse must also be true has not been made clear by the group . . .

In the document circulated by C. the presence of black women is not reflected. But we must be somewhere around in the background because she talks about black men, white men, and white women. She says: 'This particular example [that black men are more chauvinist than white men] though tainted with a convenient scent of racism, seems to illustrate an excellent point: that all men, however bright and shiny their political credentials, are compromised in relation to women, and the greater their own exploitation, the more open is their violence towards women.'

Black men are more open to violence than white men. Yes, that is true. But the conclusions she comes to on this half-truth—not only about black men but about BLACK WOMEN—are racist and wrong. Black men are more violent. Yes. BUT SO TOO ARE WE. We discover our strength as we develop in opposition to the domination in our lives of black men, white women and white men, and what power we have, we have had to take for ourselves. We are more violent too in our day-to-day struggles against the State. And so too are black men.

C. describes the charge of racism [against her] as 'convenient'. In fact that racism exists and is ingrained. The totality of the black struggle by black women and men is separated off and racist value judgments are made in which black women emerge as the supreme victims, isolated in a hopeless fight. In this way too the Family Allowance Campaign is separated off. It becomes an action by C. for other women and not for herself because she doesn't get the family allowance. If she doesn't directly and immediately benefit from it, she doesn't see it as her need. Well, neither is she black, Asian, or Irish, and our presence in revolutionary politics must seem to her an exotic accident. *This is the kind of fragmentation of which racism is made.* She says: 'I can postpone my needs in the interests of an external demand [e.g. the family allowance campaign] but I will not dismiss them.'

If the Family Allowance is seen as an external demand and not for us all, then our struggle and our needs as black women are seen too as external and auxiliary, along with all the other fights taking place.

I am not proposing that we have a discussion within the group on racism, because I do not believe that is what will resolve the antagonistic relationship between black and white women. Wages for housework, the political perspective we want to activate, is in the interests of the WHOLE working class and has the potential to unite our autonomous (not separate) struggles.

Beese

(cont. from p. 15)

donate to the State, that State which is based on the family, on the place of our exploitation, of our work! That is why we demand money from that State—it is from that violent, fascist State that we want money, money like all workers . . .

A man, when he finishes working, retires, which means he no longer works. Women are not only subjected to the mockery of the State pension, they go on working at home, they go on doing housework until they die.

This is our destiny. As long as we women, mothers, sisters, go on bringing up children at home for nothing, when we get old we find ourselves loaded with the role of grannies, which means we have to bring up our grandchildren for nothing as well—and so they manage to make us go on being mothers as long as we live.

Women go through the menopause. The menopause can be treated. No, women must be made to suffer—10 years of hot flashes, 10 years of pain, 10 years of suffering, 10 years they take off our lives! An old woman has no right to love, or to fall in love, she is discriminated against sexually too. She has no right to gestures of affection; she must be only—a granny!

Let's look and see what life is like for the girls who are trying more and more to refuse marriage even if they have children and are unmarried mothers! These women, these mothers, are put in disgusting institutions. Their children suffer discrimination at all levels, like rotten apples. The OMNI doesn't want them, it doesn't want those children without marriage, without Daddy; these children have to go into orphanages; these are the services they have given us, for which we are supposed to struggle . . .

If we have handicapped children, what help do we get? None. Derision and that's all. We have to hide them in the house, and when we can't manage them any more we have to put them in horrible institutions where they suffer further discrimination. And these too are our children, it is for them too that we struggle . . .

So all over the world the women's movement has taken up wages for housework in a great effort of organisation, propaganda, mobilisation and struggle.

We are glad this day has been successful, that many women have come; that means that many women are coming together, over wages for housework, many women are beginning to struggle, and this we put forward today as the order of the day for all! Let this be our slogan:

**STATE AND GUV'NORS, STUDY LEDGER PAGES
BECAUSE WE WOMEN WANT OUR WAGES!**

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Photos by Esther Ronay and Wendy Edmond

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The Power of Women Collective is a group of about forty women, of all ages and situations. Some of us live with men and children, some alone, some with other women. Some go out to work in offices, a factory, colleges, and other jobs; some work at home all day without wages. We are all fighting for wages for housework, for more money and less work for women.

A lot of our activity now is concerned with discussing and spreading the idea of wages for housework. As well as putting out this journal we have been holding public meetings and gathering materials for a market stall on wages for housework. We are also finding ways to fight for more time and money in our own situations and keeping in touch with similar groups of women in other countries, and with other women in the Women's Liberation Movement.

So far we have members in London, Cambridge, Reading, Oxford and Bristol. The whole collective meets monthly, and in between there are local meetings near Reading, and various meetings in London, including business meetings, rap meetings where some of us have been discussing sexuality, and introductory meetings. New people are more than welcome.

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BRITAIN the sugar on the shelves

Sugar is going up in price by eighty per cent. Shares in the multinational companies which own the companies which own the sugar crops, which own the companies which process the crop, which own the friendly neighbourhood supermarkets which sometimes let us buy their sugar, are riding high.

A North London supermarket recently displayed sugar for sale in 112-lb bags at £7 each. Shoppers, many of them old age pensioners, asked for the sugar to be divided up into amounts they could afford. When the supermarket, Budgens, refused the shoppers held an angry picket outside the store.

Budgens is a division of Booker McConnell, a multinational company with interests in agriculture, shipping, retailing, engineering, and famous authors. The company's major area of operation is Guyana, the Caribbean's biggest sugar exporter. Booker McConnell owns 80% of Guyana's sugar crop. The company also owns crops in Nigeria and Kenya.

In Britain the profits from Booker's food operations rose

last year by 52%. In a statement to shareholders, they anticipate that the future 'provides great opportunities for Booker McConnell's operations in sugar.' They add, 'After-tax profits from most divisions are substantially above last year's levels - U.K. food distribution profits are up 65%.'

Shoppers, all of us, will have to do more than picket for sugar to be divided up into amounts we can afford. The amount we can afford becomes smaller as their profits grow larger. Crumbs from the master's table are not what we can afford. The rise in price of world commodities like sugar does not mean more wages for the Caribbean plantation worker or for the £22 a week Budgens' cashier. It means greater profits for the multinationals. Until these companies are smashed they will control the circumstances of our lives and we shall not believe in the sugar on the shelves.

Source: People's News Service

119 Railton Rd, SE24.

ITALY self reduction of prices

After Italy, Britain has the highest rate of inflation in Europe. While we are wondering where we'll find the next packet of sugar and whether we'll be able to afford it by the time we do, people in Italy are settling about reducing the rising costs of living. In transport, electricity, food, and housing, there has been a growing movement in the last few months to 'self-reduce'.

Transport fares in various parts of the country went up in July. At first individuals simply refused to pay the increased fare. Then 'people started to get organised. The passengers would get on a bus. They didn't pay their fares but sat down. A delegate would then go round and collect all the fares at the old price and hand the money to the bus driver. However, the drivers had been given orders not to take fares collected in this way. So the delegate was then responsible for delivering the money to the bus company by handing it in at the depot. At first there was trouble because the police intervened and some people were charged with refusing to pay their fares. However, this only made things worse because all the newspapers gave a lot of coverage to the stories and some of them supported the action. As a result more and more people got the idea and started doing it.' Unions are now supporting the action. Area commuters' committees have been set up and are appointing bus delegates to sell season tickets at the previous prices. Self-reduction of transport fares is now taking place in Rome, Milan, Turin, and Pordenone.

In Rome self-reduction of electricity bills has been going on for at least a year. Entire quarters have been making out their own money orders paying the state electricity concern 8 lire per kilowatt, the rate Fiat is charged, instead of the 36 lire charged to domestic consumers. The state has tried to cut off peoples' supply. But they have to reckon with a large number of electricity workers who are in the self-reduction movement. When supplies are disconnected, these workers go round and reconnect them. At Porto Marghera, the petro-chemical centre near Venice, committees have been collecting people's electricity bills in the quarters and in the factories. They make out money orders for the reduced amount (sometimes 50% of the original bill).

At the end of August there were illegal rises in the price of pasta. The response of people in Rome was swift. One speculative grocer had his shop occupied, his pasta seized and redistributed. More recently, two supermarkets in Milan have been

briefly taken over. At one of them 50 demonstrators arrived when the shop was packed with 500 customers. Some went to the manager and ordered him to let people buy everything at half-price and not to call the police. Others removed the cashiers and took their place, announcing to the customers that everything was being sold at half price that day. This continued with the shoppers paying reduced prices and leaving with their shopping until the police arrived. The demonstrators gave the manager the money they had taken, 'Here you are - here's what we took at the cash desk. We are honest people.' After this the police intervened and 11 people were arrested. At the other supermarket demonstrators cut the manager's telephone wires before they invited customers to pay for goods at 'popular prices'.

In Turin there have been a large number of squats as rents have soared and housing become more difficult to get. In October there was a mass squat of empty private houses by 300 families. They had the support of the factory councils, and eventually of the two unions CGIL and CISL, and the Communist Party. By the end of the month there were six hundred families involved. Many of the squats are in large apartment blocks. Here families have started to organise first-aid clinics and day-care centres. Occupants on each floor of the blocks elect representatives to a committee which negotiates with trade unions, political parties, and the government. Linking these committees is a coordinating committee which collectively decides on actions. A recent action decided in this way was the occupation of the Turin City Hall. A four month old child had died as a result of bad living conditions in the squats. On October 30 people from many housing projects held an eight-hour sit-in at the Hall. Their action forced the city government to supply water, gas, and electricity to the squatters' homes, and to provide immediate health inspection. The city also committed itself to the re-acquisition of both publicly and privately owned housing. A further demand of the squatters was that rents be fixed at a tenth of workers' salaries. In the afternoon of the sit-in they were joined by representatives of factory councils from all over the Turin area. The local authorities have tried to create divisions between squatters and tenants, between squatters and building-workers. But in Italy there is growing unity between workers and those struggling in the community.

Source: People's News Service

Asian women on strike

who to unite with and when

Kenilworth Components is a plastics factory in Leicester with about 55 workers. Until July this year, 30 were Asian women. Their basic pay for a 42½-hour week was £13.37. In July when the 30 women walked out on strike, other Asian workers in the city stepped forward to support them.

The Kenilworth strike attracted instant publicity. The *Sunday Times* of 4 August observed: "It is indicative of the tension in Leicester, still unquiet over the 12-week strike by Asian workers of Imperial Type-writers which ended last month, that both the [Transport & General Workers] Union and the Department of Employment moved in smartly to stop the women's walk-out from Kenilworth Components from adding to racist bitterness. Normally, neither would have got involved with a tiny outfit like Kenilworth. Nor, let's face it, with a strike of *women* employees."

The strike lasted six weeks. At the end of it, 17 women had been made 'redundant'. Those who went back get a working week reduced by 2½ hours and a £5 rise in basic wage. Back at work they have been promised by the union and management that a bonus scheme will be worked out on a productive incentive basis which will result in more money for them. It has already resulted in more work. In the packing department with the work force cut by more than half, four women now do the work of nine.

The battle of Asian workers against British capital has begun in earnest. In the last year, actions such as those in Kenilworth have exposed the role of unions, arbitration procedures, race relations wallahs and other parties who concern themselves with intervention between workers and bosses. At Imperial and Kenilworths, the strikes have a new complexion: women play a significant, leading and militant role. Who are these women?

By and large they have come to Britain from East Africa. Most are new to the disciplines of factory life and wage-slavery. They are in the main Gujaratis by origin and are part of tightly knit communities of Gujaratis all over the country. Gujarati workers have as yet no intermediaries between themselves and employers or the State, no vanguard to speak for them. (The IWA, for example, is made up predominantly of Punjabi workers.) They are forced to rely on themselves as a community which can take on long months of action through support from their extended families and with a little help from their friends.

Contrary to all talk about recession and unemployment, the particular sectors of the economy which employ Asians and increasingly Asian women, are



desperately short of labour. It is a strength that the workers have begun to exploit. Old-style immigration is virtually at a standstill. In 1963, 28,678 work vouchers were issued to workers from the New Commonwealth (the British expression for blacks), in 1970 the figure had dropped to 3,052, and in 1973 it was only 39. (These figures exclude those most recently admitted from East Africa after Amin's racial purges.)

Employers have turned to the female section of the Asian population for labour. One result is the number of English classes for Asian housewives that have sprung up in every Asian community. The English classes become the first step to introducing women to jobs and a life outside the home.

Five other Asian factories were represented on the Kenilworth strike committee, and women were in the majority. The International Socialists were also there, represented by a Gujarati-speaking Asian woman. They tried to convince the strike committee to beg the support of white workers even though the whites inside were either scabs, foremen or managers. One Asian steward put forward an alternative strategy. The strikers were told it was absolutely necessary to make 17 women redundant because of lack of orders. They

knew the employer had another factory in Manchester and was sending the orders up there. Mr. Parmatma suggested sending a coachload of supporters up to Manchester to persuade the Asian workforce there to cut or paralyse production.

The International Socialists were also suggesting the setting up of a separate women's strike committee and advancing the slogan of "women must organise for themselves". Was IS, who have been anti the autonomous organisation of women, revising their principles to gain control of the strike? This situation posed the potential for unity between men and women between skilled and unskilled, higher and lower paid. Women were in the majority and strong enough to defend their own interests; separating from the men would have broken down the solidarity they needed. On the other hand, it was a dream to call on those whites to support them, and it was the most practical move to get other Asian workers to join the strike.

Many women after the strike said they would have been willing to stay out and refuse the redundancies. But because of the unnecessary debate in the strike committee the women lost confidence that they could stand up to the union.

Mala Dhondy

They give you £10 when you leave prison... nothing from school

Our last issue carried an interview with Gaye and Karen, two fifth years at Archbishop Michael Ramsay School who were organising to fight for wages for schoolwork. Since then there has been a battle at their school over the conditions in which they were forced to work. The fifth years' building was "a pigsty" with broken windows, leaking roof, toadstools around the toilets. Below is Gaye's account of the students' actions and the demands they made.

On the 9th of October last year, two fifth years at our school got together and printed a sheet saying "we don't have to put up with the bad conditions in our school building" and that we should do something about it. So we did. We passed the word around the school early next day on the 10th. All the fifth years got to the school early and we locked the gates to our building, back and front.

On the way to school a friend and myself got a couple of telephone numbers of daily newspapers and rang them.

That morning we got into the Art room and made banners saying WE ARE KIDS NOT PIGS. At about 10.30 I rang up a couple more papers from the staffroom. We called radio and Thames and BBC TV. Then at 11.00 a couple of reporters came and we showed them around. They took pictures and interviewed some of us. Then we rang the police and told them where we were going on a march from Lambeth High Street to Camberwell. At 12.00 we got ready to march and when we got out there were about 10 policemen and two cars.

We were going to the new buildings of our school, which were only half completed. When we got there, we went up to the fifth form room and waited because Mr. Aggett, the headmaster, wanted to talk to us about the reasons for the sit-in and the march. We were talking until 1.30 and then Mr. Aggett said that we could all have a FREE dinner. After that we returned to the fifth year room and talked until 2.30. Then Mr. Aggett sent the fifth year home, all except for the committee that had sprung up, because he wanted to discuss the situation with them.

The committee got together afterwards and decided to go back to the fifth year building and decide between ourselves what to do next. By this time I really felt that we were getting somewhere. When we got back we decided that we would have an all night sit-in. One fifth former knew where Mr. Bell (the Head of the fifth year) kept his keys. So we borrowed them and got one printed. Then we put his keys back. There were now a few reporters there so we gave interviews.

We went home and decided to meet at 7.00 p.m. That night the story was in the evening papers and on Thames TV Today programme. At 7.00 we were all in the building. We'd brought coffee, other drinks, and some food. As soon as

we got there we got to work. We made more banners and hung slogans out of the windows. Then a fifth form boy, Robert Britton, made up a poem and we printed that and a few slogans on a sheet. We duplicated them on a duplicating machine, about 400 copies. We slept at about 3.00 a.m. It was very cold in the building and we didn't have much heating.

At 7.00 in the morning we heard someone banging on the gate. A couple of boys looked out of the windows and it was the caretaker. After a couple of minutes he went away. Then the phone rang and it was the caretaker. He started shouting and swearing down the phone so we just put it down. At about 8.00 the fifth year started arriving and we were letting them in through the window. Then after a while Mr. Bell and the caretaker tried to get in and they couldn't so they went round the back and got through a window. Then Steve, the caretaker, chased us up the stairs and one fifth former put his elbow through a window and it hit another fifth former on the head. She was not hurt bad.

The caretaker had by now kicked the door down and punched and kicked some of us down the stairs. He made us

unlock the gate and Mr. Aggett came in and was shouting at us. By this time I really felt sick, sick of school and everything. The teachers sent the fifth formers home, but had a meeting with the committee. We were in the new school discussing the matter for about two hours. We didn't solve much. The committee made arrangements to go to the other fifth formers' houses and discuss what we were going to do on Monday. We decided to go in on Sunday night and lock the gates again.

On Sunday evening we got in again and on Monday morning nobody we didn't want could get in. The fifth years came but instead of staying, they drifted away home. So Peter Redman and myself went to the fourth year building and got them to come out with us, so they all came over to the fifth year building. Then we told them to go over to the new building and go to the fifth year room. Half an hour after getting there, Mr. Aggett came up and said that he asked would we send the fourth years back. So we did. We were all very pleased that we started something we believed in and carried out to the end. What helped us a lot more was that most teachers were on our side.

Gaye Hill



Quick thoughts in action:

Even bacteria couldn't live here

Today they were giving away free dinners
Tomorrow they'll be giving away free
O levels.

They give you ten pounds when you
leave prison.

Nothing from school.

This ain't school, this is **STUDENTCIDE
OUR PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE**

1. Fifth year to be moved into Archbishop Michael Ramsay [the new school building] straight away.

2. To have more power in the matters of the new school for all years.

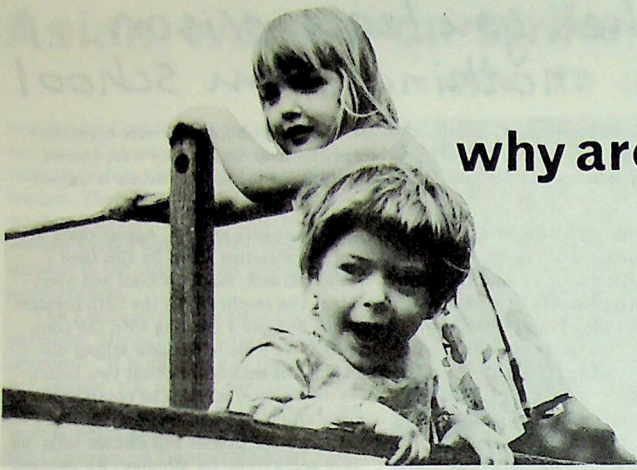
3. To have voluntary lessons above 4th year. But students must be on the school premises during school hours.

4. For the students in 5th and 6th year to be given a basic allowance each month to make them more independent of our parents.

N.B. These proposals are made not for the selfishness of the present fifth form, but for the students in the forms below us and for future students of this school.

NURSERIES

why are we forced to beg?



The lack of facilities for child care makes life miserable for millions of women and children. Mothers are either imprisoned in the home, cut off from social life and under constant strain from the children's demands, or forced to entrust their children to baby minders who often lack the most elementary necessities for their play and development, or forced to pay out huge chunks of their hard-earned wages to keep their children in private nurseries. Council nurseries are normally available only to people with special problems—unmarried mothers, abandoned fathers, etc. — and a woman whose husband earns has very little chance of getting her child into one of these.

So the demand for nurseries is obviously a vital one for feminist struggle. How does this fit in with our demand for wages for housework? Some people set the two against each other: 'what we should be demanding,' they say, 'is not wages for housework but more nurseries'. We believe that they are two aspects of the same thing.

Perhaps we can begin to make this clear by showing that the lack of wages and the lack of nurseries reflect one fundamental condition: the slavery of women. The experience of a group of women in Islington, who approached the council for some money to set up a community nursery, has brought this home to us in a vivid way.

Mothers in our area have to go out to work to make ends meet. Through bitter experience they know they need nurseries. But the life of working mothers is so hard-pressed that few of us can squeeze out the time to meet. This difficulty was our first big obstacle. The initial organising work fell (as usual) on the shoulders of a few resourceful and militant women in our community.

When we approached the Council, their attitude was that 'self help' is a good thing, but over-generosity must be avoided at all costs. They do not see us as providing a social service that takes some of the burden off them, but as objects of

charity. We are forced to beg, and like beggars we must worry about presenting the most acceptable face.

Far from taking responsibility for providing adequate child care for the community, the Council makes us struggle for every crumb of aid, while expecting us to go on contributing our free services. Finally they come up with a little money, loaded with conditions and restrictions, and expect us to be grateful for their 'generosity'.

The project we presented to the Council included a wage, equal for all those working in the nursery. They said our proposed wages were too high, and insisted on a differential between the 'matron' and the domestic staff. The social worker expressed the view that since the women working in the nursery would otherwise have to stay at home with their kids and would not be getting a wage anyway, they have no right to demand an 'unrealistic' amount. In other words, the amount women can demand for service work outside the home is determined by the fact that as housewives they get no wage.

Child care is work: it is a service without which society and the economic system could not function. Women at home have always done this work under slave conditions — that is, they are 'supported' but get no wage. Those who hold power under the present system do not want to start paying women wages for doing this work at home, and our struggle with the Council is a clear example of how they are equally reluctant to pay wages to those doing this same work in nurseries.

What is important for us is not the question of which of these two things to demand — it is to have child care (and all housework) recognised as work that must be paid for like all other work, whether it is done inside or outside the home.

Why do we want nurseries? Today many of us are forced to take jobs by sheer need, and when we do, we want our children to be looked after decently. But let's be quite clear that the point is

not to enable us to take jobs outside the home, because that means double work for us. It is never a question of housework or outside work, but of both together, and that is no liberation for women.

What we really want is not two jobs that exhaust us physically and emotionally and provide very little money anyhow. We just want money. If we got wages for housework we could choose for ourselves whether to take another job or not. But even with wages for housework, if we had that choice, we would still need nurseries. That is because it is no good for us or our children to be cooped up alone in the house all day long. We want to be with our children and to enjoy them, but you can't enjoy somebody who is sitting on your neck all day long.

We want nurseries to give us freedom to live as we wish, and also to help our children develop freely. And that means they have to be *our* nurseries, not institutions to regiment children and turn them into docile production workers. We don't want to dump our children in badly heated half-derelict houses and church basements with unpaid or scantily paid supervision and cast-off toys and furniture. We don't want to come cap-in-hand to councils and spend our precious time fund raising to keep the nurseries afloat.

Women are so used to 'making do', even in the space age. It is our traditional role: we are praised for managing on next to nothing. When we demand something more we are expected to be grateful for crumbs and—with our unpaid labour—to perform miracles. Goodbye to all that. We don't want crumbs, we want the whole loaf. Come to think of it, we want the whole bakery.

We want clean, warm, spacious, well-equipped, attractive nurseries for our children; we want them to be looked after by plenty of experienced, well-paid people. And we don't want it as a charity: it is our fundamental right as human beings.

Bernadette Maharaj & Joan Hall

THIS IS HOUSEWORK

a day's work

I keep house for five; that includes my husband, my two children, myself and my brother. No one else besides myself does any housework. My brother pays to live with us. I do all his laundry, clean his room every day, and change the bed two or three times a week; he is particular and super clean, and he has to have his bed changed often. He is a roofer. Every time I wash those clothes I end up with tar pitted all over my washer and dryer! Plus I have to make his lunch.

Every day I have to vacuum two rugs, I have to dust all the furniture and move all the knick-knacks. And I've got eight rooms and a bathroom to clean. And I've got to do my fridge and stove every single day. Sometimes I cook four meals a day, and every day I have to wash my kitchen floor. And I don't go one day without doing three to four loads of washing. Then every third day I have to cut the grass. It usually takes me two or three hours, plus all the flower beds that have to be done. So three times a week I have to do the outside work, then rush like hell to get the inside work done. Where is my husband in all this? He's at work. He works seven days a week so we can live, just live!

At least once a week, I have to do all my windows, inside and outside because there is a lot of traffic on this road. And then every three months all my drapes have to come down, all my ceilings have to be mopped down. I wash my walls every three months regardless. And every month I strip my floor of the wax, and re wax it again and keep it going nice every day. But four times a year I have a big cleaning, and the big cleaning takes me two weeks, and that includes all the cleaning out of cupboards, and drawers,

and stuff like this. And there is always painting to do, eh? Once a year all the outside has to be painted. I paint all these ceilings myself, all the trim work, all of it. Twice a year I have to shampoo all my carpets, because if I don't they look bad.

Children themselves are a day's work. They are always, always into something, or else they want something, or something has to be done. They're outside playing, they're out there for half an hour, they come in and they're filthy. You have to change them completely right through to the underwear and give them a bath. And they always want something to eat. You're just sitting down, they come in and they want something, you have to get up again. You're never allowed time to relax. And I've seen me many times where I've neglected them because I'm busy doing something else, and that's not good. Why should this other thing that I'm doing take away my time for my kids?

Sometimes when I get up in the morning and I see the house all messed and everything, I just go like hell and work all day and see how spotless it looks, I feel good. Then when I wake up the next morning and I see it right back in the same way it was the day before, and I have to start all over, I hate it. Goddam, I hate it. I think that women should be paid for housework, definitely, because I think that housework is just as hard as any other goddam job that there is going, if not harder.

On a bad day, I'd say I go fifteen hours straight a day. I usually get about six or seven hours sleep a night. That's about it. Maybe once a month I'll catch up and I'll get eight or nine hours. Yeah, that's about all I get. I'm a woman, but I'm a human being too, and I feel that I should have

some time to myself to be able to do some things that I like to do. And I'm not. I'm doing all the things for my kids and my husband, and I'm not getting anything out of it, except seeing them look nice and seeing the house look nice. But what do I look like and what do I feel like?

I'd say making love really is a duty. A lot of times I don't feel like doing it. I can never relax long enough to enjoy it. I just want to get the hell to sleep, so that I get a few hours sleep before the next day comes. Sometimes I'll enjoy it. But very seldom. I'll do it just so I can hang on to my man. And I think that's what a lot of women do. Nothing I'd like better than to be looking like a doll and feeling like a sexy Marilyn Monroe and turning my husband on. Boy, how I really love it. I'd love to feel like that.

My brother and my husband figure that I sit on my ass all day long and watch TV. They figure the house should look like this all the time. It's natural, houses always look like that. If they ever came in this house ans saw it dirty . . . once I did that. He took off to work and I took off to my neighbours. There was dishes and the house was like it was every day before I clean it. And I left it all. When he came home he was waiting for me with eyes just raged. 'What the hell's this? Where have you been? What hit this place?' I said this is the way the house looks every day before I clean it. 'Don't you ever do that again, girl.' That's what I got. There's so much it took me two days to catch up. This is what stops a lot of women. Because they've got so much to catch up on if they let it go. They've got so much to do the next day.

from an interview with a Canadian housewife

wages for housework

Why should a housewife work a 24 hour day, 7 days a week? Why, after all that work, should she get no recognition, and no money she can call her own? Why should women nowadays be forced to go out to work, on top of all we have to do at home? Why should we go home from a job to work in our kitchens for free while men doing overtime are earning extra money?

Some people will say it's because we do this work for ourselves and for our families. We do. But a lot of other people are making money out of our labour. If we didn't do housework

and raise children, industry, government and everything else would grind to a halt. The money for wages for housework must come from the government and from all the employers who couldn't do without our work. If they say they can't afford it we'll have to get rid of them — they're holding on to the wealth that we create, and that we need now more than ever.

While we're gathering the strength and numbers to win this we will fight for the time and money we're entitled to wherever we can get them.

Women are always struggling for time and money. Women have been shoplifting, holding back rent, extending their dinner hours, sitting in with children at Social Security offices to back up their claims for money, defending Family Allowances, looking after their children collectively and demanding to be paid for this. Women are also demanding paid time off from outside jobs to do shopping and look after children, social security payments whether or not we live with a man, no taxes for women and our stamps to be paid for us in full by the employers and the state we work for. All sorts of workers are going on strike and winning. It's time we women put in a claim. No woman should be forced to depend on a man.

THIS IS HOUSEWORK

foot-sore spending

Ask yourselves one question, 'Is shopping work?' 'Work? I'll say it is! I've worked harder these past two hours than a factory labourer has all day.' is the rely of a woman shopping in Whitechapel. Yet instead of thanks for these labours women are always joked about as consumers. Shopping is pictured as our pastime when we fritter away the man's hard-earned wage.

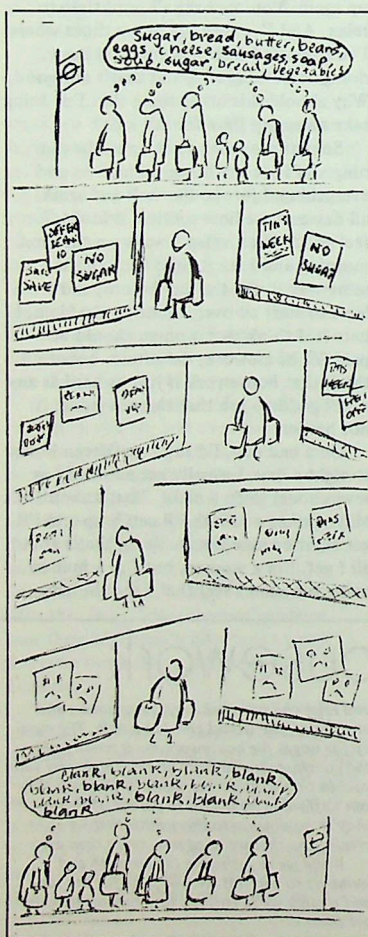
Women are the majority in any shop, supermarket, market place. Shopping is a part of our daily activity, essential to keep ourselves and our families alive and clothes. Regularly and monotonously we have to go out to equip ourselves for all our other work - food, pots and pans to cook, dusters, brooms, brillo pads, washing powder etc. to clean and wash, needles, cotton, wool to sew and mend, personal necessities and everything to do the 101 other tasks that keep the home going from day to day. Some job this! What other workers have to provide all their own work equipment?

Even when we have another job, outside, or are single, we do it. If we have children they have homework or we want them to play. If we have a husband, he wants to rest or has other 'more important' things to do. So we do it during our lunch hours, during rush hours. To all who don't do it but benefit from it, shopping is invisible, unrecognised non-work that is done as if by magic. It's done when the rest of the world is in offices, factories, schools or on the way home. It's heavy, tiring, time-consuming work. We always do it in a hurry as we have so many other things to do. We may have young kids with us to be looked after at the same time. We have to face poor crowded transport. It's always tied to the needs and demands of home and family. A single girl needs to cook and clean as soon as she gets home from work and shopping. She can rarely afford to eat out often.

Lack of money is a main reason that makes shopping such irritating and unrewarding work. We can't have what we need and want, only what our money and their prices will allow us to have. Watch women in the supermarket. We're all doing the same thing - turning over pieces of cheese etc. looking for the right price rather than the right size. We are constantly scrimping. Because the welfare and nourishment of men and children are in our hands we always put them first. Even when we scrimp and save. We have

no wages for the work we do at home and in the shops, and low wages when we go out to work, so we are always poor and have no personal freedom. We can occasionally get ourselves a packet of cigarettes or a bar of chocolate but we do it on the quiet. Even with a generous husband the wages have to be spread over 2, 3, 4 or more people.

At present rapidly rising prices and shortages are making our work more difficult. How can we afford to waste an hour in a bread queue and still come away empty-handed? A woman I work with took 2 days leave but spent it hunting for sugar and bread. Sometimes the whole family is put to work. A woman in Step-



ney had her 2 young sons stationed at two other bakeries while she waited at a third. We are being forced to buy cheaper cuts of meats, more unprepared vegetables which make more work. We are buying cheaper brands and poorer quality which are more expensive than they used to be. We go from shop to shop. We finish shopping feeling cheated and dissatisfied. The same things are in our basket every week. There are hundreds of foods, products and clothes that are barred from us. A false division is made between 'luxury' and 'essential' goods.

Some of us more desperate, anxious, very angry are saying, 'Sod you Mr. Capitalist, Mr. Sainsbury, Mr. Tesco. You expect us to accept everything. How come you made so much this year while we're getting less goods and poorer quality for our money? Superstaves, reductions, music. You want us to think you're our best friends. We pour our money into your tills - YOUR collection boxes That's all you care about. You care tuppence about us. Well some of us are rebelling. A woman buying a pair of socks in Marks and Spencers in Kilburn High Road went to the manager with a group of other shoppers demanding an explanation for an overnight price rise. He couldn't give one and had to put down the price. What good explanations have there been for lentil, rice, eggs, sugar, meat shortages and prices. They're hoarded then released at much higher prices. We're supposed to be grateful for the extra work it's given us hunting for food-stuffs and substitutes plus the complaints we get at home. Now we're taking the food off the shelves, and ignoring THEIR rules of buy and sell. Of course it makes shopping harder work, more nerve-racking especially with tougher security measures and fines. It makes it clearer what shops are all about - not a service but organised rip-off. We're *not* the ones to feel guilty even though psychologists and so on want us to feel we're mad or criminal. There are more than a few of us shoplifters. It's our way of getting what we need and what is ours.

I start to ask myself - How much longer can we put up with this? How much longer can we do this to ourselves? How much longer can we let this happen to us? THIS IS NO LIFE. We don't want to always be in a hurry. We want time for ourselves. We don't always want to be wishing for things. We want our own money or more of it. Solveig Francis

THIS IS HOUSEWORK

W on the job

Making love is different from sweeping floors. It's something very "special" done with someone special whom you love and who loves you, surrounded by a haze of romantic ideas, hopes and dreams, causing the earth to tremble and the sky to shake. All of which is very removed from sweeping floors, washing socks or cooking meals. But when you think about where, when and how this great event *actually* takes place, cracks appear in the veneer, and you start to wonder just how removed the reality of sexual relations is from the rest of housework that we all do — for other people and for ourselves.

Where, when and how differ a bit if you're married or single. But there are many similarities. Like, unless you have a lot of money and time, or you or your lover/husband works night-shifts, usually the only time you have to make love is at night (except maybe at weekends). At night you're TIRED, maybe exhausted. So you're immediately off to a bad start. It's hard to enjoy anything when you're really tired. If you're married and work at home you've spent all day looking after the children, shopping, cleaning up the house, cooking meals, etc., etc. If you work outside the home as well, you've had to do all that, plus an 8-hour (or more) job — probably very boring work that's badly paid.

Your husband's probably been relaxing after dinner in front of the T.V., or has been out since he got back from work. At home you're still at work; and then he wants you to make love. Maybe you want to, even though you're tired and tense. And afterwards how often do you feel really satisfied and content? Certainly not every time — and while it *can* be like that, it can also be the most awful experience too — when you do it, and you don't want to. You do it out of a feeling of duty or responsibility, because you don't want to start a row. You have to live with your husband after, and he might even get violent with you if you say no. Some men will be sensitive enough not to force you when you say you don't want to, but often, and particularly if a man's been drinking, he'll go ahead regardless. It becomes yet another personal demand made on you, that you're virtually (and often actually) forced to give in to what amounts to rape. To add insult to injury, you're supposed to enjoy it. (At least in Victorian times, women weren't supposed to enjoy making love — that only came in with the Sexual Revolution.) And how often do you pretend you *are* enjoying it, just to keep the peace and boost his ego? How often do you fake an orgasm and

tell him what a wonderful lover he is, in the hope that perhaps now he'll leave you alone? Sweeping floors becomes almost pleasant in comparison.

If you're living with somebody, it's not very different from being married. Probably you'll be the one doing most of the housework. How is it that washing socks, cooking and cleaning are part and parcel of having a sexual relationship with a man? If you're not living with a man, there's still a lot of work to do — like make-up to put on and the right clothes to wear so that you can "get" somebody and "keep" him; or there's the feeling of obligation to make love with him after he's taken you out — because he expects it, and because you feel you have to repay him somehow. Or you do as you please, and only go with men you *want* to go with — but how often is that really satisfactory in anything but a superficial way? If you don't like making love with a man unless you have some kind of relationship with him, you have to *find* a man (men) you can relate to emotionally as well as sexually, and that's quite a task. Then there's all the time it takes to build up a relationship, and time is very scarce in capitalist society; if you don't want to be pinned down to one it's even harder.

And you need a place — like if you live with your parents, in hostels, or in places with nosy or bossy landlords, *where* do you go to make love? In the back seat of a car, or where? That's not exactly the way to build a satisfactory relationship. Nor does it end there, because if you don't want a child, you have to worry about birth control. He's unlikely to take responsibility for it — so you do. Since there is no birth control that is both totally reliable and without harmful side-effects, you have to take the best of a bad bunch — and maybe put up with depression, swollen breasts, a lot of pain, vaginal infections and irritations, etc., etc. And you have to pay for it in money as well.

Some of these problems don't arise if you relate sexually to women — though gay relationships are just as subject to problems of time and place as are heterosexual ones. For many of us it takes a lot of work to overcome our conditioning which teaches us to despise all women, beginning with our own bodies and ourselves. This defines our sexuality solely in terms of men. Even then, it's harder to

break with conditioning in practice than in theory. Even so, there are *many* more lesbian women around than is generally known. Still, there's always masturbation — but there's no doubt that that's work — that can be very hard!

Whatever kind of sexual relationship you're in, or if you aren't in one at all, sexuality serves a function for capitalist society. It is a way in which people can release tensions acquired from the work they do in factories, offices, shops, hospitals, etc., *and* at home. Capitalism tries to ensure that these tensions and frustrations aren't directed against itself. They are taken back into the home, and into the community in general — in pubs, restaurants, dance halls, sports centres, to be released there. And women's sexuality generally plays an important part — from young girls walking down the street in short skirts, to sexy smiling acquiescent bar-maids and waitresses, to wives' and girlfriends' "putting out" in bed at home. Even so, the tensions can never be fully released or satisfied. For women, sexuality itself is often tense and frustrating; it's part of her job of being a woman in any case. It's a very important way of servicing men so that the workforce is maintained *and* reproduced. Yet while this society tries to ensure a minimal release for these tensions, it takes great pains to repress and confine our sexuality — it defines how often, in what way, at what age, and with whom making love is allowed. It thoroughly distorts human sexuality in the process and it is this distorted, limited form that is supposed to be "normal" or "natural", and that can be satisfied in a limited way.

Making love can sometimes break through the usual limitations of our lives, and can be joyful, freeing and creative. As they say in the backwoods, "If the lord made anything better, he kept it for himself." It has the potential to be something other than work for women and a service to capitalism. This is why it is dangerous to capitalism and the reason it has to be repressed. When sex has been good, the last thing in the world you want to do is work. The rest of our labour makes sure this doesn't happen too often.

Our work doesn't leave us the time, the energy or the place, and that's no accident. If it did, our sexuality might cease to be a part of our day's work, and become a source of strength and inspiration against it. When we struggle against housework, and sexuality reduced to housework, we are taking on a struggle against the way the whole society is organised.

P.O.W. rap group

THIS IS HOUSEWORK

a single housewife

Scrub, scrub; cook, cook; wash, wash; shop, shop; dust, dust that's some of housework. All women do it whether they're caring for others or for themselves. 'Enjoy yourselves while you're young and single' we're told. But all women are housewives, married or single.

When I was married, employed, and managed to think beyond the next shopping list I would have said, 'No! The single woman has everything that I haven't got. How can we be the same?' When I thought even further beyond the next shopping list I found myself unmarried and joining those lucky women, the single ones. Now life could really begin.

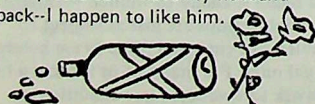
Hating housework because I'd been doing it for years, I started noticing that a lot of the work that I did at my job in a shop was housework. I dusted, swept and scrubbed the floors, cleaned the windows, made it all look nice, made the coffee, washed the tea-towels — and was pleasant to the customers. I remembered other jobs I'd done and looked at other women's jobs: we were cleaners, caterers, waitresses, nurses, secretaries, teachers, clothing and food manufacturing workers. Those jobs were the ones we'd been brought up to do in our own homes. But here we were doing them outside our homes and getting paid for it!

Somehow I hadn't stopped being a housewife. I got myself a new job in an office where most of the other people doing the same work were men. What happened? No matter what their 'rank' the women in the office were expected to be the human face of the organisation. They were to be kind, attractive, and cool if the men made sexual advances. If someone was leaving, it was the women who organised the party. Hours of each day were spent listening to the men's personal problems and encouraging them when the boss or the work got them down. This was exhausting and depressing. If they wanted a woman at one of their business lunches, I was dragged along. Forget about the shopping. If they felt like easing the day's problems with a drink after work, of course I should go. These were the sorts of things they could demand of their wives and which helped them go on working. Here I was the company's wife. Like their wives, I wasn't being paid for that.

Talk done, off the men went to more support and comforting, to a warm house, cooked food, clean clothes. I was left to catch the corner shop before it closed, spending more on food than a housewife cares to or a woman's wage can afford. Then home to a cold flat, meal to be cooked, clothes to wash, house to clean. And no comforting. That's what happens to the spare time that single women are said to have. You do the things that are going to make it possible for you to turn up at work the next day and the next

A few weeks ago my husband was sent by his company to work in the Midlands for a period of about a month. During this time he was to work a 12-hour shift—one week of days, the following nights. This meant that Saturday, the only day we could have to ourselves, became so important and full of expectations that it was generally a disappointment to us both. He was so shattered from working such long hours, living in a hotel, travelling back to the Southeast at weekends and readjusting his body from one shift to another, that when we did meet, he was only a shadow of his former self. I too realised more than ever how relationships are destroyed by work and how much my life was governed by my husband's work and company.

On the completion of this 'important' work my reward for being an 'understanding' wife was a large bouquet of flowers and two bottles of wine, with the compliments of the company. This bribe did not buy my support or my favour, only my anger. Maybe some women would welcome a short break from their men and would think that this was a nice gesture of the company to recognise their work. But my only comment was thanks for the flowers and the wine, now please can I have my husband back—I happen to like him.



Wendy Edmond

day. Washed, fed, looking good, ready. That's where most of the evenings and weekends go. Housework has its use to employers then, whether it's done as a job and paid for or whether it's done for yourself or someone else at home.

There's not much time left over for seeing your friends, spending time with their kids, or forming close relationships. The single woman isn't the free and easy bird with lots of lovers she's made out to be. There's only time for one close relationship — when you can get it. It's very hard to find a straightforward guy who isn't looking for extra-marital solace, a quick lay, or someone to care for him and iron his shirts. And if one does come along, then you find your relationship is affected by the fact of your job. Just so you can see each other you have to live together.

No wonder most men marry soon after they get a permanent job. They want caring companionship and someone on tap to make love to. They know they don't want to do the housework that keeps them able to go to work, on top of the job itself. That's too exhausting. They couldn't work the same hours in the job. Men earn more than women so an unmarried man can pay for those things a wife usually does and is; for service washes, meals out, a cleaner, and a supportive woman.

But single women, all working women, are working those hours and doing housework. The time that all women spend working in the home means that our employers or the husband's employer gets more out of us and out of the men. If we made our spare time our own time, then they'd get less work time. And what do they do with those extra hours we give them through our housework everyday? Time is money. We should be doing our shopping on the company's time. If we're not, then our unpaid housework is their profit. We should demand laundry and creche services at the workplace. If we don't, we're giving them time they're not paying for.

The single woman a housewife? A lot of her life is being that, most of her lifestyle is because of that. So much for ceasing to be a housewife. I'm still a housewife. That's where capital has got me. Married or single, our struggle's the same.

Two poached salmon ..and a smile

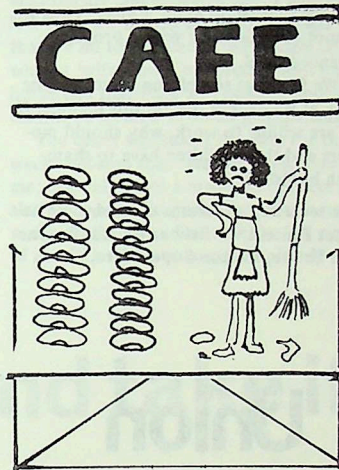
Waitressing is service work – it's seeing after people's needs – and not only their eating and drinking needs. To some extent these other needs depend on the kind of place you're waitressing in – like in a Wimpy bar or local cafe where people are eating quickly and not spending a lot of money, the demands on the waitress are fewer. But in the restaurant where I work, which caters for rich tourists and the local middle and ruling classes, a lot more is expected of us as part of the job – serving food and drink is only part of it.

People come in for a relaxing meal, which costs them a lot of money, so it's important that they be made to feel good. It helps if the food and drink are reasonable, but it's up to us to make them feel relaxed, so that they can enjoy themselves. For us this means several things: looking nice – if not sexy, at least clean and tidy, preferably with make-up; and being subservient and acquiescent, remember, 'the customer's always right.' It's a situation in which we're very much at people's beck and call – and they take full advantage of that. We have to be nice to everyone who comes in, regardless of how they treat us. And it's important to be pleasantly subservient – we have to look as if we *enjoy* being exploited – and SMILE.

Are you a waitress?
Do you get paid for smiling?

Smiling is a very necessary part of servicing people – it helps them feel relaxed, and helps them feel that "all's well with the world." We are *expected* to smile – and everyone notices if we don't. A customer once asked me if something was wrong because I wasn't smiling; and I've overheard another customer say: "She seems very nice, but she doesn't smile." So we have to be like "smiling machines" – however we're feeling – tired, worried, unhappy or whatever, we must repress it and "put on a happy face." People feel affronted to think that we're human beings with feelings, since we're supposed to be there just to serve them when and how they want. We're depersonalised servants. And if we do happen to be in a good mood and *feel* like smiling – they think we're doing it for them; either way we can't win.

Another aspect of our depersonalisation is that much of our job involves very



menial tasks – and this is reflected in the way people see us – or don't see us. Although we aren't invisible to them, as some service-workers (e.g. washers-up) are, they don't "see" us as people. The people at the table have some kind of personal relationship with each other from which we're completely excluded. We aren't real people, we're just there to serve them food, etc. Doing menial work and being regarded as a non-person in this way often makes me feel very degraded and awful.

In every way it's our job to service these people – and because servicing other people is very often not seen for what it is, i.e. *work*, much of it goes unpaid. (When it's done in the form of housework, it *all* goes unpaid.) But it is work, and it takes time and money. For example, because of the obligation to look nice, I have to wash my hair every other night, and get it wet *every* night (it's very greasy and rinsing it helps) which is a lot of time that I don't get paid for. I have to spend money on clothes to wear to work because the uniform's not provided, on tights, and on make-up. None of this is taken into account in my wages. And I certainly don't get paid for being subservient and smiling.

Housework is service work is women's work – and waitressing is an extension of the work women always do – providing

food and drink, clearing up after people, making them feel relaxed, etc. etc. Housework we do for "love", because it's our "nature" to do it, and it "fulfils" us – waitressing we do for a pittance, and with the blackmail that goes with tipping. Part of the reason the wages are so low (I get 47p an hour) is that it's the same kind of work that women do in the home, that they don't get paid for, so it's hardly even recognised as being work (except by those who have to do it). Outside the home it's work that's mostly done by English women and men and women who are immigrants.

Because the wages are so low we absolutely depend on the tips to make up our money. So it's essential that we fulfil our role to a certain extent, with at least a minimum of subservience and pleasantness, and the nicer you are and the more you do for people, the more you stand to make. Though this is far from guaranteed – many's the time we get nothing for it. One insidious effect of being so dependent on tips is that you start to think about people in terms of how much they're worth to you. When it's the ruling class you're dealing with it's alright, but it also applies to people who haven't got a lot of money. They might come in not realising how expensive it is, or come in as a special treat, and have whatever's cheapest – which means just as much work for us, but not as much money. So my interests (temporarily) clash with the interests of people I might, in other circumstances, be struggling with – and I resent that the job and my situation encourages this to happen.

Are you a secretary?
Do you get paid for putting on make up?

Not only are there the pressures on how we look and act, but we're also the mediation between the kitchen and the customer, and between the management and the customer. We have to serve the food – and if it's not hot, or it's bad, or there isn't enough, we're the ones who have to deal with the customer; the kitchen's always "outside", and away from it all. And we mediate for the management by making the customers feel good, so they don't notice (hopefully) how much they're being ripped off. If they do notice, they usually take it out on us, rather than on the management – so we get *all* the dirty work to do, and all the time we're in danger of losing our tips.

Mums on their own

Some women in Weston-Super-Mare, who are divorced or separated from their husbands, have formed a group, 'Mums on their own'. They are concerned to protest about certain aspects of the Department of Health and Social Security's and Education Department's provisions as they affect them. In a leaflet they state:

We all receive allowances from the Social Security, for ourselves and our growing children. We strongly feel these are inadequate. From our allowances we have to pay: rent, heating, lighting, gas, any decoration to our house. More important we have to feed and clothe our children properly.

These are some of the figures of how much we are allowed: for a dependent child - aged 13 to 15, £3.70; aged 2 to 12, £3.00; aged 5 to 10, £2.45; under 5, £2.05; and for a single house-holder, £7.15

(if you are classed as long-term rate you get £8.15). We also get the amount of our rent.

If our children were in residential care it would cost the State at least £15 a week per child.

If we take an outside job, we are only allowed to earn £2.05 per week. Anything over that is stopped from our allowance. This £2.05 has been the same for about the last 9-10 years. Both widows and pensioners can earn a lot more.

Another point is that when our children are at school they receive free school meals. But when they are on holiday (about 13 weeks a year) or suffer from illness we receive no extra money. Thus we cannot provide them with a properly balanced meal.

We feel that something must be done soon as we cannot live on this income. If we are willing to work, why should mothers and their children have to share such hardship?

The secretary of 'Mums on their own' is Janet Pantelli, 13 Selworthy Rd, Bourneville Estate, Weston-Super-Mare, Avon.

The 'Benefit' our wage?

Women with children, who are not supported by a man, are recognised by the State to be doing a job of work to the extent that they are paid a subsistence wage. To conceal its nature, the State calls this wage a 'benefit'. Women receive this wage because the State (Local Authority) realises that it would cost them more to take the children into care; for residential social workers, being in recognised waged work, demand a realistic wage scale.

As this subsistence wage, the 'benefit', is not recognised as such, it can be withdrawn at any time by the local Social Security office, e.g. under the Cohabitation Rule. Thus women are forced to find outside work or a man to support them and their children.

Workers outside the home can exert pressure on their employer by organising in their workplace, withdrawing their labour, picketing, changing their jobs. The woman on social security and the woman whose benefit has been withdrawn is alone. She seems to have no recognised employer. But she is a slave to the State. All unwaged houseworkers are slaves to the State.

Our wagelessness in our first place of work, our home, forces us into waged work, our second job; and makes possible our exploitation in low paid jobs. How many women on 'benefit' can afford *not* to sneak out to work in the early hours of the morning, hoping that the S.S. investigator doesn't get to hear of it from the neighbours? We need to supplement the 'supplementary' pittance, if only with another pittance.

Individually many of us have taken what is our due by shoplifting, fiddling mail order catalogues, squatting, taking our children to the Local Authority and demanding adequate housing. But we must act collectively to overcome our powerlessness. The Claimants' Union has increased the power of claimants. But we don't want to *claim* 'benefit' any more. We want our work recognised for what it is, the most essential work to society, the State, to capital. We want what is our right, a realistic wage - wages for housework.

Una Howe

Are you a mother?
Do you get paid for nursing?

Are you a housewife?
Do you get paid for painting walls?

Mother-Led Union

In Canada, unsupported mothers have organised to demand more money from the government. They have formed what they call the Mother-Led Union, a union of women who are heads of their families, called in Canada "mother-led families". They are demanding "parity" with foster mothers and reforms in the rules about keeping the cash they earn on outside jobs. To drive their demands home, they intend to take 3,000 children to government offices in Queens Park in Toronto and leave them in the legislators' laps.

Under the government's foster care programme a child is maintained at the cost of nearly \$100 per month. But a natural mother gets \$30 to \$35 per month. As the Women's Action Group of Toronto points out, natural mothers must deny themselves all necessities of life to sustain their children; their feelings for their children are being used to keep them in poverty. If a foster mother were asked to make such sacrifices, the child would be returned to the agency immediately.

Moreover, under the government rulings (the Family Benefit Allowance structure) the natural mother is not allowed to improve her financial situation by earning money outside her home. If she gets a job, she is allowed to keep \$24 (about £10) per month plus \$12 for each child. This means that if she has two children and she earns \$300 (£120) per

month for full-time work (and there is little part-time work available) she has to give the State 75% of all she earns above \$48. After being exploited all month by her employer, she has to pay the State \$189. This means she has worked all the month for \$63 (£25.20). And the cost of living in Canada means that £25 is worth less than it is in Britain in terms of what it will buy. The Mother-Led Union wants to change that situation too.

They are also demanding "daycare" - creches. And they will present a brief on that subject. They are discussing additional demands among themselves, but these three (parity with foster mothers, higher earnings and lower "recoupment" by the State, and daycare) are foremost right now.

There are 26,000 mother-led families in the metropolitan area of Toronto alone, according to Joan Clark who is an active organiser of the Mother-Led Union. In August there were three local branches already formed after the idea of a union was adopted at a women's conference in June. Help came to the union from a variety of sources, including social workers, children's aid societies and paralegal advice groups.

The organising leaflet which the union distributed asks: "Did you ever wish you could go on STRIKE??" And then says, "Everybody and his brother goes on strike. MOTHER you can too."

I went to Brighton to stay with a friend

for a few days. I left Bristol in a hurry on a Saturday without much money because I wanted to get away while my husband was in the country with the children. We have been having a bad scene for some time and usually before I go anywhere his trick is to be drunk for some days and get me into such a state that by the time I get away I am feeling so upset that I cannot relate to the person I am going to see. I got caught shop-lifting in Brighton; I had taken some food and two pairs of socks in Marks and Spencers, and a pair of plimsolls in Woolworths. The plimsolls were meant for my friend who is on social security and who had no shoes.

When I was taken to the magistrates court the next day I tried to explain (I had no lawyer) that I have a jealous alcoholic husband, that I was under strain and economically badly off. The only thing

they seemed concerned about was the fact that they thought I had run away from my 3 children. Two of them are 13 and 15 years old and quite capable of looking after themselves quite apart from the fact that all 3 were with 2 grown up men and not on their own. It was obvious that the court and police's opinion was that I as a 'Mother' should be where my children are and nowhere else. I almost had to pinch myself to remind myself that we no longer live in the Victorian era when a 'wife' could be forcibly sent back home and that I am 35 years old and cannot be treated as under guardianship.

The court adjourned the case for three weeks because they wanted reports on me; not only from a probation officer but also from a psychiatrist. They don't normally do this for a first offence (£5 worth of goods!). So I had to tell an elderly

male psychiatrist about myself and let him probe into my life and what should be personal to me. His questions were like: was I a sociable child, was there mental illness in my family? After 1½ hours he got onto questions like 'what do you think of right and wrong?' Finally he asked me did I believe in the 'sanctity of marriage' and was I a Christian?

So not only was I punished (£5 fine) for being badly off, having spent 15 years doing unpaid childcare, housework, and my painting, but also for not being properly a 'mother' as they define it. I was asked 4-5 times with great suspicion: 'What were you doing in Brighton?' As if I had no business, being a woman and a mother, to see friends anywhere else than where I happen to live!

Monica Sjøo

Lie back and take it

'I am not ashamed of what I have done. I was afraid and I had to defend myself.'

In March 1974, Inez Garcia shot and killed one of two men who had beaten and raped her. She is 30 years old, of Cuban and Puerto Rican descent. For the past three years she has been living and working in Soledad, California, to be near her husband who is in Soledad Prison. She has one child, an eleven year old son.

For defending herself against the mens' attack, Inez went on trial for first degree (premeditated) murder. There was no rape charge against the remaining man. In October she was convicted of second degree (unpremeditated) murder and sentenced to five years' imprisonment. She is appealing against the conviction and sentence.

On trial in late November is Joanne Little, a 20 year old black woman. She is accused of killing a white prison guard who tried to rape her.

Joanne was in Beaufort County Jail, Washington, North Carolina, pending an appeal on a conviction of breaking and entering. She was the only woman in a jail where all the guards are white males. She has stated that the guard's death was a matter of self-defence. He made sexual advances towards her once before and, on the night of 27 August, he tried to rape her.

The guard entered her cell at about 3 a.m., having taken his shoes off outside the door. He threatened Joanne with an ice pick. As he was undressing she got hold of the pick, struck him with it several times, and then fled the jail. The guard was found naked from the waist down except for his socks, and his shoes were lying outside the cell. Sperm was found on his clothes. Joanne turned herself in to the state authorities eight days later and told her story.

The verdict against Inez Garcia is a verdict against Joanne's chances of success in what might look a straightforward trial. That verdict denied women's right to defend themselves against men's attacks by whatever means necessary. But there are further reasons why the odds are stacked against Joanne. The racial attitudes in that part of North Carolina would make a fair trial impossible. Her lawyers have tried to have the trial transferred to another part of the state. Their first motion to have the case moved was turned down on technical grounds. But they are appealing and plan to test the constitutionality of the state law.

Her lawyers must also deal with Joanne's conviction on charges of breaking and entering. She lost her automatic right of appeal when her previous lawyer failed to file all the necessary papers before the

time allowed for appeals had expired. As a result, she must begin to serve a 7 to 10 year sentence. However, at the end of October her present lawyers did succeed in getting an evidentiary hearing into why her appeal was not filed.

Until recently Joanne was being held in the solitary confinement block of the Women's Prison, Raleigh, North Carolina. Her supporters demonstrated in front of the prison on November 16. They also protested against conditions inside the prison. All of the several hundred women prisoners there, mostly black, are forced to work in the prison laundry. They work in 120 degrees of heat and have to carry laundry bags weighing up to 175 pounds. Going to prison doesn't release women from slave labour.

The experiences of Inez and Joanne are further evidence of racism and sexism in the law and life of capitalist society. They are not just victims of rape. They are victims of women's powerlessness in that society. Like all women prisoners, they are political prisoners. Until women have won their power the rights of women will be an empty demand.

Source: *People's News Service*

Are you a wife?
Do you get paid for night work?



Photo: Oxford Mail and Times

Housewives to British Leyland

The 'Cowley wives' hit the headlines of the national press during an industrial dispute at British Leyland's car factory in Cowley (Oxford) last April. They organised at that time in protest at the fact that their husbands had been laid off. (There was a strike of 150 men, and 12,500 workers, women and men, were laid off — a familiar pattern.). They came together as wives of British Leyland men — housewives who had taken a pay cut because their men had been bringing home reduced pay packets since Christmas and were now bringing home nothing at all. They organised around their men's workplace as it affected them. They demonstrated three days running at the British Leyland factory, and then held two public meetings at Oxford town hall.

Since then, they have kept in touch and have regular meetings of their committee. They have formed a 'Wives Action Group', which has 50 paid up members. They had thought in terms of meeting together to keep an eye on what was happening at British Leylands, so that if anything happened they'd be ready to act, but since there have been no lay offs since April, they have been thinking about what else they might do. As well as the committee having informal discussions among themselves about their own lives as women, they are now organising more formal groups, with talks on particular subjects like economics because "we want to educate ourselves in all subjects". They see themselves as a women's action group which is no longer concerned only with what's going on at British Leylands. Other women who are not wives of British Leyland workers have asked if they can join, including single women, and have become associate members of the group. They will all be invited to the discussion meetings. But the women want to make sure that at least half of the committee are "British Leyland housewives" so that if they do want to take action in the future about something that happens at the car factory, they can't be accused by management or the unions of interfering in something that's got nothing to do with them.

We went to talk to Carol Miller, who was the spokeswoman in April, about what happened then, about what she and the other women felt at that time, and about what they have been doing since then. In April, they weren't against that particular strike, "it was the amount of strikes there had been, over the past two years . . . I wanted to make a point, that I was sick of my husband being out of work." Although the men are supposed to earn about £50 a week, they hardly ever got a full week's pay. There had been two years of constant layoffs, and then the three day week — the men hadn't had a full pay packet since Christmas. Many of the men themselves were fed up with the layoffs, and fed up with the union for pulling people out on strike the whole time. They felt that £50 a week

was no good to them if they could never earn it. (Many of the wives had taken on work outside the home because the men's wages were so irregular — Carol herself took on waged work when her husband went to work at British Leyland's because she couldn't rely on his wages.)

Carol was so fed up about the layoff in April, that when she saw an article in the Oxford Journal (a free advertising newspaper) reporting that the negotiations between union and management were deadlocked, she went to the Oxford Journal offices and said that she was fed up and wanted to do something, and could they help her. They put her in touch with the local radio, who interviewed her. She said in the interview that she wanted to have a march, and asked if other women would come along and demonstrate with her "so we could show our feelings, that we were sick to death of all the strikes and no money". The result was a flood of phone calls from women saying they agreed with her, and were ready to demonstrate. "I was just trying to make a point that I was sick to death of my husband coming home from work and no money". She suggested that all the women should meet at the factory to protest. She'd never been on any kind of demonstration before, but thought that they should all go to the factory — it seemed the obvious place because that's what it was all about.

When she got back from her cleaning job on Sunday morning, she found hordes of reporters at her house. From then on she was surrounded by them — which meant that although there were (to her astonishment) about 300 women at the factory to demonstrate on the Monday, she didn't really get a chance to talk to the other women. Most of them were women she'd never seen before, but "I think mainly the women who did turn up on that march were British Leyland housewives". A lot of these women were able to come because the men were home and looked after the kids. "Wednesday there wasn't a great deal [of women demonstrating at the factory] because a lot of the men went back — there were some who didn't bother to come because the gates had been opened but there was a lot who couldn't come because they had nobody to look after their kids."

This was particularly true of the evening meetings at the town hall — at the first one, about 40 or 50 women who'd been on the demonstrations came, and the meeting went well. They were relieved that there was no opposition, since they'd expected trouble. But at their next meeting, the following Wednesday evening, it was a different story. They'd called a meeting for wives only. However, some of the men from British Leylands, who'd come to the town hall earlier in the evening for a mass union meeting (which was called off last minute because so many people turned up that the hall was too small) stayed on and came to the wives' meeting to oppose

them. There were also a number of women who weren't connected at all with British Leylands. The idea of having a women only meeting was dropped because they were frightened of fights at the door if they didn't let the men in.

Some leaflets had been distributed attacking Carol and the other women who had demonstrated, but when she tried to deal with the charges made against them she wasn't allowed to finish. She was accused of being unambiguously pro-management and anti-union (because she'd been to talk to British Leyland management, and had spoken out against the strike) and the actions of the women were seen as anti-working class.

One action that the women have taken (that the union never seems to have bothered about) is to find out what money the men who are laid off should be getting from Social Security, and to prepare themselves to get that money in the future. Carol has discovered that her family are entitled to £27 – but they only ever get two payments of £7 a week, the first of which came three weeks after the layoff. Since April, she and some of the other women from their committee have had a meeting with the manager of the Social Security office, and are planning to go down as a group next time the money isn't paid.

POW If there were all those women ready to march on the factory, did you never think of going down to the Social Security?

Carol No, I didn't think of that.

POW Would you think of it another time?

Carol I don't know about *marching* down to Social Security. We'll definitely go down there in a small group of us. A lot of the wives – and I'm also not for it – they're not all for this forceful way, you know like the National Housewives women tried to, well they got involved with our demonstrations on declaring no sex and things like this. None of the women went a lot on it.

POW But if the women were ready to demonstrate at the factory, why wouldn't they be ready to demonstrate at the Social Security – what's the difference?

Carol I don't know. There is a difference because – I can't put it into words. But I myself, I don't think I'd like to go down there with about three hundred women and demonstrate down at the Social Security. I'd go down there with a small delegation. Even if you did get three hundred down there and you all started with your banners and that you couldn't get no money, they wouldn't turn round and give you any money, because they pay out by cheque . . .

POW Except that in some places the result of women going down there like that has made them get a shift on with the payments, it has made them hurry up.

Carol Yes but I did suggest to some of the wives about taking children, because we all put our kids in Transport House [the local Transport and General Workers Union offices] on the Wednesday. Poor things, they didn't know what hit them! . . . We went down to Transport House on the Wednesday afternoon and we took the children. But we didn't tell them what we was going to do with them. I mean we said that if there was any union men down there and they refused to see us then we'd give them the children, we'd say well you feed the kids. If you're not interested then – so we walked in there. Course, this man, we didn't know who he was then, and we asked him if there was any union official there and he said no. So we said right, you can have the kids. So we took all the kids in this little room, it was only a tiny room, and he straight-away he said, look, he said, take the children out he said, I'll see you. We said who are you? He said Mr. Thompson (one of the big knobs down there). That was the only way we got to see him. But my girl, well she's twelve, and she didn't even know what was going on. And she wouldn't do that again! She wouldn't let me do that again to her. But I did suggest that, you know to take some of the children down to Social Security and say well if you won't pay us then you support, you know, you feed the kids. But a lot of the wives don't want to

know anything about that.

POW Yet they were ready to take them to Transport House.
Carol Yes, mm, they did that.

POW Peculiar isn't it?

Carol Whether it's because, it's that fact that it's the money that's involved in it I don't know . . . but another thing we talked about doing as well, and that is taking our rates, and mortgage or rent books down to the union, Transport House and saying to them well look, you want my husband out, then you pay the rates and mortgages. And leave them down there.
POW And what about doing that to the Social Security? Because equally you could ask the Social Security to pay the rates and the mortgage couldn't you?

Carol Yes, but they're not asking the men to come out on strike. It is the union. The union's calling the men out on strike, and they're also the ones that are doing nothing about the men that are laid off also, so we feel that it is the union's responsibility.

POW Do you not feel that any of the strikes are justified?

Carol Some of them are, yes.

POW And how do you distinguish between the ones that are and the ones that aren't?

Carol This is what we've got to find out. This is what we've got to find out.

Suzie Fleming and Wendy Edmond

Halsbury Report

crumbs for the 'birds'

The Halsbury Inquiry Report, on salaries and conditions in nursing, was delivered to nurses with a predictable reprimand: "As an independent body we considered whether we should suspend our enquiry, in the light of this [industrial] action . . . but we came to the conclusion that, since the action was not supported by a majority of nurses, we would not interrupt our investigations." He compared nurses taking action to "birds in the Spring, ruffling their feathers."

Presumably, such comments are meant to convince nurses that pay reviews, pay rises, and improvements of working conditions come as a matter of course and, in fact, are threatened when we take action in our own interests! This appears especially absurd since Lord Halsbury would never have been summoned from his holiday to head the inquiry had it not been for nurses indicating that they were tired of waiting in silence like good little ladies.

The Halsbury Inquiry was a result of nurses' intense agitation around their grievances, which began when student nurses pressed the Royal College of Nursing to confront Barbara Castle and "demand that the gross injustices to which we have been subjected are rightfully realised and rectified immediately." Then, when the nurses' negotiating body met with Barbara Castle, a demonstration of 1500 nurses waving banners and chanting "strike, strike", marched outside. The Minister, less anxious for a confrontation, slipped out of the building to avoid meeting the marchers' delegation. The pressure was on.

Strike action was being considered by nurses, stoppages with emergency cover were arranged while nurses attended protest meetings, and the RCN threatened the Minister with mass resignations from the NHS and the setting up of agencies unless an inquiry was set up by 4 June. Action committees were formed in hospitals, representing nurses of all grades and overriding differences of union and professional organisation in them. Nurses began themselves to work out demands, grievances, and a strategy for struggle. A mass national demonstration was held on 6 June (see last issue); by this time, having been promised an inquiry, the RCN was able to retreat from its militant pose, and it declared a moratorium on action. This

about turn discredited the RCN. The March went ahead.

Suspicious of the promise of a report "by the end of the summer", and unwilling to be held back by the doctrine of 'professionalism' which in effect said that to demand what you rightfully deserve is 'unprofessional', many groups of nurses decided to continue their action. Walkouts and disruptions were carried out in many hospitals. A National Coordinating Committee, set up by nurses during the struggle, planned a national day of action for 8 July. Less than a week before this, the leadership of CoSHE, the most militant union, came to terms with Barbara Castle, and accepted her promise for an interim award if Halsbury did not report by 16 September. Many local groups of nurses who had begun to mobilise support from factory workers, miners, government employees and other hospital workers for joint action on July 8, were left in the lurch. The initiative which had been enthusiastically seized by the nurses at the bottom when they began agitation in April, was unceremoniously taken back by the men at the top. Still, 300 staff, members of NUPE and CoHSE, at Highcroft Mental Hospital in Birmingham, staged the first ever 24-hour strike of nurses after the compromise was reached.

Against this background Halsbury's proposals are anti-climatic. The wages of nurses was so low that rises of any sort are bound to look good. But, the enormous gap between the 29.0-30.8% increase for a Nursing Officer, a management position, which amounts to £600-700, and only 14.0-17.9% (£147-231) for a Nursing Auxilliary, not surprisingly, has been played down. An 'improvement' of pay differentials has clearly been accomplished - and as usual those at the bottom, doing

the hardest physical work and having the least control over their situation, get the least money.

Students who, like nursing auxiliaries and aids, are used to providing what is politely referred to as "the pair of hands" - end up with an actual salary of between £93.75-110.25 monthly; that this represents a 41.3% increase for some is merely a reflection of how bad the old rates were and not how generous are the new. Student nurses over 21 receive as little as a £5 monthly increase. None of the lower paid nurses got more than £8.50 a week (and most got much less), compared to £20 a week for higher management personnel.

There is a promise to negotiate "more realistic" (higher) lodging charges at the next review. What the Lord giveth, the Lord can take away! Canteen prices have already begun to rise again, let alone prices outside. A letter in a student nurses' newspaper points out that with proposed rent and canteen price rises some will end up with a smaller take-home pay than before the report.

More important than the Halsbury Report itself, was the message which widespread action of nurses during their struggle announced: that nurses had found their voice; that they would no longer be kept in their place by the illusion of professionalism, which constrains people to act like "lady-like professionals", and prevents them challenging their low pay and the lousy conditions under which they work; that they would no longer submit to the blackmail, always used against service workers and especially women, which says that to fight in your own interest is to endanger someone else's. Lord Halsbury assures those who might be dissatisfied: "This is not the last word on the subject." On that at least we must agree.

L.S.

One paid day per month for housework

In June 1973 there was a spontaneous strike of 400 immigrant women-workers in one section of the Pierburg factory which produces carburettors and monopolizes 75% of this market. The 400 strikers out of about 1,500 almost all women workers, had the following demands:

- abolition of the lowest wage-group in which there were exclusively immigrant women-workers. (Three years before there had been a successful strike for the abolition of the former lowest wage-group.)
- 1 Mark rise for all, men and women;
- one paid day per month for housework;
- the subsidy for travelling fares to be continually increased according to the general rise in prices;
- just distribution of over-time;
- equal pay for men and women with hard physical work;
- women on special machines to be put into one of the higher wage-groups;
- workers working for the company for several years shall have higher wages than newcomers
- frequent illness is no reason for dismissal;
- half a day off for each visit to the doctor;
- payment for the day of strikes and reengagement of those who have been suspended.

The strike was broken off two days later without any results because of the long weekend of Whitsuntide. But two months later in August 1973 there was a one week strike in which nearly all of the 2,000 workers participated. After a few days even the German male skilled workers came out. The abolition of the lowest wage-groups and an increase in pay was won.

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POWER of WOMEN

MAGAZINE OF THE INTERNATIONAL WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK CAMPAIGN

No. 5

15p/50c



ICELAND, OCT 24, 1975—GENERAL STRIKE OF WOMEN. Full-time housewives, factory workers, teachers, typists, actresses, childminders, telephonists, prostitutes, bank clerks, school girls, mothers, grandmothers. Some businessmen took their children to work. 90% of industry ground to a halt. Meals not cooked. Shopping not done. Floors not swept. Of 60,000 women in all Iceland, 25,000 at mass meeting in the capital, Reykjavik. Women struck to show their power—and did! (More news and pictures inside.)

Wages Due

For governments, it seems, it's not enough that we women give our working time at home for free. Everywhere they are proposing to cut the money that already comes to us and to increase our work.

The money that comes to us isn't much. Whether it's housekeeping money or wages on a paid job, Family Allowance or welfare/Social Security, pensions or student grants, it's never enough. And it's nothing compared to our burden of work.

But wherever we have won money, we are not only defending it but using it to get more.

On page 11, the women in a watch factory in Italy make clear that taking care of their own health, which is destroyed by their two jobs, is unpaid work. They are demanding that the employers who pay their wages on the paid job begin to pay for the housework of health care.

The women in Canada, Britain and Northern Ireland who get Family Allowance are fighting to increase this money.

Women on welfare/SS are resisting cuts and daily confronting the State for more. And that some women get welfare/SS is an opening for all women to get a proper wage. That is why government and industry are so anxious to tell women who go out to work that welfare/SS mothers live off their wages. They know the opposite is true—that women's wages go up when fewer of us are competing for the same jobs.

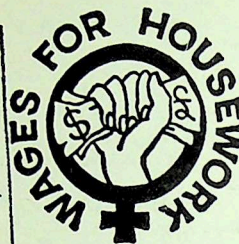
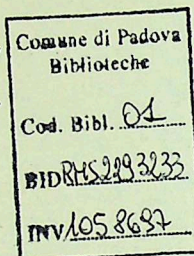
And governments and industry are counting the cost of the power that even a little money has won us. We less and less accept what passes for "health care" as we value our time and our bodies more. We less and less accept the extra housework that poor housing imposes on us. Less and less do we submit to financial dependence on men and a sex life based on that dependence. More and more will the State have to pay our children because we are setting them an example: don't work for nothing and don't work for peanuts.

Of course the hardest hit by the crisis are those of us in countries where even few men have wages—in the Third World. Many of us have left those countries and travelled thousands of miles to get that wage or to follow a man who could get one. The wage was inviting; the climate and the work are not. What we have won can be counted not only by what the older ones have, but by what the younger ones are demanding.

In spite of the crisis that we women are supposed to solve by working harder for less, we are demanding our wages, whatever our situation. Every morning that we wake to another day of work and worry is a defeat. But defeat is not new. What is new is how many channels we have built to resist work and poverty, crisis or no crisis. And when we see, as on the cover of this magazine, thousands of women from Iceland taking "A Day Off" and bringing everything to a halt, we know it is possible for us all to get our wages due.

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FAMILY ALLOWANCE

At the end of 1975, the Canadian government froze the Family Allowance increase they'd promised to women. As usual women were to expect less and live on less—to set the example for the rest of the working population. Had Canadian women accepted that without protest, other cuts, in social services and unemployment pay, would have been easier to impose. Of course social service cuts also hit women hardest. More and more we are the service workers—outside the home as well as in it: we are the canteen workers, nurses, teachers, social workers.

In January '76 the Toronto Wages for Housework Committee launched a petition protesting against the cut in the "baby bonus" and demanding wages for housework. The petition spearheaded a protest against all the cuts.

The response all over Canada has been tremendous, and has rallied not only women with children who are directly affected by the Family Allowance freeze, but all women who are under attack by the government's plans.

Each copy of the petition goes out with an endorsement by Wages Due Lesbians. Ellen Agger of that organisation addressed an audience of 500 at a Coalition Against Cutbacks rally on March 22nd on behalf of the WFH Campaign. "All the independence from men that we have fought for as lesbian women is under attack. The only solution to this situation is economic independence for all women." For the first time a lesbian woman spoke publicly in Canada about the effects of the government cuts on lesbians.

The petition has been endorsed by many organisations. A group of men calling themselves Men Against the Family Allowance Cutbacks have been petitioning among men with their own endorsement. They say that the loss of money and social services to women "have the effect of chaining us even more tightly to our jobs."

In Britain there has been a similar attempt to take back a promised rise in Family Allowance. The government had proposed a new "Child Benefit" scheme to replace Family Allowance, and promised women an increase of about £1.50 (\$2.50) per week per child. But the rise was going to cost the government virtually nothing besides a new building and staff to administer it. The money for the rise was to come straight from men's pay packets, by abolishing men's tax allowances for children. But after imposing a wage freeze, the government and unions decided they didn't dare cut men's pay further—and scrapped the whole scheme. Women were furious not to get the promised rise, and furious too that the government said there wasn't the money if they didn't get it off the men. If men's pay is cut, women know we'll lose on housekeeping, which is one reason why we want that money from the government.

The London WFH Committee had already launched a petition on May 1st demanding a rise in Family Allowance, that Family Allowance be paid for the first child, be tax free and paid on top of Social Security and wages for housework for all women from the government. The petition is being signed and circulated by women all over Britain and N. Ireland.



May 1st—the Family Allowance petition is launched in Bristol, England.

Single parents—and most of these are women—have been particularly eager to join the campaign because Family Allowance is deducted from Social Security, so these parents never see it.

As in Canada, an endorsement by Wages Due Lesbians is circulated with each petition. Women who have had to keep their relationships with other women a secret have spoken about them at petition tables at fairs and markets. There are others who say nothing, but look surprised and pleased.

The Canadian government still hasn't decided whether women are to get the money they put on ice.

The British government says that starting from April next year it will reduce men's child tax allowance and give £1 (\$1.70) a week to mothers for the first child. (Most mothers get nothing for the first child now.) By next April inflation will have eaten much of that £1. But having won the right to money for the first child, we'll be in a better position to demand more.

For the last few years men have been taxed on Family Allowance. The "new" scheme is to make the money "tax free", but in fact the tax will be

collected by reducing men's child tax allowances. In practice this means that married mothers have won something, but that men and not the government will foot the bill. That's what's happened every time we got a Family Allowance increase and men were taxed on it: men and not the government paid for most of it.

Those who lose out by the new scheme are immigrants with children abroad. Women and men who work for wages in Britain and who now get a tax allowance for children in their home country will lose it. The mothers or grandmothers caring for these children back home won't be entitled to the new Child Benefit. Immigrant families will take a wage cut.

The Women's Liberation Campaign for Legal and

Financial Independence is backing the government scheme for Child Benefits, and the proposal that the money come from the men rather than from the government. Where we are demanding money from the government, they want to protect the government from having to pay out to women. Whose side are they on?

This is the second time in recent years that women in Britain have fought to keep and increase the woman's Family Allowance. We kept it in 1973 when it was to be abolished. The government knows that women are angry and that they'll have to increase our money. The only questions are when, by how much, and who's going to pay?

The US: ORGANISING FOR WELFARE

WELFARE IS THE FIRST MONEY WE WOMEN HAVE WON DIRECTLY FROM THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE WORK WE DO IN OUR HOMES.

IT IS NOT MUCH AND IT HARDLY PAYS FOR ALL OUR WORK. BUT IT IS A START AND IT IS OUR MONEY.

MONEY WE DON'T HAVE TO ASK ANY MAN FOR.

These are the first lines of the 20,000 fold-outs, in English and Spanish, that were distributed by the New York Wages for Housework Committee and some Black women who support wages for housework. They were distributed in welfare offices, on the streets, and from hand to hand among friends, family and neighbours. The fold-out advertised a conference on Wages for Housework and Welfare called to strengthen the new confrontation between women and the US government which threatens to cut the money they survive on, money won by years of struggle.

In preparing for these cuts, the government as usual pleads poverty, for themselves and for industry. From their air-conditioned carpeted private offices, they tell us there's no money. That is what the government means by the "welfare mess". What women mean is that

AS LONG AS HOUSEWORK IS NOT CONSIDERED WORK:

We pay a heavy price for the little we get from welfare.

Our lives are investigated as if we had committed a crime.

They call us "bums" and "parasites" to divide us from other women.

We women are pitted against one another as if our problems and our work were not the same.

A hundred and fifty women attended the conference, women from all over New York as well as from cities through the US. During the morning there was a panel of women in many different

situations: a formerly "wealthy" suburban housewife who had to go on welfare to support herself and her children when she divorced her husband; a university student who went on welfare when she became disabled; a social worker; a Black woman who is an unemployed university lecturer; and a woman from the NY WFH Committee who talked about the international campaign.

The social worker spoke of how the State attempts to use her against other women, while the suburban housewife talked of how her "middle class" status ended overnight when she left her husband. The Black woman talked about how wages for housework relates particularly to Black women, whose presence in America began with unwaged work—with slavery—and who, in demanding welfare for themselves and their children, now face the State's counterattack of forced sterilisation.

In the speak-out which followed, women expressed themselves freely at the "open mike". Lesbian mothers spoke of their greater vulnerability as mothers because of their lesbianism, of how they are fired from second jobs more quickly and of how the courts declare them "unfit" mothers and take their children away because of their refusal of the work of being with men. Many older women spoke of the entire cycle of unpaid work throughout their lives, of how their housework as "grandmothers" continues up to the grave, and of their particular isolation as "old" women whose age is itself considered a "disability". Many Black women spoke of the power relation between Black and white women in which white women are defined as "ladies" and Black women as "whores". They spoke of the vast number of Black women whose only possible waged work outside the home is as maids for white women, and of how Black women are the lowest paid wage earners in the US. They spoke also of their struggles against the welfare bureaucracy and against the welfare cuts.

Continued on the next page

Birth Announcement

We are pleased to announce our presence as an autonomous group of Black Women for Wages for Housework within the International Wages for Housework Campaign. We came together for the first time at a conference sponsored by the New York WFH Committee on Wages for Housework and Welfare, which was held in Brooklyn on April 24, 1976. We've been meeting every week since then.

Our activities have included study of WFH literature and the struggles of Black women in the community and on the second job against housework and for the wage. We've rapped to women in our neighbourhoods and distributed our own leaflets at welfare offices, daycare centers, shopping areas, and wherever women meet, including a Black women's conference held at Hunter College, City Univ. of NY. We participated with the NY WFH Committee in planning a day of action against welfare cuts and for Wages for Housework, and held our own public meeting: 1) to establish further contact with other Black women and 2) to mobilize for the day of action and demonstration.

Our public meeting at the end of June was a tremendous success in bringing together Black women to share our experiences of struggle in the community against all the ways in which the

The two most significant workshops in the afternoon were one of Black women and one of social workers, each of which discussed how best to resist the cuts and how to struggle for the wage in their own particular situations. While the conference attacked the divisions among women, it didn't seek to deny them. And by the time the conference re-assembled, everyone had a better idea of how her own struggle from her own situation brings strength to our common struggle for the wage. The Black women announced that they would continue to meet as a group around wages for housework (see Birth Announcement on this page).

Plans were laid for further moves and the Day of Action on June 29th was one result. Another was that women who attended the conference have since organized meetings on Wages for Housework and Welfare in a number of US cities. While the city, state and federal governments plan their offensive, women all over the US are busy with their own plans. What we have won we intend to keep and extend.

We have been divided in the past, welfare women versus women "supported" by a man versus "working" women. But we know we can't afford these divisions because it means scabbing on ourselves. The struggle of welfare mothers has given power to all women because it has opened the way for all of us to demand that housework be paid. And this time, **WITH THE POWER OF OUR NUMBERS, WE WILL WIN A WAGE** and not a pittance that can always be taken away from us as if it were a charity!



New York: Day of Action against welfare cuts. WFH Committee and Black Women for WFH.

budget crisis affects women's lives. The meeting lasted a full day with a panel beginning with a presentation about our work in the home (our first job) and how much all of the jobs we do as housewives would be worth if we were paid: for example, doctor, bookkeeper, teacher, etc. Other women spoke on cutbacks in welfare, daycare, the City Univ., and overall crisis in NY. There was also a presentation on the struggles of Black welfare mothers against sterilization. The panel ended with a report on the struggles and victories of women in the International Wages for Housework Campaign. There was also a speakout in which Black women spoke about our need for WFH and how we can plan our struggle to get it. In addition to the panel and speakout, we had songs, dancing, a dramatic skit, disco and food.

The public meeting was followed by a day of action where women from Black Women for WFH participated with the NY WFH Comm. at a rally across from the Dept. of Health, Educ. & Welfare in downtown Manhattan, and then picketed using posters, songs, mops, brooms, pots, spoons, and a speakout with bullhorns.

July was also a busy and exciting month highlighted by our participation in a conference for all women called Toward a Strategy for the Lesbian Movement which was sponsored by Wages Due Lesbians of the Toronto WFH Comm. While in Toronto we had our first newspaper and videotaped interviews for a Black newspaper and a cable TV station.

In August we had a chance to rap with Selma James of the London WFH Comm., an international mover in the WFH Campaign.

We are presently getting ready for our first fundraiser in early Sept. and also preparing our own documents for publication so that we can increase our contact with as many Black women as possible. We are looking forward to hearing from Black women everywhere who are moving to organize for WFH. (See page 2 for address.)

The Right to Have Children

I am going to be 30 and I know now more than ever before that I have but one life and no better days ahead except in joining forces with all women to change the conditions of our lives.

One of the reasons why being thirty is a turning point for me and for millions of women has very much to do with having or not having a child. I want a child—"later," I always said. There were millions of things I wanted to do and a lot I wanted out of life. But I wanted children too. In fact I wanted everything, but every bit of life I had was stolen from the regimentation and the discipline of work.

And now, as a married woman under 35, I am one digit in the government statistics of the millions of women in that age bracket who are not producing babies. It isn't the child that I have been refusing. It is a job, an additional all-encompassing job which means to be on call 24 hours a day—the drastic undermining of my mobility and the increased isolation in my home—and above all a total dependency on a man for several years. What I have been refusing is to sacrifice that much more of my life, that much more of my possibility to struggle with other women.

And so have millions of women. The birth rate is falling and this has been a major struggle we have all been waging because every child and every additional one in the family is an increase in our powerlessness.

And so we have won a battle to have legal abortion although it has never been free as we demanded it. And for a while the women's movement told us that we had won control over our bodies. What kind of control is that when millions of us cannot even afford to consider keeping the child? It is the minimal possibility to say NO. I'm so tired of saying NO. NO, I cannot afford it, NO, I cannot pay such a price. Because it only means that I'll pay another price—the price of growing old without young people around, the price of not playing with a child.

That is why I want wages for housework. That is the control over my body and my life I want. I want to be able to have a child without destroying my life. And when I have a wage for the work I do I'll also have the power to demand and win the

working conditions that I want: days off, paid vacation, government-financed day care centres which we control and which don't destroy our children, available to all women regardless of whether we have a job outside the home or not. Day care centres which are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week because we and our children need time away from each other. Because as women we know what it means to be prisoners of a love relationship—love as our blackmail—love as our reward instead of a pay check. We don't want it for us and we don't want to imprison our children in it any longer.

Wages for housework will give me the control I want with my sisters who are now being sterilised. I want wages for housework for all women in this country, the country I come from [Switzerland] and everywhere else. Our wombs will not belong any longer to the governments of the world and the international business they serve. The governments which refuse us legal abortion in many countries of Europe leaving us to the backstreet butchers—and which sterilise some of us here, in Puerto Rico and so many other places. The governments that decide which of us will produce babies, the future labour force, depending on our national origin, the colour of our skin and the struggles we have made against their plans. I want wages for housework so that all women can decide if we will have children, how many and under what conditions.

The only thing we can offer our children and our future children is our struggle to change our lives and theirs.

We refuse to have our children drugged up to keep the classroom quiet. We refuse to have our children beaten up and killed by the police. And we refuse to send our children off to be killed in wars or daily destroyed in factories, offices and in front of new kitchen sinks. *We are not going to pass on our suffering to our children—and we are not going to put up with it any longer ourselves. We want wages for housework.*

Speech delivered at the opening of the Wages for Housework Committee's Campaign office in Brooklyn, New York. November 1975.

Italy: the Right to Abortion

There have been marches of up to 100,000 women in Italy for abortion, many with the slogan "We want the right to abortion, but we don't want only to have abortions."

In January 1976, women in Milan and Genoa occupied churches where prayer vigils against abortion were being held and publicly denounced the clergy. Police brutally attacked the women and dragged them from the church. In the same month women in Padua organised a protest outside a church. Before they could even distribute their leaflets, the police charged, beating both demonstrators and

passersby.

Italian women, in this explosive confrontation with the combined forces of Church and State, have also had to fight the political parties. While the fascists attack directly, the Communist Party, which has always opposed free abortion on demand, calls the police to defend themselves against women. Italian women have refused to hand their struggle over to parliamentary or extra-parliamentary political organisations. The issue of the right to have or not to have children if, when and how we want, remains in women's hands.

THE MASTER'S PLAN

The comments and table below are printed with permission of the Feminist Women's Health Center, Los Angeles. Although they come from the United States, we know that *all* governments plan how many children they want us to have, or if they want us to have any. In Eastern Europe, women are being paid to have children, and denied housing unless they have at least two. In India until recently women were paid with transistor radios to be sterilised. Now laws in India will *force women to be sterilised*.

But forced sterilisation, denying women the right to have children in other ways, and forcing women to have children, goes on all over the world. Everywhere we women are making a fight to have the children we want and not to have the children we don't want. *We want money in our pockets so we, and not governments, will decide if, when, under what conditions, and how many children we will have.*

* * * * *

The following table was taken from the October 1970 issue of *Family Planning Perspectives* magazine, a publication of the Planned Parenthood World Population organisation. It is a frightening but perfect example of the strategy that was planned and is now being implemented by the government for the purpose of population control.

When the Supreme Court made the decision to reform abortion legislation, there were cries of thanks from many women in the women's movement. It was as though our work had finally paid off. I think that is a very dangerous way of looking at it. I don't believe that women's work in abortion movements was in vain or that the

results of the change in laws won't have good ends. Abortion will be accessible to a lot more women now. But we must be aware that the laws have not been changed for our benefit, but so that the government can have control over the population. Seeing these "proposed measures" together will give us a better picture of the strategy. It is going to be very important to remember that changes such as the abortion law reform and liberalisation of attitudes toward homosexuals does not mean that the people who are in control in this world have any less contempt for us. It's just all a part of their master plan.

Table 1. Examples of Proposed Measures to Reduce U.S. Fertility, by Universality or Selectivity of Impact

Universal Impact	Selective Impact Depending on Socio-Economic Status		Measures Predicated on Existing Motivation to Prevent Unwanted Pregnancy
	Economic Deterrents/Incentives	Social Controls	
Social Constraints			
Restructure family: a) Postpone or avoid marriage b) Alter image of ideal family size	Modify tax policies: a) Substantial marriage tax b) Child tax c) Tax married more than single d) Remove parents' tax exemption e) Additional taxes on parents with more than 1 or 2 children in school	Compulsory abortion of out-of-wedlock pregnancies Compulsory sterilization of all who have two children except for a few who would be allowed three	Payments to encourage sterilization Payments to encourage contraception Payments to encourage abortion Abortion and sterilization on demand
Compulsory education of children		Confine childbearing to only a limited number of adults	Allow certain contraceptives to be distributed non-medically
Encourage increased homosexuality	Reduce/eliminate paid maternity leave or benefits	Stock certificate-type permits for children	Improve contraceptive technology
Educate for family limitation	Reduce/eliminate children's or family allowances	<i>Housing Policies:</i> a) Discouragement of private home ownership b) Stop awarding public housing based on family size	Make contraception truly available and accessible to all
Fertility control agents in water supply	Bonuses for delayed marriage and greater child-spacing		Improve maternal health care, with family planning as a core element
Encourage women to work	Pensions for women of 45 with less than N children Eliminate Welfare payments after first 2 children Chronic Depression Require women to work and provide few child care facilities Limit/eliminate public-financed medical care, scholarships, housing, loans and subsidies to families with more than N children		

Source: Frederick S. Jaffe, "Activities Relevant to the Study of Population Policy for the U.S.," Memorandum to Bernard Berelson, March 11, 1969.

WHEN WOMEN STOP

On 24 October 1975 the women of Iceland stood together and proved a point to the whole world. For 24 hours they withdrew their labour, took a "day off"—to show everyone how important, how fundamental their work was in the home, on the farm, in factories and offices and schools. They showed how nothing could work unless they worked. They proved that when women stop, everything stops.

The choice of the date (UN Day of International Women's Year) was not so important as the fact that a date was chosen. Once it was set, the work of the strike committee, formed at the Women's Congress in June, was to make sure that every woman knew about the date. This they did through a circular letter entitled "Why a Day Off for Women?"—see opposite (they sent out 47,000 copies to an adult female population of 60,000); through the sale of 25,000 stick-on labels and 5,000 posters; through announcements in newspapers, on the radio and on television.

Once the word was spread, the response of women was almost unanimous—90% took the day off in Reykjavik, the capital, and 99% in towns and villages. Schools and shops were closed because the majority of workers in these places are women. Operator-assisted telephone calls were impossible. Airline schedules were disrupted. Newspapers were not printed because most typesetters are women. (One report says that some typesetters did work early in the morning to set the news of the strike—and then they left to join it.) Theatres closed—among others, actresses joined the strike. Banks and businesses were crippled because not only were the women absent, but men had to mind little children either at home or in the office. Most farm and factory work had to stop.



The women of Iceland disproved something that all the "experts" on labour struggles are fond of saying: that housewives cannot strike or that if they did they wouldn't hurt anyone but themselves and their "loved ones". For Iceland—and elsewhere—that notion was destroyed. Industry and business were hurt. Women and children were not, and men didn't suffer by not going to work!

October is a cold month in that northern country, but on the 24th 25,000 women gathered in a central square in Reykjavik. It was the biggest meeting Iceland had ever seen. In Akureyri, the largest town in the north, 1,000 women met in a hall for a day of songs, speeches, stories and talk. Other towns and villages had similar events.

In Reykjavik they marched into the square behind an all-women band playing an old suffragette song. Women who have been in smaller demonstrations can imagine how thrilling this one must have been. Not only was it large—it was unanimous. It was not a matter of some women demonstrating and others watching alongside men, but of nearly the whole female population on the move.

After the two-hour programme in the square, the women could not just go home. They stayed out, some with babies at breast and many with their elder daughters (what daughter could forgive her mother's leaving her out of such an experience?). They went to Open Houses and ate together, sang and talked for the rest of the day.

Feminist materials from other countries were on display. A network of stewardesses and other female staff who work for Icelandic Airlines had brought them for the Day Off.



EVERYTHING STOPS

A general strike is the crest of a strike wave. This general strike didn't come from nowhere. The strike call was loud, but it was only taken up because it was heard by women who'd been fighting every day. Fighting for better pay and for nurseries, fighting to get men to help in the house, fighting for money, for more power over their lives.

Some of these struggles involved actions that are known publicly as strikes. Other struggles by individual women withdrawing their labour in individual homes are like local strikes, though they may not be "recognised" as such. These strikes, we all know, go on everywhere—in every country. It is precisely because of these constant struggles that a general strike is possible.

Iceland was the first time we know of when women refused all aspects of their job, childminding, cooking, cleaning, shopping, and the outside job, all at once. In other countries some women who heard about the strike said, "It couldn't happen here." But they were saying the same thing in Iceland before it did happen.

Never before had there been so general a general strike. It included the woman from the fish canneries and the full-time housewife whose husband was in business; the farmer's wife and the telephone operator. So-called general strikes of the past have ignored the woman who goes on working in the kitchen. Not only have they not seen her work, but the success of the strike has depended on her working even harder. But in Iceland women left their kitchens and this action showed what a general strike really is.

Only when women stop does everything stop.



WOMEN'S DAY OFF
OCTOBER 24th 1975

WHY A DAY OFF FOR WOMEN?

The Women's Congress, held in Reykjavik, June 20 and 21 1975, urges women to take a day off on October 24, the United Nations Day, in order to demonstrate the importance of their work.

Why was a motion like that put forward and carried at a congress where women of all ages and political parties were assembled?

The reasons are many and here are but a few:

- Because when someone is needed for a badly paid low-status job the advertisement specifies a woman.
- Because average wages of women in trade and commerce are only 75% of the average wages of men doing the same jobs.
- Because the principal negotiating body of the Icelandic Trades Union Congress has no woman representative.
- Because the difference between the average monthly earnings of women and men labourers is Iceland kr.30,000 (approx. £100 or \$200).
- Because farmers' wives are not accepted as full members of the Farmers Union.
- Because it is commonly said about a housewife "she isn't working—just keeping house".
- Because there are men in authority unable or unwilling to understand that day nurseries are a necessary part of modern society.
- Because the work contribution of farmers' wives on the farms is not valued at more than Iceland kr.175,000 (approx. £500 or \$1,100) a year.
- Because whether an applicant for a job is male or female is often considered more important than education and competence.
- Because the work experience of a housewife is not considered of any value on the labour market.

The general conclusion is that women's contribution to the community is underestimated.

Let us demonstrate to ourselves and to others the importance of our role in society by stopping work on October 24th.

Let us unite in making the day a memorable one under the theme of the International Women's Year:

EQUALITY—DEVELOPMENT—PEACE

Executive Committee for Women's Day Off.

International Lesbian Conference

On July 24-25 nearly 100 women gathered from all over North America and Britain for a conference "Toward a Strategy for the Lesbian Movement" called by Wages Due Lesbians, Toronto. The conference was open to all women, and quite a number of the women who came were not lesbian. Some women came from complete isolation—one lesbian mother from a small town told of a three year search to find other lesbians. Others came from lesbian organisations, and from gay organisations of women and men.

The conference opened with an international panel on lesbian autonomy. The first speaker, Ruth Hall from Wages Due Lesbians in England, defined autonomy as "when we decide what we want, what we need, and how we're going to get it". She spoke about the divisions between lesbians and other women, including her own experience of being sent to Coventry by the women she worked with—women who, like her, were involved in a daily battle against their factory work and housework, and against men's power over them. When we organise as lesbians and in connection with other women, she said, we have to get together as lesbian

Lesbians Toronto, laid out in more detail how wages for housework is a strategy for lesbian women. She outlined how Wages Due Lesbians, within the Wages for Housework Campaign, had been able to contact women, lesbian and straight, on an unprecedented scale, always on the basis of our own needs and our own organised power as lesbians.

There was lively discussion after the speeches, with women from mixed gay organisations describing their battle to establish some power for themselves—and sometimes to break away from gay men altogether—and Black women presenting their fight for autonomy from Black men.

Things got even hotter in the next session, on "sexuality". One of the speakers, after laying out some of the gains we make by being lesbian, looked at the pressures on our lives. "I'm so busy, between my job and my housework, that the only time I can manage much in bed is Sunday morning. And God help me, the pressure to make it on Sunday morning . . ." The discussion explored how sexuality is pushed into a separate, underprivileged corner of our lives—only in certain times and certain places, and after all the exhaustion and strains of the day or



women to make sure that those women's fire is directed outwards against the ones who are making us all work.

Wilmette Brown followed, a member of Black Women for WFH. A number of women, lesbian and straight, had come from that New York organisation. She spoke of the need for Black lesbian women to organise autonomously and visibly: "Invisible as we are, there are many, many of us." That autonomy can be achieved, she said, in fighting for Wages for Housework. "It has not been possible until Wages for Housework for Black lesbian women to organise autonomously with anything . . . with the possibility of getting something by organising." This campaign offered the possibility of getting money "which is the power to struggle to be lesbian" and for many Black women, trapped in marriages by dependence on a male wage, the power to come out.

The last speaker, Francie Wyland of Wages Due

week. It made clear that freeing our sexuality means attacking all our work and all the discipline that binds us. With very little of that discipline, the conference explored the various joys and trials of masturbation, celibacy, "market place" clubs, and couple relationships.

Sunday suffered from an all-too-successful dance on Saturday night, but participants gradually emerged from their beds in local women's houses, and discussed their relationships with their mothers, and how our mothers' own rebellion against subordination in the family nourished the development of many lesbian women. A talk on custody of lesbians' own children followed, and a resolution was passed:

"No lesbian or any other woman should face the blackmail of losing custody of her children, in court, through social pressure or through poverty. We demand from the government the money we need to keep our children without being forced to depend on a man."

ALL OUR TIME IS WORKING TIME

The following is an account by women factory workers in Italy of their struggle to win the time and facilities they needed to look after their own health. Their fight is part of a battle being waged by women everywhere against the work at home and in outside jobs that ruins our health, and against the medical industry which assumes that we have no power and therefore can suffer in silence.

While some attention is given to the risks involved in waged work, the dangers to health from housework at home are rarely recognised or treated. But more accidents happen at home than anywhere else. The monotony drives us crazy. And for those of us with children, or difficult housing conditions, the work and surroundings themselves make a mess of our health. The workload is unending and the hours are long. We get up every night with the baby. We work all through the night if our children are sick. And we nurse everyone in the worst conditions. The places we live in are often cramped and dark. We worry about the damp and the children catching colds. We worry about the next day, the roof that needs fixing, the endless pile of washing, the gas leak, what we are going to cook. We have little time to relax. The air we breathe and the food we eat make us ill. At the end of the day our bodies ache with fatigue. This overwork is the greatest health hazard. We don't have time to think about our health. Therefore our neglect of our health is part of our housework.

And now with the crisis and cuts in the health service the government is counting on us more than ever to maintain the workforce physically and emotionally, to pull us all through the crisis. They are expecting women to grit our teeth as we spend more and more time in doctors' waiting rooms, put up with our aches and pains in silence and place our health last once again. We are expected to look after people at home more and more as hospital wards close and waiting lists grow longer. We are expected to undergo agonising and dangerous induced births, be forced to have coils fitted by untrained doctors, and be sterilized when they decide they need us to have less children, especially if we are black or Indian women. When we set up our own health centres and groups, the State hopes to use us once again as free, voluntary labour.

But in rebelling everywhere against our burden of work, we women are making the first step to health. The struggle of women against the State's control over our lives and bodies and against the medical industry, begins with our refusal to do the work which makes us ill.

We have massively rejected the role and work of the housewife in the home. We have used sickness and madness to escape that work. We have fought for social security to avoid taking on a second job outside our homes.

As hospital workers we have confronted the State and refused to be blackmailed into doing extra work for free. We have refused to be used against patients—to cut pubic hair, to administer shock treatments.

As lesbian women we have fought the medical profession's definition of us as unnatural and sick, of heterosexuality as women's biological destiny,

and thus we have refused what is considered to be women's nature. Many lesbian women, who go into the health service wanting to work with women and learn to take care of our own medical needs, have had to fight to make lesbianism accepted on the job.

In the self-help movement women have formed groups and centres to find out about illnesses common to women that the medical profession knew nothing about. Doctors' "cures" were sometimes worse than the disease. We have challenged the medical profession's authority over our bodies. We have taken back knowledge about our bodies and armed ourselves with technology to confront the State's control of our bodies and to set the terms of the care we receive. We have forced the State to provide essential services for us. And we have won grants for women's clinics where we can begin to discover the kind of care we need. By getting together in groups we have broken the isolation and imprisonment in the home which the State has tried to impose on us.

The scope of the self-help movement has been limited by the fact that most women have little time to spend on our health. The story of the Italian factory gives an indication of how women are fighting for that time, and the facilities we need, so that what we have gained and learned already can be massively expanded, and so every woman will be in a position to make these facilities and this information her own.

Ruth Chimowitz

"Trichomonas is very common, especially because of excessive frequency of intercourse and lack of personal cleanliness." Women of the Solari watch factory "learned" this from one of the heads of the Udine health service. He was speaking at a meeting which the women had promoted in order to hold the health service to their responsibilities regarding women's health.

The women's struggle for medical examinations, in decent conditions and on company time, had begun in the spring of '74, when they faced the problem of how to have themselves examined for cancer of the breast or uterus without losing two half-days of work (obviously not paid).

When the demand was raised the factory management granted a half-hour meeting at the end of the working day so that the women could get information about this examination and a paid hour to have it done. It was during this half-hour meeting that some of us got a chance to speak directly with all the women workers, and to establish a link which has been growing stronger ever since.

"It was a meeting we are very glad to look back on," write the workers in the document they wrote and distributed everywhere, "because we had a chance to talk, ask questions and discuss." Together, in fact, we discussed everything.

From the problem of cancer to the more general problem of health, and the problem of work which is the cause of all our troubles, was an extraordinarily short step. And it was quick too, because we women

had a chance to speak directly amongst ourselves without trade unionists or doctors as go-betweens.

All the women, as soon as they saw the chance to speak directly of their troubles and illnesses, brought up not only the problem of cancer, but also those of vaginitis, cystitis, etc., that had never been treated. In short, they all had many ailments, but none had ever had the chance to get them treated. The housework which awaited them as soon as they came out of the factory gates included the care of other members of the family, but never of themselves.

After this meeting, the women intensified their mobilisation. When the Tumor Centre sent them the results of their cancer test, 25% of the women were asked to have a gynaecological examination because the vaginal smear had revealed cervical infections, erosion of the cervix, parasites, inflammations, etc.

That was when the Solari women decided the time had come to begin demanding the right to take care of themselves. But there was no way: the time for this care had to be found outside their hours of work in the factory.

The women write: "Not that we formerly thought we were 'well', in perfect health—but (since housework begins as soon as factory work ends) for sheer lack of time, each of us had resigned ourselves to ignoring backache and various disorders, exhaustion, vaginal discharges and bleeding, itching, severe period pains, even fever. We had resigned ourselves to not having time even to take care of ourselves; compared with our everlasting physical and mental tiredness due to the fact that all our life is always working time, one little pain more or less had no importance. What can it mean for a woman to be ill? When can we allow ourselves to be ill? Never; unless we have cancer or T.B. or have to be operated on. Only then 'can' we be cared for—but in that case our illness must be really serious. However we decided to accept these 'invitations' to have gynaecological examinations. We decided to begin caring for even our minor ailments, even those considered chronic which everyone takes for granted that women have to put up with. We discovered quite soon that perhaps we were asking for too much!"

"Waiting for hours," they write, "in a doctor's waiting room until our turn comes, or going to the clinic and standing in queues, always hoping the doctor will be on time—then being examined and treating ourselves—is no pleasure, it's work; it's housework, since these are hours we spend trying to put our bodies in order, bodies which are exploited

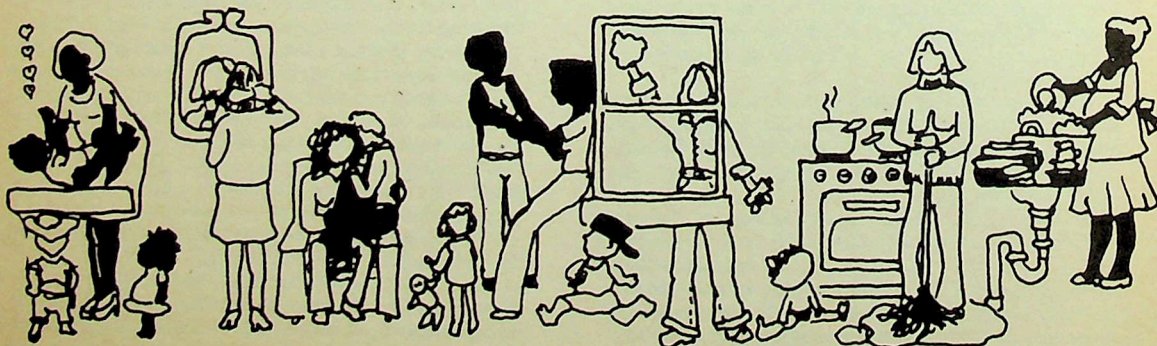
every day in the factory and at home. Nobody doubts that the doctors are working when they care for the sick. Some people also manage to see that when we care for our loved ones at home, before they go into the hospital or when they come out, we are working, and this is part of our housework! But when we care for ourselves we are also working, even if nobody is willing to see it, still less pay for it."

The Solari workers therefore decided not only to take the time for treatment from their factory working hours (because two jobs—factory work and housework—are too much and we have to start reducing them!) but also to start getting paid for housework, beginning with the demand that the hours we take off for medical care should be paid.

"That was when the Women's Health Committee was organised inside the factory. Its aim was not only to solve this concrete problem—that is, to be examined properly with paid time off work—but also to get together and speak out about all the things we have always thought but never said publicly. And there are many such things."

The mobilisation and the discussion on health took on a new impetus as soon as the Women's Health Committee started functioning. Our independence from the union made it possible to define our perspective of struggle. The women immediately pointed out that their ill-health was due directly to the work they did, and was made worse because their work load was a double load. The more they worked the more their bodies were punished and the less they could care for themselves. The conclusion was glaringly obvious: to struggle for health means to struggle against the organisation of work (that is, against the speed, rhythms, quality and quantity of work) in and out of the home. Moreover their independence from the union gave the women a chance to develop a really remarkable organisational imagination and creativity in struggle. In fact, they brought under attack not only the management but also the directors of the "mutua" [a medical insurance scheme] and the city and provincial health services. They knocked on all doors. They left no stone unturned. They were soon joined by other women in nearby factories and other women in the city, little by little refusing those partial gains they were winning through their

Continued on the next page



struggle if those gains divided them from other women.

First of all, for a thorough knowledge of their situation as women, a few women produced and circulated a questionnaire, and "for safety" they photocopied the diagnoses given by doctors to their workmates.

"With regard to the examinations done at Inam, we found the following facts: the pill was prescribed for two patients without the tolerance test which by now everyone knows is necessary; medicines were prescribed that have not been sold for years (and we'd like to know why); one woman with an ovarian cyst was given a 20-day course of vaginal pessaries when what she needed was immediate hospitalisation (as in fact occurred as a result of the doctor's treatment)."

Other facts emerged: "A situation has come to light which we want to publicise: none of the women seen in private by specialists (often the same Inam doctors) ever get a receipt for bills paid (more than 20 women paid from 20,000 to 25,000 lire)—which allows the doctors to avoid reporting their real income. The Inam often denies us the right to have the analyses requested by our own doctor. And Inam is one of the many public bodies whose money comes out of our pockets." They found "Doctors who prescribed outdated and ineffective contraceptives, which shows their vast ignorance. Hasty and inadequate examinations; a patient who is complaining and wants to go into hospital cannot get what she needs unless she has her husband with her."

The organisational level reached by the Solari women workers had broadened the mobilisation within the factory of the men workers as well. In fact the men began to wonder why they were not paid when they went to have X-rays for ulcers. "This time," the women write, "our struggle has managed to give some political pointers even to them."

The struggle goes on . . . meanwhile the bosses, not only in Italy but also outside Italy, having extorted so much free time from us, have finally started to pay us for the hours we spend taking care of ourselves!

We conclude by quoting the end of the document written by the Solari women: "We have written this document so that as many women as possible may come to know of our struggle. We have written it for women workers like ourselves, of whom more and more are struggling to get their own factory assemblies to discuss their problems as women, to get paid time off for medical treatment, to get one paid day a month for housework, etc.

"We have written it for all the women who up to now, during their examinations and analyses, in waiting-rooms and hospitals have not been able to openly express their rebellion against this health system which exploits us, offends us, and oppresses us—especially us as women, even more heavily than it oppresses men.

"Our struggle begins here, but it will not end here. Whether they want to or not, the bosses, insurance companies, hospitals, doctors, provincial and local governments, and the State, from today on must reckon with us and with our struggles."

This article is translated from the first issue (May 1st, 1975) of Le Operaie della Casa—The Houseworkers—published by the Padua Wages for Housework Committee.

Baby's Due

I've spent all morning scrubbing floors and choking on the dust
Trying hard to clean my kitchen sink, the drain-pipe's full
of rust

The midwife comes tomorrow, and if this squat don't look fine
Then it's off to London Hospital, they'll induce me when
it's time.

Chorus The Queen sailed off to Canada
On her private yacht
While the council calls me a parasite
For living in a squat.

Giving birth at home is hard when there's no hot water
But if I go to maternity, it hurts when they break my water
They'll pump me full of hormones, they'll decide when it's time
They'll force that baby out of me, just like an assembly line.

Chorus

I left my job in nursing, they ran me off my feet
They expect me to have my baby on £9.70 a week
The gas leaks, they won't fix it, because this is a squat
They say they're too poor to give me more, but I know that
they're not.

Chorus

But the paint is falling off the walls, and scrubbing won't keep
it clean
And a rat lives under the kitchen floor, and it makes me want
to scream.

So they said "Don't have that baby," and I just said "Why
not?"

I've worked all my life for pennies, and the State must pay
the cost.

They never paid my mother, for giving birth to me
And wearing herself out training me to work in their factories.

They never paid me a farthing, for going off to school
So that my mother could be free to work in a typing pool
They never paid for all the care I gave out as a nurse
They said it's just a woman's job, to think of others first.

Chorus

But the paint is falling off the walls, and scrubbing won't keep
it clean
And a rat lives under the kitchen floor, and it makes me want
to scream

I'm living on S.S., and in winter there's no heat
And Mr. Callaghan just said we live beyond our means!

Chorus

I don't want to go out and get another job
My baby stuck in daycare, and me working like a dog
I don't want to go out to work just to pay the fares
I know that if work made women rich we'd all be millionaires.

Chorus

So the government better sit tight, and start calculating
Because we women want our wages . . . and we're sick of waiting.

Song by **Bonita Lawrence**
London Wages for Housework Committee

'The State Is the Biggest Pimp'

In June of 1975 prostitutes in France went on strike. Two hundred prostitutes occupied the church of St Nizier in Lyons. And all over France prostitutes struck and occupied churches, holding meetings in the churches to which all women were invited.

During the strike the women said plainly that the government was the biggest pimp. The State extorts at least 50 billion francs a year in fines alone from prostitutes.

Women are fined up to four times a day—often while doing their shopping; or the police walk into their homes and fine them at any time of day. The police make lists of all women charged and send these lists to accommodation agencies so prostitutes have a hard time finding a place to live. Hotels in some red-light areas have been shut down to drive women to work in the streets so the police can get at them more easily.

On top of fines, there are taxes. Taxes for prostitutes are high because they are taxed like a company. Only, unlike a company, paying the taxes is enforced with brutality. If a prostitute can't pay the fines or taxes, she is immediately sent to prison.

The resistance to this persecution by the police has been growing for some time and finally was organised by the prostitutes themselves in their massive action all over France, against the fines, against the exorbitant taxes, against the prison sentences and against their children being taken from them.

"Going to church"

The churches were the best place prostitute women could have chosen as their rallying point. First, everyone is supposed to be safe from the police in church. Second, the church is supposed to be the centre for "morality". By occupying the churches, the women were demanding that all those who chatter about morality take a position against the government's robbery with violence of prostitute women.

All over the world there are penalties for women who demand money for sex. But we can see how much demand there is for sexual work outside of marriage by the reports that rape in France had increased where prostitutes went on strike.

In France prostitute women not only spoke out, but took mass action. They invited all women to open meetings they held. Some married women who came said, "I didn't consider myself a prostitute when I came here tonight. But now that I think about it, I always have to be more available for sex around my husband's pay day. I suppose I'm a prostitute too."

Independence from pimps

Government pimping through high fines and taxation was hardest on prostitute women who refused to give part of their earnings to individual pimps in return for protection. The response of some pimps to the struggle of women to be independent of them and of the government was to call counter meetings and to organise men to beat

the women up.

In Lyons the government answered the prostitutes' action by sending police into the occupied church to club the women and drive them out. The women of course fought back: there were two police to every woman.

The strike by prostitutes all over France had many responses. One was from leftwing political parties who told them to go into factories and offices, to get "respectable" jobs. The women had to shout at them that these were the jobs they were trying to escape. Other women saw from the strike that all women have a right to money, whether we are hookers or not.

In Lyons

... It is out of the question, and on this I'm positive and I talk still in the name of all the women, that we should be locked up in any brothels of any kind, as everybody seems to wish. This must be perfectly clear: we will not be put in prison, we will not be forced to lose our children, we will not be put in brothels. . .

We will not leave this place, now less than ever. We hold our heads high, we are showing that we are not cattle. We are women like all women. . . We informed the Ministries of Health, Justice and the Interior. They do not want to hear our demands. . . we are 3,000 women on the verge of revolt, not only in churches but on the streets, not only in Lyons but in Marseilles, in Montpellier, in Grenoble, in Paris. . . It's not only a question of prostitution, it's a question of women, contrary to what Francoise Giroud [Minister of Women's Affairs] said. . .

We are asking all women to come and join us, because in the last analysis the government is repressing all women and it's all women who are receiving clubs on their heads.

We are waiting for all of them, all, all, as long as it is necessary to hold on. All women drop what they are doing and come to help other women.

WHAT WE DEMAND

- 1 — Abolition of article "34": incitement to debauchery. No more fines, no more summonses. We propose: non-punitive taxes giving us the right to social security and pensions, like every French woman who is a mother.
- 2 — We state that prostitution is a job due to the sexual needs of one part of society.
- 3 — We want to be full citizens.

WE REFUSE FIRMLY

- 1 — The reopening of brothels, even in their modern and luxurious form of Eros Centres.
- 2 — To be civil servants of sex completely without freedom.
- 3 — To be nationalised.

4 — To be municipalised.

OUR IMMEDIATE DEMANDS

- 1 — The dropping of all jail sentences facing the persons in Lyons.
- 2 — Abolition of the law concerning jail sentence for repeated offenders.
- 3 — To meet a government representative capable of understanding the problems of the prostitutes and finding ground for agreement.
- 4 — Reopening of the hotels only in the neighbourhoods for prostitution.
- 5 — Enforcement of the laws allowing the reintegration of prostitute women into society.

Committee of Prostitute Women from Paris
9 June 1975

THE PROSTITUTE WOMEN OF LYONS TALK TO THE POPULATION

We have asked the State to hear us AS WOMEN. Poniatowski [Minister of Interior] answers us with clubs, takes our money, throws us in jail, insults us, hits us, throws us out of churches by force, puts us in brothels by force, and takes OUR CHILDREN AWAY.

He refuses to see us as women.

He accepts us only as a sex factory.

He talks about pimping, but he takes our money and stays free.

Therefore we are saying:

No to pimping

No to brothels

No to police repression

No to jail terms

Yes to justice

Yes to being full women

More united than ever, in dignity, for the creation of the General Assembly of Prostitute Women, we are organising in the struggle.

Action Committee of Prostitute Women

* * * * *

Statement of MB, invited to address the mass meeting sponsored by the Collective of Prostitute Women at the Salle de la Mutualité, June 16 1976, Paris.

My name is MB; I live in New York and I work with a group of Black women who are struggling for wages for housework. We are part of an international network of organisations in the UK, Germany, USA, Canada, Mexico, Italy, New Zealand and Australia, which is waging the international campaign for wages for housework. I am here this evening to support you in the struggle of prostitute women in France, because this struggle is also the struggle of Black women in the USA.

Racism has determined that all Black women are considered prostitutes because we don't have money and because we have always struggled against the misery which the state imposes on us. During our slavery in America we were denied marriage and forced to produce children for the

work of the plantations and to prostitute ourselves with the masters of these plantations. But at the same time we have always turned this work of prostitution into a power for ourselves to struggle against the system which exploits us, to win the means to live in spite of the system which attempts to destroy us. Perhaps you are familiar with the song "Lady Marmalade" by a group of Black women called Labelle, which celebrates the struggles of prostitute women.

Right now in the USA the repression against prostitute women is being intensified. Even if a Black woman is not a prostitute, when she walks the streets the police often arrest her for prostitution. A week ago the New York state legislature passed an anti-loitering law which seeks to prevent women from walking freely on the streets. The police have raided and closed many massage parlours where prostitute women work, and last Friday they arrested 60 prostitute women in Times Square, New York. In the newspapers and on the radio there is a big propaganda campaign attacking prostitute women. And now the police are using women police officers to arrest prostitute women more easily. Thus the state attempts to divide one group of women against another.

But the struggle of prostitute women in France has been a great power for all prostitute women in the USA and for all Black women, because the struggle to be paid for the work that we do is the struggle not only of prostitute women but of all women to reappropriate, to take back, our own lives. The struggle of Black women for wages for housework is precisely the struggle to be paid for all the work of women, including sexual work; it is thus the struggle which recognises that all women are prostitute women.

I greet you and I am sure that in our international struggle we will win.

ALL WORK AND NO PAY

WOMEN, HOUSEWORK AND THE WAGES DUE

edited by Wendy Edmond and Suzie Fleming

published by Power of Women Collective and Falling Wall Press

1st edition, September 1975 128 pages

Single woman or wife, working in a British typewriter factory or in a Mexican village, on strike as a nurse or under fire in Northern Ireland, lesbian or 'straight'—what we have in common as women are the burden of housework, the identity of dependant, and the struggle against both.

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Los Angeles, May Day 1975. The new WFH group joins the march against the deportation of immigrant workers. Since then the group has held a conference for the Southwest, and published their own newsletter, in English and Spanish. Their radio and TV appearances are regular and well known.

The Witches Are Returning

On May Day 1976, the Italian Wages for Housework Campaign went south for the first time—to Naples, which has always been part of the Third World of Europe.

First marching as a women's contingent of the traditional May Day demonstration, the women then went their own way. By this time, many Naples women had joined in. There were 3,000 women marching through the streets for wages for housework. After theatre and music in the park, the women rested and ate. They finished the day with a torchlight procession, chanting "Tremble, tremble, The witches are returning, Not to be burnt but to be paid!"

'All Work and No Pay'~ VIEWERS RESPOND

On February 7th and 14th, 1976, a programme made by the Wages for Housework Campaign was shown on BBC TV. We called our half hour "All Work and No Pay", like the title of our book. Women of all ages, immigrant women and women from all over Britain and Northern Ireland talked about their lives. There were glimpses of the campaign in the streets here and abroad, with some of the songs and theatre we have created. Most exciting were the shots of the Women's General Strike in Iceland—the first time that great event was shown on British television. (For information about showing the film in your area, contact any of the campaign addresses on page 2.) For weeks after the viewings, women wrote to us telling us about themselves and wanting to join the campaign. We print below parts of just four of those letters.

I was not only delighted to hear your "Open Door" programme but also amazed. I have felt a freak for years now because I wanted exactly what your organisation wants. I simply did not realise other women felt the same.

My husband is an electronics tech. on oil rigs. Which means he earns very good money. I am a housewife with two young children and, at one time, a part-time job. Which means I earn little or nothing. On one occasion "he" had nothing to do but wait for transport for a week. That week I was working in the factory from nine to five; looking after the children from 7 to 8.30 and from 5.30 to 8p.m. and at weekends I was decorating our bedroom. My husband took home over £200. I took home less than £20.

Aberdeen

I listened to your TV programme on Friday night and after complimenting your centre upon its excellence, would like to ask if there is a branch anywhere near my home, or alternatively whether it would be possible to start a "crusade" here. I noticed that most of your associates were young or youngish, as would be expected, but though I am now a senior citizen I have lost none of my interest in a subject which has been close to my heart for many, many years and which I should very much like to help succeed.

Middleton Cheney, Northants.

I watched your TV programme on "Open Door" and was very interested to hear views and proposals voiced that I have held for many years.

I had begun to think I was the only person who believed that if women called a united general strike, we would not only bring industry to a halt, but also the government to its knees . . .

I've always thought that the majority of men consider their wives as unpaid servants and that doling out money to their wives every week makes men think that they are superior. And most women that I know who do voice their views hate this feeling of dependence.

I would very much like to receive some literature about "Wages for Housework" and a petition that I could get women to sign and also any men with enough foresight and sympathy to sign.

Please excuse the paper and pen as my house-keeping some weeks doesn't even run to that!

Poole, Dorset

I think a major effect that wages for housework will achieve is a general raising of women's wages outside the home. They will really need to tempt us out if they want us!

Dalry, Ayrshire