

Wages^{for} Housework NEWSLETTER

No. 4

May-June 1977

(216) 651-8987

P.O. Box 5482, Cleveland, Ohio 44101

WFH Campaign Conference in Chicago

On the weekend of April 8, five of us from Ohio attended the North American Wages for Housework conference in Chicago. About 80 women from three countries and all over North America (including San Francisco, Philadelphia, Boston, New York, Toronto, Los Angeles, and, of course, Cleveland) gathered to discuss the organization of the International WFH Campaign.

The conference opened with Judy Ramirez of the Toronto WFH Committee speaking on how far we have come "Winning Our Wages." We talked about how the main Campaign event of the year was the New York Wages for Housework and Welfare Conference last April, and the resulting formation of Black Women for Wages for Housework. Welfare, little as it is, is the first money won from the government for housework, and therefore, has to be the focus of the Campaign. We must defend strongly the money we have already won (welfare, the Family Allowance/baby bonus in Canada, social services), before we can win even more.

On Saturday the topic of discussion was autonomy. Francie Wyland and Ellen Agger of Wages Due Lesbians, Toronto, spoke on how the autonomy of lesbian women within the Toronto Committee has meant the emergence of the lesbian viewpoint and lesbian struggles in every aspect of the Campaign — a strength for all women, lesbian and straight. Later, Wilmette Brown, of Black Women for Wages for Housework, New York, spoke on the leadership of Black women in the welfare movement and to the WFH Campaign, and how Black women moving in their own interests (organized independently) give power to all of us.

On Sunday we discussed "What is the State Up To?" — plans of the government to defeat our fight for money of our own. Women spoke on the ERA, busing, welfare and the harassment and struggles of prostitute women.

We also managed to squeeze in a little time for visiting, and for a concert by Boo Watson and the comedy routines of Lorna Boschman.

To Our Readers . . .

These past two months have kept us busy — with the North American WFH conference in Chicago, Wilmette Brown's two visits to Ohio, and Boo Watson's concert tour of Ohio cities.

Wilmette, of Black Women for Wages for Housework, spoke in Oberlin in March and met then with Black and Third World women. Her talks sparked such lively discussions that the women asked her back on April 23 — African Liberation Day — to participate in a conference on South Africa. She spoke on "Taking Back What Is Ours: Struggles of Women and Children in Southern Africa." Wilmette told us about the struggles of women and children in Soweto, about their burning down sterilization clinics, schools and buses transporting the men to factories 10 miles away in Johannesburg, where they worked for a mere \$6 a week. It is clear that the situation of South African women, and their struggles against the ghetto of Soweto, is the same fight always waged by Black women in the U.S. — and that the Wages for Housework Campaign is the power to move against all ghettos. Wilmette's talk was finished to a standing ovation.

The weekend before Wilmette spoke in Oberlin, Boo Watson, of the Toronto WFH Committee and Wages Due Lesbians, entertained about 100 people in Cleveland at a concert co-sponsored by Oven Productions. She sang in Canton, Oberlin, Delaware and Cleveland as part of the Wages for Housework Campaign. Her songs, like "The State's in the Bedroom Blues," "Wages for Schoolwork" and the "Wages Due Song" are songs we could all relate to!

Francie Wyland (also of the Toronto WFH Committee and Wages Due Lesbians) will be in Cleveland on May 10th to speak on Lesbianism and Wages for Housework. Francie wrote *Motherhood, Lesbianism and Child Custody*, which will be published soon. Articles by Wages Due Lesbians on the need for lesbian autonomy were published in *High Gear* and *What She Wants*. Hope you can make it to Francie's talk and the discussion.

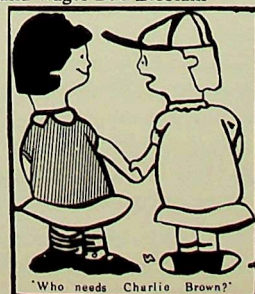
with Francie Wyland from the
Toronto Wages for Housework
Committee and Wages Due Lesbians

When: Tuesday May 10
at 7:30 p.m.

Where: Unitarian Church
2728 Lancashire
Cleveland Hts.

Free! Open to all women!

LESBIANISM
and
WAGES for HOUSEWORK



for
child
care
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9962



NO CUTS...

JUST BUCKS.....New York

Oberlin.....

On January 27, 1977 the Faculty of Oberlin College (which administers the university) proposed reinstating D and F grading. Students had won the abolition of Ds and Fs and of graduation requirements, as well as women's and Black studies programs in the 1960s, as a result of the tremendous struggles they made for the power to learn what and how they wanted. The current attack on liberal grading policies, along with tuition increases and cutbacks in financial aid, is part of a general attack on women, limiting our access to higher wages. But students are fighting back, and on March 1, 1977 the Faculty was forced to back down on its proposal to reinstitute those grades. Winning the fight against D and F grading opened up the possibility for further organizing in Oberlin against the attacks on college and community women, and for money and choices in our lives. The following is part of a statement written by the Oberlin Wages for Housework group on D and F grading.

The proposal of the College Faculty to reinstitute D and F grades constitutes one more part of a general attack on women here and elsewhere. As has been shown by many studies, women must work harder to receive the same grades as men. In the 1960s, a test showed that a composition that was written by John Doe was rated significantly higher than the same composition by Jane Doe. At Oberlin, the trend for years has been that, although women enter with higher SAT (Achievement Test) scores than men, there are far fewer women honors students and senior scholars. In addition, women bear the brunt of providing emotional support for men and other women in the highly pressured Oberlin atmosphere, which takes away from time spent on our schoolwork. Thus, we women are far more likely to be the victims of D and F grading.

Most of us came to Oberlin in an attempt to refuse housework and dependence on men and to get a higher wage, but the proposed grading policy will mean less access for women to graduate schools and high-paying jobs, and close off the possibilities to get anything but low-paid jobs — or any waged job at all.

The situation at Oberlin reflects the general attempt of the state to make all women work harder than ever for less money. Using the economic crisis as an excuse, Oberlin College, like other schools, has made consistent attempts to limit the power we women have gained by cutting women's studies, counseling services, etc. — and now by reinstating the grading policy. Oberlin women join all women internationally fighting the cutbacks and refusing to be pushed back into low-paying jobs or returning, wageless, to the home.

Of black women: "By moving autonomously in our own interests, we build power not only for ourselves but for all Black people and for all women." — Wilmette Brown

It is well-known that Black women are not represented at Oberlin College in teaching positions. Furthermore, tuition has been increased while scholarships and financial aid are being cut back. In the same way, women in the community are being denied their wages by welfare cutbacks, on top of fewer well-paid jobs opportunities and a heavier workload at home because of rising prices and fewer social services.

We as Black women must organize in our own interests not only within the college but with women in the community as well, to overcome our isolation and to build our power to fight the attacks on our money.

The SEEK (Search for Education, Elevation & Knowledge) Program is a stipend program for students in the City University of New York (CUNY). It began in 1966, as a result of the power built up by the struggles led by Black women for welfare in the 60s. The stipend allows Black, Latin, immigrant and other poor students without money for food, shelter, books and transportation a way to go to school, a way of getting access to higher wages.

The attack on the SEEK program is the key to the state's offensive against women. The majority of SEEK students are women who have used SEEK to break out of the isolation of the home and gain access to a higher wage. Dismantling the program forces those women, penniless, back into the home and to dependence on men. It forces young women to choose between dependence on their family, or working a low-waged second job for long hours and low pay, or turning to street life, prostitution, and a greater risk of jail. Lack of money means more housework, more unwaged work in the home.

The attack on SEEK students began in the fall of 1976 when the Comptroller of New York State revealed "welfare fraud" at CUNY, charging that many students receive funds both from SEEK and from welfare. (Of course, SEEK and welfare combined are not enough to live on.) In addition, tuition, a "proficiency exam" designed to eliminate students, and non-credit remedial courses were instituted at CUNY, and the attacks on women on welfare were stepped up. (Beginning February 1977, applicants for ADC are forced to sign a paternity affidavit.)

The Queens College Women's Action Group came together in the fall of 1976 to fight the welfare cuts and the dismantling of the SEEK program. They are presently circulating a petition, which says:

The attack on women students in the SEEK program is an attack on all women and all students. The cuts in the SEEK program and the welfare cuts aim to limit even more our access both to money and to education which is the possibility of money in the future.

Among their demands are a halt to the dismantling of the SEEK program, an end to charges of fraud against students receiving stipends and welfare; free childcare for all women on campus; an end to paternity affidavits; and Wages for Housework from the government for all women.

ADDRESSES:

Black Women for
Wages for Housework
c/o Brown
100 Boerum Pl.
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Wages Due
Lesbians
Box 38, Sta. E
Toronto, Ontario,
Canada

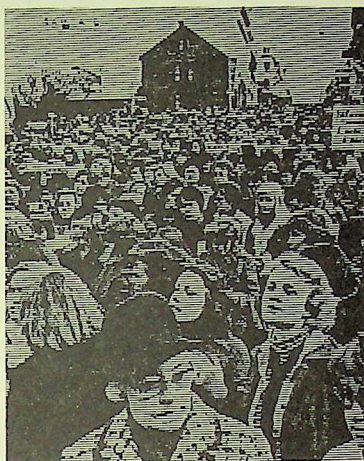
Wages for Housework is the organization of the struggles which all women are making against our work and for more money and power. That is why we are calling an organizing meeting of Black Women for Wages for Housework.

— from an Oberlin Review article by a Black student at Oberlin College, April 20, 1977

Money Makes The World Go 'Round

CANADA/USA [1976] — Several child custody cases involving lesbian women have been reported in the press recently. One woman in Alberta and another in Maine won unconditional custody. Still, thousands of lesbian women are losing their children, inside and outside the courtroom because, like other women, they don't have the money to fight it out or to support them in the unlikely event that they win.

ITALY — In January 1976, over 100,000 women demonstrated in Rome for abortion on demand. Their main slogan was "We want the right to abortion, but we don't only want to abort." A strong movement for Wages for Housework in Italy has stressed that without money, no woman can really *choose* to have or not to have children.



General strike of women, Iceland, 1975

Working For Pin Money?!

The *Los Angeles Times* on February 20 announced a great discovery — something we women have always known. The vast majority of women who work outside the home have taken the second job out of economic necessity. The *Times* reports that "68% are without a husband or are married to men whose incomes are less than \$7,000 a year."

Over 50% of all women are in the waged labor force. At the same time, our wages are FALLING in relation to men's. We now get paid 57 cents for every dollar paid to men.

Today, then, more than half the women in the U.S. are working two jobs, one inside the home and one outside. And for these two jobs combined, we earn little more than half what men earn for one. That's liberation?

ICELAND — A general strike of women? Yes. In October 1975, women all over Iceland banded together to stop work for one day. Full-time housewives led the way by walking out on unwashed dishes and unmade beds. School kids got a holiday because 65% of teachers in Iceland are women. Communications stopped dead because, as we all know, telephone operators are women. Restaurants were empty and laundromats lay idle. What about the men? Well, someone had to look after the kids, so many were at home. And it wasn't exactly business as usual with no secretaries in the offices or tellers in the banks! Even theaters were closed because actresses were on strike.

The strike was called to show that without women's work, society can't function: *industry, government, schools, etc. only hang together because women work for nothing in the home and next to nothing outside.* The strikers' slogan was: WHEN WOMEN STOP, EVERYTHING STOPS. And everything stopped in Iceland.

CHINA — In the rural areas wages are paid in "work points," and women, who do housework as well as farm work, are demanding work points for it. In the oilfields areas, women have *won* some wages for housework, in cash. The movement is spreading!

LONDON, ENGLAND — In November 1976, Louise Boychuk, an office worker, was fired from her job by an international insurance company, for wearing a "Lesbians Ignite" button. She applied to an industrial tribunal for compensation, but the tribunal supported her employer's right to give her the sack. Boychuk is now appealing that decision, and Wages for Housework groups in England have been active in circulating a statement of support. The statement, "In Supporting Louise Boychuk We Are Supporting Ourselves," has already been endorsed by many individuals and over 40 organizations. The public stand taken by these organizations, which represent thousands of people, heterosexual as well as gay, shows that no one fighting for her rights as a lesbian woman is alone.

CHICAGO [September 1976] — The FBI arrested three women who were part of a \$100 a night call girl operation. Many of the women involved were "housewives supplementing family income and college students earning money to return to school." Enough said.

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 theater 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!"

SAVE YOURSELF A SHOPPING TRIP!

Wages for Housework potholders, dish towels, & T-shirts . . .

- Please send me: dish towels (\$1.00 @)
 potholders (\$.50 @)
 T-shirts - S M L
 blue green red brown
 black (\$4.50 @)

Name _____

Address _____

State & Zip _____

I am enclosing:

\$1.00 \$3.00 \$ _____

- I can't send a donation now but would like to remain on your mailing list.
 Please send me a literature list.
 Please send me a copy of the Women's Declaration of Independence.
 Please take me off your mailing list.

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Address _____

City _____

Phone _____

We Have Mother's Day; When's Pay Day?

[NOTE: The following excerpted statement is from the London Wages for Housework Committee, which has been very active in the Family Allowance Campaign in England. The Family Allowance is a tiny bit of money that the government pays mothers each week. Until April 1977, only women with two or more children could get the money. Now a new Child Benefit system means that women will get some money for the first child - one of the things a Family Allowance-Wages for Housework petition has been demanding. But the amount of money is ridiculously small - less than \$2! Mother's Day in England is March 20.]

This year women are asking for more than a Mother's Day card. One day of being "shown we're special" doesn't make up for a year's unpaid work. So at a central London cinema (movie theater) some women will be taking the day into their own hands and demanding a different kind of recognition, the kind every other worker requires. They're saying, "We want love AND money."

The Mother's Day event has been organized by the Wages for Housework Campaign. It will include a film show, music, and a women's speak-out. And while the children are looked after by men who support the campaign, women will be gathering up petitions demanding increased Family Allowance and Wages for Housework for all women from the government.

Please return this coupon to:
WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK
 P.O. BOX 5482
 CLEVELAND, OHIO 44101



The London Wages for Housework Committee has written to Mr Healey, the Chancellor of the Exchequer (or Treasurer) requesting that he meet a deputation from "Mother's Day" the following week, and receive the petition from them. Thousands of women have signed the petition and say Family Allowance is insultingly low. Child Benefits, despite all the furor, will mean very little in cash, and for many women nothing at all. The letter to Mr. Healey asks, "What can such a rise mean nowadays, except that mothers aren't worth very much?"

Mr. Healey doesn't talk much about women or housework. But he counts on us, not only to bring up the next generation of workers but to be the main shock absorbers of the crisis. Mothering is harder work than ever when the money's so short.

And it's not only children we mother. Everyone's turning to women for extra 'help,' support and understanding - as sisters, daughters, wives, grandmothers, neighbors, as secretaries or nurses - every woman, whether or not she has children, knows that she's expected to do more mothering, with less and less means.

And every one of us has to struggle to fit her budget to Mr. Healey's. On Mother's Day women with and without children will be coming together to demand that this year, he should fit his budget to ours!

WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK
 P.O. BOX 5482
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