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

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

For instance:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WOMEN'S
STRUGGLE
IS
INTERNATIONAL

All over the world we women are rebelling. Wherever we are the battles that are going on elsewhere determine what we can win. This is because women everywhere are fighting the same enemy.

INTERNATIONAL
CAPITAL OWNS
OUR WOMBS
AND COMMANDS
OUR ENTIRE LIFE

Internationally our struggles uncover our fundamental common situation: we are all exploited and defined by the housework we do without a wage, producing and reproducing all labor power including our own for free. Our enemy is international capital. The international corporations that benefit from the work we do at home and in outside jobs. The governments that plan for us where we are going to emigrate from and where we are going to immigrate to; where and when we are going to have waged jobs in addition to being wageless workers at home; where we will be able to get abortions and where we will be forced to have children or risk our lives with back streetbutchers; where we will be refused contraception and where we will be sterilized against our will.

WE ARE ALL
HOUSEWIVES

Whatever else we may do we are the houseworkers of the world. Whether we are mothers or lovers, lesbians or straights, whether we have a second job or not, we all have been trained to service men physically, emotionally, sexually. We are all trying to refuse parts of this work but nothing will give us more power to refuse it and our "female nature" than to get a WAGE FOR IT. WE CAN'T AFFORD TO WORK FOR LOVE-IT DESTROYS US.

ALL WE ARE
OFFERED IS
MORE WORK-
WE WANT TIME
AND MONEY

Many of us are forced into a second job because the family cannot eat without more money, because we refuse to be dependent on a man to survive and sometimes because we have hoped to escape our female lot. And they have a special wage for us: IT'S LOWER. After generations of us working for free in our kitchens, they can afford to offer us "this opportunity." MORE WORK FOR PENNIES.

WE REFUSE TO
BE SHOCK ABSORBERS
FOR CAPITAL'S
CRISIS

Right now they force on us more unwaged work for them at home-because we have to cope with rising prices-because they lay us off and we carry on our work for free in our kitchens-because they lay off the men cutting our support and forcing us to absorb the shock financially and emotionally. At a time when they force us to compete among ourselves on the international labor market we have to make it white clear that WE DON'T WANT MORE WORK-WE WANT THE MONEY THAT IS OURS

WAGES FOR
HOUSEWORK
IS OUR
OFFENSIVE

Unless we abolish our free labor in the home, it is our weakness wherever we go and ultimately the weakness of the entire working class. The division between the waged and the unwaged on an international level has been the most powerful weapon that capital uses to keep the class divided against itself. As women we have experienced how we can be divided even in our rebellion, when we are forced to make limited and separate demands for child care, for higher wages on waged jobs, for abortion, for money to live without a man, struggles which don't draw immediate strength from each other because they are fought in isolation by women in different situations.

Now we open the battle on another level. We are launching an international campaign for Wages for Housework in cash for all women. We want to decide when we work, how we work and whom we work for and even no to work at all.

ENORMOUS POWER, INTERNATIONAL POWER IS WHAT WE NEED-
TO STRUGGLE ON OUR OWN TERMS TO CONTROL OUR LIVES-
TO TAKE THE OFFENSIVE AGAINST CAPITAL