

Group circulates petition

# Housewives should be paid

By GREG BURLIUK  
Staff Reporter

That bane of womanhood, housework, will become a salaried position instead of volunteer work if a group of Toronto petition-passing women have their way.

Two representatives from Wages for Housework spoke to a small group at the Kingston Women's Centre, 200 Montreal street Monday.

"We're challenging the kinds of work women are forced into," said Frances Gregory. "And the reason we want a full wage for all women is to break the cycle of poverty which surrounds them because they are women."

Her fellow speaker was Francie Wyland, who is a member of Wages Due Lesbians as well as Wages for Housework.

"One might think that lesbians are liberated and have put housework behind them because they don't depend on men," said Ms. Wyland. "But often in our jobs we become everyone's mother and office housewife."

Wages for Housework is a world-wide organization. The Canadian group is now focusing its attention on the federal government's decision to cut back \$220 million on baby bonus cheque increases.

The group has been circulating petitions which call for the family allowance to be increased as scheduled and that it not be taxed, as well as demanding wages for housework.

"The war against inflation is being fought on women's backs," said Ms. Gregory. "Even though women's qualifications are going up, the disparity between their wages and men's is getting greater. With wage increases being controlled, she suffers — if she is dependant on a man's wage.

"Now the family allowance freeze, one of the government's largest cutbacks, is the last straw. Those cheques are the only money women can call their own."

Ms. Gregory said there are 15 to 20,000 of the petitions being circulated and that already 7,000 people have signed it. When there are 10,000 signatures on the petition, a delegation will go to Ottawa to present it to Prime Minister Trudeau.

She added that asking wages for housework was just a natural progression from asking wages for motherhood through the family allowance cheque.

Wages for Housework has not determined how much houseworkers shall be paid, although Ms. Wyland noted that a study done for the Chase-Manhattan Bank a couple of years ago concluded that a housewife's pay would be worth \$12,000.

The group feels that the government and big business should pay for housework, because according to Ms. Gregory, "think of all the free work they've gotten out of us already. We care for its workers and raise the future labor force, all for nothing.

"We'd sooner have the government give us the money rather than just individual men because then we'd be more independent."

When asked by one disagreeing member of the audience if being paid by the government would not lead to a more structured life for the housewife Ms. Wyland disagreed. "Sure, the government would try to control us," she said. "But to get them to pay us at all we'd have to build a level of power and with that power, we could challenge their control."

To skeptics who felt that women had no power, the pair pointed out the actions of the women of Iceland. Last October they staged a 24-hour strike, and, without the womanly touch, the country became paralysed during that period.