

Wages for Housework Campaign Bulletin



Toronto, Canada

vol.2 no.1

Fall 1977

Hookers fight back

By JUDY RAMIREZ

TORONTO — In 1975 the Ontario Appeal Court acquitted Ottawa prostitute Louise Rolland on the grounds that her wink to a prospective customer did not constitute "soliciting". The police were forced to stop harassing anyone they suspected, and charge only women who "made a nuisance of themselves". Arrests dropped dramatically. Hookers got a real boost in their working conditions, along with the possibility of making more and paying out less in fines. It didn't last long.

In Toronto, City Hall recently pushed the panic button and launched a heavy-handed campaign to "clean up Yonge St.". Since it began, roughly six months ago, Toronto police have been making one sweep arrest after another. The scene of 6 or 7 women being dragged out of body rub parlours to waiting paddywagons has

become a familiar one on the 6 o'clock news. The Courts have also cracked down as never before: they are keeping hookers awaiting sentence in custody, and imposing stiff fines and jail terms which are completely without precedent.

Central to this campaign of intimidation is the crackdown on sex shop operators. City Council recently approved 100 recommendations which would provide much stricter licensing regulations. The aim is to force sex shops to come under the "body rub parlour" category which most have managed to dodge so far. The yearly fee for body rub parlours is \$3,300 as opposed to the \$55 fee most nude amusements are presently paying!

In addition to getting its cut from the sex industry (the moralists are obviously not above pimping!), City Hall wants greater control over the "product". There is pressure on Ottawa to bring back the "vagrancy" laws which would

allow any woman to be arrested for standing around on the corner. This street harassment would drive many women into the newly licensed body rub parlours, where regular Government inspection would be awaiting them. Also, changes in the zoning laws are being sought by City Hall, which could banish the whole "sex strip" to a deserted industrial area near the docks, thus bringing it "under control".

But whatever measures City Hall finally chooses, the politicians' primary aim is clearly to bring hookers back in line because prostitution is losing its stigma. Hookers have become too visible, too upfront, and too numerous. Housewives are doing it for extra spending money. Students are doing it to put themselves through school. And young girls are getting into it because it beats being a cashier or a file clerk.

Politicians everywhere have tol-

erated "the world's oldest profession" as long as prostitutes remained isolated from other women. They have always been held up as the symbol of female degradation, precisely to keep the rest of us "coming across" for free. And not only in bed. For many of us it's a package deal which includes cooking, cleaning, shopping, and raising children.

But all that is changing. Women have been demanding their wages in many ways, and "alarming" increases in the rate of prostitution have become common in large cities everywhere. So have struggles for welfare, daycare, unemployment insurance, family allowances, etc. And the politicians are worried.

When thousands of immigrant parents and children recently held a noisy protest march in Toronto, after the slain body of Manuel Jacques was found on Yonge St., City Hall and Queen's Park had a heyday. The fact that those accused of Manuel's murder are four gay men, added more passion to the promises of cleaning up "the filth".

The issue for most of the immigrants marching, however, was the right of any immigrant boy to earn his money on the streets of Toronto. When you come halfway across the world in order to feed your family, and even young children must help earn the family's wage, the right to safety on the streets is the right to economic survival. And nobody knows what that's all about better than the women of all races and nationalities who are earning their living on the Yonge Streets of Canada.

City Hall used the march to appoint a special prosecutor to deal with all the charges being laid in the Yonge St. crackdown, and to make solemn vows about speeding up the whole process. This from the very same politicians who are in no hurry to raise the wages of immigrant mothers who fill Toronto's sweat shops, so that our children won't be forced out on the streets to make up the difference!

Less money for women, in fact, is what the Yonge St. crackdown is

all about, and similar crackdowns have been underway in New York, London, Vancouver, Detroit, San Francisco, Washington, Boston. . . . But prostitutes everywhere are fighting back publicly, and winning unprecedented support. In recent months, mock street trials were held in S.F., Los Angeles, and Boston, which accused Government and business of pimping off prostitutes and off the work of all women.

The events were attended by hundreds of women, many of whom "testified" from the crowd about their struggle for money. In the Boston trial, Ms. Anonymous Prostitute, speaking for PUMA (Prostitutes' Union of Massachusetts) told the large crowd in the Boston Commons, "My crime is not actually having sex — work which all women are supposed to do for free — but, rather, demanding money for it." Wilmette Brown, of Black Women for Wages for Housework, said "They punish welfare mothers and prostitutes for getting money, for the work all women do — they make it a crime for women to refuse to be poor."

In Canada, prostitutes from Toronto to Vancouver are speaking out more openly than ever. Recently, one told the "Toronto Star" that she considers herself a social worker. "We perform a service for these men", she said. "We help them with their problems and stop them taking their frustrations out on other people." In Quebec, a 19-year old stripper who earns \$425 a week told the "Montreal Star", "I'm into stripping and I don't feel degraded by it." If Government continues to cut back and unemployment continues to rise, many more women will be saying the same, because nothing is more degrading than having no money.

The Wages for Housework Campaign fully supports these demands and announces the upcoming visit of Margo St. James, of COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics) to Toronto! Housewives and hookers will be making a common cause Nov. 25-30 in a series of public events. Watch your local newspapers for more information.



"Every little girl learns by the time she's five how to put the hustle on her Daddy for a new toy."

Margo St. James,
founder of COYOTE (a loose woman's organization)

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Women 'try' rape judges

By HEATHER STIRLING

LONDON, ENG. — It was front page news all over Britain, and, in Canada, we read about it in "The Globe and Mail". On July 16, 1977 five hundred women held a public tribunal in Trafalgar Square, in London, to indict the "Queen's Justices" who had set free a convicted rapist.

Guardsmen Tom Holdsworth brutally raped 18-year old Carol Maggs and was sentenced to three years in prison for it. On appeal, three judges freed him so as not to "interfere with his military career"! Carol Maggs came forward publicly to denounce the decision and hundreds of women came forward with her.

On June 26, Women Against Rape, a London-based group connected with the Wages for Housework Campaign, invaded the High Court where one of the Holdsworth judges was hearing a case. They demanded the immediate dismissal of all three judges, the disqualification of judges known to be biased against women from hearing rape cases, the recognition of rape in marriage as a crime, automatic financial

compensation for all rape victims, and financial independence for every woman so we can leave any situation where we feel the danger of rape exists. The judge was forced to leave the court, and days later, several Labour MP's tabled a motion calling for the dismissal of the three judges!

The public outcry against the Holdsworth case culminated with the Trafalgar Square tribunal. Carol Maggs was the star-witness and she spoke out against the "rape of justice" in the courts. Also testifying were Helen Buckingham of PLAN (Prostitution Laws Are Nonsense), and an Asian woman from strikebound Grunwick's who told the crowd that the older immigrant women had to make their native dishes for the bosses and the younger ones had to sleep with them in order to keep their jobs!

The powerful two-hour trial found Government and industry guilty of "conspiracy to rape and perpetuate violence against women in all its forms". Canadian women salute our sisters in Britain with a National Day of Protest Against Rape on Nov. 5!

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Hundreds of women join march led by Women Against Rape, London, England, July 16, 1977.

Family law reform: equality or more poverty?

By DOROTHY KIDD

The Ontario Legislature is debating the Family Law Reform Bill. Similar bills are being passed across Canada, and the ERA in the United States is cut from the same cloth. They all come at a time when women's rebellion has thrown the family into crisis. Not content to work for nothing in the home, "economic independence" has become women's rallying cry. In our millions, we are divorcing, choosing to live common-law, and coming out as lesbians.

Our rebellion has caused an international crisis. All the family law reforms speak loudly of "recognizing the economic contribution of the home-maker". The Ontario bill intends to do so by awarding 50% of the family assets to each spouse on the dissolution of a marriage. However, the wife's slice isn't anywhere near half the pie, because the award doesn't include pensions, business assets, or other investments belonging to the husband, even though they were made possible by her work at home. Spouses will also be able to contract out of any obligation. For women with little bargaining power at the time the contract is written, this provision rules out any redress afterwards.

In any case, this widely touted gain of shared assets is irrelevant for the majority of families who are lucky to even own their own home. It is the support provisions which concern most of us. The bill gives women "equal rights" with men by giving us "equal responsibility" for our own support. In a marriage where the woman has been the "dependent" one the Government intends for her to be "rehabilitated" to take a second job. In this way women will no longer be "stigmatized" by not having money in their own right. In the few cases where the woman

has more money than her husband (in marriage or common-law) she will be expected to pay support for him and the children!

This is the long-awaited recognition of our work in the home? The Family Law Reform Bill is unequivocally based on the premise that housewives are parasites. Ed Ryan, one of the original drafters of the bill put it this way, "Mr. McMurtry's (the Attorney-General) bill doesn't contemplate a society in which men support women. In the long run you won't have the women who can't do anything except be wives dumped onto the welfare rolls... when a marriage breaks down you will have a woman at least a lot better prepared than today to go to work." Just what does he think we've been doing in our homes all these years?

Already one Ontario judge has refused to award support to a mother with two children under twelve. She was told to go back to her former occupation, teaching. This pressure to take a second job comes at a time when women are finding it increasingly difficult to get wages which are high enough to save us and our children from bare subsistence. And the gap between women's wages and men's is steadily widening.

Mr. McMurtry is attacking mothers on welfare who have fought this pressure by demanding pay for their work in the home. His principal argument for the bill is that it cuts down on welfare costs and puts the responsibility "back in the family's hands". We've heard that argument before. Every time they've made cutbacks in social services, the "family" has had to pick up the slack. Which means we women have worked harder in our homes caring for the children, and the elderly. Margaret Birch (Ontario Cabinet Minister) gets paid \$42,700 a year to tell us "love is all the pay a mother needs",

and McMurtry manoeuvres to take away the first wage we've won for our housework. That's exactly what these "equality reforms" are all about.

For many women, welfare has been the one option which allowed us to turn down the "opportunity" to work for peanuts outside the home. It has cut down competition among women for the same few jobs in the female job ghettoes. With welfare less available and the job market deteriorating, it will be next to impossible for us to leave intolerable home situations. When we do, more and more of us will have to leave the kids behind because we can't afford to keep them. Lesbian women will find it impossible to "come out". And the pressures for women living common-law to marry will increase as the benefits of "marital tax-breaks" force many of us to trade whatever independence we've won for badly needed cash.

When we do leave, the Government is saying that whatever money we are demanding will have to come from the men. Until we are "self-sufficient", the courts and the welfare department will be given more power to go after the men. We know that most men don't have enough for themselves, and many are defending their wages from controls, cutbacks, rising unemployment, etc. We want to be paid in our own right, so that we're free to enter into relationships with men that aren't warped by economic dependence on them. We absolutely oppose any schemes which force men and women to share the poverty.

But the Government and many "feminists" are telling us that "equality" and "economic independence" means either a second job or shared poverty with men. With victories like this, who needs defeat? A

group of women in Winnipeg said it all in their recent Brief to the provincial legislature about the proposed Family Law Reform in that province!

"We are certainly not against a woman obtaining a job outside the home... But we are against the assumption that a woman's work in the home is not worth any financial remuneration, and that going into the work-force is the only mechanism toward financial independence... The work of a spouse maintaining the home should be recognized as wage-labour."

Group in Support of Wages for Housework



Lesbians on the move

By WAGES DUE LESBIANS

"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 the money we need to keep our children without being forced to depend on a man."

This was one of the resolutions passed by the majority of women — most of them from the Prairies — who attended this summer's 5th Annual National Gay Rights Conference in Saskatoon. The resolution went on to be defeated by a vote of the several hundred men present at the final plenary session. But throughout the weekend what electrified the atmosphere was the growing strength of lesbian women in the gay movement, and our determination to make these conferences occasions where we can organize for our own needs.

Francie Wyland, from Wages Due Lesbians in Toronto, opened the conference with an inspiring speech about the fight of lesbian women from all the different life situations in which we find ourselves. She voiced the women's demand to lead the gay rights march later that day, and there was no argument from the men: many, in fact, supported us enthusiastically.

The march was a high point of lesbian power. When we were interviewed by the media we said we were marching for all the lesbians who couldn't afford to "come out", in Saskatoon and every other town in Canada; and we said we knew we could march only because millions of women — both lesbian and "straight" — are fighting for sexual choices and independence in every part of our lives.

Three important resolutions that women proposed were passed by the whole conference. One was that the gay movement in Canada actively support the growing struggle of lesbian mothers for child custody. The second was our demand that, however many lesbians are actually present at gay conferences, the women must be allotted at least 50% of the voting power. And the third called for the conference's support of the July 13 picket of the Ontario Supreme Court organized by Wages Due Lesbians to protest the laws that allow lesbian mothers to lose custody of our children. These victories in Saskatoon are an index of the increasing visibility of lesbian women everywhere.

Another example was the strong presence of lesbians at the California State International Women's

Year Conference in June. Five thousand women gathered in Los Angeles to formulate proposals to be taken to the National IWY Conference in Houston, Texas on November 18-21. Wages Due Lesbians was there and this is one of the resolutions passed almost unanimously:

"Whereas our poverty and social pressure force too many lesbian women to choose between coming out as lesbians, and having and keeping our children, be it resolved that we demand wages for housework from the government for all women so that we have the power to freely choose whether or not to be lesbian, and whether or not to have children; and be it resolved that we support our children's fight for their own right to sexual choices."

Francie Wyland spoke at the Los Angeles Gay Pride Rally on June 26, to a crowd of 10-15,000. Her speech was reprinted in "The Los Angeles Sunday Times" (circulation 1.3 million) with the headline "Wages for Housework a Lesbian Issue, Too"! The more visible lesbians are the clearer it is to all women that our strength is vital to everyone. When lesbians are strong, no woman will have to dread being called "unnatural" or a "dyke" if she says "no" too often. And all of our power depends on having the money to make our "no's" stick.

One of the most violent punishments lesbian women face for stepping out of line is the loss of the custody of our children. Like prostitutes, welfare women, immigrants, disabled women, prisoners and mental patients — we have our children taken away every day. Almost anyone who comes along can label us "unfit". And that risk more and more faces any woman who refuses to raise her children in a nuclear family situation.

Fifty people, who knew that our fight is also theirs, joined Wages Due's picket of the Supreme Court in Toronto on July 13, when we took over the sidewalk for an hour at lunchtime with placards, banners and bullhorns. They came from the Women's Counselling Referral and Education Centre, the Law Union of Ontario, the Community Homophile Association of Toronto, Prisoners' Rights, and many other groups. Local radio and TV coverage brought the news to many who could not be there.

Among the speakers were Florence Sims of Black Women for Wages for Housework, Anne Walker of Wages Due Lesbians in London, England, and Judy Ramirez for the Immigrant Women's Centre. All were protesting the use of sexual preference and financial status as criteria in deciding custody cases.

Mrs. X, the local lesbian mother whose case Wages Due has been involved with, was also at the pic-

ket. Her ex-husband recently dropped his fight and she was awarded unconditional custody of both her children, with no future supervision from Children's Aid!

Because of the tremendous support from many groups of women, the picket succeeded in focusing public attention on the invisible fight being waged by thousands of lesbians, against being forced to choose between our sexuality and our children.

Good news!

The Wages for Housework Campaign is moving westward! Two new groups, in Regina and Winnipeg, have recently formed and many women are getting together with a lot of energy and ideas. To find out what is happening and to join Campaign activities, contact:

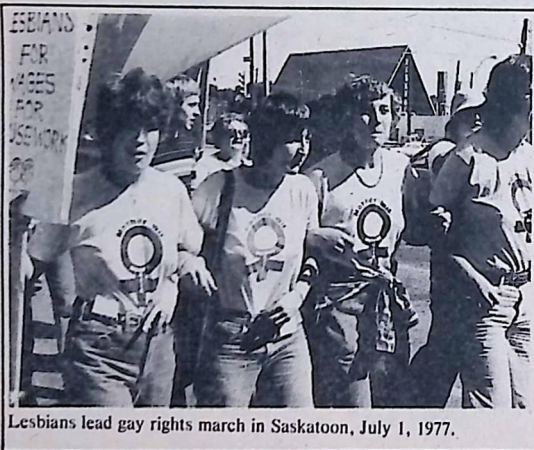
IN REGINA:

Wages for Housework Group
c/o Mallory Neuman, Box 326,
Balgonie, Saskatchewan
Tel. (306) 637-2381

IN WINNIPEG:

Wages for Housework Group
c/o The Woman's Place, 143 Walnut St.,
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Tel. (204) 453-0311

Also, for more information in KITCHENER, Ontario, contact: Linda Lounsberry, 83 Water St. S.,
Kitchener, Ontario
Tel. (519) 576-0796



Lesbians lead gay rights march in Saskatoon, July 1, 1977.

**MOTHERHOOD
LESBIANISM
and
CHILD CUSTODY**

FRANCIE WYLAND

Published by Wages Due Lesbians (Toronto) and
Falling Mill Press, Bristol, England.

Available: In Canada from Wages Due Lesbians
32 pp. PO Box 38, Ste. 11 Toronto Ont M2H 2K6
PO Box 888 Washington, D.C. 20003 U.S.A.
\$1.20
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WELFARE: Every mother is a working mother

"Chatelaine" magazine recently ran an article about a deserted mother of two who went on welfare. "Living a deadend existence" was their description of her life. Until she remarried and went back to school, that is. Then her "climb to self-respect" began, with "everything coming up roses"! The message is less than subtle: welfare mothers lead meaningless lives and contribute nothing to society. They should find a man and/or go out to earn a living.

For those of us who do, of course, there are "rewards". Such as the federal Government's witch hunt against housewives on UIC. After we take on a "real job and claim the benefits we are legally entitled to, we are weeded out as "freeloaders" just the same! The new reason for not giving us our money is that we are only "secondary wage earners". The truth is that we are just plain SECONDARY, because our first job in the home does not rate hard cash like other jobs.

Our weakness as women is that the overwhelming majority of us still work 16-hour days in the home and never see a pay-cheque. That pegs the value of our time, generally, to the lowest level of any workers in society. And nowhere is this clearer than when we go outside the home for a second job. We get palmed off with wages so low that we earn only 50% of what men earn — and the gap is increasing! Waitresses in Ontario are currently fighting to keep up with the minimum wage! The paltry wages of immigrant women working as domestics have no legal protection whatsoever. Women teachers and social service workers, who have "made it" into

professions, are getting hit with enormous speedups, and many are losing their jobs altogether.

Women lack the leverage to get a better deal not because we aren't in unions — two thirds of Canada's workers aren't, and the wages here are among the highest for any industrialized country! Nor because we aren't better qualified — on the average, women workers in Canada are slightly better educated than male workers! We lack leverage because our unpaid housework stamps CHEAP all over us.

Our biggest source of power as women is precisely the welfare mother who put a price tag on raising a family and won us our first wage for housework. The very fact that some women have a wage for that work automatically puts more leverage in the hands of all women. That can be seen clearly in Ontario where between 1961-1973 there was a 300% increase in the number of sole-support mothers on welfare! This at the very same time the divorce rate rose by 295%! Welfare money has clearly been our ticket out of marriages we would otherwise be trapped in. It has also been our ticket to greater sexual autonomy, with the possibility of lesbian women having children because we no longer have to depend on a man's wage to afford them.

Welfare has also raised women's bargaining power in the paid labour force because, for the first time, we have an alternative to the low wages the female job ghettoes offer us. The power to say "no" has always gotten workers more money, and we women are no exception. Without welfare those wages would be even lower. Between 1969-75, with the increasing num-

bers of women demanding welfare, the minimum wages rates throughout Canada doubled, substantially closing the gap between low and average income workers. Men gained from our struggle because many of their wages rose and immigrants, who are at the bottom of the wage scale, gained enormously.

This is precisely why the Government keeps the welfare wage so low, and why women on welfare are held up for public scorn as being "dependent", "parasitic", etc. Poverty and humiliation will prevent more women from demanding welfare, the Government hopes, which in turn will prevent wages, generally, from "skyrocketing". The 46,000 FBA mothers in Ontario presently receive only 60% of what they need to live "adequately", according to a recent study done by the Social Planning Council of Metro Toronto. And they are losing ground, despite a recent increase. Many a welfare mother is forced to use her benefits as a basic wage and pick up other money "on the side". The Government calls it "fraud", we call it survival.

In the USA, where the welfare rights movement was so massive that the number of families on welfare rose from 1.5 million in 1969 to 2.5 million in 1970, the gains we made are under systematic attack. As in Canada, more and more women have claimed welfare as their RIGHT, in spite of the poverty and the put-downs. Breaking the power this money has given women and all other workers is the No. 1 priority of Carter's new "Program for Better Jobs and Income".

The program is designed to cut off 1 in 3 welfare recipients in the USA, 90% of

whom are mothers. They will be forced to accept specially created "public sector" jobs at the minimum wage. Even mothers with school-age children will be forced to work outside the home at least part-time, and "strong incentives" are being built in which are intended to drive women back to men in order to survive. "We must make a complete and clean break with the past", said President Carter, in announcing the new welfare reform recently.

He also called the present welfare system "anti-work", because women get benefits for being at home. And this is really the whole crux of the matter. If raising a family is work, then we deserve to be paid for it without having to take on more work outside the home. "Who is working?" has become the million dollar question. Literally. Carter and his pals Trudeau, Davis, Schreyer, etc. are trying to tell us that only if we go out to work are we really working. But we know that EVERY MOTHER IS A WORKING MOTHER, because welfare women have the cash in their hands to prove it.

The following resolution was passed by the overwhelming majority of delegates — many of them welfare women — at the annual conference of the Ontario Anti-Poverty Organization, held in June, 1977 in Toronto.

"Whereas women consider raising children a job and welfare a recognition of that job Be it resolved that the government end its harassment of welfare mothers and grant an immediate increase in benefits."

Is abortion the "right to choose"?

By JUDY RAMIREZ

TORONTO — In 1973 the US Supreme Court made abortion legal after years of organizing by the women's movement. The new law was immediately used by Chicago's Mayor Daley to round up pregnant welfare women and force them to "accept" abortions in order to stay on benefits. What the women's movement called "the right to choose" was precisely the opposite for thousands of Black, Chicana, Latin, and poor white women.

In 1977, Medicaid funds for sterilization are being increased at the very same time that the US Supreme Court has ruled that individual states are not legally required to provide Medicaid for "elective abortions" for the poor. The women's movement is again organizing to protect "abortion rights" and with the same slogan which equates the right to not have children with the "right to choose".

In Toronto, the May 28 Coalition for Abortion Rights formed last spring to protest the growing cuts in abortion services in Canada. The Badgely Report (1976) documented the widespread unavailability of abortions throughout the country. Hospitals are not required by law to set up the "therapeutic abortion committees" which legally decide who "needs" an abortion. Only 1 in 5 hospitals have such committees and many began cutting back the number of abortions they perform, or attaching conditions to it such as "consenting" to be sterilized.

The May 28 Coalition's main slogan "Abortion — a woman's right to choose" was meant to mobilize all women in self-defence. It did no such thing.

At the organizing meeting where the slogan was chosen, a West Indian woman, Erica Mercer, said she could not circulate leaflets with such a slogan to Black women. Too many Black women, she said, have been forced to abort because they can't afford the children they want.

Many others have been forcibly sterilized.

Other women present — some from the Wages for Housework Campaign — supported the inclusion of "the right of all women to bear the children they want" to the slogans. Defending only the right to not have children, won't give us the right to have those we want, and without that, how can abortion be the "right to choose"? But in the long-hour debate which followed, Coalition leaders insisted that abortion was "the main issue" and that "you can't demand everything at once". The proposed change was voted down.

Shocked, Erica immediately called a meeting of immigrant women (and some men) who work together on health-related issues. The group, which emerged from the conference "A Multicultural Approach to Family Planning and Contraception" last February, was shaken. How could the interests of Black and immigrant women be so callously ignored? To add insult to injury, the Coalition leaflet which appeared called for the defence of abortion rights only "for all Canadian women"! This in a city of over half a million immigrants.

Despite the mediation attempts of some women in the Coalition (who managed to force changes in the second leaflet, but not the main slogans), the immigrant women decided to oppose the Coalition publicly. A statement was drafted by the Immigrant Women's Centre which said:

The May 28 Coalition for Abortion Rights equates the "right to choose" with ABORTION, when many of us, both immigrant and native-born, are forced to have abortions because we cannot afford to have the children we want. Immigrant women have always experienced coercion either by being forced to have children (because birth control information and abortion services were denied us), or by being prevented from having children (through genocidal birth control practices in the Third World, as well as against Black women in the USA and Native Peoples

in Canada). For us, the "right to choose" can never be only the right to abortion, but must also be the right to have all the children we might want.

We, therefore, demand of the Canadian Government:

1. FREE ABORTION ON DEMAND

— Until contraception is fully safe and we don't run the risk of damage to our health, we need to abort freely without harassment about "multiple abortions"; without having to beg a handful of "therapeutic committees" throughout Canada and Quebec to take our "exceptional case" into consideration; and with free access to abortion counselling in our own languages.

— Because as immigrant and as women we have always been poor, we want abortion to be fully covered by OHIP (with no doctor's fees added) and fully available to women who can't afford OHIP

2. FUNDING FOR CLINICS AND RELATED BIRTH CONTROL SERVICES IN ALL IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE IMMIGRANT WOMEN WHO USE THEM

— We want the money to control the programs ourselves because the lack of it has always meant government programs which force us either to have more children than we want or to not have those we do want

— We want services which recognize that immigrant women often refuse contraception because our experience has taught us to be suspicious of the methods available, and not because we are "backward"

— We want contraception to be free of charge and available to women of all ages in their own languages.

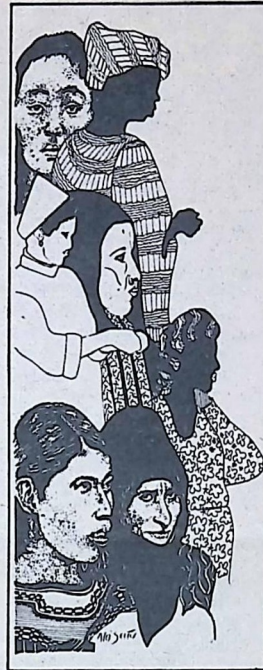
Finally, to ensure that we are in a better position to choose freely, we demand of the Canadian Government:

3. LIVING WAGES WITH FULL PROTECTION UNDER THE LAW FOR ALL OUR WORK BOTH IN THE HOME AND OUTSIDE

4. FULLY PAID MATERNITY LEAVE WITHOUT LOSS OF SENIORITY OR BENEFITS

5. FUNDING FOR 24-HOUR CHILDCARE CONTROLLED BY US WITH PAID STAFF BOTH IN OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS AND IN EVERY SWEATSHOP

WHERE WE ARE FORCED TO WORK



The statement was endorsed by many immigrant organizations such as Black Education Project, Harriet Tubman Centre, Working Women, Centre for Spanish-speaking Peoples, East Indian Employment Development Centre, Women Working with Immigrant Women, etc. The Wages for Housework Campaign also supported it and stayed away from the Coalition's meetings and the march. Other women's groups such as Nellie's Women's Hostel endorsed the immigrant women's statement, reflecting the growing financial pressure on women who are native born and educated, many of whom are also being forced to give up the idea of ever having children.

The media covered both the Coalition march and the immigrant opposition to it. Because of the strength of the opposition, many in the Coalition accused the immigrant women of hurting the abortion cause by the "display of disunity". The Coalition itself had, in fact, voted in that disunity by excluding the interests of the immigrant women from the start.

The message to the women's movement in all of this was loud and clear: there can be no fight for abortion which isn't also at the same time a fight to have all the children we want. The power to refuse to have children we do not want is increasingly dependent on being able to afford those we do want. The impossibility of isolating abortion as "the main issue" was made frighteningly clear in a recent interview with Dr. R. T. Ravenholt, director of the US Office of Population, an agency of the State Department. He told the British "Evening Standard" that seventy foreign doctors are currently being trained at Washington University in "advanced fertility management". The \$2.8 million program is creating the medical technology necessary to protect "the normal operation of US commercial interests around the world". The goal? To sterilize 100,000,000 women in developing countries in the next decade.

Is the women's movement planning to tell these women that abortion is the priority because it is the "right to choose"?



No cuts just bucks!

By JUDY RAMIREZ

NY—On May 1, 1977 an article appeared on the front page of the "New York Times" announcing that the City of New York University was "revamping" its SEEK (Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge) program and introducing "new guidelines" for eligibility. The \$20 million program aids 10,000 Third World students with a stipend of \$1,000 per year, and has been effect for ten years.

The Women's Action Group, a campus organization connected with the Wages for Housework Campaign, organized an emergency meeting to confront the administrators with what was obviously a plan to cut SEEK funds. The "Times" article contained numerous distortions which gave the impression that SEEK students are "poorly motivated" and that they receive \$10,000 a year!

Three hundred students crowded into the Student Union for the emergency meeting chaired by Margaret Prescott-Roberts of Black Women for Wages for Housework. The City University Chancellor was on hand, as were the Acting President and the SEEK Central Budget Officer. They all pleaded innocent to angry charges that SEEK was being slowly dismantled, even though the students were armed with facts which proved the contrary. The university had already withheld over \$2.5 million in SEEK funds from needy students and plans to increase that by at least another \$1.5 million this year!

The shaken administrators agreed to hold a press conference the following week to set the record straight and to answer publicly the charges which SEEK students had made against the university. But the planned press conference never really got off the ground. Leaflets by the Women's Action Group informing students of the event were confiscated from the university print shop—an order later traced to the President's office!

The Women's Action Group has continued to gather hundreds of signatures on their petition "No Cuts Just Bucks" which began circulating prior to the uproar with the administration. It demands "an im-

mediate end to the dismantling of the SEEK program which attacks everyone in the university and first of all women... no proficiency exams which are designed to eliminate students... no cutbacks in courses which limit students' access to future jobs... and no non-credit courses which increase the work and raise the cost of getting a degree".

It also demands an end to the witchhunt against "welfare fraud" among women SEEK students because "both fundings together are not adequate for subsistence". The Women's Action Group made public a new paternity affidavit which the NY City Social Services Department is forcing all mothers applying for welfare to sign. In it she must reveal whether or not she had sexual relations with other men at the time of conception! The new procedure also gives the welfare department the right to verify that the father is not living in the home, by writing or calling landlords, friends, family, employers, etc.

In taking the offensive against both the cuts in their student stipends and the intimidation of the welfare department, SEEK women are telling the government loud and clear that their figures are way off.

They end their petition by saying: "Women students are doing double work. When a woman takes on the additional work of being a student, her first job—housework—does not disappear. Recent figures by economists estimate the value of housework to industry and government at more than \$21,000 a year, but we women are in crisis with no money we can call our own. Therefore, we demand wages for housework from the government for all women".

The new school year has just begun, and the SEEK struggle at NY City University continues.

For more information contact:
Black Women for Wages for Housework
c/o Brown
100 Boerum Place
Brooklyn, New York 11201
Tel. (212) 834-0992



(Branching Out July-August 1977)

Tipping the wage scale

By ELLEN AGGER

The fight against a lower minimum wage for tipped workers is steadily building momentum. The Waitresses' Action Committee, which formed last winter to oppose such a move by the Ontario Government, has been actively organizing among waitresses, who make up 80 percent of workers in the industry.

Our aim has been to put pressure on the Government through a letter-writing campaign, media coverage, and the widespread circulation of our brief, "The Minimum Wage and a Tip Differential". We are also circulating a petition which demands no cuts in the minimum wage for waitresses/waiters, a higher minimum wage for everyone, wages for all the unpaid work waitressing involves, and the removal of tips from taxable income.

Support has come from many organizations including the Status of Women Committee of C.U.P.E. Local 79, the Ontario Status of Women Council, and the Law Union of Ontario. Hundreds of individuals are signing our petition, particularly as unemployment and inflation rise. Ontario now has the second lowest minimum wage in Canada and many women are stuck at the bottom of the pay scale. Women who are not presently working as waitresses but who feel the pinch in their own lives have distributed the petition widely through their own organizations. The Waitresses' Action Committee has met with groups of women in Milton and London, where a successful informational picket through the downtown area was held in May. There has also been a steady stream of articles in women's newspapers and magazines, as well as national press and television coverage. Thousands of women have learned of our struggle in this way.

Changes in the minimum wage are made at the provincial level by the Cabinet, upon recommendation by the Ministry of Labour and, in this case, also with pressure from the Ministry of Industry and Tourism. Because such an important decision is made behind closed doors, those to be affected have little chance to protest and put for-

ward their needs. The Waitresses' Action Committee's brief began to force open those doors.

The demand for a public forum on the minimum wage was the major focus of a meeting held with representatives of the Ministry of Labour in late June. A delegation made up of members of the Waitresses' Action Committee, the Immigrant Women's Centre and Opportunity for Advancement (a welfare mother's group), spoke about the disastrous effects on all women of a lower minimum wage for one category of women workers. We emphasized how the position of women in the paid labour market is being eroded, and that such a move against one group would lower the bargaining power of all of us. Marnie Clark, Director of the Women's Bureau, who was present at the meeting, went on record as supporting our call for a government forum.

When the Waitresses' Action Committee formed last December, the question of the tip differential was not considered an issue by anyone except waitresses. The tourism industry had expected it to go through without a fight. Only because we have organized widely and loudly, has the Government been forced to listen. You can help us stop this move by writing letters of protest to the Minister of Labour and Premier Davis calling for a public forum and demanding an immediate raise in the minimum wage across the board. You can circulate petitions to waitresses and other supporters; hold informational pickets; contact your local media about this issue, and spread information to as many women as possible.

For copies of the brief, petition, or to make a donation, write: Waitresses' Action Committee 112 Spruce Street Toronto, Ontario Tel. (416) 921-9091

Send your letters of protest to:

Bette Stephenson
Minister of Labour
400 University Avenue
Toronto, Ontario

Premier William Davis, Q.C.
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario

"When's pay day?"

By FRANCES GREGORY

OTTAWA—That's the question we asked representatives of Prime Minister Trudeau and the Minister of National Health and Welfare when a delegation of 15 women from the Toronto, Kitchener, and Ottawa Wages for Housework Campaign met with them for Mother's Day, last May.

We arrived in Ottawa with a gift-wrapped box containing 10,000 signatures on the Family Allowance Petition the Campaign had been circulating across Canada and Quebec (in five languages) since Trudeau froze the Family Allowance in 1976.

The petition, demanding the promised increase in the baby bonus as well as wages for housework for all women, had already played a crucial role in forcing the government to give back the cost of living raise in 1977. We had also prepared a Brief, "In Defence of the Family Allowance", which outlines how the baby bonus freeze was only a part of the state's plans to force women back into dependency on men, by attacking all the sources of money and power we have gained. (See editorial)

We held a large press conference on the steps of Parliament before going in to meet the brass. The story went out on the wire service and newspapers all over the coun-

try carried it. Radio and television interviews were aired in many provinces, and women from all over, who had signed and circulated the petition, contacted Campaign offices to tell us that had made their Mother's Day!

We began the meeting (which lasted two hours) by outlining the points in the Brief and by saying that women everywhere are fighting back against the Government's plans. A Black woman on welfare said the Government's proposed Guaranteed Annual Income amounts to nothing more than a work incentive program to make mothers take on a 2nd job in order to qualify for assistance. Wages for housework would solve the crisis of poverty in the country, she said. A lesbian woman spoke about how Government cutbacks are making it harder than ever for lesbians to have children, and harder to "come out" of the closet at all. Finally a single woman spoke, saying that she wanted to have children without being forced to depend on a man's wage, and that without wages for housework that choice was effectively denied her. The Government officials were clearly amazed that so many women from different life situations could be in one room saying the same thing—we want more money and less work, not the other way around.

Everything we had written in the Brief about the Government's plans to attack our money and our power was then confirmed by what the government officials said in the meeting. But the thousands of signatures on the petition, and the struggles women everywhere are making to win more money showed the Government that **THE BATTLE HAS ONLY BEGUN.**

From a letter to the Hon. Marc Lalonde, Minister of National Health and Welfare, by a Mississauga housewife:

"I agree with what the delegation from the Wages for Housework Committee with their Brief and petitions are trying to say to the Government, and the people of Canada, that women are entitled to be paid for their work in the home... The same way as men, women deserve to be recognized with a good living wage, that is the way society is set up today... Women do not expect men to work for nothing, that is we do not expect him to hold down a job or position and not be paid, well paid, for it... Housework is a full-time job, especially with child bearing and child raising thrown in, and should be paid for, well paid. Why not? No one should be expected to work for nothing."

(Mrs) Catherine O. Lindsay
May 26, 1977

CAMPAIGN TROUPERS