

FC, Cantella 3, 6

MEN SUPPORT THE FAMILY ALLOWANCE—  
WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK PETITION

As men, we support the campaign for wages for housework, and the petition demanding increased family allowances and wages for housework for all women from the government.

If women were paid a wage by the government for the work they do in the home, there would be—as the women say—'a lot of wages due'. But also women wouldn't be totally dependent on men for money. It's the discipline of having other people depending on them for money that makes married men preferable to single men as far as employers are concerned. Employers take advantage of the fact that married men tend to be steadier workers, that they can't afford to take so many days off, that they have more at stake when they go on strike. At the same time, the responsibilities of married men are a weakness for the single men working with them. Women's dependence on men for money is a weakness for all of us.

In pointing out the huge extent of the unwaged work women have always done—the work of servicing men and bringing up children as well as looking after themselves—women have helped us to see how much unwaged work all *men* do: all that work we do outside the factory or the office, in order to get a wage *inside* the factory or the office. As some men in Toronto put it, in support of another petition in the international Wages for Housework Campaign:

... Take travelling time we *must* spend simply getting to and from work; because this time costs them nothing, they have been able to force a longer workday on us for no additional wage by running down the transportation system. Recently, the *Toronto Star* reported that workers in Toronto are now spending a quarter of a million more hours each day travelling to and from work. . . Added up, all this unpaid work, all this time and energy we put out for free, is producing increasing profits for the corporations, the banks and the governments . . .

But if the government is going to pay wages for housework, where's the money to come from? Many groups and organisations are happy to give their approval when the Social Services Secretary, David Ennals, says the government's aim (with the introduction of Child Benefits) is 'to take more money out of the wallet and put it into the handbag'. The women of the Wages for Housework Campaign have been the only organisation to stand out and say: 'We're entitled to the money in our own right'; and to say that they don't want it to come from the men because, if men take a pay cut, women may be forced to take a cut in housekeeping money. They insist that, contrary to all the State's propaganda, the money's there.

The Labour government is still trying to follow the advice given by the TUC to

the Tory government in 1973, about its Child Tax Credit proposals: 'The impact on the take-home pay of the father could also be substantially mitigated by a *gradual* transition to the new situation. . .' It wants to introduce Child Benefits at men's expense, but a bit at a time, so that men will not notice the loss in take-home pay and explode the Social Contract.

But already men's power—pushed by pressure from women, who have made clear to men what the wage packet no longer buys in the shops—is undermining this plan. Men, led by the Leyland car workers, are saying: We want more money. Healey now has a sharp choice. Either to let the Social Contract be blown away or, in a last attempt to make it look as though it's still intact, to give a pay rise by taking away less tax. If he does cut tax, women will get the new Child Benefit at the same time as men's tax is *reduced*. If he doesn't, men have given notice they will get the money back from their employers.

As women force the government to give them wages for housework, the government can take the money off men only if we let it. With the new Child Benefit, it looks as though it won't be able to. Women have got themselves a bit more money, a bit more power—a £1 benefit for the first child; and by pressing our demands, we're making sure this won't be at our expense, at the expense of men's power against the State.

In supporting women's demand for wages for housework from the government, we want to make it clear that the State must pay, not us. Men have the strength to make sure that the government pays.

#### **Men in Support of the Family Allowance—Wages for Housework Petition**

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