

# Boston Wages for Housework

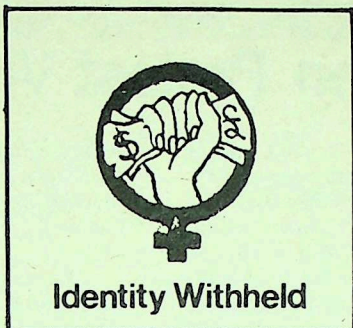
Fall 1977

782-7685  
10 Madeline St. Brighton, MA 02135

## Women Speak Out

### Prostitute

... You want to know what a nice girl like me is doing in a profession like this? I live in a world where men have most of the money and power. I want some. I set an example for other women by demanding a wage for my work, my time, and my services. But the government rips me off.... Everyday, girls who have done nothing worse than take money for their services are arrested. They charge us a fine and the government takes its cut, then they give us something we never had before—a criminal record.



### Woman on Welfare

Nina ... Women on welfare get paid for raising children and caring for the family. This is work that all women do.... In the 60s, the struggle of Black women and other poor women succeeded in winning welfare for all women—the first money we won for the work all women do. But welfare has stigmatized us, so it's looked upon as a charity, and we're called cheats and bums. We don't want a charity, we want wages for our work!



### Waitress

Rona ... Where I work we're given \$1.26 an hour. That's fairly typical, I believe.... The government excludes waitresses from even the lousy, unlivable minimum wage other workers get.... The government is telling me, "Go out there girl, hustle your minimum wages, you can make it on the floor." The government is my pimp!



### Secretary

Nina ... While it took me a few months of training to learn how to type, it took me 21 years of training, the longest job training in the world, to learn to do the housework supposedly "natural" to me as a woman. My real job as a secretary is to keep everyone working by being mother, wife, and sex object rolled into one.



### Teacher

Phyllis ... If you don't know there's a rebellion going on in the schoolrooms today, let me inform you. The children are tearing down the buildings, tearing up the books.... As a teacher, every morning I get paid to leave my housework to do someone else's.... I am faced with an overcrowded school and classrooms full of children who don't want to be there because they know the whole thing is a rip-off. I'm in there supposedly preparing them to go into the labor force.... I get paid for six hours to discipline and lie to children....



### Mother

Didi ... I have no money to educate my child the way I want, to stay home if I choose.... I have to send him to the state's so-called "schools" where he is *not* going to be educated, but rather policed and programmed.... As my child is Black, busing is presented to me as a way to get quality education. How am I supposed to feel comfortable about sending a small child in a bus across town, away from all familiar surroundings, to a hostile environment? Each woman wants the best for her child, and we know that busing will not provide it, but due to our powerlessness we confront each other's resistance and hostility instead of being able to confront the state.... I want the money to educate my child. I want a choice about the kind of education. I want the wages due me!

### Lesbian

Pat ... Many of us don't have the choice to have children, because we have so little money and because as lesbians we always face the threat of losing our children to the state by being called unfit mothers.... This threat is a blackmail of *all* women to make sure that we raise children only in circumstances that will be profitable to business....

### Health Care Worker

Yvonne ... Business and government pimp off the health of women and children on welfare.... When you go into your medicaid mill who's in there? Women and children.... And what are they giving us? Pills, hysterectomies, sterilization, that's what. Forced sterilization is one of the biggest businesses going down. The government sterilizes welfare women for the "crime" of demanding money for the work all women do in the home.... They pass laws to sanction it. They force welfare women to be sterilized, they pay business to perfect sterilization methods, and if they can't force you they'll trick you into signing papers that they say are necessary to get your welfare money....

### Student

Leah ... Being a college student is a four-year job training program.... As women students we have two jobs, schoolwork and housework, but since we have no money for these jobs we often have to take a third job—shit-work—part-time work at the lowest wages....



# To Our Readers

In the past few months, we have witnessed the growing public presence of the Wages for Housework Campaign here in Boston. Boston WFH has been fighting the attacks on welfare women, on prostitutes, against the denial of Medicaid money for abortions; and we have been demanding money for all our work inside and outside the home—all our wages due.

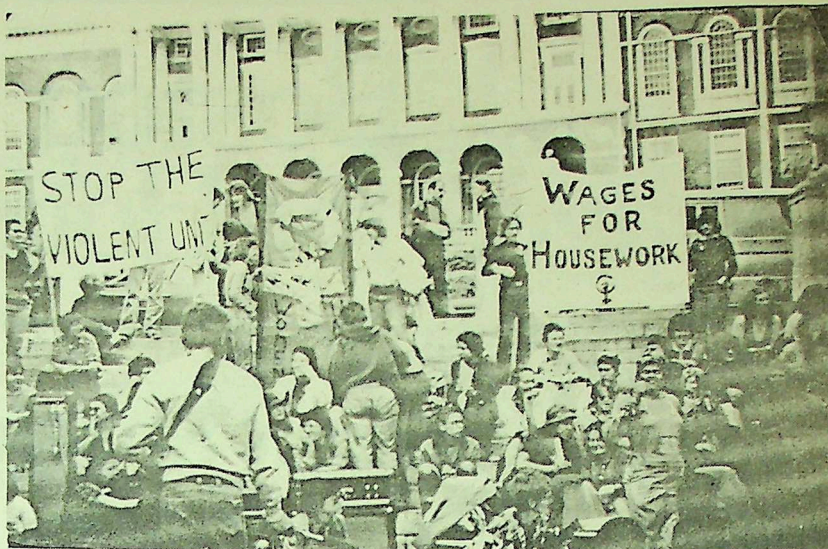
Since our highly successful April Public Meeting featuring Wilmette Brown of Black Women for Wages for Housework (BWFWFH) talking about "Women, Children and Busing", we have sponsored many events, speaking to women through radio, TV, and in the streets.

Following Wilmette's talk in Cambridge, we held an Open House, where we got together with women from all over the city to plan our street trial, Women vs. Business and Government (see p. 4). This event, co-sponsored by BWFWFH, exploded the issue of how business and government make money off the unpaid work of women right onto the streets of downtown Boston.

This event sparked interest from people all over the city and has led to articles in various papers, including *The Herald American*, as well as appearances on radio and TV shows, including *Good Day*. We have also been able to share the event with women who weren't able to make it to the Common by showing our videotape of the trial.

All through the summer, the government has sponsored International Women's Year Conferences throughout the U.S. Our group has made sure that wages for housework was on the agenda. We came with resolutions and demands that spoke to what all women need—more money of our own, less work, and the time to enjoy ourselves (see "IWY Meetings", p. 7).

We also participated in a conference sponsored by a Rhode Island minority women's organization. Along with Davine Henderson of BWFWFH, we held a workshop on "WFH and Domestic Workers". Davine spoke about how getting wages for our housework in the home will raise the wages we receive for the housework we do outside the home, as well as break down the division between women who work outside the home and those who don't. WFH was received enthusiastically by the other women in the workshop, many of whom were themselves domestic workers or had mothers who were.



## Women Protest Violent Unit

On Saturday, October 1, the Coalition Against Institutional Violence sponsored a march of several hundred women through Boston Common. The march protested the government's plan to establish a maximum security prison in Worcester for "criminally insane" women. This prison, a speaker at the rally following the march pointed out, will be used as a threat against women in all other prisons and institutions: if you are violent or step out of line, you will be sent to Worcester.

Boston Wages for Housework endorsed and participated in the demonstration because

we know that prisons and mental institutions are always used as a threat against our struggle to work less and to get paid for our work in the home. Prostitutes know this especially well.

We reiterated at the demonstration a point which a woman from this coalition had made at our street trial: The government is calling for a budget of \$40,000 a year for each woman in the Worcester prison. If they just gave these women that \$40,000 a year, the state would not have a problem with violent women.

Coming up this fall, Boston Wages for Housework will be sponsoring a concert by Boo Watson, a fantastic feminist singer from Toronto. Boo, a member of Wages Due Lesbians, has been touring throughout the U.S., and we are lucky to be getting her to come to Boston for her New England debut. We'll be sending you more specific information about the concert (date, place, etc.) soon.

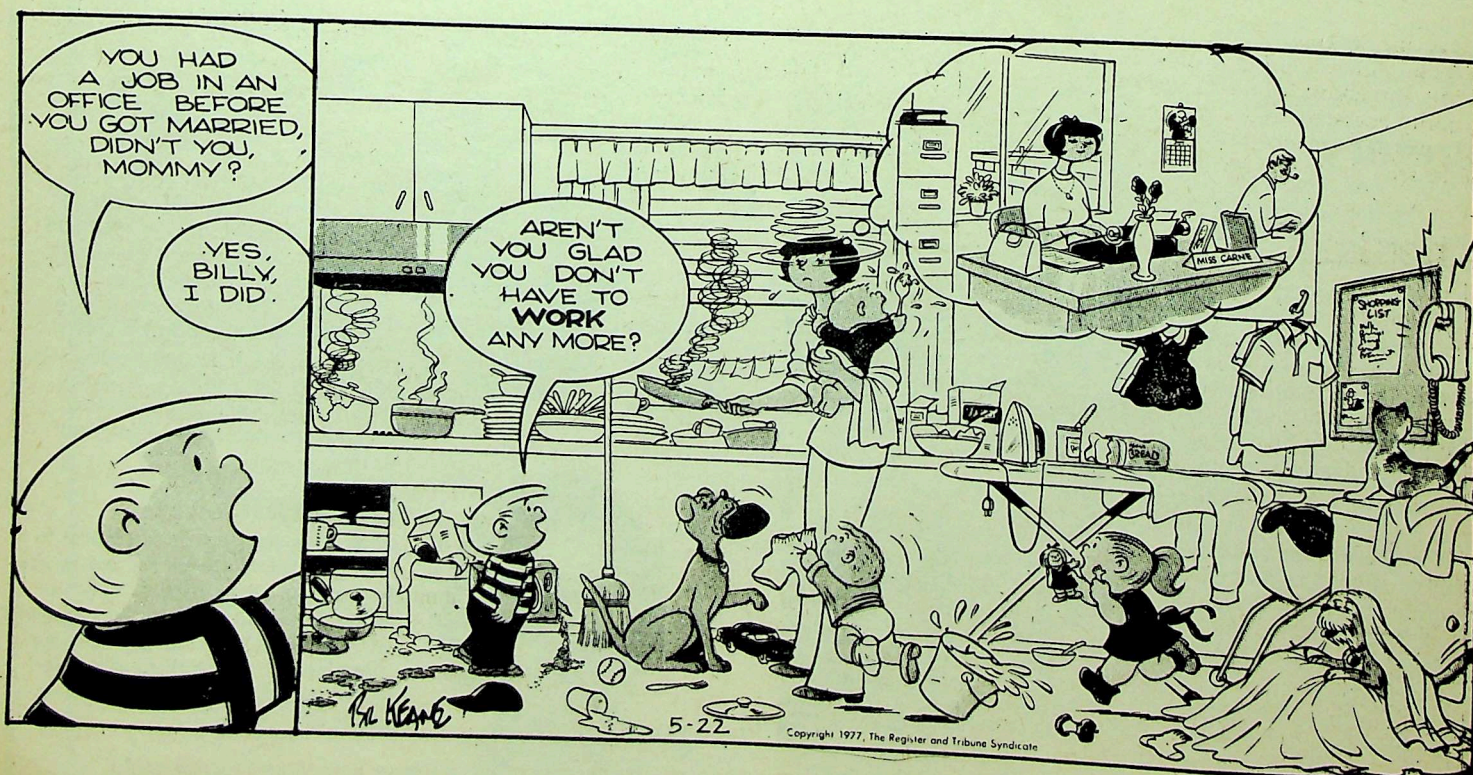
We're also pleased to announce the publication of a new Falling Wall pamphlet, "Lesbianism, Motherhood, and Child Custody" by Francie Wyland of Toronto Wages Due. The pamphlet was recently publicized by a massive picket in front of a Toronto court which was hearing a lesbian mother's child custody case.

The case, and the pamphlet, are part of the growing struggle of lesbians for the right to keep their children after they come out. You can order the pamphlet from Boston WFH.

One more bit of news: Our address has changed to:

Boston Wages for Housework  
10 Madeline St.  
Brighton, MA 02135  
782-7685

So please write us there—we'd really like to hear from you, and hope to print letters in our next issue.





# Abortion, Welfare, and Choice

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." Here in Boston, at the federally sponsored International Women's Year Conference attended by over 1000 women, a resolution was passed demanding access for all women to free abortion, and also demanding paid maternity leave and wages for housework from the government so that we can afford to have the children we want. All over the world, women have been fighting both for access to abortion and the money to have children.

In response to the strong movement we have been building to gain control of our own bodies, governments all over the world have launched a counter-attack. Since our children will be the next generation of workers in the factories, offices, fields and kitchens of the world, government and business have a great interest in controlling which women have children and how many we have. It is no accident that abortion is illegal in Italy and women in the Soviet Union are given awards for having ten children, while at the same time birth control pills are literally shoved down the throats of Indian women, and Puerto Rican women—both here and in Puerto Rico—are sterilized in massive numbers.

According to the records of the Bureau of Public Health in Puerto Rico, forty percent of Puerto Rican women of child-bearing age have been sterilized to date. —Reported in *Sojourner*, Sept. 1977.

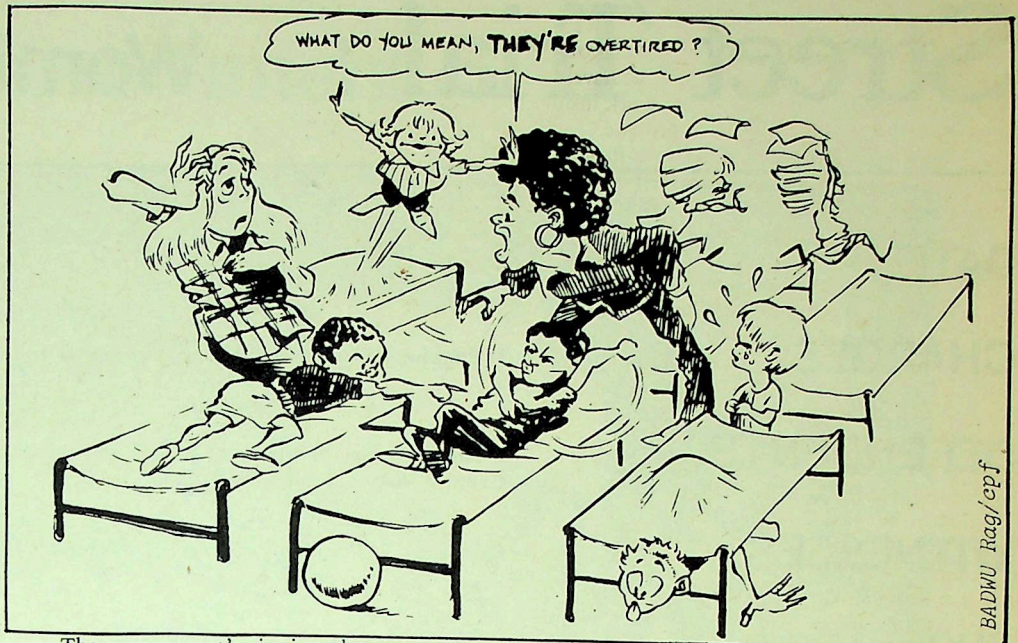
Recently in the United States, the government's attack on our struggle for free abortion and money has focussed on one particular group of women: women on Medicaid. On June 20, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states' Medicaid programs need not pay for abortions. Both the Senate and the House of Representatives have passed legislation which restricts use of federal money for abortion to cases where the woman's life is in danger. President Carter and Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Califano have made no secret of their sympathy for such legislation.

On the state level (states contribute half of Medicaid funds), 28 states have already banned Medicaid abortions, with more likely to follow in the near future. Here in Massachusetts, both the Senate and House voted to cut off Medicaid funds; it was only the inability of the Senate anti-abortion forces to muster the 2/3 majority necessary to override the Governor's veto which saved Medicaid funding. These legislators are still at work on new strategies, however.

## Cutbacks in Welfare

The attack on money for abortions is part of the general attack the state is making on women on welfare. Welfare is a wage some women have won from the government for part of our housework: the work of raising children. For many women, welfare money (pittance though it is) has provided the possibility of having and keeping their children, or of walking out on the man they live with without having their children starve.

Through the massive struggle they made in the 1960's to increase welfare benefits and get on the welfare rolls in unprecedented numbers, women on welfare have provided leadership for all women to demand wages for our work in the home. Because we are all doing that same work, the government's attack on women on welfare is an attack on all women. For when they say welfare mothers are lazy, they are saying that being a mother isn't work, and that housework isn't work. They are saying that none of us are working!



The government's aim is to keep women working at home *for free* taking care of the present generation of workers and raising the next. If we want any money of our own they want us to take on more work—a double shift—outside the home. The government therefore continually tries to keep women off of welfare and to isolate women on welfare from other women. They know how much power we have when we all begin to demand to be paid for our work in the home, our first job, housework. As more of us go on welfare and demand increases in this money, women spoil the plans the government has for us.

As we have come together in a movement demanding money for our housework, the government has intensified the cutbacks against women now on welfare. By denying Medicaid money for abortions, as well as by slashing welfare checks, increasing the harassment of women on welfare, and proposing "workfare" schemes to give us a second job (as though we are not already working hard enough as mothers), the state is attempting to limit our access to welfare. The government is trying to force us back into financial dependence on men, trying to keep us *all* working in our homes for no pay and outside of them for crumbs.

## The Attack on Black Women

The denial of Medicaid money for abortions hits Black and Third World women especially hard, because many have no other alternative for their "health care". Forced sterilization has for years been used as a means of control over Black and Third World women. Now, many will be faced with little alternative.

## The Attack on All Women

These cutbacks on women's access to free abortion are not simply an attack on certain groups of women. They are an attack on all of us.

Some of us have health insurance, either through our husbands or parents, our jobs outside the home, our schools, or (when we can afford it) as individuals. Although in most cases we are forced to pay high premiums for this insurance, it does usually pay for abortions. But the "benefits" paid by insurance companies are greatly influenced by government policies in the Medicaid and Medicare programs. Private companies may soon follow the government's "lead" and cut off money for "elective" abortions.

Those of us who are covered neither by Medicaid nor private insurance companies have

all along been forced to hustle the money for abortions or seek a cheaper coathanger abortion from a backstreet butcher. Now, by eliminating Medicaid coverage for abortion, the state is telling *all of us*: "If you need an abortion, get the money from a man or in a low-paying second job, or risk your life at the hands of a quack."

## Sterilization in Many Forms

Many women today have decided not to have more children, or any children at all, because every child means more isolation, more dependence, *more poverty, and more unpaid work for us. Others of us refuse to have children because having a job outside the home is one of the few ways of getting some money of our own; we can't handle (or "juggle", as the magazines say) both children and another job, so we "choose" the second job. This is forced sterilization, not a real choice.*

Millions of mothers—lesbian and straight—are trapped in relationships with men because we can't afford to leave, for fear of losing our children, or simply because we don't have the money to walk out. Many lesbian women have had to give up our children, or the possibility of ever having them, in order to come out. This, too, is sterilization.

## Women Fight Back

But women are coming together internationally to fight against this situation. We are meeting the government's denial of money for abortions by demanding free abortion on demand for all women. At the same time, we are fighting *all* the ways that the government is trying to cut back the money we have won for our work in the home, by demanding wages for housework for all women from the government. As we win both free abortion and money to have the children we want, we win a *real choice*—which we have never had before—as to whether or not we become mothers.

**Can You Afford A Child Today? The \$64,000 Question.** "Raising a child, including education at a state-supported university, costs a typical middle-income family \$64,000. . . .

"A low-income family can raise a child a bit cheaper—only \$44,000 on the average, said Thomas J. Espenshade, associate professor of economics at Florida State University."

—*Boston Globe*, May 3, 1977

Apparently some children *need less* than others!



# Street Trial : Women vs

**DATE:**

May 16, 1977

**CHARGES:**

1) Pimping Off of Prostitutes: 2) Pimping Off the Work of All Women

**DEFENDENTS:**

President Carter, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Califano, General Motors, John Does 1-50

**WITNESSES:**

Prostitute, Welfare Mother, Teacher, Secretary, Housewife

**JURY:**

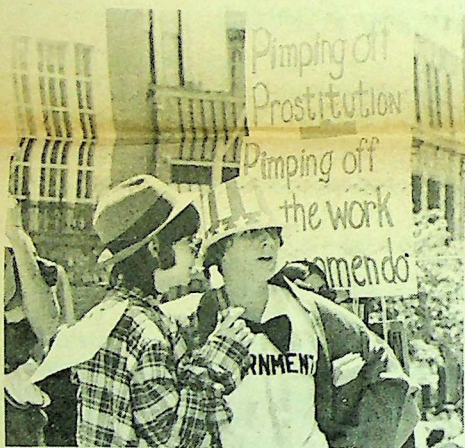
All Women

**VERDICT:**

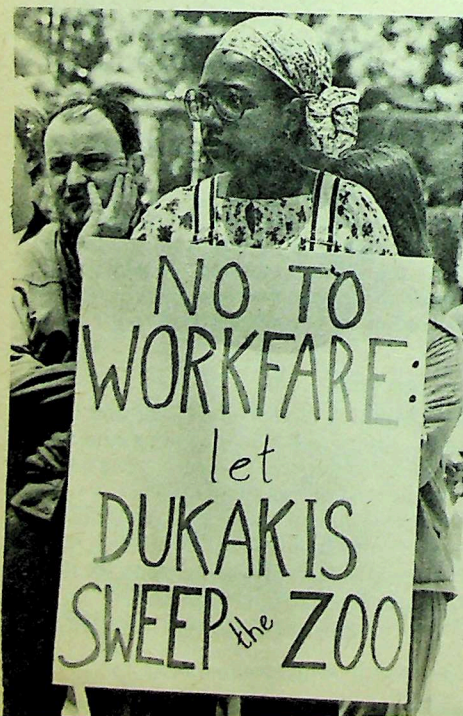
Guilty

**SENTENCE:**

Eternity of Unpaid Housework



Business and Government prepare their defense



The trial we held in Boston was part of the International Wages for Housework Campaign's struggle against the crackdowns which are going on against prostitutes and welfare women—crackdowns on women who have won money for some of their housework. Here in Boston, we have been fighting against the state's "workfare" plans, Carter's welfare "reforms", cutbacks in welfare and food stamp payments, and harassment of prostitutes. For in building a campaign to be paid for all our work, we are starting by defending the money we have already won. Similar trials were held in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and London.

Business and government pimp off the work of prostitutes through "respectable" hotels, which run their own pimping services and use prostitutes to fill their rooms, and through other tourist industries, which depend on prostitutes to attract customers to the city. Front establishments, such as motels, hotels, and massage parlors profit off their work. The government, too, takes its cut in the form of fines and payoffs. Mastercharge and other credit card companies allow men to buy now and pay later. Prostitute women are continually faced with police brutality, jail sentences, and having their children taken away from them by the courts—all for the "crime" of taking money for the sexual work which *all* women do.

As the statement "An Attack on Prostitutes is an Attack on All Women" circulated by Wages for Housework and widely endorsed by women's groups all over the world stated:

Sex is supposed to be personal, always a free choice, different from work. But it's not a free choice when we are dependent on men for money. We are expected to be sexual service stations and because of that, sex becomes a bargaining point between ourselves and men. When any of us sleep with a man, at least to some degree, we are forced to consider what we are going to get in return for "giving"—money, the rent, or better treatment in other ways. Those of us who are prostitutes not only calculate, but put a price on our services and make men meet it. The link between unpaid sex and paid sex is a question of what we get in return.

All work is prostitution and we are all prostitutes. We are forced to sell our bodies—for room and board or for cash, in marriage, on the street, in typing pools or in factories. And as we win wages for *all* the work we do, we develop the power to refuse prostitution in any of its forms.

Even if we are not professional prostitutes, business and government use our work to make money. It is our job to produce the workers who make profits for business: that's what housework is. Our unpaid housework—cooking, cleaning, comforting, *and* screwing—gets everyone to work each day. And it's our housework which enables them to "recover" from that work so that they can face it all again the next morning. But despite the fact that without our work all industry would grind to a halt, we receive no money for our housework. Business and government get all this labor for free.

If we work outside the home in a second job on top of the first one in the home, it's the same story. We find ourselves doing the same work outside the home as we do in it. As nurses, teachers, prostitutes, waitresses, secretaries, domestic workers, we do the caring, cleaning and servicing, the sexual work, the looking good, the smiling. And since this work is unpaid inside the home, business can underpay us outside the home. They profit from our unpaid and lowpaid work wherever we are.





# Business and Government

photography by Jeanette Muzima

## ADDRESSES:

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Brooklyn, NY 11201

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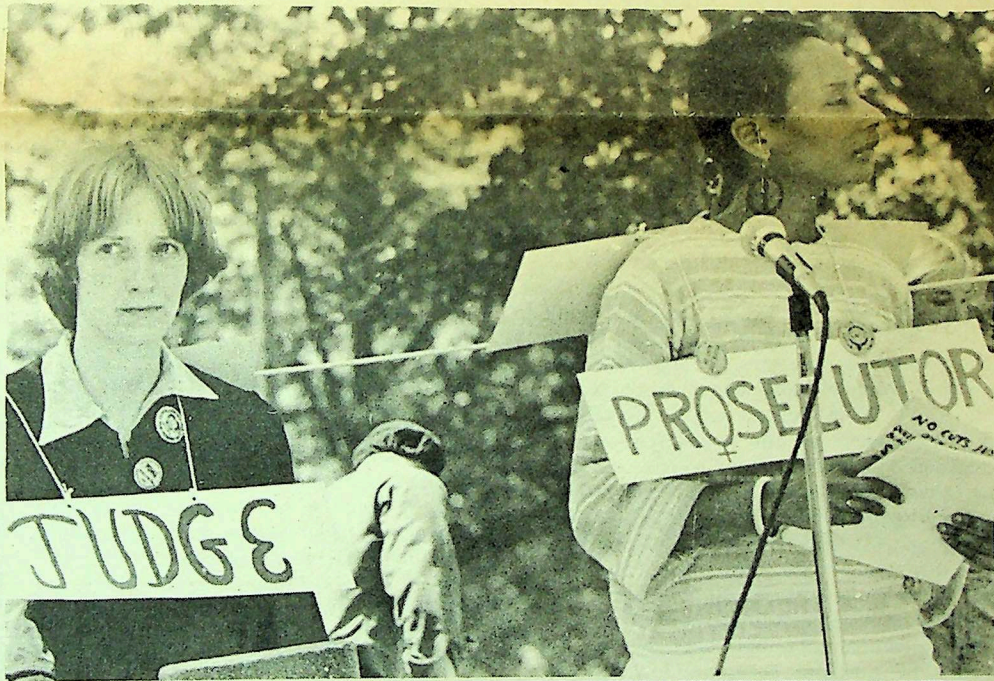
It is true that, whether we are professional prostitutes or not, business and government pimp off our sexuality. Advertising uses our bodies to sell products, while magazines and films use our bodies to sell themselves. Offices, stores, showrooms use our "sex appeal" to please clients, make sales, and keep everyone working hard.

Like prostitute women, women on welfare have struggled to be paid for the work all women do: producing workers for business. They are the first women to win wages from the government for one part of that work: raising children. Like prostitutes, they have refused to work for free.

The government has responded by attacking and harassing welfare women. The state has tried to convince women that welfare is a charity, not a wage. This is a lie: they are saying that *none of us* are working, and that none of us should be paid. The state has kept welfare below subsistence level, to keep all women working harder. They are trying to tell us that the price of winning wages for our work is poverty and isolation. They continually harass welfare women by interfering with our lives, by kicking us off the rolls, by taking away our children, and through "workfare" schemes—as though we're not working already, in our homes, as though we need more work, rather than more money.

By harassing welfare women and prostitutes, the state is attempting to divide these women from the rest of us. They are giving us a warning: don't demand wages for your work, don't step out of line—or else. By calling welfare women "cheats" and "chiselers", by terming prostitutes "whores" and "sluts", the state seeks to convince us that there are two kinds of women: the "bad women" who demand money for their work, and the "good women" who—they hope—will be content to work hard for free.

In staging our street trial, we rejected this division. Women at the trial, like women all over, were *refusing* to be isolated from the power that prostitutes and welfare women have won. We came together at the trial on the basis of our common situation as unpaid housewife and our common need for more money.





# Women Against Rape

## Public Trial in London

This summer five hundred women held a public trial in Trafalgar Square, one of the busiest parts of downtown London. The trial was called by *Women Against Rape*, a London-based group. The women charged British government officials with rape, conspiracy to rape and perpetrate violence against women, and trespassing against women's bodies and women's rights. A march of several hundred women through the streets of London preceded the trial. The event was covered by the press in England and throughout the world.

### Why a Public Trial

This trial spearheaded the efforts of the Women Against Rape group to recall three judges from the bench, as well as to win financial compensation for rape victims and to eliminate the conditions—particularly financial dependence—which cause rape. These three judges stirred widespread public outrage when they let a British soldier accused of raping a young woman go free. The judges' reasoning: a conviction would disgrace the British army and ruin the soldier's army career. Carol Maggs, the rape victim, did what more and more rape victims are doing—she voiced her anger, to other women and to the press.

The anger of women about the Carol Maggs case led to several actions culminating in the street trial. Following the judges' verdict in the Maggs case, the words "Women Unite Against Rape" appeared on military statues in London. The following week, a group of women entered the court of Judge Roscoll (one of the three), shouted slogans and insults from the gallery, and forced him to leave the court. Following this, a group of women invaded the Ministry of Defense to protest the Army's brutality toward women. They experienced the harassment and disrespect women have come to expect from the military internationally: they were physically attacked.

### The Trial

By the day of the trial, the anger that had been built up made many women eager to tell their stories. As in the street trial in Boston (see p. 4), women from many different situations came to the microphone to talk publicly about their own personal experiences—this time, their experience with rape. Carol Maggs was the first witness. Another woman told, for the first time in her life, of how she'd been raped when she was fifteen: "I found my tongue 18 years later in Judge Roscoll's court." A married woman told about being beaten and raped by her husband. A stripper testified how the judge in her rape trial told her she had "nothing to lose" by being raped.

As women from different situations began to see what they had in common, they began to uncover rape in all its forms. A lesbian and a prostitute spoke about how their isolation made them particularly vulnerable to rape—and to rape again by the courts who saw them as "asking for it". A woman testified that beating children (who are also powerless and have no money) in schools is rape. A black woman spoke about rape in the ghetto and another black woman, Wilmette Brown from Black Women for Wages for Housework-New York, spoke about the rape of Africa. "The British Empire still exists," she said. "It just has another name, the United States."

As in our trial in Boston, the jury was composed of all the women present. Resoundingly, they found the defendants guilty.

The trial was organized by and for women. Men, for the most part, supported this decision. One group published a statement which said:

We fear for all the women close to us—mothers, sisters, wives, daughters, and friends. But we understand that women must be in charge of their own defense [against rape], and that the first line of their defense must be against men. Therefore, we endorse absolutely the demand of Women Against Rape that the march they have called... be for women only... While women are organizing their self-defense against us, they are also attacking the source of the violence which we are encouraged to take out on them: ... industry and government.

### Women Against Rape

Ruth Hall, activist in the Wages for Housework Campaign and founder of Women Against Rape, said of Carol Maggs' experience in Roscoll's court: "This case has epitomized everything we are against. Women from all over the country and from abroad have written to us giving their support. The judges' attitudes are similar to those held by the police, by doctors, and by authorities in general. The idea they have is that any woman who has been raped is in some way responsible for the rape, that it was her fault." And it is this situation, as well as the causes of rape in the first place, that *Women Against Rape* has dedicated itself to eliminating.

The group's aim is to expose and fight against rape in all its forms. One of WAR's activities has been to conduct a random survey of women to establish just how widespread rape is. What they found is that it's much more prevalent than even they had thought. Women have been intimidated from speaking about our own rape because of how rape victims are treated. But women are starting to talk about it—the trial in Trafalgar Square proved that—and what women are saying is that rape happens not just when we meet a stranger in a dark alley, but also when we go to work, and at home.

In fact, rape, like charity, begins at home. In the home, where a man is often bringing in all or most of a family's income, he expects certain services from the woman dependent on him: clean shirts, hot meals, and the satisfaction of HIS sexual demands. And women, with little or no money of our own, have often had little choice: without money, you can't say no.

Women are less and less often accepting this situation. As we win money for ourselves, money to get out from endless housework and endless subordination, we are challenging men's "conjugal rights". More and more, women are refusing to have sex when and how HE wants. Women are saying that we are not going to be forced into sexual relations—or relationships. To "make love" because you and your children have no other means of support is rape, whether he hits you or not.

When a woman is raped in the street, she is the one who is treated as a criminal: "What was she doing out at that time of night?" "Why doesn't she get herself a boyfriend?" "Why wasn't she safe at home in 'her place'?" Recently in California, for example, a woman was raped while hitchhiking. Her rapist was let off, with the judge saying that she was "asking for it". When a woman brings a rape case to the courts, she often feels that she's been raped all over again: by the courts, by the police, by the doctors, and by the media, all of whom, like the rapist, treat her with violence and lack of respect.

Increasingly, women are refusing to accept rape by all authorities, by men on the street, in our paid workplaces, and by the men we live with. Rape, and women's daily resistance to it, are not new, but the battle is becoming more intense. *Women Against Rape* refuses to accept that rape is inevitable, or that individual rapists are the only ones responsible. WAR's Statement of Aims calls for the recognition of rape in all its forms, including in marriage, and demands that the state accept responsibility for preventing and eliminating rape, that women who bring rape cases to court not be put on trial as the criminal, that rape victims be treated with respect and care and receive financial compensation. Finally, WAR demands money for all women, for only this can eliminate rape by eliminating the poverty and dependence of women which lies behind it.

Contact WAR at: 29 Lydford Rd.  
London, N15, England

#### WOMEN WIN VICTORY AGAINST RAPE

In Wisconsin, Judge Simonson excused a youth from the charge of raping a 15-year old girl, calling rape "a normal reaction to our permissive society." There was a massive and instant protest of this; over 21,000 people signed a petition of recall. The judge was then ousted by a special election.

#### Black Women: Worldwide Struggle

Wilmette Brown, of Black Women for Wages for Housework-New York, has been traveling these last few months and meeting Black and Third World women all over the United States and Europe.

On African Liberation Day, April 23, Wilmette was the keynote speaker of a conference on South Africa at Oberlin College in Ohio. She was honored by a standing ovation after her speech which clearly analyzed the crucial struggles that women and children are making Soweto: burning down sterilization clinics, schools, and buses transporting the men to factories ten miles away in Johannesburg where they work for a mere six dollars a week. Her speech made it clear that the situation of South African women and their struggles against the ghetto of Soweto is the same fight being waged by Black women in the United States—and that the Wages for Housework Campaign is the power to move against all ghettos.

In Europe, her powerful speeches as well as the power of the Campaign made her a visible figure at several large conferences. She was an influential participant at the International Socialist-Feminist Symposium in Paris where many of the 500 women attending were eager to hear more of the Campaign. In England, her visit was a catalyst in the formation of a Black Women for Wages for Housework group in Bristol. Wilmette spoke to Black women in Germany, who are also in the process of forming a Wages for Housework group.



## U.S.A. : Women Say What We Want

When the state-elected delegates come together in Houston this November for the U.S. International Women's Year (IWY) National Convention, Wages for Housework will definitely be on the agenda. At statewide meetings held across the U.S. and its territories this summer, women came together with talk to each other about our lives, the things we want, and how we hope to get them. Fighting the social service and welfare cutbacks and getting money of our own were high on the list of topics we discussed. Wages for Housework groups were present at 6 state meetings and had a large impact upon them. In Massachusetts, a resolution demanding wages for housework for all women from the government was enthusiastically endorsed by the 1000 women present.

This year's IWY meetings were commissioned by the U.S. Congress as a follow-up to the 1976 IWY meeting held in Mexico City. The stated purpose of these meetings was to involve women "from all walks of life" (but they left out the streetwalkers!) in the process of nominating and electing delegates to a national women's convention and passing resolutions which, after approval at the national level, would be sent as a report to the President.

Although talk about involving "grass-roots women" and "giving every woman a chance to speak her mind" was prevalent in the statewide planning meetings, time and again the planners of the conferences limited participation in workshops, cut off discussion, and denied us access to information. When a New York woman asked to see the nominations list, she was refused, on the grounds that the nominating committee had it "in hiding". At the Rhode Island meeting, women were cut off in mid-sentence when "time expired" on the debate—even when there was still lots more to be said. The situation was so bad in California that a coalition was formed on the second day of the three-day convention to demand that their "unofficial" resolutions and nominations be heard. Women in other states learned from that experience and formed coalitions prior to the conventions so as to be sure that they were represented on the agenda.

The confusion, bureaucracy, and obstacles to participation which were evident at all the IWY meetings were not the fault of individual women on the planning committees. The chaos was planned into the meetings by Washington. Contrary to what the government claimed, it did not want to provide us with an opportunity to really get together and talk with each other as women. On the contrary, the "official rules" which governed the meetings were designed to increase our isolation from each other by stifling discussion.

But in state after state, women refused Washington's plans. We don't have the time nor the desire to spend hours at a meeting which doesn't serve our needs. We rebelled against the nominating process, against the debate time that was so limited, against the resolutions procedure which distorted our ideas and demands, against the registration fees which made it too expensive for many women to attend.

These fights opened the way to breaking down our isolation from each other. Conversation was non-stop. Many women stopped by the exhibits and displays in order to make contact with other groups of women. And we, the WFH Campaign, were present all over the country. In California we circulated a statement entitled "Lesbian Women Have Rights and So Do Our Children", which defends our right to be lesbian without paying the price of childlessness. In New York, Margaret Prescod-Roberts, a member of Black Women for Wages for Housework and a spokesperson for the International



Philadelphia Gay Rights Rally July 24, 1977

### Toronto: Waitresses Demand Higher Wages

Waitresses in Toronto are organizing to fight the government's attack. Waitresses from the Wages for Housework Campaign along with other waitresses have formed the Waitresses' Action Committee, demanding both an increase in the minimum wage for waitresses and wages for all the hidden work that they now do for free: setting-up time, cleaning uniforms, etc. These women have sent a brief with their demands to the Ministries of Labor and Industry and Tourism, and have gained much support from many other organizations. In response to the waitresses' demands, the Ministry is considering holding public hearings on the minimum wage laws, proving that the Waitresses' Action Committee has driven a wedge into the Government's closed-door decision-making policy.

This attack on workers who receive tips is an attack on all women. Most of the minimum wage earners in Ontario are women, and the majority of tipped workers in the hotel industry are women. All women work for free in the home and it is no accident that the work women get outside the home is usually an extension of housework—and at "special" women's wages, 55% of men's. The minimum wage is already too little to live on and yet the government is trying, once again, to force women to absorb the costs of the industry's "crisis".

The tourist industry in Ontario claims that it's in a crisis of declining profits. As a solution, the government has proposed to widen the gap

between the standard minimum wage and that of workers earning tips in hotels and restaurants. The government claims that these workers "are making huge sums of money from tips and should take a lower basic wage to compensate." There is already a difference in the minimum wage for tipped and non-tipped workers. While the standard hourly minimum wage is \$2.65, it is only \$2.50 for tipped workers. However, the government is now considering widening this gap from 15¢ to 50¢ an hour. The tips waitresses make are not easy to come by: they have to hustle, smile all the time, be "fondled" by men. And after all this, they often have to split their tips with busboys, hostesses, cooks, etc. Certainly what is left of the tips does not make up for the differential in wages.

The Waitresses' Action Committee is fighting to eliminate the differential in minimum wages and to raise the minimum wage for everyone—and to win all their wages due. For more information on how the Waitresses' Action Committee is trying to make the Government pay, contact:

Ellen Agger  
Waitresses' Action Committee  
112 Spruce St. Toronto, Canada  
OR

WFH Campaign Office  
745 Danforth Ave., Suite 301  
Toronto, Canada

WFH Campaign, was a keynote speaker. WFH groups throughout the country received radio and TV coverage on our participation. We also circulated a statement on abortion which demands the right to free abortion as well as money for all our housework so that we can afford to have the children we want. This statement received an overwhelming positive response and was immediately used by other groups in putting forth their demands.

In Massachusetts, most of Boston WFH's resolutions were passed, and will be sent as official recommendations to the national in Houston. Our demands included: (1) Medicaid funding for abortions, and an end to the welfare cuts; (2) an end to the harassment of lesbian women; (3) wages for housework for all women from all governments. Based on the

power built in all the state meetings, Margaret Prescod-Roberts will be sent as an official delegate to the National Convention. She will be accompanied by a delegation from the WFH Campaign in the U.S. and Canada.

The state meetings are finished now and the state delegates are preparing for the National Convention in November. At this point it is clear that Washington will not get the kind of report it had hoped for. The government had hoped to use these meetings as an opportunity to get their plans together for us, but instead we took the time to develop our own strategies. As we used the state meetings to be in touch with each other locally, we can use this National Convention to plan our struggle nationally. And perhaps that's why the planners have tried so hard to keep us from talking to each other.



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