

...PETITION... PETITION... PETITION...

Money for Waitresses is money for all women!

The tourist industry claims to be in a crisis of declining profits. What are they proposing as a solution? That the government increase the difference between the standard minimum wage and that of workers earning tips in hotels and restaurants. They are suggesting 50¢ an hour less for us because they claim waitresses and waiters make "huge amounts" in tips and can well afford a cut in wages.

But who are they talking about? The majority (80%) of tipped workers in hotels and restaurants are women. Because we do the same kind of work for free in our homes, we are forced to accept bargain-basement wages when we get jobs outside. Most waitresses make only the minimum wage and many of us work part-time. As a result, we are forced to depend on tips to make ends meet.

The system of tipping makes us dependent on the goodwill of the individual customer. Like all other women, we resent being forced to hustle for our money, because often it amounts to a form of prostitution. We want it directly through higher wages. In fact, tipping subsidizes the industry and keeps everyone's wages low -- both waitresses and other employees who regularly receive a cut of the tips.

But we aren't going to give up our tips until we are assured of a decent wage in return. And we object to paying taxes on our tips as long as our wages are so low and benefits (such as unemployment insurance) are calculated on the wages alone and not on our tips.

As with the cuts in the family allowance and unemployment insurance, tightening up of welfare, and soaring prices, the government and industry are once again going after those with the least power -- women. The full-time housewife, the secretary, or the nurse of today is the waitress of yesterday or tomorrow. We are all feeling the

squeeze and we refuse to stand still while the government makes another attack on our paycheque and the independence that goes with it. Every woman wants as many options open as she can get to have money of her own -- including working as a waitress with the possibility of hustling harder when we need more money.

- Would a standardized "service charge" help these problems? No.
- we would risk losing our tips altogether, as we have no assurance that employers would turn the money over to us,
 - we would lose the possibility of making more money by hustling harder,
 - the gap between men's and women's wages would once again widen, because men tend to get the jobs in the classier restaurants where the tips are higher,
 - whether we work in a fancy restaurant or the local coffee shop, our work is the same. We want the same wage for all of us, not dependent on the class of restaurant or customer,
 - and we want the money to come from the employers' pockets -- customers certainly don't have enough to keep footing the bill.

We want that money in higher wages. And we want money for all the unpaid work we now do -- from buying and cleaning uniforms, hours of free labour at both ends of our shift and often no breaks, to kickbacks we are forced to pay to management to keep our jobs. We need better working conditions and job security. When we get that money, we can say what those working conditions will be and how much we will work.

WAITRESSES' ACTION COMMITTEE
WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK CAMPAIGN

The Waitresses' Action Committee has submitted a brief to the Ontario Government demanding an end to all "tip differentials" in the minimum wage and wages for all the work we now do for free. Support has come from all over Ontario for the brief. For the brief, more petitions, and more information on our organizing, contact:

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