

MAYDAY IN TORONTO

At noon on Friday, May 2, City Hall square was full of sun and full of people. Many were from nearby offices having lunch, many were en route to government offices, and some were there specifically for the rally.

It began with live music and soon we were speaking to a crowd of 250 people. Many of them were women - secretaries, clerical workers, immigrants - all of them listening intently and taking our leaflets away with them.

Eight of us spoke from our different situations. As nurses. As waitresses. As office and factory workers. As full-time housewives. As welfare mothers. As lesbians. Each of us linking ourselves to one another, and with one set of introductory remarks connecting our struggle for wages for housework to the rest of the working class and to the self-activity of women internationally. The rally lasted $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours and, during that time, we spoke to approximately 500 people.

The media was there and we received very wide coverage; several radio news spots, that morning announcing our rally, 5 or 6 radio interviews in the course of the rally, national TV news coverage (5 minute report), and 3 local TV news items. We reached ~~thousands~~ ^{to build} more than were there with us and our work in the coming months is ~~sure~~ a stronger public presence locally and throughout Canada.

We video-taped the entire rally and are now editing it down to $\frac{1}{2}$ hour for use on local cable TV. We are also preparing a 1 hour version to be distributed nationally (and internationally) along with a "mayday pamphlet" which carries all the speeches, songs, graphics, etc. We are planning to use them extensively as an organizing tool in the coming months. The national feminist magazine "The Other Woman" is carrying two of our speeches in its forthcoming issue.

In preparation for the rally, the Committee issued 5000 leaflets in four languages (Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and English), and at the rally itself distributed 1000 more in English. We spoke to a number of women's groups - tenants', daycare, employees, etc. - and to thousands more in 2 phone-in radio talk shows (2 hours long!) and one brief TV appearance.

Two weeks before the rally, there was a full-page article on the first page of the "Woman's Section" in the Toronto Star (paid circ. 750,000) titled "Should Housewives be Paid?". It presented the Committee's position and spoke about our rally and the international network. For the next 3 days the telephone in our office rang constantly - women calling from all over the city saying "right on", "it's about time", etc.

And since the rally, opportunities to speak at conferences, women's groups, and on the media keep coming in. Last week Judy debated Laura Sabia (Chairperson of the Ontario Status of Women Council) in the top national public affairs radio program, "As It Happens", challenging the whole current in feminism that sees women's exploitation as consisting of "underutilization" and our liberation as depending on more work and the solvency of the State. Also last week, we spoke at a conference of university women where another video-tape was

made for cable TV - to be supplemented with a studio interview and a report on the ongoing activities of the Committee and the international network.

The Mayday rally served as an "announcement" that we are on the scene on that we are beginning our organizing to get wages for housework. It has given us the public visibility we need in order to begin functioning as a reference point to women in all different situations throughout Ontario and Canada. It has opened up possibilities for our political work which before seemed distant and formidable.

Our immediate priority is the preparation of the mayday materials for mass distribution. The "Women's Liberation Bookmobile", staffed by two sisters from the Wages Due Collective is touring all of Ontario - urban and rural centers - throughout the summer, and establishing contacts throughout the province. Some of us are travelling extensively throughout Canada during our summer holidays and setting up meetings wherever we go. We must pull together and ~~then~~ build on what was started two years ago at the Feminist Symposium in Montreal when 800 women passed a resolution demanding wages for housework from the State.

The Toronto Mayday Rally got us off to a running start.