

# Wages for Housework Campaign Bulletin



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## “Hey, housewife — you’re worth \$6,000 a year”

by Judith Ramirez

“Look up from that dishpan and smile, Canadian housewife. Today, the federal Advisory Council on the Status of Women announced that your work is worth at least \$26 billion a year to the economy, or \$6,000 for every household in the country.

It’s the first time ever that thorough research has been done into the content and value of Canadian housework, and it’s an eye-opener. The council’s 90-page report, called **Five Million Women** says that those 5 million are producing services equal to 27 per cent of the gross national product.”

So began a recent article in the Toronto Star. The business of calculating the value of housework is catching on like wildfire! Why, only 3 years ago, when we launched our campaign, everyone said “it can’t be done”, “how can you quantify love?”, etc. But now the economists are hard at work, and not only in Canada:

### IN THE USA

In July 1977, “Family Circle” magazine published figures from the Prudential Life Insurance Company estimating the value of woman’s work in the home at \$283.49 a week.



R. Nissim

### IN BRITAIN

On Valentine’s Day 1978, the Liberty Life Assurance Company estimated the value of women’s work in the home at £115 a week (\$230.00).

### IN ITALY

In Oct. 1977, a Parliamentary recommendation was made that called for paying Italy’s 12 million full-time housewives a salary of \$60 a month. Included is the provision that the salary be automatically increased with the cost of living.

The IWY International Interdependency Task Force has recently called on all governments throughout the world to include the value of housework in the Gross National Product of their countries. In the USA, the richest country in the world, it would amount to 350 billion dollars a year, or 24% of the GNP!

If you think you deserve to be paid for your housework, write to your MP and tell him so. Send us a copy of your letter and we’ll print some in our next Bulletin.

## EDITORIAL



## HOUSTON: Equality begins with money

The following press release was issued by the International Wages for Housework Campaign after the National Women’s Conference last fall, attended by 20,000 women. Judith Ramirez, Francie Wyland and Ellen Agger were international observers representing Canada.

At the International Women’s Year National Women’s Conference (November 18-21, 1977) in Houston, Texas, the Wages for Housework Campaign announced itself as a national and international force.

Margaret Prescod-Roberts of Black Women for Wages for Housework (USA), a delegate from New York State, led the Wages for Housework contingent which came from many states as well as Canada and Britain. We were determined that the conference should go on record against Carter’s Welfare Reform “Program for Better Jobs and Income” now before Congress. We were determined that welfare, the wages some women have won, would not be lost at Houston.

Many other individuals and organizations came to Houston to fight the welfare women’s cause, among them three dele-

gates who were leaders of the great women’s movement for welfare in the 1960’s — Frankie Mae Jeter, Beulah Sanders, and Johnnie Tillmann.

The question we all faced was how, on behalf of all the women who could not afford to be at Houston, to refuse Carter’s Welfare “Reform” which the official resolution in the proposed National Plan of Action endorsed.

On the agenda in alphabetical order, welfare was as usual at the bottom. Money for women, either on welfare or in low-paying jobs, single or married, lesbian or straight — and always one man away from welfare — was scheduled to come last, the anti-climax after the “feminist” issues.

But welfare isn’t just “another feminist issue.” It’s every woman’s insurance policy against complete dependence and starvation.

Pro-Plan, the ruling coalition of the conference, discouraged any departure from the official resolutions, all of which they backed. They claimed that Pro-Life (the anti-abortion coalition) would use debate on any issue as the occasion to block the three

resolutions which Pro-Plan considered crucial: ERA, abortion, and lesbian rights. But they were wrong.

Another coalition emerged.

The “Pro-Money Coalition” which included disabled women, Black, Hispanic, and Native American women, lesbian women, prostitute women and homemakers — placed, replaced and “displaced” — made welfare, the money we have already won, the focus for all other issues. The power to refuse rape, battering, and low-paying jobs — and to win childcare, education, custody and lesbian rights, as well as the choice to have or not to have children, depends on our access to money. Money is the power to live our own lives and make our own plans.

As we discussed in our own groups, caucused with each other and lobbied the delegates, the Wages for Housework Campaign demonstrated that together we have the power to change the agenda, refuse Carter’s Reform, keep the money we have already won, and demand more. Pro-Money was able to win over both Pro-Plan and Pro-Life.

As the substitute resolution on welfare was being presented, a banner carried by Black and Hispanic women demanding “No Cuts — Just Bucks” moved through the coliseum. And from the bleachers Black and white women of all ages from every region chanted together: “Every mother is a working mother.” Not even the Ku Klux Klan, which was openly present in the Mississippi delegation, could deny that!

The substitute welfare resolution which was overwhelmingly passed states:

The elimination of poverty must be a priority for all those working for equal rights for women.

We support increased federal funding for income transfer programs (e.g. Social Security, S.S.I., AFDC). Congress should approve a federal floor under payments to provide an adequate standard of living based on each state’s cost of living. And just as with other workers, homemakers receiving payments should be afforded the dignity of having that payment called a wage, not welfare.

We oppose the Carter Administration proposal for welfare reform (HR 9030) which among other things eliminates food stamps, CETA training and CETA jobs paying more than minimum wage, adequate daycare, and introduces “workfare” where welfare mothers would be forced to “work off their grants, which is work without a wage, without fringe benefits or bargaining rights, and without dignity.

We strongly support a welfare reform program developed from on-going consultation with persons who will be impacted.

“The women from the bottom of America fought for a place on the agenda and won,” said Margaret Prescod-Roberts. “We were what was happening at Houston. The other women, some of them on their way to the top of U.S. government and industry, saw that. They dropped their own resolution and backed ours.

“The next battles are first for implementation and second to extend the victory of wages to women everywhere who work for free or for peanuts.”

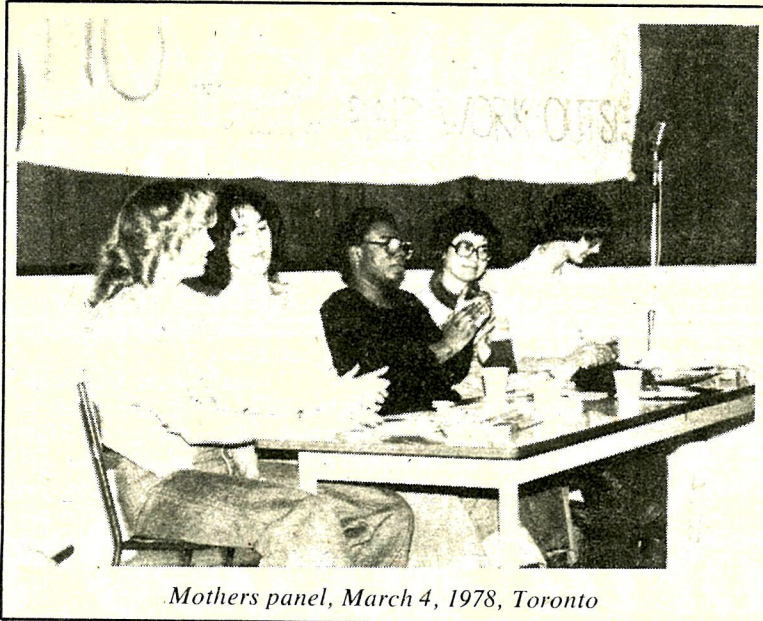
# Teens and women speak out!

by Frances Gregory

The first of Toronto's International Women's Day Celebrations this year was also a first in the city's recent history. For it brought together women on welfare, hookers, lesbians, students, full and part-time housewives, and our children, under the theme "Women and Teens Unite".

Sponsored by the Wages for Housework Campaign; the Regent Park Teens Association, an unemployed youth group; Wages Due Lesbians; BEAVER, a hookers' rights group; Waitresses' Action Committee; and Payday, a group of men supporting their "dependents" fight for money of their own, the press release explained it all. "According to official estimates, welfare mothers in Ontario receive only 60% of what they need to live. The wage gap between men and women is over 50% and growing. The unemployment rate among teens has reached 15%. As the economy flounders, it is women and youth who are getting it in the neck. A new coalition of women and youth is emerging, based on our common need for money."

The festival took place in a school in the Regent Park area. Display tables had been set up around the gym by the sponsoring groups as well as the Metropolitan Community Church, Nellie's Women's Hostel and women sel-



Mothers panel, March 4, 1978, Toronto

S. Oltuski

ling a variety of crafts.

By the time the Festival was to begin, the gym was filled with women — Black, immigrant, native Canadian, white: women of all ages coming from organizations and as individuals; women from Regent Park, Don Mount Court and many other parts of the city.

The events began with a rousing mini-concert by Boo Watson of Wages Due Lesbians, who sang her original hits such as "Hands Off the Family Allowance", "It's a Rent Freeze", and "Landlord."

Then Dorothy O'Connell, author of *Chiclet Gomez* and President of the Ottawa Tenants Council gave the opening address. She spoke of how the struggles of women on welfare have thoroughly shaken up the government. "This is the most important thing happening in Canada today. Women getting together, seeing the strength they have, seeing the things they can do together, feeling the power of organizing. But we're feeling very threatened right now, because the government has discovered that putting a lot of women together in a housing project was dangerous! And they've decided to do something about it. There's a big move going on. It looks like they're going

to sell it (public housing), take it away from us altogether, put the middle class in it, and we'll be scattered and dispersed. And they think that's going to stop us from organizing. Well, we're going to do our very best to stop them from any such thing!"

With the power of Dorothy's speech setting the tone for the afternoon, the Mothers' Panel began. On it were a black woman, a welfare mother, a prostitute, a lesbian and a nurse.

Florence Sims opened by reading a greeting from Black Women for Wages for Housework (U.S.A.).

Then Edie Beck, a Regent Park mother, talked about child abuse, but with a twist — the government's contribution to it.

"Family Benefits give women the benefit to feel anxiety all the time. Anxiety before the cheque comes. Anxiety when the cheque doesn't come. Anxiety when the cheque isn't enough to pay the rent, anxiety when Johnny breaks his leg and you don't have enough to pay a cab to take him to hospital..."

Family Benefits gives mothers the fringe benefits of charging for her son to live at home. So she is forced to kick the real brother out of the home so the youngest won't starve, and bring one in from the Big Brothers. Talk about child abuse! What about family abuse!...

If the government doesn't wish to hold onto the responsibility of child abuse any longer, welfare must be immediately increased and brought up to a living wage."

Francie Wyland of Wages Due Lesbians spoke next: "What we've discovered from talking to a lot of lesbian women and a lot of straight women is that our lives are 99% the same... We scrub the same floors. We do the same work. We get the same welfare wage." And Baba Yaga, speaking for BEAVER, added "a lot of hookers are mothers, too".

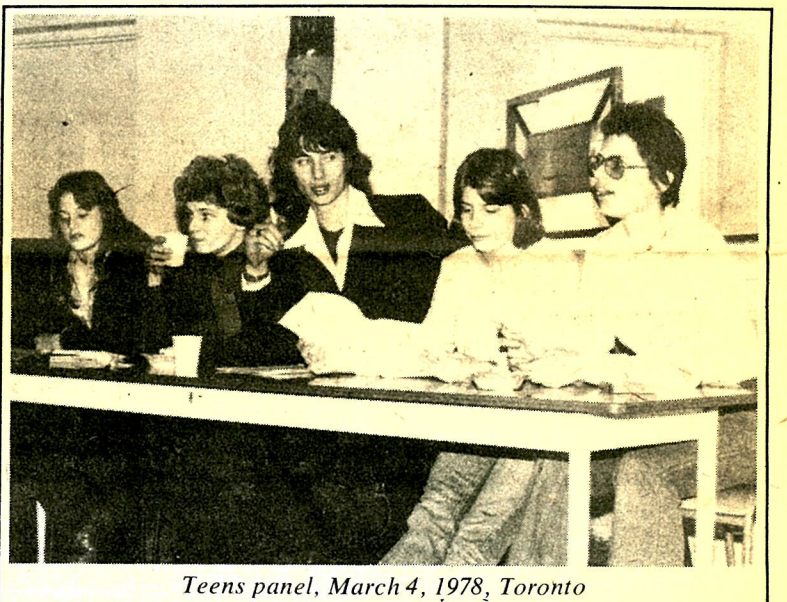
As different women spoke from the panel and from the audience, and then the teenagers from their panel, the profound feeling in the room was one of mutual struggle and support. Every woman's fight was the next woman's, because often the welfare mother is the lesbian or the student, or the young woman the prostitute, or the nurse of today the welfare mother of tomorrow.

The young people spoke about their daily fights — against the police, the schools, all the institutions that try to control them, and about how their mothers' lack of money influences their lives, making their mothers' fight for more money their own. One fifteen-year old girl from Regent Park said: "As a teen I have problems. Just as

much as anyone else. My mom is on Mother's Allowance and when I want to go to a show or something with my friends, because I don't have any money, I feel left out... The government won't teach us nothing. I am learning more from my mother than the government, because she has been through it all. And I know what to expect."

Men from PAYDAY, a group with chapters in four countries, read a message from unemployed workers in Vancouver who had just staged mass job searches to protest harassment of UIC recipients: "Although we are in different cities, welfare rates are the same everywhere. So is poor housing and cuts in UIC. Only by organizing in our different cities, and then coming together, can we change things for the better. We wish you every success — signed Downtown East Side Residents Association, Vancouver."

By the time the disco, sponsored by the Regent Park Teens Association, began rocking later in the evening, everyone was rocking with the power of the day. Because as Dorothy O'Connell put it, "As long as there are groups that can come from all over the place, people from all different kinds of groups — lesbians for wages for housework and the hookers, altogether — then they can't beat us".



Teens panel, March 4, 1978, Toronto

S. Oltuski



Dorothy O'Connell, president Ottawa Tenants Council

## Lesbian Mothers' Defence Fund

By Wages Due Lesbians — Toronto

Wages Due Lesbians has been organizing for two years to help gay mothers in their fight for child custody rights. We co-published *Motherhood, Lesbianism and Child Custody* by Francie Wyland (first printing sold out!) about the difficulties gay mothers face and the stake all women have in supporting their struggle. At every opportunity we have spoken on the radio and tv, at conferences and rallies. At the same time, we raised hundreds of dollars for a local lesbian mother who won unrestricted custody of her son and daughter last November.

Calls and letters began to come in from other gay mothers all over Ontario, asking for advice, the names of informed lawyers, and moral support. And now, Wages Due Lesbians announces the formation of the Lesbian Mothers' Defence Fund.

The LMDF can provide:

- Pre-legal advice, and information on successful custody battles in Canada, the US and England
- referrals to sympathetic lawyers and other professionals
- financial assistance in building a strong court case
- personal and emotional support

The aims of the LMDF are:

- to help women to keep or win custody of their children
- to promote the rights of lesbian mothers, and all gay women through media interviews, political lobbying and regular contact with women and community groups
- to mobilize public support for all lesbian mothers' struggle against discrimination and economic hardship
- to speak out about how many thousands of lesbian mothers there are while putting no pressure on any individual woman to make her name public

Already the Lesbian Mothers' Defence Fund has received tremendous public support in the form of donations and endorsements from such organizations as The Women's Counselling Referral and Education Centre, The Immigrant Women's Centre, The Metropolitan Community Church, Dignity (Gay Catholics), The Lesbian Organization of Toronto, and The Body Politic.

For more information write to: LMDF, Box 38, Station E, Toronto, or call: (416) 921-9091 Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6 to 8 p.m.

Please make donations payable to: Ellen Murray (Barrister), Francie Wyland and Ellen Agger IN TRUST FOR THE LESBIAN MOTHERS' DEFENCE FUND.

### "COME OUT!"

The newly formed Wages Due Lesbians in Winnipeg helped make the April 30 rally against Anita Bryant's crusade a record-breaker. Their benefit concert for the Lesbian Mothers' Defence Fund, starring the women's band Mother, Wit and Wages for Housework's own Boo Watson, was a smash hit! Now the group is doing background work toward building a western branch of the defence fund. For more information about Campaign activities in Winnipeg, contact:

Lissa Donner,  
507 Hay St.,  
Winnipeg, Manitoba.



On April 30, "Renaissance International" is bringing to Winnipeg Anita Bryant who campaigns against equal rights for women, lesbians and gay men, and religious minorities.

**BENEFIT Concert** 3:30 p.m. for Lesbian Mother's Custody Fund Sponsored by Wages Due Lesbians

## Hookers organize

By Ellen Agger

TOR. — Henry Morgenthaler supports the decriminalization of prostitution. So does June Callwood. And a growing number of concerned Canadians are giving serious thought to the issue. It is all in response to the efforts of BEAVER (Basic Education And Vital Equal Rights) to stir the conscience of the public about the forgotten rights of hookers.

Formed last November, with the blessing of Margo St. James of COYOTE (the San-Francisco based group leading the campaign for decriminalization), BEAVER's aims are to disseminate information about hookers' rights groups all over the world, build a strong lobby for legal change in Canada, and offer assistance and support to individual hookers.

Clayton Ruby, well-known civil rights lawyer, came out strongly in defence of hookers when a recent proposal to change Canada's Criminal Code called for stiffer penalties for soliciting: "The proposal focuses on a non-problem, a nuisance at worst, and it will mean that the cops will go back to picking up prostitutes who 95% of the time are harming no one." (Toronto Star, May 2, '78).

At a St. Lawrence Centre Forum last November, "Prostitution: Where Sex and Class Meet" Judith Ramirez of Wages for Housework

took on aldermen Pat Sheppard and Allan Sparrow, architects of the Yonge Street "crackdown". Addressing the largely feminist audience of over 400 she said: "There is nothing involved in the decriminalization of prostitution that isn't also involved in the fight of any other group of workers. It's the value of women's labour time that is at stake. In a prohibited market hookers keep only 10% of what they earn, and that reinforces the role of women as unpaid and underpaid servants."

BEAVER is currently circulating a brief which calls on the federal government to remove prostitution-related laws from the Criminal Code. Baba Yaga, founder of the organization, is a frequent speaker at schools, conferences, rallies, and other public events, building support for the cause. She recently appeared on the popular Lynn Gordon Show, televised nationally, and was a featured speaker at the "Festival of Life and Learning", at the University of Manitoba, where she appeared on a panel with co-worker Margo St. James.

For your copy of BEAVER's brief — which individuals and groups are being asked to endorse — write to BEAVER, c/o Wages for Housework, PO Box 38, Stn. E. Donations urgently needed.

# Every mother is a fighting mother!

A favorite slogan of our worldwide campaign to win wages for housework is "Every mother is a working mother". In every language, it brings smiles to women's faces, because recognition of our work means recognition of our rights to money. On this page, we place side by side some of the many ways mothers are fighting for what is rightfully ours. The guts and the power of all of us put together is our single biggest strength!

## Jamaican mothers under attack

TOR. — In February 1978, seven Jamaican women, who have worked for several years in Canada and made full contributions as workers and taxpayers, were ordered deported by the federal government. Their crime? Failing to report their dependent children in Jamaica before they immigrated.

The government has counted on the support of Canadians by saying that immigrants are to blame for the unemployment crisis. On May 6, however, more than 200 people marched to the federal immigration office in Toronto in support of the women and many groups have protested the government's action.

The women have now filed a complaint with the Human Rights Commission. They cannot be deported until the hearing takes place.

It is only too clear that the deportation orders were given to undercut the struggle of mothers, especially Blacks and immigrants, who are trying by every means possible to achieve economic independence in order to support their children.

## MESSAGE OF SOLIDARITY SENT TO THE RALLY AGAINST THE DEPORTATION OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN, TORONTO, JANUARY 1978.

The Wages for Housework Campaign sends its warmest greetings of solidarity to the Rally tonight.

The Jamaican mothers who are under the threat of deportation are making the same struggle as all women. They have come to Canada to support their families, to reclaim the wealth that has been stolen from them in the Third World. Canadian women are also fighting for the money to raise our children in dignity and with hope.

The attack being made on these mothers is felt by all of us. The government is trying to keep us in the wageless ghetto of the kitchen — whether it be in Trenchtown, or Cabagetown, or Cornerbrook.

They will not succeed.

From Kingston to Toronto, POWER TO THE SISTERS!

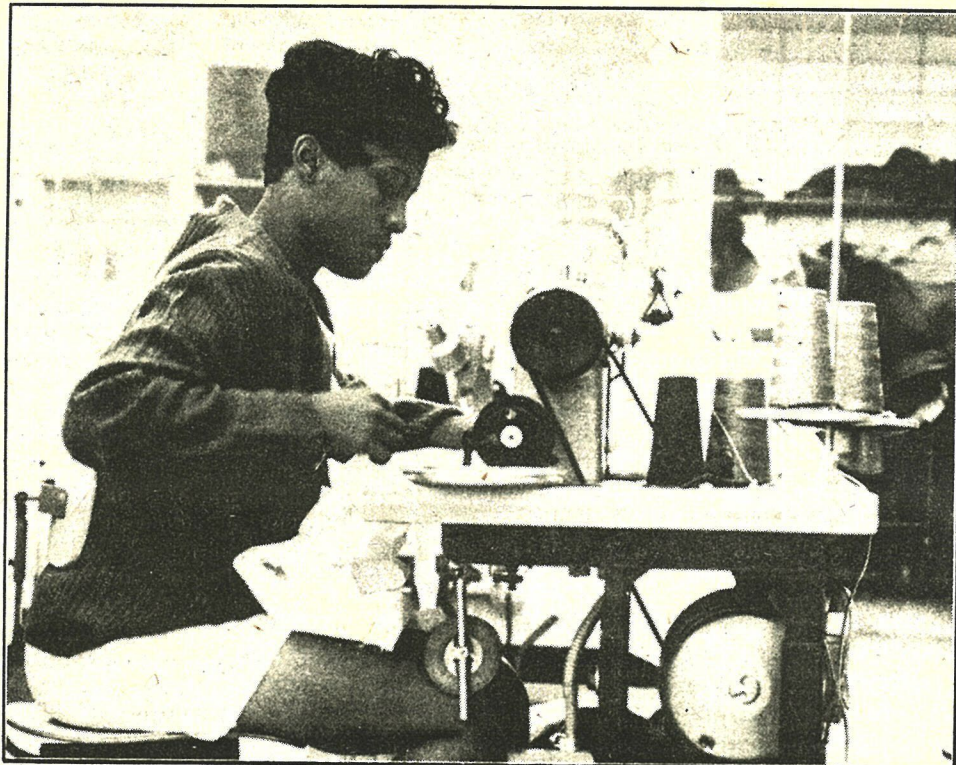


F. Wyland

## "Out for the Best"

QUEEN'S PARK — Government representatives have had their minds blown this spring in two meetings with a delegation led by Black women and welfare mothers protesting cutbacks in education spending and student financial aid. The delegation is part of a coalition brought together by Students from the Wages for Housework Campaign. It is made up of the Single Parents Associations of Ryerson and the University of Toronto, Black Women for Wages for Housework, the Mother-Led Union and women from several community colleges.

It is one of the first times that the government has met with such a wide spectrum of women who could not be pitted against each other. When 7,000 students demonstrated



Ch. Simonopietri/Sygnma

last spring against cuts in student aid, the government charged that students are just "an elite group". This coalition of women at the bottom sprang up to challenge the government's claims.

During the meetings with representatives of the Ministries of Colleges & Universities and Community & Social Services, Black women, sole-support mothers, and single women detailed how the cuts in education spending and student financial aid have made it more difficult for women to enter and remain in post-secondary institutions.

Nancy Duffy, of the Association of Single Parents at Ryerson and a welfare mother, summed up the intent of the group. "In the face of all the pressures from both the government and the media for women to get off welfare, why are no alternatives offered? We are working long hours to raise the future labour force. We demand an adequate wage in recognition of that work, and support when we choose to go to school."

At one point, one of the officials from Social Services tried to defuse the anger of the group by complimenting the welfare mothers for being "exceptional": "You're not like other welfare mothers who are only out to get the best." Janice O'Connor of the Sole Support Parents at the University of Toronto, spoke for everyone when she replied, "But that's exactly why we're here. We're out for the best too!"

And the best means demanding more day-care provisions for students, and demanding that mothers not lose Family Benefits when they take summer jobs. It means speaking out against "volunteer" placements that are required in many courses, and the lower-paid or minimum wage jobs offered to women on welfare.

The group also presented a petition which has circulated across the province, demanding changes in the student aid program, including grants for all students in recognition that schoolwork is a job and should be paid for.

More meetings are scheduled with the government (at its request!) until all the students' questions are satisfactorily answered and individual grievances resolved.

Florence Sims of Black Women for Wages for Housework summed up the strength of the group when she told the officials: "A lot of us are really angry, and we're not going to turn that anger on ourselves. We're going to turn it out to the government. We want our money, because we know it's there!"

## Courts begin to see the light

TOR.— On March 22, 1978, the Supreme Court of Ontario awarded a housewife \$50,000 in a lump sum divorce settlement. Her husband was suing for divorce on the grounds of adultery.

Judge Boland stated that the husband could not have achieved his financial success without the wife's contribution of raising six children, doing all the housework, looking after business calls, and entertaining his clients.

It's high time the Courts recognized what women have known all along, that behind every successful man stands a woman — broom in hand and broke!

## Mothers' Day in Harlem

NEW YORK — On May 10, 1978, Black Women for Wages for Housework (USA) held a Mothers' Day Celebration in Harlem. Black, Latin, and white women, representing a variety of groups and countries, came together in honour of mothers, their work and their struggles.

Among the speakers was Norma Jean Steele from Black Women for Wages for Housework (Britain), who told of the successful boycott, led by Black mothers, of a school in Bristol that had planned to hold a meeting of the National Front, a racist white-power organization.

The highlight of the day was the presentation of special "Mothers' Money Awards", to mothers who have been in the forefront of the fight for economic independence. One of the awards — a pin with a fist holding a \$100 bill — was presented to Beulah Sanders, former president of the National Welfare Rights Association, which led the powerful welfare movement in the 1960's.

The event ended with wine and cheese, in celebration of the struggles mothers have made, and of the victories to come.

## Child Benefits for all

LONDON — As of April 5, 1978 in England, when the Family Allowance was increased for children resident in the country, thousands of immigrant women with children living abroad lost most of their child tax exemption.

By 1979, the government plans to eliminate the child tax exemption entirely for women whose children are living in such countries as the West Indies, Asia, Greece, Latin America, Portugal and Turkey.

By this action, the British government is saying that immigrant women working and contributing as taxpayers in England are not deserving of the same rights as native-born women. They stand to lose \$140 million!

Black Women for Wages for Housework (Britain), the Commonwealth Taxpayers' Association, the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, the Union of Turkish Women, and Payday in Great Britain have joined together in protest against this legislation.

Together they are demanding that the government stop penalizing immigrant parents: "We have always worked for Britain in the Third World where we produced, first, wealth and workers for the British Empire, and now wealth and workers for Britain. We are tired of seeing that once again it is parents and children from the Third World who are expected to pay the most." Support from the USA and Canada is being organized by the Wages for Housework Campaign.

## "Insurance Policy" for nurses

TOR. — Nurses and nursing assistants throughout Ontario are fighting a proposed law that, if passed, will jeopardize their right to employment.

The proposal, made by the College of Nurses of Ontario, would require every registered nurse or nursing assistant who hasn't worked in Ontario for at least 50 days within one year, over a five year period, to take a re-entry course, the cost and length of which have yet to be spelled out. Failure to meet the requirements means they will lose their "certificate of competence" — without which they can't get a job.

The proposal directly attacks nurses who have taken time off to raise families. It also affects those who work part-time, who live in small communities where jobs are scarce, and the growing number of nurses who've been forced to get jobs outside the province.

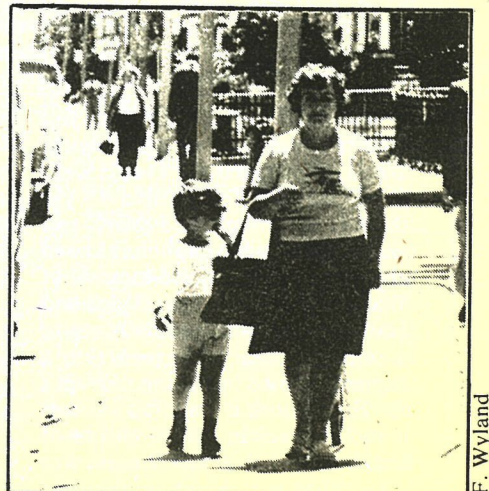
It is no accident that the proposal comes in an occupation made up primarily of women, and at a time of increasing cutbacks and unemployment. What better way to solve the unemployment crisis of nurses than to declare 20,000 — 30,000 of them "incompetent"!



But nurses are not taking it lying down. Nurses United for Registration Security and Employment (N.U.R.S.E.), a London-based group composed mostly of full-time housewives, has spear-headed the fight against this proposal. They've organized many meetings across the province, and nurses have turned out in record numbers to protest. In March 1978, 350 nurses attended a Toronto meeting to hear Barbara Dundas of N.U.R.S.E. and the President of the College of Nurses debate the proposal.

Nurses who have spoken out have been accused of treating their certificate of competence as an "insurance policy". But just as welfare is the universal insurance policy for all women, so this certificate is the insurance policy for nurses!

The certificate protects a nurse's right to choose to be employed, or to be a full-time mother for a few years. Flexibility is the reason why many of us went into nursing in the first place. We don't intend to go backwards now!



F. Wyland

Written collectively by:  
Betty Burcher  
Mary Deacon  
Frances Gregory  
Liz Janzen  
Dorothy Kidd

# On the WARpath

By Heather Sterling

Women Against Rape continues to make headline news in England in the war against rape.

With banners reading "Join the forces — license to rape" WAR and supporters from many groups picketed the Home Office in November 1977. They were angered by several lenient court decisions involving members of the armed forces convicted of rape.

In another case, a judge let a wealthy young man off with a suspended sentence for raping a three-year old girl. The judge told the girl's mother, "You will forget it and so will your little girl." The mother did not forget and contacted WAR instead. Thousands of women and men are now supporting her demand that the judge be dismissed.

After surprising everyone last fall with their invasion of Justice Raskill's court (one of the judges in Holdsworth case), WAR invaded the Ministry of Defence for "not defending women's rights to safety on the streets". The Guardian, a major daily newspaper, ran a scandalous article called "The Rapist's Reply"

and WAR promptly staged a sit-in at their offices in London. They won equal space for a reply about WAR's campaign to end rape.

In May, a woman named Joan Leslie-White who came to WAR for assistance, finally won custody of her kids. She had put them into care two years ago, in order to escape from a battering and rape-filled marriage. The judge ordered public housing to give back her original apartment — this is the turn-around — praised her for having removed herself and the children from a violent home!

British courts are really beginning to feel the pressure. Another judge recently gave a convicted rapist a six-year prison sentence, and in his written decision, said that women in WAR would not allow him to do less!

The group has recently published a pamphlet "Women at W.A.R." (Falling Wall Press) which sold over 1,000 copies in the first week. It is available in Canada through WAR, c/o Wages for Housework Campaign, PO Box 38, Stn. E., Toronto.



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## Winnipeg festival

Thousands of people crowded the University of Manitoba's Winnipeg campus in February for the annual Festival of Life and Learning. This year its theme was feminism, and famous speakers like Germaine Greer were on hand, as well as singers, comedienne, and artists of every kind.

Spokeswomen for the international Wages for Housework Campaign in Canada and the U.S. were asked to come, to conduct the keynote panel discussion. Margo St. James of C.O.Y.O.T.E., was also a guest of the Festival, bringing news of the organizing of prostitutes against legal and police harassment.

item on her list was economic security for housewives!

Over three hundred people attended the Wages for Housework session, and many times that number heard the discussion broadcast live by the local radio station. The panel of 7 women was a real cross-section, for whom the Wages for Housework Campaign has found the common denominator. They described the organizing of Campaign groups to defend the Family Allowance, social services, custody rights for lesbian mothers, and the growing movement for welfare increases here and in the U.S. When one woman in the audience insisted that the speakers



Left to right: Wilmette Brown (New York), Judith Ramirez (Toronto), Francie Wyland (Toronto), Lissa Donner (Winnipeg), Paula Henderson (New York), Florence Sims (Toronto), Marlyn MacDonald (Winnipeg)

The three days of activities felt almost circus-like, so many workshops, films and other events were going on at once. But a single thread ran through the Festival and tied together what might have been chaotic; everyone was talking about Wages for Housework! Tyler and Harrison, a popular comedy team, wound up their performance to a capacity crowd by saying, "Wages for Housework is only fair!" Barbara Ehrenreich, the co-author of *Witches, Midwives and Nurses*, was asked after her speech on feminist strategy what she sees as the priorities for the women's movement now. The number one

were putting too much emphasis on money, and not enough on "other women's issues", Judith Ramirez replied, "If you think we're hung up on money, the answer is yes, because it's the key to everything else that ails us!"

Afterward, members of the new Winnipeg Wages for Housework group were approached by a dozen women who wanted to help build the Campaign in the west.

Marian Yeo, Festival Co-ordinator, summed up the impact of the Campaign on this women's weekend when she said, "Wages for Housework helped make the Festival an extraordinary event!"

## Selma James tours USA

Selma James, founder of the Wages for Housework Campaign, has just completed a successful 6-week tour of major US cities.

She spoke to groups large and small and appeared on many college campuses including Yale, Wellesley, Bryn Mawr and UCLA.

Everywhere she went she brought news of the international campaign and the crowds asked only one question "how do we get the money?"

Selma Selma James is co-author of the feminist classic *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*, and has also written "Sex, Race, and Class" and "Women, the Unions and Work".

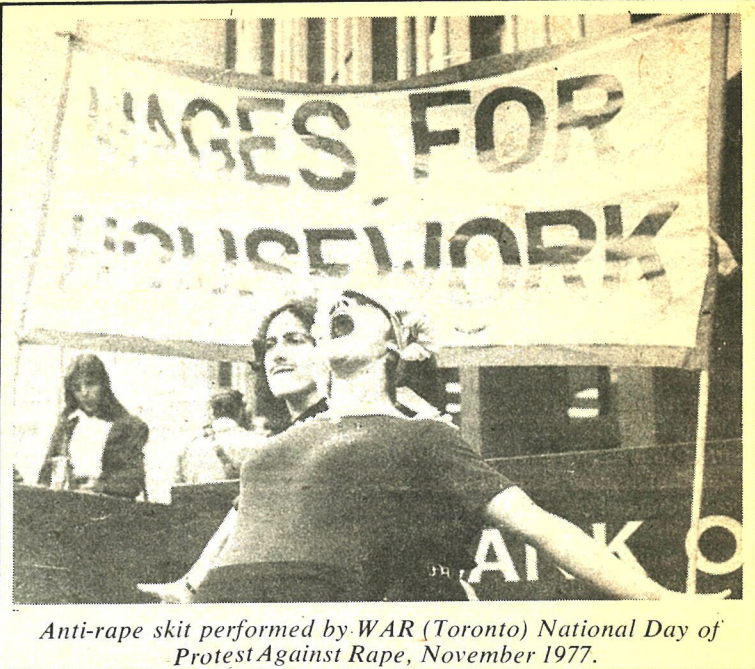
### Campaign Addresses

- In Canada**  
Toronto:  
WFH Committee  
PO Box 38, Stn. E.  
M6H 4E1
- Wages Due Lesbians (same)
- Winnipeg:  
WFH Group  
507 Hay St.  
R3L 2L5
- Wages Due Lesbians  
40 Luxton Ave.  
R2W 0L6
- Montreal:  
c/o Patrice Simister Degardeas  
3422 de l'Hotel-de-ville Ave.  
H2X 3B4
- In the USA**  
New York:  
Black Women for WFH  
c/o 100 Boerum Place  
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201
- Philadelphia:  
WFH Action Group  
602 S. 48th St.  
Philadelphia, Pa. 19143
- Wages Due Lesbians (same)
- Boston:  
WFH Committee  
PO Box 94  
Brighton, Ma. 02135
- In England**  
London:  
WFH Committee  
c/o 74 Princess Rd.  
London NW6
- Wages Due Lesbians (same)
- Bristol:  
Black Women for WFH  
c/o 79 Richmond Rd.  
Montpelier, Bristol BS6 5EP

Return to:  
WFH  
Box 38, Stn. E.,  
Toronto, Ont.

FIRST CLASS

P. Fainstai



Anti-rape skit performed by WAR (Toronto) National Day of Protest Against Rape, November 1977.

— BOOK REVIEW —

## Chiclet Gomez

By Frances Gregory

*Chiclet Gomez* is a collection of short stories written by Dorothy O'Connell, long-time activist for tenants' rights and resident of government housing in Ottawa. It is about women whose daily struggles against the State are often invisible to outsiders, but whose impact has given power to all women.

*Chiclet Gomez* is about women on welfare. Women who have chosen or been forced to raise their children without a man, and who collect their wage from the State. Women who, like Chiclet and her friend "... are not against men, we just don't care for the institution of marriage. Any other custom that took a young girl with a log of life in her and turned her into a worn-out drudge by the time she was 25 would be called slavery."

The book is funny, and warm, and very tough. Stories about the women's attempts to make money by designing calendars showing "Sneaker Week" (to coincide with income tax refund time), "Buy Cough Medicine Now Week", etc. or by inventing exotic bathroom decor for the wealthy. And the humour always has a bite to it. As when the men in the Housing Project, threatened by the women's independence, try to sabotage the women's auction to raise money for the Community Centre, by stuffing one of the cushions to be sold with wasps.

But you can't mistake the book's earthy humour for the women's lack of sophistication. They are political geniuses. Whenever they need or want something, they gather their forces, analyze their strengths and weaknesses, and build a strategy, usually based on asking for more than they want so they end up with what they want. Like when they need the Project parking lot for the auction and they ask the Housing Authority Man-

ager to be the auctioneer, knowing full well that he would be so afraid of exposing himself to the tenants that he'll gladly concede the space. Or when Edna's son moves out, and she is told she'll have to move from a 4 bedroom to a 3 bedroom place because there are only four children left at home, even though her oldest daughter needs a room of her own. Knowing that no authority would support such an "irrelevant" need, the women stage a show for the Public Health Nurse, featuring Edna's younger daughter who has suddenly and inexplicably become hyperactive. The Nurse, convinced that she couldn't possibly share a room, in turn convinces the Housing Authority to let Edna keep the larger house.

But such organizing is not easy. "One of our big headaches in organizing was that, whenever we managed to get a group together, some social worker or do-gooder would decide God or somebody had decided that they should come down and tell us what we wanted. We prefer bigots to do-gooders."

All the experts who control the lives of the poor constantly explain their qualifications by saying "we were once poor too". The implication is, of course, that women on welfare are parasites but that they can climb out of the ghetto and up the ladder too.

O'Connell's answer pulls no punches: "Let the City realize that we are the same as everybody else, except that we have no money, and they'll have to examine the way they treat us. But as long as they can tell themselves that we're poor because we deserve to be, then they don't have to worry about how they treat us, short of outright extermination."

O'Connell's heroine, Chiclet Gomez, embodies the tenacity and creativity of women everywhere who confront the State in order to survive, and who, because they are at the bottom, lead the way for everyone else. Read this book.

*Chiclet Gomez* is published by De-neau and Greenberg, Ottawa, costs \$4.95 and is available at Cole's, W. H. Smith, Classic and many other bookstores.



This Bulletin is put out periodically by the Toronto Wages for Housework Committee. Please do not reprint any portion of the Bulletin without our permission. Mailing address: Box 38, Stn. E. Toronto, Ontario. Phone (416) 921-9091.

### ...Calling Regent Park Mothers...

Need a break? Join the Housewives' Initiative summer program. We're doing crafts in the Regent Park United Church, every Tuesday at 7:30pm. There's no charge for materials or instruction. If you're interested just drop-in, or phone Edie Beck at 863-6276. Everyone welcome.

books for, by, and about women  
non-sexist children's books  
women's records, posters, buttons

TORONTO  
**WOMEN'S**  
BOOKSTORE  
85 Harbord Street  
west of Spadina  
922-8744