

# WOMEN'S WORK...

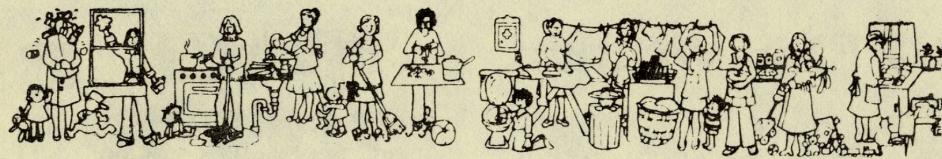


The world couldn't survive without it.

Women operate the telephone system, punch the computer cards that control private industry and governments, type the letters, file the orders, and serve customers in restaurants, department stores, and supermarkets. We clean our own and other people's houses, and we take care of the children, feed the men, and get both off to school and work on time. We keep everything running smoothly so that when they come home, they are cared for and made ready to go back out the next day.

The employer can say he doesn't need us because there are lots of women out there looking for work. But he does need women workers as a pool of cheap labour. Our husbands and society say we don't do real work; they say that their work supports our leisure. But we know that we work hard and that it is our housework that supports their leisure. Society needs the free work we do taking care of the children because otherwise enormous amounts of money would have to be spent to replace our contribution.

The government and corporations have always seen us as a group, but they do everything to prevent us from seeing ourselves as a group. And yet, in relation to our work, women as a group are used and abused whether we work for the government, private industry or in the home. The government tries to make us (and everybody else) think that we're overpaid and underworked when, in fact, our pay is below the wage scales in the private sector. When we work for industry, we are forbidden to talk about our paycheques or raises so that we become competitive and mistrustful of one another. They try to convince us that our problems are our own individual problems, the result of our own individual failures. As housewives and mothers, we have no wages and live isolated in our work places. We feel that we're supposed to work hard but think we don't, and when we start feeling tired or unhappy, or overworked, we're not supposed to talk about it because it's our own personal problem. But the problems we face are common problems that can only be solved by working together.



## Working together

Women work long and hard hours in the workforce and in the home, yet in both places we are undervalued (if we're valued at all). We need to start talking to each other about our work and organizing the way we deal with our common problems.

### For example:

- We can start by talking to our neighbours and friends about housework and child care; maybe start discussion groups or bring up the subject of our free labour in women's groups, church groups and community groups.
- We can become involved in neighbourhood and community organizations and stress issues that make it hard for women working in the home. For example, we could work on better transportation, better street lighting, easily accessible shopping areas designed for our needs.
- We can bring up our concerns at our union meetings: childcare, parental leave (especially for looking after sick children), flexible hours, equal pay. We can talk about why it's hard for women to be active in unions when we bear the double burden of having to look after a family after working hours when union meetings are usually scheduled.
- Where we are not organized in unions, we can talk to our co-workers and confront our employers with a common voice on issues that concern us. Many women's occupations have never been organized into unions and that's why it's easy to see ourselves as powerless and undeserving of a better deal.

IF WE DIDN'T DO THE WORK, WHO WOULD?

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