

Wages for Housework Campaign Bulletin



Toronto

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Five Women Speak Out!

Wherever women have won some money and power, those gains are now under attack. Unemployment insurance is being cut, women's wages continue to lose ground, welfare remains low, rents and prices keep rising, and we are supposed to make up the difference by working harder. But women are saying "no"! In this issue we report on the fight that millions of women are making to prevent the government -- at all levels -- from solving their "crisis" at our expense.

Waitress

It really burns me up that the Ontario Government wants to increase the minimum wage for everyone except workers who make tips. Because most of us are women we're underpaid to start with, and many of us have kids to support and more than one job to make ends meet.



B. Watson

The government is talking about the piles of money waitresses make in tips and what a hard time the tourism industry is having here in Ontario. Well, I want to remind them that my tips are a subsidy to industry because they allow employers to pay out less wages!

If the government is allowed to increase the "tip differential" and extend it from liquor servers to all other tipped workers, than an awful lot of us are going to be giving away our hard work at bargain basement wages. I, for one, say no damned way!

Ellen Agger

City-Housing Tenant

I've lived at Bain Avenue for three years now. It's non-profit housing, which is supposed to mean reasonable rents, but we just got our third increase in two years! It brought my tiny one bedroom up to \$193 a month--utilities excluded. Thank God I'm on subsidy so I only pay \$135--but on \$110 a week, that's plenty!

Anyway, tenants were up in arms. The women in particular were ready to fight. We confronted our Co-op Council who negotiated the increase, but they're trying to buy the property

from the City so they're on "good behaviour"--at our expense.

We knew a lot of tenants were fed up, so we went ahead in spite of Council. Over 100 units (out of 260) supported a rent freeze and for one month many of us withheld the 18% increase. When eviction notices came--compliments of the City and our Council--we decided to pay up, but not before a visit to the politicians at City Hall to demand an immediate referendum on ownership.

Council's push for ownership is the main obstacle to lower rents here, and all it will get us is the privilege of doing our own rent collecting and evicting. We've already had a taste of that. Council worked hand in hand with the City to stop the rent freeze and tried to evict us when they couldn't. We need more of that like a hole in the head!

So we're organizing for the referendum now, and we know we can win it hands down!

Prostitute

I was born in Toronto and I started as a hooker when I was fifteen. It was sort of by accident, I was hitchhiking and this guy made me an offer! I didn't have any money--I was living in a foster home at the time--so I figured "sure, why not"? Later I got into working the bars and discos and I made a lot more money.

Then last year I tried going back to high school to get my diploma--I was back living with my mother--but it just didn't make sense. What would I have when I got out? It was like when I dropped out a few years ago, worse in fact, because unemployment is much higher now.

But I've been busted twice already, and the cops have been bugging me a lot with all this talk about "cleaning up the streets". So I've stopped for now, and I'm staying on welfare til they cut me off. We'll see after that... I really don't know what I'll do....

Donna F.

Welfare Mother



B. Watson

Florence Sims

When Trudeau cancelled the 10% increase in the baby bonus last year, I said to myself, "now's the time to fight". It cost us mothers \$220 million bucks and it was only the tip of the iceberg!

I have a child to support and the government was cutting away like crazy: welfare, daycare, social services... I figured, at this rate, with prices going up too, I'll be getting it from all sides! It's been a real fight to keep up.

But the Family Allowance protest got a lot of us together. I was ready to do something, and thousands of women signed our petition. When I heard that Trudeau increased the baby bonus for 1977, I was elated! I knew our fight had helped win it back. The papers called it a "goodie", just like they call welfare "charity". But it's all money we've earned with our work in the home. It's a start towards more recognition and independence for us mothers!



B. Watson

Francie Wyland

UIC Recipient

I've been married for fifteen years and we have two school age kids. For a long time I didn't even think about going back to work--I have enough to do at home! But then my husband was laid off. He works in an auto-parts plant and they laid him off for three months. It put us behind in everything and it was really demoralizing because prices keep rising and we just couldn't keep up.

So I got a job in a cafe-

teria. I can't really do much else, I guess (laugh). Anyway, that lasted for about two months. After Frank was called back I applied for Unemployment Insurance and, at first, everything was ok. We needed the money and my cheque every two weeks really helped.

But then I missed an appointment because our youngest got sick, and that's when the trouble started. The benefit control officer said I could not be looking for work if I

was home looking after the children! Two weeks later they cut me off for not doing enough job searches. Just like that!

All I got was eleven weeks and I know I'm entitled to a lot more. If you ask me, mothers should get extra because we're really doing two jobs, not one! Anyway I'm appealing it, and I intend to get every penny that's due me.

Identity Withheld

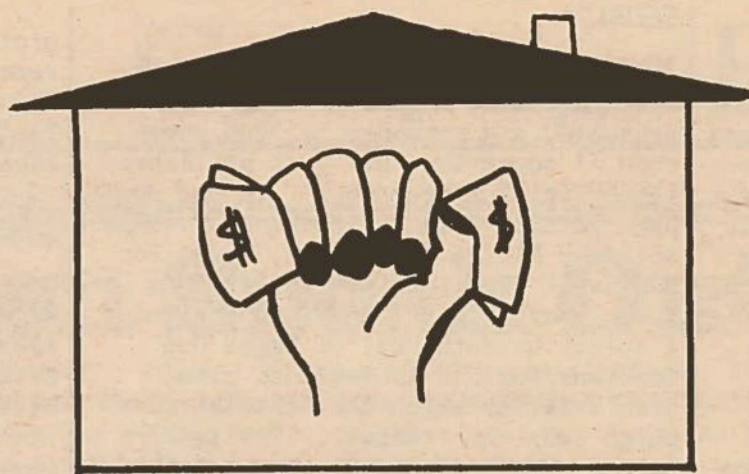
According to the Bureau of Municipal Research, there are close to 40,000 families in Toronto who rent premises they "cannot really afford", or that are "over-crowded and in poor structural condition". In a city of 2½ million, that's a crisis by anyone's standards.

When a group of tenants at the largest city-owned non-profit housing project recently went on a rent freeze, the magnitude of the crisis was driven home. The tenants at the Bain Avenue Apartments were refusing to pay an 18% increase as of February 1, 1977. The rents in City projects are geared to 'low incomes' which presumably means these tenants are better off than the rest of us.

In reality however, the floor space they get for the money is less than the open market, utilities are extra, maintenance is slow and substandard, and the Left's "tenant management" is just so much free work for the City!

The impetus for the rent freeze came from women tenants at Bain, and it's no wonder. Who knows better about the extra housework it takes to clean an old apartment in poor condition and the sacrifices of doubling up or relocating to cheaper quarters when the rents rise?

Women Lead Rent Fight



In organizing the freeze, the Bain Avenue women expressed the anger and frustration of thousands of tenants throughout Toronto.

Support has come readily, especially from other City housing tenants. A group of tenants at the Beverley-Dundas Project went on a partial freeze of their own to protest a City surcharge aimed at offsetting lost commercial revenue. These tenants had successfully blocked plans for such a development and the surcharge is their "punishment".

Other tenants wrote letters to the newspapers, offered help organizing, and kept morale up. The media coverage by press, radio, and television has been uniformly supportive.

The Bain Avenue Co-op Council has strenuously opposed the rent freeze insisting that they are the "official" and "democratic" representatives of the tenants. But it's all too clear that what they really represent are their own vested interests in taking over ownership from the City.

To every problem that arises --be it rents, maintenance, or subsidies-- they are always quick to shout "ownership is the only answer". "The answer for whom", counter the tenants, and "what good is ownership for us if we can't afford to live here now?"

Recently the rent freeze tenants appeared before a meeting of the City Non-Profit Housing Board to bring grievances against the Council and demand an immediate referendum on ownership, and the City set May 2-3 as the date for the requested poll. This was a victory in itself because long delays would have forced many tenants to move out. Winning the referendum will stop the transfer of title negotiations and pave the way for an immediate fight to lower rents and improve maintenance.

The Co-op Council has threatened to boycott the referendum because their terms--a simple majority out of 35% of tenants voting--were rejected. The City favoured the rent freezers' demand that at least 50% of the tenants must vote and 2/3 of these must favour ownership otherwise it won't go through. So much for the great defenders of "democracy"!

The Wages for Housework Campaign fully supports the women at Bain Ave. in their bid to lower rents.
-- Judy Ramirez

FAMILY ALLOWANCE

Every Mother's Wage

During World War Two the Canadian government had a problem on its hands. They knew the war wouldn't last forever and they had to think about "re-building the nation". For one thing, while the men had been away at war, women had taken their places in the factories and offices. The government had to think of ways to get them "back where they belonged" --working for no wages in the home, looking after their soon-to-return husbands and babies, the future labour force.

But the government knew it wouldn't be easy, because no one wants to give up the power of a weekly paycheque for an armload of diapers. The Canadian government was not alone with this problem. In Britain Sir William Beveridge wrote a report proposing a programme of Family Allowances, to be paid to the mother in recognition of the work of raising children. He saw it as an investment for the country, for "with its present rate of reproduction, the British race cannot continue. Means of reversing the recent course of the birth rate must be found".

In 1945 the Canadian government began the Family Allowance Programme. What the government never counted on was how unwilling women are to sell their labour for a few dollars. Sure, women continued to have kids, but never in the number the government had hoped. Especially in Quebec, despite the highest baby bonus rates, women have made a massive fight against house-

work by having the lowest birth rate. In Quebec last year, Premier Bourassa said that women have led the fight "... to a point where Quebec's social climate has been disrupted"!

The P.Q. Government seems to agree -- they just brought in their first budget which put another \$32 million directly in the hands of women by further increasing the family allowance!

Women are continuing to cause a crisis. Not only are we re-

fusing to make babies on schedule for the state, we're also demanding to be paid a full wage for having the kids we choose as well as to be paid for the rest of our housework.

The Wages for Housework Committee is preparing a brief on the Family Allowance which we are presenting to the Minister of Health and Welfare, Marc Lalonde, in Ottawa, on--you guessed it-- Mother's Day! What better time to remind the Govern-



ment that along with flowers and dinner out, women want their wages!

Contact us if you want to come to Ottawa or receive a copy of the brief.
-- Frances Gregory

OCTOBER 14

The 'Unorganized' Organize

The unions gave a "general strike" and less than half of their own membership came! The turn out at rallies across the country was "disappointingly low" on October 14.

Not that the rest of us are happy with the government's wage controls and cutbacks. Quite the opposite: the economy wouldn't be in such a state if we weren't all fighting tooth and nail to get what we feel is ours.

But the Canadian Labour Congress only represents 1/3 of all waged workers and they are not about to move too far without the other 2/3--just simple math! There are also millions of us who have no wages at all--housewives, students, Native people, the elderly etc. What we do have is a whole history of struggle that unions have never recognized, much less led!

And it happened again on October 14. "Unorganized" women organized a Noon Hour Concert to "protest unpaid work in the home and low paid work outside". Over 500 people came to Nathan Phillips Square for the event! The

majority were women from nearby offices, restaurants and department stores. Others were coming down--disappointed--from the CLC Rally at Queen's Park. One male worker was heard to say "this is much better than the unions--if I'd known, I would have come here first."

Rita MacNeil sang her powerful songs about women's lives, and Boo Watson played guitar and sang lighthearted lyrics about government cutbacks and unpaid housework and our fight to get rid of both!

Afterwards, Frances Gregory, an office worker from the Wages for Housework Campaign spoke, along with Paula Fainstat of Nellie's Women's Hostel, and a member of Wages Due Lesbians. The high point came when Florence Sims, a black welfare mother (see page one) announced that Trudeau had just promised to re-index the baby bonus in 1977! We sure didn't win that by being "unorganized".

Two hours of inspiring music, speeches and personal conversations made many of us reluctant to return to the office and the kitchen. When we have a general strike, we won't.
-- Judy Ramirez

EDITORIAL: Is Johnny Taxpayer's Wife Getting A Free Ride?

Hot on the heels of a media campaign against "freeloaders", a bill was recently introduced in Parliament that would cut off 50,000 Unemployment Insurance claimants who are "...mostly people under 25 or housewives who work for short stretches". And what the government means is 50,000 at any one point, or up to 250,000 women and youth per year cut off UIC for a total of \$110 million in lost benefits!

To hear Ottawa tell it, the "problem" is that too many with an "unstable attachment to the labour force" are claiming UIC after the minimum eight week period and have "little or no interest in working." To make matters worse, only a small number of these claimants "really need UIC. They have been getting money for jam". And all this at Johnny Taxpayer's expense!

But we have a few problems of our own:

First of all, housewives are always working. We have an all-too-stable attachment to the unpaid labour force in the home that gets Johnny out to work every day. This consumes our time, drains our energy, and leaves us penniless. So when women get a second job outside the home, what we are after is our money. Those of us who stay only as long as it takes to get UIC have plenty of work waiting at home to keep us "productive". Women have never had the option of taking "little or no interest in working"!

Secondly, the unemployment rate for youth under 25 is over 14%. Of the one million Canadians presently unemployed, a high proportion are young people who have a right to their own wages. Many of those who are working, are stuck in dead-end jobs at the bottom of the pay scale. If they choose to keep changing jobs and draw UIC in between who can blame them? No one in his or her right mind would want a "stable attachment" to a shitty job at low wages!

Lastly, along with extending the qualifying period from eight to twelve weeks, the government's new legislation would give only one week of benefits for every week worked, up to 25 weeks. At present, the full entitlement for the same period is 51 weeks, which means that thousands of other workers (i.e. taxpayers) will also be cut back. For the men whose wives and kids are cut off it will mean either living on less or making up the difference by working longer hours. Some break!

The present Unemployment Insurance Act was introduced in 1971 when unrest was mounting among students and when demonstrations were taking place like the one in British Columbia where students, mothers with small children, elderly people, and unemployed men all invaded the provincial legislature!

The result was that the qualifying per-

iod was reduced from 30 weeks in two years to eight weeks in one--thus including temporary workers like students and housewives. Also universal coverage extended benefits to public employees, hospital workers and teachers. And benefits rose by 50%!

Clearly, everyone gained. But unemployed men gained as much as they did only because women and students also wanted something for themselves and fought to get it.

Now six years later, the unemployment rate is the highest in 19 years, prices keep rising, thousands of families can't survive without two wages, and Trudeau is telling us we're all living "too high off the hog"! With his campaign against women and youth "freeloading" on the taxpayer, he's really out to lower everyone's expectations and standard of living.

Telling women and kids there is no money for us is the government's way of lowering other workers' wages as well--wages they won in the first place, because we fought with them, and which they are now in danger of losing if they don't fight with us, to defend ours.

Johnny Taxpayer never needed his wife's "free ride" more than he does now!

For your free copy of "A Housewife's Guide to UIC" contact the Toronto Committee.

Hustling For A Wage



You might know that two reform aldermen, John Sewell and Allan Sparrow, are the prime movers in the crusade to "clean up Yonge Street"! Body rub parlours and nude amusements are "morally degrading to women" they say, and an open invitation to organized crime.

Lost in their moral outrage however is the fact that many of us are forced to earn our living there because it pays better than the minimum wage in one of Toronto's sweatshops.

There are enough of them to fill fifty Yonge Street's, but our progressive politicians have no campaign against how we're degraded in those establishments.

Toronto is not alone in its crack-down on "smut" and prostitution. Last January, the San Francisco police stepped up an already heavy-handed campaign of harassment against street prostitutes.

Using the cover of "morality" and insinuating a connection between

violent crime and prostitution they were depriving thousands of women of their only access to money by threatening them with imprisonment and heavy fines. At the same time the government left untouched the big hotels and other establishments which make a fortune by piaping off prostitutes.

Internationally, the harassment of prostitutes is escalating because prostitution exposes women's sexuality as work for which we should all be paid!

"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. When any of us sleeps 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. Whether we enjoy it or not, we are making a calculation... The (only) line between unpaid sex and paid sex is what we get in return." This from the English Collective of Prostitutes.

In response to the crack-down on the San Francisco street prostitutes, the Los Angeles and San Francisco

Wages for Housework Committees circulated a statement demanding an end to the harassment and the abolition of all laws against prostitution. The statement was endorsed by over 50 groups in Europe and North America including COYOTE, the San Francisco-based organization of prostitutes, and PUMA, a similar group in Boston.

Black Women for Wages for Housework (New York), in their supporting statement "Money for Prostitutes is Money for Black Women" said:

"Just as black women who get welfare--which is the first wage women have won in this country for the work we do in our own home--are resisting the welfare cuts and demanding more money everywhere, we are refusing to settle for the sweatshops, just because the Man tells us it's a respectable job. Respectable or not we demand cash money."

Wages Due Lesbians, a Toronto-based organization stated: "Many women who work as prostitutes are also lesbians. They are making the same fight against free sex on command when they refuse heterosexuality "off the job". The only choices women now have are to "give it" for free for our daily

survival, to demand more money for it in exchange, or to refuse it altogether--and we pay a high price for all three. We refuse to keep footing the bill."

Progressive politicians and other male "benefactors", get off our backs!!

-- Heather Sterling

The Housewife At Sussex Drive

Canada's first lady, Margaret Trudeau has just taken another beating in the media. Apparently it's "inappropriate", and even "offensive", for the Prime Minister's wife to leave hubby and kids to go to rock concerts, New York ballets, or do whatever else she feels like doing.

For all the pomp and prestige of her position, it sounds like she's in the same boat as the rest of us--and fighting back. The call to duty", whether it's the week's shopping or a state dinner, is always expected to come before our needs and priorities! More power to you Margaret, for refusing to be "a rose in my husband's lapel" and a housewife to the Canadian State!

International Campaign News

TORONTO

In October 1976, women from Nellie's Hostel ended their occupation after receiving \$7,000 from the local government and a one year federal grant that allowed them to hire more staff! Their fight for long-term funding continues. Paula Fainstat, a leader in the occupation, is writing a diary of the Nellie's struggle, soon to be published by the Toronto Committee.

NEW YORK

On March 12, 1977, an International Women's Day march along 5th Avenue culminated in a rally at which Wilmette Brown from Black Women for Wages for Housework spoke for the international Campaign. Her speech, which included references to the fight against current welfare cuts in New York City, was enthusiastically applauded by the 1500 women and men present.

TORONTO

Wages Due Lesbians is publishing a pamphlet "Motherhood, Lesbianism and Child Custody" by Francie Wyland. They have been actively organizing around custody and recently sponsored a benefit for a lesbian mother whose fight is still in the courts. To order a copy of the pamphlet write to Wages Due Lesbians, Box 38, Stn. E, Toronto, Ontario.

LOS ANGELES

A recent interview about Wages for Housework with the popular tabloid "MIDNITE", brought a flood of letters to the editor supporting the Campaign. Over 500 women wrote in from all over the United States and Canada! "Midnite" is turning the letters over to the Los Angeles Committee.

Waitresses' Action Committee

Waitresses active in the Campaign recently helped form the Waitresses' Action Committee to oppose the Ontario Government's proposed changes in the minimum wage (see page one).

Excluding waitresses and other tipped workers (liquor servers, chambermaids, etc.) from the higher minimum wage when unemployment for women is over 9%, is just one more way the government is trying to pick women's pockets to put us "back in our place".

The Committee has prepared a brief demanding a higher minimum wage for all workers. It also demands money for the enormous quantity of unpaid work that most waitressing jobs involve, as well as the implicit sexual work which is required to make tips. Waitresses are "glorified housewives and hookers", say Committee members.

They have already appeared on national television and received endorsements from 31 organizations in Ontario.

For your copy of their brief and for more information, write to:
 Waitresses' Action Committee
 c/o Ellen Agger
 112 Spruce Street
 Toronto, Ontario (416) 921-9091

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

BELGIUM

The international Tribunal on Crimes Against Women, held last summer in Brussels, and attended by 2000 women from 43 countries, has just published its official proceedings. In the 300-page volume edited by Diane E. H. Russell and Nicole Van de Ven, Wages for Housework "testimonies" appear from Italy, Northern Ireland, and England. A speech by Ruth Hall of Wages Due Lesbians/England is included along with a letter which the Canadian Campaign sent the Tribunal. Published by LES FEMMES (Calif.), the book is available from the Toronto Women's Bookstore, 85 Harbord Street, Toronto.

NEW YORK

Black Women for Wages for Housework is organizing against cuts in the federally funded SEEK program (for black and third world students) on major university campuses. Along with the Queen's College Women's Action Group and the New York Wages for Housework Committee, they are circulating a petition demanding an end to the harassment of student welfare mothers and the cuts in SEEK funds.

QUEBEC

On March 21, 1977, Selma James, feminist author from Britain, gave the keynote address for "Women's Week" at Concordia University in Montreal. At week's end, Selma was also on a wrap up panel along with Margaret Benston, author, and Marcia Gallo, member of the Socialist Workers' Party. During the question period which followed, organizers tried to silence a black sister (she was speaking too long!) and give the microphone to a white man instead. Selma left the panel in protest--alone --and was shouted down abusively by the organizers.

But Quebec women in the audience, present as observers, immediately rose to

protest their exclusion from the conference, and the sham of a few token French-speaking women on various panels! The Wages for Housework Campaign fully supports the Quebecois sisters.

CHICAGO

On April 8 - 10, 1977, the network of Wages for Housework groups in North America held a conference on organizing. Seventy-five delegates from 12 cities attended including women from Toronto, Kitchener, Winnipeg, Windsor, and Regina. England, Italy, the West Indies, and Africa were also represented.

ENGLAND

The London Committee held a successful Mother's Day Event on March 20, 1977. Many women took time for themselves to attend an afternoon of films, music and discussion at the Gate Cinema. Afterwards, a delegation of 50 women delivered Family Allowance petitions demanding a raise to Dennis Healey, the Chancellor of the Exchequer!

TORONTO

On February 18, 1977, Judy Ramirez of the Toronto Committee was the guest speaker at a family planning conference sponsored by the City of Toronto Board of Health and the Immigrant Women's Centre. Many immigrant women attended, and Judy's emphasis on women's right to have and not to have children, and the money to choose freely, dominated the day-long workshops.

The immigrant women won a floor fight in the plenary session to pass a resolution demanding that the government fund indigenous health centres run by immigrant women. In India, Zambia, South Africa and the West Indies, women have protested government run family planning clinics by burning them to the ground.

Campaign Gifts for Mother's Day

Buttons: \$.50 Wages for Housework No Cuts Just Bucks --
 Coming Out with Wages for Housework Black Women for Wages for Housework

Tea Towels: \$1.00 Pot Holders: \$.75

Cotton T-shirts: \$4.50 Indicate quantity and colour of each size.

Size: S M L
 Colour: Green Blue Red Black

Books & Pamphlets:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. <u>ALL WORK AND NO PAY</u> \$1.95
ed. Edmond & Fleming
-anthology of writings by women from many countries | 4. <u>ITALY NOW</u> \$.75
-feminist documents from the abortion movement in Italy
-introduction by Judy Ramirez |
| 2. <u>WOMEN SPEAK OUT</u> \$.60
-speeches from May Day Rally 1975 in Toronto | 5. <u>WAGES AGAINST HOUSEWORK</u> \$.40
-by Silvia Federici |
| 3. <u>POWER OF WOMEN JOURNAL</u> \$.60
-magazine of the international Wages for Housework Campaign | 6. <u>SEX, RACE & CLASS</u> \$1.40
-by Selma James
-with contributions from Race Today editors and correspondents |

Send to: Wages for Housework Campaign Office
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