

BLACK WOMEN for WAGES for HOUSEWORK (UK)

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NEWSLETTER NO.2

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"Black women know that moving in our own interests we build power not only for ourselves but for all Black people and for all women."
Wilmette Brown, co-founder of Black Women for Wages for Housework U.S.A.

victories home and abroad

Many thanks to the young Black women and men of the Greenhouse Sports Club, Brook Rd, and to the many other individuals and organisations - especially Women's Initiative for their support to the Club's action lead by the women in the netball team. The youths organised, fought and won my reinstatement.

A special thanks to Vicki Meminger of Black Women for Wages for Housework U.S.A. who worked closely with the netball team, and was key in the fight during her stay in England.

Now we must continue to organise against the unpaid social, community and housework that all women are doing.



Norma Steele, BWFWFH - U.K.

PETITION PUT OUT BY THE WOMEN OF THE GREENHOUSE SPORTS CENTRE

On October 16th Mrs Norma Steele, a Black Community Worker at 25 Brook Road, (a Detached Youth Workers Office serving the areas of St. Pauls, Montpelier, At. Agnes, Easton and St. Werburghs) was dismissed from her job.

We the undersigned demand her immediate re-instatement for the following reasons:-

- (1) Mrs Steele's work at Brook Road has been to expand the range of facilities and services Brook Road provides for the whole community. Young women and men especially have benefitted in an area where there are few facilities or jobs for young people. This work must be allowed to continue.
- (2) Black women in the area have begun to use Brook Rd because Mrs Steele's presence has meant there is someone there whom Black women can relate to and confide in and who can understand what Black women need. We refuse to allow the authorities to cut back on this provision which has provided for the first time an important resource for women in the area.
- (3) It is hard enough for Black women to get qualifications and a decent job; a threat to any Black woman's right to a job cannot be allowed to pass.
- (4) There are many Black women doing important Social and Community Work in the Black community for no payment. When one woman is finally given a formal paid job to do this work, the authorities cannot be allowed to dismiss her.

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HOUSTON: Equality begins with money

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 Great Britain. We were determined that the conference should go on record against President 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.

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. 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 (HR9030) which ...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.

'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.'



Margaret Prescod-Roberts of Barbados and New York, BWFWFH - U.S.A.

Prostitutes Bill step nearer

March '79

It would amend the law which classified two women living together as a brothel.

"This has forced prostitutes directly into the hands of organised crime—making them totally dependent on pones and pimps—and part of a terrifying Mafia," said Ms Colquhoun (Lab, Northampton N).

"They must be able to live together to protect one another."

The Bill would mean a prostitute could no longer be convicted solely on the evidence of one police officer.

There was mixed reaction from MPs. Energy Secretary Tony Benn (Bristol South East) and his Conservative Shadow Tom King (Bridgewater) voted for the bill, for once finding themselves in the same lobby.

Also in favour were Labour MPs Ron Thomas (Bristol North West), John Watkinson Gloucestershire West), Terry Walker (Kingswood), and Conservative MP Charles Irvine (Cheltenham).

Opposing the bill were Government chief whip Michael Cocks (Bristol South) Labour MP David Stoddart (Swindon) and Conservative MPs John Cope (Glos. South) Paul Dean (N. Somerset) and Peter Mills (Devon West).

PROSTITUTES last night lifted their threat to name some of their highly placed clients after MPs voted in favour of a Bill which would make their lives easier.

Mrs Selma James, of the English Collective of Prostitutes said: "We are absolutely delighted."

The Protection of Prostitutes Bill was introduced by Ms Maureen Colquhoun—who invoked the wrath of the Rev. Ian Paisley.

Ms Colquhoun told MPs: "It is only the peculiar sexual hypocrisy of the British which has singled out prostitution or soliciting as an offence."

Mr Paisley thundered: "This is only the beginning of a scheme to undermine all the laws at the very heart of the moral fabric of our society."

The Bill seeks to abolish jail sentences for soliciting, to establish a single offence to cover all street offences based on evidence from people annoyed, and to abolish the term "common prostitute".

"If the proposals to fix the rent allowance in the first weeks of a supplementary benefits claim is carried out, then this will get worse."

'We are branded as prostitutes' — rape meeting

Bristol Evening Post Nov.'77 and October '78

COLOURED WOMEN in Bristol are being branded by police as prostitutes as they walk through the streets at night, said Mrs Norma Steele, of the Black Women for Wages for Housework group.

"Many of us, who are forced to live in areas like St Paul's and also have to work at night, have to walk home.

"The police are on the look out for prostitutes and so if they see a woman alone their attitude is that we are all prostitutes."

Mrs Steele (27), a mother of two, who lives in Montpelier, was one of five speakers at a Women Against Rape meeting held in Stokes Croft, Bristol, last night.

All five attacked the police and also the courts for their attitude to rape victims.

Mrs Steele said: "Women just do not trust the police or the social workers. They are afraid to report a rape because of the attitude of the police."

The all-women meeting heard from Ruth Hall, WAR London, that there is a great deal of hidden rape.

"The Home Secretary will have to act. At the moment, the police back up the rapist, the courts back the police and then the Government is, as such, backing up the rapist."

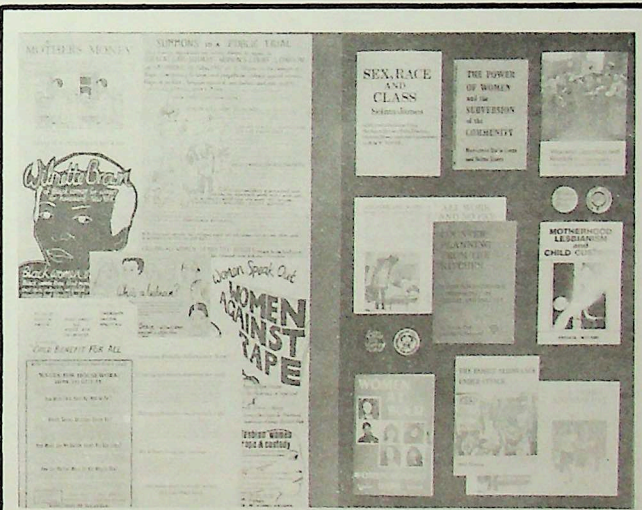
For prostitutes, against prostitution

The public debate, Prostitution: what of the future, organised by Baroness Vickers at Central Hall Westminster, November 27th '78, received for the most part serious and sympathetic coverage by the media. This was due first to the debate itself and the support we got from single mothers on S.S., lesbian women, married women, Women Against Rape, the Wages for Housework Campaign, and people from the Salvation Army and the National Association of Probation Officers.

The vote at the end overwhelmingly supported the resolution which called for an end to the Street Offences Act and to the law which insists that two or more women who share premises constitutes a brothel.

We are campaigning for the laws against prostitution to be abolished. These laws prevent women from living together if even one of us is on the game. These laws prevent women from coming off the game by branding us "common prostitute". These laws allow police to choose who is to be branded. They parallel the cohabitation ruling which means that women on social security who are suspected of living with a man are cut off. The assumption is that if a man has sex with a woman, the woman must insist that the man pay. That is to coerce women into one form of prostitution.

Vast numbers of families—children, old people, and even student husbands depend on our income, and would not survive without it. Prostitution is the welfare the State does not provide, which is why so many single mothers are forced to go on the game. Prostitution is the way that some women refuse to be on social



Display of Wages for Housework leaflets and badges and Falling Wall Press publications which formed part of an exhibition at Bristol City Museum. All available from the Campaign addresses on the back page.

security at all, and refuse also the low paying job ghetto reserved for our sex—and in refusing poverty, prostitutes are by no means alone.

Selma James spoke for many women when she said we were "for prostitutes and against prostitution". Women in massive numbers are refusing to be poor and refusing to sell themselves in any of the ways

society and our families have demanded of us up to now. For this, no price is right.

Margaret Valentino
English Collective of Prostitutes
Helen Buckingham
Prostitution Laws Are Nonsense

The Guardian, December 1978



Bristol speakers at last night's Women Against Rape meeting held in the Swann Inn, Stokes Croft (from left) Suzie Fleming, Norma Steele, Karen Crocker and Jenny Smith, with their petition, calling for changes in the current rape laws.

'BREAKING THE SILENCE' —

Black Women for Wages for Housework speech on the rape of Black and immigrant women, published in *Women at W.A.R.* by Women Against Rape London and Bristol.

Price 50p plus postage.

Available from Falling Wall Press 79, Richmond Road, Montpelier, Bristol BS6 5EP

and from Women Against Rape 60 Westbourne Park Villas London W.2. Tel. 01-221-5754 Bristol Tel. 0272-422810 Cambridge Tel. 0223-57142

We know it's women who are the lowest paid and are the majority of strikers. Many of these women are Black and immigrant. We are always the first to let the Government know that we can't afford to work for love in the home, or on a second job. Council workers didn't win everything this time but they will be coming back for more.

Sefton Pk. Black Parents Boycott

There was a massive response by Black parents to the boycott call which our group made and many white parents also responded. Parents withdrew their children from both the primary and secondary schools and not only from the cachement area of Montpelier and St. Paul's. 25% of the children of Sefton Park were absent and over 50% from St. Barnabas. This is a spite of the fact that the boycott was organised in 5 days. For too long Black people have been ignored by politicians, unions, the left and the media who are claiming to 'help' us and talk vaguely about the 'fight against racism'.

Black women have been fighting racism every day not only by demanding better deals for ourselves but also by raising our children to demand more for themselves.

Everyone knows that Black children are refusing the low-paid jobs laid out for them and Black mothers have been in the lead not only in the U.S.A. but Britain too—in demanding Welfare benefits, decent housing and refusing to take the kind of jobs and rates of pay that are reserved for immigrants. If the National Front attacks Black women and children - which they do - it is precisely because we have been a point of reference for the whole working class in

demanding that the wealth we have created come back to us. and refusing to accept that there is only a small slice of the cake to be shared.

The N.F. attacks on us are to put us back 'in our place' - to cut our access to more money, and to discipline us, both directly by physical attacks on us in the street and in the extra housework they put on Black women who have to deal with the emotional burden on the whole family that every racist attack brings.

In view of struggles like these it was no accident that Black women took the lead in organising the boycott and in 5 days were able to gain massive support. Had we known about the meeting a month before we could have mobilised enough people to stop it.

The N.F. chose Sefton Park because the school with 25% Black children is just on the outskirts of an area with a substantial immigrant population. While they were more nervous of coming into the Black neighbourhood they wanted to stir up trouble. They also knew that Black and white mothers had come together last Spring and organised specifically against the effect that the education cuts would have on children and mothers. These cuts meant children would be sent home from school if the teachers were off sick.

We can't afford to lose the wages or become unpaid teachers for our friends' children if we are full-time housewives. It was this organising which put Sefton Park in the newspapers - everyone knew a fight had gone on there.

To prevent violence now and in the future the N.F. must not meet again at Sefton Park or any other school and the boycott has set a precedent for future action to be taken and led by Black women.

Norma Steele, Black Women for Wages for Housework.

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PARENTS THREAT TO KEEP FRONT OUT

By Stephen Jones

IMMIGRANT PARENTS might threaten to withdraw their children from Sefton Park junior school, Bristol, if Avon county council allows the National Front to hold a meeting there next Tuesday.

Their leaders met last night to discuss ways of opposing the meeting in the school, where one in every four children comes from a coloured family.

The Front wants to stage the meeting to promote its candidate in the Avon county by-election.

PETITION

Black community spokeswoman Norma Steele said last night: "Both black and white parents are opposed to the Front meeting. They feel it can only lead to violence."

Immigrants would inevitably picket the school in protest on Tuesday, if the meeting went ahead, she said.

Objections have been made by the West Indian Parents and Friends Association, the Barbados, Caribbean and Friends Association, the Asian Council, Asian Youth Club, and Black Women for Wages for Housework.

Avon County Council says it has no choice, because the law insists it must provide accommodation for political parties to hold meetings before an election.

Mr. Bill Ashley, headmaster of Sefton Park, said angry parents wrongly think he personally allowed the Front to use his school.

"I spent five years in the last war fighting Fascism. It's really shocking to now have people thinking that I'm supporting it" he told me.

Parents yesterday handed a 320-name petition against the meeting to Education Committee chairman, Councillor Norman Reece.

The petition said they were appalled by the insensitivity of allowing the meeting to take place. Racial harmony in the school would be permanently damaged.

Western Daily Press, Oct. '77

"CHILD BENEFIT FOR ALL"



FOR BEING DEPRIVED OF OUR CHILDREN – IMMIGRANTS MUST PAY £ 70 MILLIONS. From April 5th, the child tax allowance will be phased out; and most mothers will get a rise in Child Benefit. But immigrants from Africa, Asia, Cyprus, Greece, Latin America, Portugal, Turkey and the West Indies whose children are not in this country will not be eligible for any Child Benefit. **WE WILL BE CHARGED £ 70 MILLION FOR BEING DEPRIVED OF OUR CHILDREN.**

WHEREVER WE LIVE – WE ALL WORK FOR BRITAIN. Housework has recently been valued at £ 115 a week, and all of us women are doing this work. We women are working for Britain and not only in Britain. 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.

WHO PAYS THE PRICE. This government proposal is aimed at keeping us poor, divided and dependent. Women, immigrant and native, of all races, will speak at the meeting about our lives and how this new discrimination will affect ALL IMMIGRANTS AND ALL WOMEN.

PUBLIC MEETING, Monday, March 6, 1978 at 7 o'clock at THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, PARLIAMENT, London, England.

Twenty Black and Asian parents were among a coachload of people who travelled from Bristol to the meeting at the House of Commons, London.

M.P. Maureen Colquhoun chaired the meeting.

Speakers :

Anowara Johan - *Bangladesh Women's Association.*
Norma Steele - *Black Women for Wages for Housework Britain*
Enise Y aylali - *Union of Turkish Women in Great Britain*
Selma James - *Wages for Housework Campaign Britain*
Rachel Smith - *immigrant mother from Wages Due Lesbians*
Tessa Squires - *Women Against Rape London*
Mrs. Buksh - *Bangladesh Women's Association*
Carolina Begué - *Housewives in Dialogue*

WFH CAMPAIGN ADDRESSES (UK)

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0272 426386

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P.O.Box 287, London NW6, England
01 328 7856 01 837 7509

Wages Due Lesbians (England)
P.O.Box 287, London NW6, England
01 624 6364

English Collective of Prostitutes
P.O.Box 287, London NW6, England
01 459 1150 01 837 7509
Bristol (0272) 426386

Cambridge Wages for Housework
Committee
19 City Road, Cambridge, England
0223 57142

Bristol Wages for Housework Committee
79 Richmond Road, Montpelier
Bristol, England
0272 422116

*for North American Campaign addresses
contact:*

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P.O. Box 830 (USA)
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(212) 834 0992

PETITION

WE DEMAND CHILD BENEFIT FOR ALL MOTHERS

1. IMMIGRANT MOTHERS – CHILD BENEFIT MUST BE PAID TO ALL MOTHERS REGARDLESS OF COUNTRY OF ORIGIN, AND WHETHER OR NOT THE CHILDREN CONCERNED ARE IN THIS COUNTRY.
2. SOCIAL SECURITY MOTHERS – CHILD BENEFIT MUST BE PAID ON TOP OF SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFIT.
3. LOW INCOME FAMILIES – CHILD BENEFIT IS A MOTHER'S MONEY BY RIGHT, AND MUST NOT LIMIT A FAMILY'S ENTITLEMENT TO ANY OTHER BENEFITS.

WE'RE ENTITLED TO THE MONEY BECAUSE
EVERY MOTHER IS A WORKING MOTHER.