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South St.

64 Larch Rd.
London NW2
6 June 1975

Dear Sisters,

Some things may not have been clear from the letter the Power of Women Collective sent to subscribers explaining that there was "a serious error in the address list on page 2 of our Journal no. 3", (the error being that we included the via dei Tadi address in Padova as a place where people could contact our political perspective.)

One inadequacy of our letter is that we were referring to the Centro Femminista and should have said so. It was an oversight on our part to refer to their address without using their name, and we apologise for this. Another shortcoming is that we did not sufficiently bring out what is fundamental in our differences with this group. After further discussion we have understood better how we can differ from other groups who also say that they are "for wages for housework", and we are more confirmed in our original view.

The implications of Wages for Housework have been considerably developed since this perspective was first put forward. This is as a result of the experience of different groups in different countries and our continual exchange of information and ideas. We are clearer now about what our perspective means in organisational terms.

The basis of our politics is women's work in the home. Our organisational practice therefore can only flow from this fundamental relation to capital which all women share. We have seen that women have been isolated and separated from each other by their work and even by the rebellion against their work. We have seen that we have been forced to make limited and 'separated' demands, for child-care, for higher wages in waged jobs, for abortion, for money to live without a man, struggles which don't draw immediate strength from each other because they are waged in isolation by women in different situations. Thus we have seen the necessity of making a demand that speaks to the needs of us all, that can bring us together. We set out therefore to build a movement that can bring together all women as housewives, in all the different situations in which we find ourselves: married/single, heterosexual/lesbian, mother/non-mother, with/without a second job, young/old, through a campaign for the wage, for every woman, on an international level.

Negatively, we have experienced in our struggles as women how, unless we demand the wage per se, from the beginning and for all women, we stand in danger of being defeated either because there are not enough of us or because the State has been able to utilise particular demands for its own purpose of our more intense exploitation. (There are more "opportunities" for women to get waged work in the United States now than before, but the female wage in relation to the male wage has dropped)

Positively, we are confident of our ability to organise that campaign and win that wage because we know that housework is fundamental to all women's work, that the need for a wage for that work is fundamental to all women, and that the struggle for the wage is a lever of power common to us all. To raise the demand, to let all women know that we want a wage for housework and intend to win one, is already a power for all women, and precisely the basis of organisation. Our involvement in individual struggles does not contradict but is part of a campaign, integral to building an organisational network. But our campaign is itself the strategy for struggle. It is a new strategy for struggle flowing from a new political perspective, an entirely new evaluation of the class struggle. To reduce our political activity to involvement in individual struggles only, is to throw out the analysis of what is the specific form in which capital exploits women and the specific response with which we propose to confront it. It is to negate Wages for Housework as an analysis because we negate the organisational conclusions that flow from it.

The report of the Trivento Committee (A Long Weekend of Struggle) has made clear the ways in which propaganda and mass activity are one. To demand wages for housework internationally, as we said, is already a power. To come out on the streets together in a demonstration for it is inseparable from the demand. Making our presence felt has already made it possible for women to raise demands and make struggles which were impossible before. After a demonstration of 100 comes a demonstration of 1,000, and of 10,000, the possibility of strike action across the lines which divide us, of activities that can hurt the State and be seen as a power to other wageless workers as well as to the waged. Our campaign is the organisational framework which will make all these actions more possible in a way that organising in one neighbourhood, in one city, or even in one country, can never do because we can never feel or convey our collective

strength to the wageless, isolated but rebellious housewife. In some parts of the world the struggle for the wage directly is quite advanced. The power this generates is a magnet which sucks us out of the provincialism, nationalism, isolation and timidity which has been our training as women.

In conceiving of a mass campaign, we are making an organisational break with the left and with politics as they have practiced them. First, they have always seen themselves as outside the working class. In whatever section they were addressing themselves, their politics in theory and practice was never based on a mutual experience. We do not "intervene" in other women's struggles with Wages for Housework. That is our struggle, and that is the struggle of all women because all struggles of women are struggles for the wage.

Second, the left ignored us not only because they were men (some of them were not), but because we were unorganisable in their terms. We have an entirely different conception of what is organisationally possible and necessary for us as women who are isolated from each other and who find, when we confront capital, another section of the exploited (men workers) standing in our way. Our network of organisation must overcome this isolation and the divisions among us.

Third, because of their failures, the male left have criticised the working class: the working class was backward - it could not grasp their perspective, was not ready for it.

In varying degrees these have been the positions taken up by some who identify themselves with wages for housework. They have felt that a mass campaign for the wage was premature, that women are "not ready" for such a campaign. This is not our position; this contradicts the premises of Wages for Housework. We have seen that internationally women are already struggling to refuse work and win money, and the demand for wages concretises and expresses what is already present in the struggles women are making. We are not imposing on "other" struggles a demand which will "supersede" them but making a demand which names explicitly our mutual goals and makes it possible for us to draw on each other for further power.

The Centro Femminista, via dei Tadi, Padova, has repudiated a campaign for some of the reasons above. It is not accidental then, that they were able to cooperate organisationally with women's commissions of male organisations. Unable to break with the organisational practice of the male left, they were unable to break with the male left organisationally.

The question of the campaign for the wage for every woman, then, has become the dividing line for us between on the one hand wages for housework as one demand among many, as a slogan which is eye-catching, as a demand which one day we will struggle for, and on the other hand Wages for Housework as an international and revolutionary feminist perspective which we activate now to build the power of women on a mass level now. This is what we meant when we said in our letter that the Centro Femminista was "not a Wages for Housework group". The enclosed document by Ruth Hall is an analysis of the second international conference of the Wages for Housework network where all the issues above are made more explicit. It makes as clear as possible that the issue of the campaign is the issue of whether we are for or against Wages for Housework, and is not peculiar to any country.

The Power of Women Collective has been asked to organise an international conference in July for those groups and individuals who have broad agreement on this crucial issue and who want to compare experiences and work out how to further the campaign. In countries where a campaign has already been initiated, we accept the judgement of those groups which have initiated and are working on the campaign there as to who from that country should be invited to the conference. In Italy that group is the Triveneto Committee.

While there are occasions such as this conference when those who share this political perspective feel the need to meet on our own, this doesn't mean or imply that we are not at all other times open to dialogue, discussion, communication and common action with all tendencies in the feminist movement. We are confident that many feminists will be increasingly drawn to Wages for Housework as a political and organisational strategy on the basis of their own experience and as they see for themselves its implications for women's power. In Britain we will be organising a national conference this autumn open to all groups and individuals who are interested in the perspective.

While we jealously guard our organisational autonomy against capital and the male left, we just as zealously nurture our links and relations with other feminist groups. But to state our position clearly and to dissociate ourselves from what undermines our position is not sectarian or destructive. We need clarity in order to ^{not to} break new ground.

In Sisterhood, Power of Women Collective

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We would like to invite you to a conference where those who are organising, or want to organise around this international campaign for the wage can work out together theory, strategy, and tactics. We hope women coming from countries where the movement is less advanced, and some of the issues discussed above have not yet been decided, will be able at this conference to use their international connections to draw strength for the campaign. The conference will be held in London, England on the weekend beginning Friday, 18th July. If you would like to come please, could you let us know your numbers and when you will expect to arrive, as soon as possible, so that we may have some idea of the size of the conference and can make arrangements for accommodation. Further details and a tentative agenda will follow shortly.

To avoid wasting time on debates that could be conducted within individual countries or cities, this conference is by invitation only. So please regard this invitation as applying only to the group or individual named. If you should know other people whom you think should be invited, please let us know. We hope, if possible groups or individuals could come with enough copies of prepared reports to distribute amongst the conference (In English preferably).

We do hope you will be able to come, it should provide a chance for us to move ahead, co-ordinate our activities, get to know each other and feel our international strength.

Power to the Sisters

Power of Women Collective
64 Larch Road,
London NW2, England

INVITATION TO AN INTERNATIONAL WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK CAMPAIGN CONFERENCE

LONDON, JULY 18-20 1975

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The implications of Wages for Housework have been considerably extended since this perspective was first put forward. This is a result of the experience of different groups in different countries and our continual exchange of information and ideas.

The basis of our politics is women's work in the home. Our organisational practice therefore can only flow from this fundamental relation to capital which all women share. We have seen that women have been isolated and separated from each other by their work and even by the rebellion against their work. We have seen that we have been forced to make limited and 'separated' demands, for child-care, for higher wages in waged jobs, for abortion, for money to live without a man, struggles which don't draw immediate strength from each other, because they are waged in isolation by women in different situations. Thus we have seen the necessity of making a demand that speaks to the needs of us all, that can bring us all together as housewives, in all the different situations in which we find ourselves, through a campaign for the wage, for every woman, on an international level.

Negatively, we have experienced in our struggles as women how, unless we demand the wage per se, from the beginning and for all women, we have stood in danger of being defeated either because there were not enough of us or because the State has been able to utilise particular demands for its own purpose of our more intense exploitation.

Positively, we are confident of our ability to organise that campaign and win that wage because we know that housework is fundamental to all women's work, that the need for a wage for that work is fundamental to all women, and that the struggle for the wage is a lever of power common to us all. To raise the demand that we want a wage for housework, and intend to win one, is already power for all women, and precisely the basis of organisation. Our involvement in individual struggles does not contradict but is part of a campaign, integral to building an organisational network. But our campaign is itself the strategy for struggle. It is a new strategy for struggle flowing from a new political perspective, an entirely new evaluation of the class struggle. To reduce our political activity to involvement in individual struggles only, is to throw out the analysis of what is the specific form in which capital exploits women and the specific form with which we propose to confront it. It is to negate Wages for Housework as an analysis because we negate the organisational conclusions that flow from it.

To demand Wages for Housework internationally, is already a power. To come out on the streets together in a demonstration for it is inseparable from a demand. Making our presence felt has already made it possible for women to raise demands and make struggles which were impossible before. After a demonstration of 100 comes a demonstration of 1000, and of 10000, the possibility of strike action across the lines which divide us, of activities that can hurt the State and be seen as a power to other wageless workers as well as to the waged. Our campaign is the organisational framework which will make all these actions more possible in a way that organising in one neighbourhood, in one city, or even in one country, can ever do, because we can never feel or convey our collective strength to the wageless, isolated but rebellious housewife.

The left have ignored us not only because they were men (some of them are not), but because we were unorganisable in their terms. We have an entirely different conception of what is organisationally possible and necessary for us who are isolated from each other. Our network of organisation must overcome this isolation and the divisions among us.

In some parts of the world the struggle for the wage directly is quite advanced. The power this generates is a magnet which sucks us out of the provincialism, nationalism, isolation and timidity which has been our training as women.

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