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9, 9, 10 MARCH '74

A LONG WEEK-END OF STRUGGLE

On March 10 1974 Ferretto Square, which seemed forever consecrated to the "worker's movement", conceived as the movement of "maleworkers", was for the first time with workers of the home and of the factory : by women united against their common exploitation, in the home first and outside of it.

For several months, that is since the Fall of 1973, the Veneto Committee For Wages For Housework had established a network of contacts, mostly in the Venice area, between groups of women who up to that time had been either ignored by every political force, or had been kept carefully divided by the traditional organisations : first by the trade unions and the parties, while the extraparliamentary groups had just followed the beaten path.

Precisely because we started by positing housework as the first link in the chain of exploitation that enslaves all women and allows capital to discriminate against women on the outside job, the Committee was able "to take the right road". That is, the Committee tried to make channels of political communication among all women, and ,therefore, to create the possibility for a growth of political power for all of us, so that women who are already in a stronger position would give strength to women who are in a weaker position. But if it was not to be based on a merely ideological solidarity that never develops real roots, this unification of all women could only be based on the acknowledgement of our common exploitation : housework.

Nobody had ever taken this road.

In fact, politicians, would be leftists, trade unionists, and the Women's Commissions of the parties and the (supposedly leftists) groups all agreed on the premise that women are "nothing"; thus, they all were convinced that there is no need to analyse the condition of women. It never crossed anybody's mind that women are the labor power which is consumed in the process of producing and reproducing labor power, though this productive process is known, for it is experienced by everybody.

They all had started from the capitalist appearance and, consequently, had considered women always and only as someone else's appendages. And, as appendages, they had seen them divided first of all into mothers, wives, daughters, fiancées, single women, etc. They did not see, however, the basis on which these different roles are built, and, consequently, they did not understand the basis on which these divisions are founded. On the contrary, we women had seen very clearly this basis and we have identified it with housework. For each of these roles is based on a determinate quantity and quality of housework that women must do in the home. A woman must provide her husband not only with the maximum amount of housework, but also with all the duties that housework involves; love-making included. A sister is not expected to provide this latter service to her brother, in the same way as she is expected to provide an amount of housework much inferior to that which is expected of a wife with respect to her husband, or of a mother with respect to her children.

Now the roles to which the highest productivity of housework corresponds are generally that of wife and mother. Moreover, on a mass scale, they coincide because to be a wife generally means to be also a mother. Therefore, the woman who is a wife and a mother (besides being a sister, a daughter, etc.) represents the highest level of productivity of housework. But also those who today are sisters, daughters, fiancées, etc. tomorrow will be wives and mothers. For the cycle of housework is determined in such a way that it requires certain roles during the period of our heavy training, (daughters, sisters, fiancées, etc.) and other roles during the period of the highest productivity (wife and mother). The woman who refuses to go through the cycle of housework, and thus refuses to guarantee her consumption as labor power at the most highly productive level is further divided from other women. This is the woman who, though she is a wife, does not want to bear children; it is the woman who, though she ~~has~~ has children, does not want to be a wife; it is the woman who does not want to be either a wife or a mother. These divisions too are mystified by capital through moral and ideological judgments. But in reality they are determined by the lower productivity of housework.

It is clear, then, that this first order of division is in fact built on different levels of productivity of housework which are imposed on us women.

The fact that this division was never questioned by

anyone contributed to codify a capitalist hierarchy among women based on the higher or lower productivity of their work: housework.

Furthermore, as wives (mothers, daughters, sisters etc.) women were defined in turn as proletarians if the male wage which commanded ~~their~~ them was that of a proletarian, bourgeois if the income which commanded them was that of a bourgeois. No one saw that in every case women did not have money of their own in their hands for that common work which all of them did. And that this basically determines a lack of power for all of us.

Being always defined always and only with respect to the level of power (or non-power) of a man, women were divided among themselves from the viewpoint of the (non) analysis, of the (non) objectives, of the (non) political strategy. They were divided not only in terms of the class to which "the man" belonged, but also according to the hierarchies of power within the class itself to which "the man" was subject.

If we, on the contrary, define women precisely on the basis of their work, we must assume that all the women who on a mass scale do housework, who are labor power consumed in the process of producing and reproducing labor power, are workers; they are the workers of the house. They are workers without a wage of their own, but they are workers. The fact that on a mass ~~scale~~ scale women are unwaged workers has determined such a radical lack of power in working class women as to determine a lack of power even among bourgeois women. In fact, the wife of a powerful man, for example, certainly enjoys a reflected power

through her husband, but she is not powerful on her own. The wife of a man who has a low level of power has little power because of the low level of power of her husband, but to his ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ low power she adds her own lack of power.

There exists a condition of weakness common to all women, that is a lack of power of their own such that can provide a common ground of struggle for all.

Besides this type of divisions others were being postulated and fixated. Some of them were never put on paper (it would have been too much) but they were always said and thought. These are the divisions based on 'aesthetic' appreciation; beautiful-ugly, and those based on moral judgment: saints-prostitutes. It is worthwhile to point out that the highest productivity of housework has been the object of positive moral judgment (that woman--who works like an animal--is a saint), while the refusal and the rebellion against housework has always been the object of a negative moral judgment (that woman--who does not do her 'duty'--is no good).

Other divisions, instead, have been written about and theorised. Starting always from a definition of women as wives, mothers, daughters, seen as <sup>everything</sup> ~~xxxxxxxx~~ <sup>every-</sup> ~~xxxxxxxx~~ body, rather than as workers of the house, they all have further divided women in "non-workers" (the housewife) and "workers" (the women who have an additional job outside the home). ~~Again~~ And again, the woman with a "clean" job--these are the factory workers, employees, shop-girls--and those with a "dirty" job, the prostitutes.

Also this further order of divisions was based on the fact that housework was not recognised as work. This prevented them from seeing that housework is the ground of exploitation common both to the housewife and to the woman who also works outside of the home, and that prostitution is nothing but specialized housework.

TO MAKE LOVE IS HOUSEWORK.

They had always approached women starting from the divisions of power capital has created among us, taking them as "natural" and therefore "inevitable", or worst yet, as "a consequence of the backwardness" of the women themselves, and therefore, after all, well-deserved". In this way they reinforced these divisions, and also caused guilt feelings in those women who have not performed "brilliantly" in the race for "emancipation"—and, as housewives, we all know what that is. Thus, these political organisations tended to strengthen, instead of destroying, the objective divisions created by capital and the consequent lower degree of power some women have with respect to others. It is worthwhile to make it clear once for all that this is the relation the so-called political forces with a leftist reputation have always established not only with women but with the whole class.

But in the case of women this has been particularly damaging, because by ignoring the "housewife" as "too weak", "non-organisable", or "too backward", or even "non-existent as a worker", these political forces deprived women of any possi-

lity for a mass organisation. All women, in fact, as we well know, are fundamentally "housewives", that is "workers in the home". For housework is the "first and only front where we all are and which determines all aspects of our life".

But nobody ever started from this and consequently nobody ever tried to build an organisational continuity between the woman who works in the home and the woman who also works outside the home. Aiming at "keeping the divisions", they had never even tried to make an organisational connections between the woman who works in the big factory and the woman who works in the ~~kkkkk~~ <sup>small</sup> factory, the woman who works in the countryside and the woman who works in the city, between the woman who must accept a textile machine in the home and the woman who must run out to work at a textile machine in a plant.

We, the women of the Committee had started precisely in the opposite way, by assuming that the power divisions capital has created must be destroyed. Obviously, this does not mean-- as some would like to believe--giving up the power some of us have already gained against capital; on the contrary, it means <sup>working</sup> for all women, and therefore for the entire class, to gain the greatest power against capital.

We, as women, can achieve this growth of power only if we organise ourselves starting from that battle front in which we all are, that is housework. Only in this way will it be pos-

sible, always and in every place, to bargain around the entire work we do: housework first of all and, in addition to it, also the secondary jobs, and thus to bargain around the entire wage, the entire work-time, and the entire conditions of our life, in one word, OUR SOCIAL POWER which is based on them.

Given that this is our perspective, how would we move in practice to build it organisationally?

In facing this problem one thing became immediately obvious to us: we had to put an end to the isolation of women's struggles. We had to put an end not just to the isolation of the four domestic walls, but also to the isolation of those invisible walls whereby women who struggle in a factory never see those who struggle in the home, women who struggle around daycare in a neighborhood never see those who struggle around daycare in another neighborhood, the isolation whereby the woman who enters a doctor's office does not know that the way she is treated is the way all the other women waiting outside, and all the women in the hospitals, will be treated, and therefore does not know that her revolt can join that of the others.

Let us say it again: the isolation of our struggles is a direct consequence of the fact that all the so-called political forces have wanted to see only partial aspects of the exploitation and oppression of women, and therefore have built a wall of silence around every "part" or "aspect" which they were interested in recognising.



Our viewpoint, to bargain immediately around all our exploitation, gave us also--we were to discover it for the first time-- the possibility of thinking of a moment of mobilisation common to all women, and therefore the possibility for the first time to break every division and every isolation.

#### How to build this ?

We, the women of the Committee, as all other women had little time and money for "political work", that is to build an organisational network which would give more strength to all women and, consequently, to us too. But we began to think of some instruments in a strategic way. In Padova it was the problem of the center. Not only had we to be ready to travel in order to have meetings, to mount a debate to establish a first contact with women in other cities, or other villages; it was also crucial that these women have the possibility to easily reach us. As we know, few women have cars. Thus, we chose a center close to the bus and train station. It was extremely handy. Many women, some from villages, could "come and go back" in one afternoon, without any member of their family even being aware of it, and without their interfering.

The center was open regularly a few days a week, to answer any question of the women who came, to give information, to offer reading materials and a chance to speak with other women; and it became immediately the place for a series of meetings which

grew as our contacts grew. The address, the opening time of the center were publicised also in the papers and in any other way. We, the women of the Committee, would take turns to keep up with the meetings, as we must would take turns in travelling around.

At first, the function we performed was essentially this: to make contact with the greatest possible number of women. What was our immediate perspective? To go a first time in the streets all together, with the only demand which could see us all together, and which therefore would give us a new power to bargain all the rest: WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK.

This was our immediate objective. And then? We will go many times again in the streets, all together, always with this demand until we be not thousands but millions; for while we in Italy are putting forward this demand, our sisters in every country are moving on the same demand. We wont have to wait long before we are millions.

Until the unification of women is large enough, strong enough, until we have all gone into the streets many times together, we will not have an idea of where to concentrate our organisational effort, where we will be able to strike harder, because there we are strongest and with what forms of struggle.

Building the first demonstration on the demand for wages for housework (the March 10 demonstration) has meant giving an organizational basis to the increasing refusal of housework which every woman feels and expresses in more or less open revolts. The price we women pay for this refusal is high. Men block our struggle, they blackmail us, they beat us, they kill us. It is horrifying to read in the papers, over the last few months, of women murdered by their husbands explicitly because "she refused to do housework".

Already many hours which have not been spent doing housework--whatever the price we might pay--have been spent, here in Veneto, writing documents, having meetings, making bulletins with information about our struggles, travelling, taking pictures, making movies, songs, in one word, preparing for the 10 of March demonstration. This was and continues to be the phase of the underground strike, of the increasing refusal of housework. Next time, in the Spring of '75, there will be an open strike. Not a national strike yet, but a strike by a network of women such as no trade union or party ever succeeded in organizing, a strike by a network that overcomes the objective divisions created by capital.

We said in the square: "Today we are opening the campaign for wages for housework". Had we further detailed what we meant by a campaign, probably none of us would have said anything more than to keep multiplying ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ what we

had done so far, to have many more women than were in the square on that day. But precisely because we had ~~constructed~~ constructed a first occasion, afterwards it was much more clear, to us and to all the women who participated in the demonstration, what it means to build a campaign for wages for housework. And this is precisely what has to be emphasised: the 10 of March caused a leap in the organisational capacities of all the women who participated in it. Not only the older women had seen beside her the younger, the woman with children had seen beside her the woman without children, the factory worker had seen beside her the shop-girl, the student had seen the woman who does piece-work in her home; in one word, every woman had seen the condition of the other women; but also through the impact of our speeches, of the interventions each of us made, speaking perhaps in public for the first time, the interdependence of every aspect of her condition as a woman and the interdependence of her condition and that of the other women came to light. Precisely because of this, once back home every woman had the power to see with new eyes her life environment, discover the ties that tie her to the other women, and thus succeed in focusing with them on the possibility of an organisational network.

Obviously, even before that, many of us were involved in organisational situations. We were involved in the daily struggles over daycare, prices, the conditions of the neighborhood, rent-reductions, wage-discrimination and on the defense of

Search for a job. But we also know the sense of weariness and weakness induced by our sustaining such hard struggles, struggles for which we pay a higher price than anybody else, and which do not guarantee us any power as women and no any possibility of a permanent organisation, based on our interests and controlled by us.

Now, on the 10 of March we had given ourselves first of all a new perspective in which to move. This new perspective, wages for housework, had given us for the first time the possibility of a mass organisation, because, as we said before, and as we said in all our speeches, "housework not only claims all of us, but it is the work which determines all other aspects of our life". For this very reason this perspective had given us not only the possibility of a mass organisation, but also the only possibility of a permanent organisation. In fact, while the struggle over daycare ends when we take the daycare center, the struggle for wages for housework ends only with the end of housework itself. As long as we have to spend one minute of our ~~time~~ day to reproduce ourselves, not as free individuals, but as labor power for others--and this is housework--labor power others will exploit, our struggle against housework will not end. Even to put rollers in our hair every Saturday (because a shop girl must have a nice hair-do) is housework we perform for the bosses. If we were free individuals, we would or would not put rollers in, our choice would be dictated only by our taste, not by

somebody else's, our boss' need to make us into a model shop girl who attracts more customers. And this is only one example among thousands. The same holds for all that we do in order to reproduce our body and mind. A comrade from the West Indies, who having intuited (thanks to Penuke teachings) what is housework, began to better "visualise" our entire "working day", commented: "Well, those who are commanded by capital never pinch out". Brushing our teeth is housework, putting lipstick on is housework, making love is housework, sleeping is housework and it does not make any difference that we also like a lot to sleep, for the fact that we sleep guarantees the existence of capital.

Our perspective is that everything, as long as it is commanded to us, must be paid for to us. And we must get everything paid for by those who want us to brush our teeth, put lipstick on and to go to sleep early so that we can get up early in the morning. If they want to impose all this on us, it means that they profit from all this. Then as long as they are forcing us to do something, they are always indebted to us, whatever the wage level we have reached. It goes without saying that our struggle for wages for housework does not end with a certain wage level, but with the destruction of their command over us to make us work. That is, with the destruction of every class relation, with the end of the bosses, with the end of the workers, of the home and of the factory and so of male workers too.

And our reproduction?

We say immediately that it will not require housework any longer. Housework will not exist any longer in the same way as for-

ced labor will not exist. Given our present technological possibilities, and the present level of technological invention, every possible solution is at our disposal. At one condition, however, that we break the class relation which prevents us from enjoying the benefits of these inventions.

Only if our time is not commanded by others, only if our space is not confined by others, will we be able to develop our full capacities: the capacity to understand, to invent, to act and to build completely different social relations.

Earlier we said that the ID of arch with the political perspective it expressed has concretely demonstrated to all of us the possibility of building a permanent organisation. The roots of this organisation that we began to build were ~~rank~~ <sup>daily</sup> grounded in the struggles of women, but freed at last from the accumulated debris of the male tradition which always suffocated them. Only a male interpretation of women's struggles could see in the struggle over the price of steak our interest as defending the man's wage, rather than our interest to have first of all a wage of our own to be able to afford a steak for ourselves. The same holds for the struggle around housing. Only a male interpretation could see this women's struggles satisfied when the house would be assigned to the "head of the family", without thinking that women could aspire to have a house of their own, independently from their being the reproducers of an entire family: a house where to live alone, or with a female friend, or

with a child, or with a man, but not necessarily with a man.

All the struggles over prices and housing--we can say without fear of error--expressed first of all women's need for autonomy, a need for money of our own, space of our own, free time of our own. But in order for the totality of our interests, that these struggles and thousands of others expressed, to emerge completely and find an organisational form, it was necessary to break with the male management of class struggle. When as women we decided to interpret our struggles ourselves, and to define our own interests ourselves, we were able for the first time to ground our AUTONOMY as our strategy. In fact for the first time were we able to see the totality of our interests, and therefore, try to build our full organisational power from the ground up. That is, an organisational power that always, at every moment would represent the totality of our interests.

It was a clear break with men and their organisations, precisely because men and their organisations by interpreting our interests in a limited and distorted way, had deprived us of a definitive strategy against our exploitation. Thus, they had confined us to political impotence, that is to depend on capital, to depend on capital's <sup>strategy</sup> ~~xxxxxx~~ for us. We were condemned by male interpretations to start from the branches (the outside job) rather than from the roots of our exploitation. We were condemned to bargain over partial interests (the job that supplemented the male wage in order to support our family) rather than bargain over our whole interest : to have immediately a wage of



our own starting from the housework we all do, not to preserve but to destroy the family, which is based on our unwaged work. Thus, we were condemned to fight from a ~~not~~ defensive position; we were confined to struggle to prevent capital from worsening our condition, instead of being able to struggle like waged males to destroy our exploitation.

OUR LACK OF AUTONOMY FROM MEN, FROM MALE ORGANISATIONS WAS A LACK OF AUTONOMY FROM CAPITAL. It meant that we were condemned, let us say it again, TO DEPEND ON CAPITAL, to depend on capital's choices for us.

When we decided to interpret our struggles ourselves and the needs they express, we were consequently able to outline a definitive strategy and thus ~~built~~ BUILD IN ORGANISATIONAL TERMS OUR AUTONOMY FROM CAPITAL.

This must be thoroughly clarified, because up to this day there is a tendency to confine the meaning of feminist autonomy to the fact that we hold meetings separately from men. To have meetings separately from men has been an indispensable condition for building a strategical autonomy. But to limit ourselves to having separate meetings, while moving around a male strategy, means to let what we have thrown out of the door come back through the window. And all the political organisations and their Women's Commissions are in fact under our windows waiting to jump in.

As we said before, only the demand of wages for housework allows us to struggle against the totality of our exploitation, for it allows us to bargain around our entire work-time, the entire wage of our work. This then is the only demand on which we can build a definitive strategy, and all those--men and women--who are against this demand, want to come back through the window to disarm us. If the Women's Movement sponsors their strategy it means that these people have already come back through the windows of some Women's Centers.

March 10 1974 was the last of three days which expressed the organisational effort of many months of work: the continuous search for money to travel around, to print and distribute 20,000 leaflets, to print and circulate 6,000 wall posters, to rent a movie theater, a stage with amplifiers in the square of the rally, to run off and off-set piles of materials which were essential to distribute during the months of preparation, and particularly on that work day, to build a photographic show which lasted for the three days in the square, to rent the movies to be shown.

There was always the problem of time: time that was continuously snatched at night, on Saturdays and work Sundays, for many of us "on the job", typing stencils instead of office correspondence while the boss was in the other room, meeting with our

sisters pretending to sell them a sweater behind the counter of a department store.

TIME and MONEY, Now that our political struggle had begun we needed even more time and money. Our power, our liberation depended on how much time we could spend on it, how much money we succeeded in extracting from anybody, to prepare adequate tools of struggle.

The 10 of March was also the first testing of the tools we had created and of their ability to provide a clear and immediate communication among all the women present.

In the morning at the Excelsior movie theatre in the Ferretto Square we showed two feminist movies: "The Struggle Is Not Over", and "The Adjective Female" produced by the Roman Feminist Movement. The first pictures the demonstration of March 8 1972, 1973, and the second pictures the first public protest about the situation of abortion in Italy, the situation of women forced to work in the general markets, the struggle of women who had occupied a factory in Rome, the heaviness, and fatigue and monotony of housework. ~~Admission was free.~~ Admission was free. Many women entered with their children. In the intervals, in the movie theatre, the Musical Group of the Committee, who had composed songs would sing with guitars. Many women in the room started singing (and the children too in their own way). The rhythm was easy to learn and the words were immediately grasped for they spoke of a situation reality which they knew all too well. Many men came in "to see". It was the first time they saw movies made by women for women. They had a rather bewildered expression on their faces and they were silent.

There were others, however, who with quickness of wit managed to "say the right thing at the right moment". These were the militants of Avanguardia Operaia (Workers' Vanguard), who came to see us going out of the movie theatre with a pamphlet of their own on abortion. They said: "After all, if you have understood anything it is because Lenin taught you". We answered them from the stage--so that our answer could reach the ears of all their allies scattered in the square--"No, Lenin on this has never said anything that makes any sense, and neither has Marx. The Women's Movement has started from where no man had ever arrived" (1)

The images shown by the movies were unusual: deformed bodies of old women, policemen charging the Roman Roma feminists who were demonstrating, women speaking of the condition in which they had aborted. All this without any male mystification. But if the images were unusual for a movie theatre, the women who were present recognised themselves in these images. One could hear comments from many points: "It is just like that". They would ask the other women--those who went through the rows distributing leaflets, small pamphlets, the texts of the songs--what that day was organised for. When they would hear: "Because they must pay us for housework", they would say "It is right", it was some-

1) Their allies were: Lotta Continua, Manifesto, Quarta Internazionale, P.D.U.P., Organizzazione Comunista, Circolo La Comune. They had gathered together with Avanguardia Operaia at the movie theatre Marconi to babble about the "emancipation of women", in a room crowded with men.

something they had never thought about ,though many times they would say with anger "I work so much for nothing".

When the show ended it was lunch time.Many women rushed home,the men,as usual,hung around in the square looking at the posters,the banners,the pictures of the show,and at us who were singing ,speaking with other women,and shouting slogans. Then,one of us,took the loudspeaker and started shouting in their ears:"Men, where are your wives? Women,come to the square to struggle.Men,go home to cook."

By 1:30 the square had emptied for the Sunday meal. It was at that time that it was possible to see immediately with one look the marvellous floral taste with which the Communist Party had decorated the <sup>walls</sup> ~~square~~ for the 8th of March,filling ~~it~~ them with posters.The scene was reminiscent of D'Annunzio's "yellow daffodils fever" ,except that instead of daffodils,on the posters,there were mimosas.But the effect was the same : crazy. And crazy were the words that invited women to "emancipate themselves" and "to give help" (to whom it was not clear) to come out of the crisis.Luckily our posters were purple otherwise they would be confused.And luckily we put banknotes, large and well visible,in the hands of women,so women understand immediately that we are the party of money not the party of work.Since that day the party of work has increasingly emphasised

its floral relation to women's struggles.(1)

Around 3pm the square started filling up again: it took just that much time for women to feed their family and wash the dishes. But the news that in the afternoon in the square there would be shows with feminist songs and debates must have circulated very widely because we saw many older women coming, who ruffling the "Bullettins" on the stalls read at least something about themselves. Older women, who listening to the songs, felt that we spoke of them too. Older women, who leaning out of the windows (we saw many of them), heard that we spoke of them too in our speeches. "Women not only get the mockery of social pension, but they continue to work in the home, they continue to do housework until they die". "When we are old we find on our shoulders the role of grand mothers, which means that we must raise also our grand children for nothing and in this way they keep us working as mothers until we die." "For a woman there is menopause; menopause could be treated, but no, she must suffer. And it is ten years of our life they take away. An older woman does not have the right to love, she is discriminated sexually, she has no right to receive sexual attention; she must be only a grand mother".

1) In Il Corriere Della Sera (November 7, 1974, p.3) we read a statement made by Rassinovic, at a meeting in Monza, for the re-launching of recruiting for the Communist Party in Brianza. "If while we go by in a protest demonstration we meet a woman in a car, not only do we offer her a propaganda leaflet, we give her also a rose" We start being suspicious about the function of carnations. (n.o.t. the ~~xxx~~ red carnation is one of the most popular symbols of the Italian P.C.I.).

In the square arrived also all those women who had not been able to come in the morning. The women who came to the square for a Sunday walk on their husbands' arms met with the women who had come specifically for the demonstration, leaving their husbands many miles away.

There was a strange tension. Those of us who continued to distribute leaflets and documents saw the out-stretched arm hand of a husband who wanted to see what this was about before handing it to his wife; and the wife often did not have the power to say: "Wait a minute, this is for me". The situation of the women walking on their husbands' arms worsened when we started speaking at the microphone. It was clear that the husbands liked neither the tone nor the content of our speeches, because they would drag their wives away, putting pressure on their arms, ignoring the protests of the women who wanted to stay and listen.

And then there were the soldiers on leave, who were more than happy to have a chance to speak with so many women. Seemingly interested in what we were saying, some of us asked us what we wanted. "Wages for housework--we told them--for all the work we do at home without which the State could not survive, and for which the State does not want to pay us". The words "State" and "housework" caused them immediately to change their attitude, from courteous to thoughtful. After looking at each other and around a bit, and after talking among





her to lack anything. "What is mine is hers"; others would remain silent and thoughtful.

A woman from the Committee, the wife of one of these workers, joined the discussion. She laid out with passion her viewpoint on the issues which had come out, throwing out also things which she had been brooding about for a long time and we with her. First of all she started making it clear that there would not be anything wrong if once housework is waged men would decide to do it; and if a man feels pleasure in giving money to his wife he could keep doing it also after his wife has a wage of her own.

At one point some said that after all they agreed, that after all it was right that the State would give women a wage; after all with ~~two~~ two paychecks in the family you could ~~keep~~ keep your head above water. Actually, in the case of a strike, probably one could get by better. They told us ~~by~~ that they were struck by a sentence ~~as~~ uttered in the square: "No strike has ever been a general strike. When half of the population works in the home, in the kitchens, while the others strike, it is not a general strike". They asked her how she thought-- how we thought--we would get to this general strike. At this point she told them what had been in her mind for a long time, and she answered that in order to achieve this they should be ready to shut down the factories and join us in the square when we would decide to have the next demonstration.

It was a very important straightforward political direction. Our strategy allowed us to give some new direction also to the other sectors of the class.

The discussion went on around "what is housework". Through our words they discovered, some with surprise, others with dismay, that they too did housework, even if much less than women. They discovered that fixing the sink and changing the light bulbs etc. were not small ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ favors they conceded grudgingly to their wives, but housework. They discovered that many of the activities they engaged in every day were housework. They also began to see more clearly how this relates to commuting to work. They had already struggled hard to get it paid as work, but were now able to see it in a new light. It was not only the hours expended for the bosses outside the factory (time and traveling to and from work), but many more to be added to those. And they also began to see more clearly the shortcomings of their struggle around commuting had had, shortcomings which were determined by the limitations of their objective, and therefore the limitations of the involvement in the struggle by other sectors of the working class.

It will depend on our strength and level of organisation whether the issues raised in this discussion in the square on the 10 of March will become turning points for the theory and revolutionary practice of the male working class. However, for the present, let us see their immediate effects.

First of all the men started thinking of the hours of housework they too perform and of the possibility of bargaining over this work, precisely because we had opened the struggle around it. And the fact that we intended to bargain around this work had not only opened their eyes about the actual length of their working day ;it had also given them <sup>an</sup> essential basis of strength to be able to bargain over it.

Besides this, for the first time some waged males thought of uniting with us on the basis of our objectives (which not accidentally also expressed their class interest) rather than repeating to us as usual that we had to unite with them on their objectives, even if their objectives never succeeded in expressing our interests.

Our strategy opened <sup>up</sup> for the first time the possibility of a class unification ,which would happen non through the repression of the sectors defined as weaker--we women first of all--but springing from our autonomous organisation as women, would bring anew level of power for the entire class, rather than a further stratification of power.

Comitato Trivereto Per Il  
 Salario al lavoro domestico  
 di Padova  
 Padova, 1974  
 novembre