

WAGES for HOUSEWORK

CAMPAIGN BULLETIN

spring 1977

No.1

THE PAY DEAL WOMEN ARE BREAKING

The deal between government and unions to keep wages down is falling to pieces. Wage claims are coming in from all quarters. Everyone is watching what men workers are doing. But it's not only men who work. And it's NOT ONLY MEN WHO ARE PUTTING IN THESE WAGE CLAIMS.

When women go out to work, we're shoved into the low paid jobs in smaller factories, into low paid service work—in schools, hospitals, canteens, office cleaning. The cuts have been hardest on us, and we've been fighting not to lose that wage, resisting going home to do unpaid housework full-time without any money in our pockets, not even unemployment pay.

Whether we're full-time at home or not, all of us are doing housework. Every time the news mentions coal miners or car workers they don't mention the wives, mothers, girlfriends and daughters who've worked at home so men AND women can clock in in the first place. And what a job that is when there's less money! It's a miracle more of us don't get heart attacks watching the prices rise. That's why women have been pressing men not to take this wage freeze any more.

And we're also putting in our OWN wage claim in

a thousand different ways for ALL the work, unpaid or low paid, that WE do.

FAMILY ALLOWANCE: "IN EFFECT, A WAGE"

Neighbourhood street rallies in a number of cities launched the Family Allowance-Wages for Housework petition last May. In the following months, at petition tables on High Streets, at fairs, markets and shopping centres women discussed marriage, prices, housework, jobs, sex, equal pay, the cost of having children. They not only signed but got their husbands or boyfriends to sign. Many men understood that we are demanding the money from the government, not from them. But if the men refused to sign, some women argued it out with them there and then. After all, it's a public affair whether women have money of their own.

Women took petitions away, to get signatures from neighbours and relatives or from workmates on their paid job. A lot of filled petitions were handed in when Gingerbread—an organisation of single parents—marched in London last summer.

The new Child Benefit system comes in on April 1st. Women will now be entitled to payment for the first child—one of the things we've been petitioning

Calling all women!

March 20th is Mother's Day

When's Pay Day?

Come to a Mother's Day Event



ABOUT TIME a new film by the Wages for Housework Campaign, and London Women's Film Group

Speakout Songs Refreshments

FREE ADMISSION FREE CHILDCARE

*We mother our fathers
We mother our brothers
We mother our children
We mother our mothers!
And husbands and boyfriends
And even each other.
Every woman's a housewife,
And all of us mothers.*



The Gate Cinema, Notting Hill Gate

London W.11

Sunday 20th March, 2-4 p.m. Doors open 1.30 p.m.

for. But the State will take back 70p of the £1 from men's pay packets. Most single mothers pay back even more of what they get.

But one result of women's protests is that even government ministers, like Stanley Orme, are saying the Child Benefit is "in effect, a wage". He was trying to make the pitance sound good. But once we've got them to call it a wage, it's money they've ADMITTED we're entitled to, and it's even harder for them to justify why it's so little.

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IF YOU HAVEN'T SENT YOUR SIGNED PETITIONS IN YET, please get them in the post to reach us by March 19th or bring them with you to the Gate Cinema on Mother's Day. We will present them to the government in the following week. **WANT TO COME ALONG TO PUT IN YOUR WAGE CLAIM PERSONALLY?** Give us a ring.
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Every woman's Social Security

While the government is holding down Family Allowance for all mothers, women are TAKING a more substantial wage. Between 1970 and '75, the number of women with dependants claiming Supplementary Benefits increased by one third. And many single women without dependants are on Supplementary Benefits too. Either they couldn't get a paid job or they've decided that, after taxes, fares, lunches and other expenses of working, they're no worse off

on Social Security than on 'women's wages'! Other women are calculating whether it's worth staying in intolerable or violent marriages for the 'security' and the housekeeping money. We often get more of both on S.S. Many women feel we get better with men anyway when we're not financially dependent on them. At least one family in 12 in Britain is a woman on her own with children.

Almost half of these women are claiming S.S. There are so many women making their claim to financial independence at the S.S. office that the government is trying to discourage us from claiming by cutting what little they give. So those on S.S. have had to fight to get heating and clothing allowances, which they're entitled to by law.

But despite the harassment, including sex-snoopers, and the daily hassles, still more women are going on S.S. It's money we've won for the housework ALL women do, and we should ALL be entitled to claim.

February 22nd 1977

Dear Mr. Healey,

We are writing to you on behalf of the thousands of women who have signed the enclosed petition demanding increased Family Allowance and wages for housework for all women from the government. We are writing to request a meeting with you.

Everyone knows that the social contract is now being challenged by thousands of paid workers. No doubt you will be meeting with trade unions and others who claim to represent these workers. But if you really want to know what is happening to workers in this country, you will have to meet with women.

The social contract has always rested on women's shoulders. You must be aware that when prices go up and wages are held down it is *women* who do the extra work of shopping around, cooking and stretching to make ends meet. When hospitals and nurseries close it is *women* who take over the nursing and caring—for free. And *women* are refusing to accept this 'contract' which is always at our expense. Those of us who live with men are pushing them to get more money. And women in every situation are demanding money in our own right for the work we do, the work which is always taken for granted... until it's not done.

You must be aware of women's widespread anger at the con of the Child Benefit scheme. What can a £1 rise mean nowadays, except that mothers are not worth very much? And what does £1.50 mean to single mothers, when most of it goes straight back to the tax man, or all of it straight back to the D.H.S.S.?

Year after year we women have been forced to fit our budget to yours. We feel strongly that *the time has come for you to fit your Budget to ours.* We will be coming together on March 20th, to celebrate Mother's Day and to discuss the question so many women are raising: "When's Pay Day?" A deputation from that meeting would be glad to meet with you any time the following week.

Please let us know as soon as possible what date is convenient to you as we will have to make arrangements for babysitters and to take time off from work.



Yours sincerely,

Solma James

Solma James
 Wages for Housework Committee, London

Services Due

All over the country there have been massive strikes and rallies, and daily resistance to cuts in social services, which affect women most. Teachers are refusing to "cover" for each other, and boycotting oversized classes. In Bucks, angry mothers FORCED THE COUNCIL TO GIVE UP on its plan to close five nursery schools. In some places thousands have come out in the streets to protest health cuts which mean double work (or lay-offs) for health workers, long waits or even death for patients. Women have been the biggest social servers. Now it is women who are demanding services that meet OUR needs, including childbirth that isn't an assembly line, and, if we're older, higher pensions and the paid help we require.

Campaign News

The campaign is under way internationally for wages for housework for ALL women from the government. Countries include Britain, the United States, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, New Zealand and Australia. And in a million ways, everywhere in the world, women are demanding and taking the money, time and independence due to us.

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CANADA—August '76. Residents and staff of a women's hostel declared an "emergency occupation" against low funds and understaffing. It was wall-to-wall mattresses—they refused to turn any homeless women away. Afterwards, they rallied support with a programme of live entertainment and films, organised by the Wages for Housework Committee.

October. With a Family Allowance petition and campaign, like the one in Britain, launched by the Toronto WFH Committee, women WON BACK a rise in the "baby bonus" that the government had "frozen".

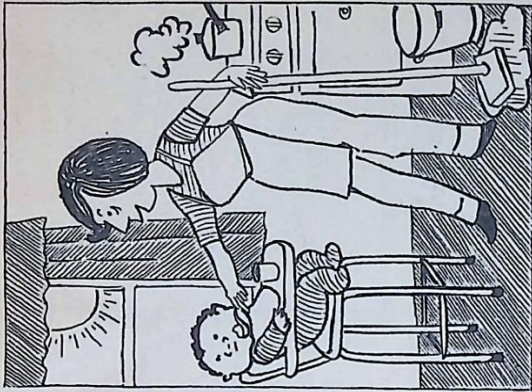
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BRITAIN—For the first time here, a publicly lesbian woman, Jean Whitfield, won custody of her children. Now she's fighting for maintenance: like so many women, she has no money to keep them.

Women from Wages Due Lesbians and other gay organisations organised a petition and a picket in front of the BBC, which censored four lesbian women off the air as "unsuitable for Sunday listening". Never on Sunday is the name of a film, not a broadcasting policy.

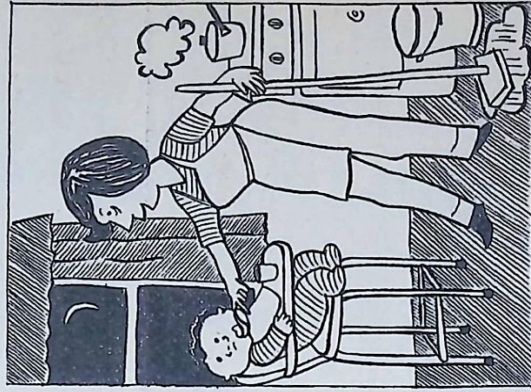
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CHINA—In the rural areas wages are paid in 'work points' and women, who do housework as well as farm work, are demanding work points for it. In the oilfields areas, women have WON some wages for housework, in cash. The movement is spreading.

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BRITAIN—October. About 100 women took Saturday off to go to a conference on 'Wages for Housework: How to Get It'. T.V., radio and the papers reported the event. The London Evening News asked women if they thought a women's strike for wages was a good idea. Most did!

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U.S.A.—San Francisco police are cracking down on women earning their living as prostitutes. The WFH Campaign in California has issued a statement demanding an end to this harassment and the abolition of all laws against prostitution. Endorsements are flooding in from prostitutes' and other women's organisations all over the world. The San Francisco city government has had to take note and meet a delegation of women. The statement is circulating in Britain and is available from the WFH Campaign here. (See addresses on back page.)



A MOTHER WORKING



A WORKING MOTHER

U.S.A.—Black Women for WFH and the New York WFH Committee organised a demonstration against welfare cuts, in downtown New York last summer. They said, "They call us 'bums' and 'parasites' to divide us from other women. But welfare is the first money we women have won directly from the government for the work we do in our homes."

Contact us at . . .

Wages for Housework Committee
64, Larch Road, London N.W.2.
phone: 01 452 1338 or 01 450 8326

Bristol Wages for Housework Group
79 Richmond Rd., Montpelier,
Bristol 6.
phone: 422116

Cambridge Wages for Housework Group
19 City Road, Cambridge.
phone: 57142

Wages Due Lesbians
59 Wrotesley Rd., London N.W.10.
phone: 01 961 3709 or 01 450 8326

. . . if you'd like to know more about the Campaign, or take part in it – and use it! We can send someone to meet with you and your friends, or speak to any organisation you may belong to. There are two films available, and a videotape of the Bristol Group's HTV programme. Or write for a list of campaign materials, from books to Wages for Housework tea-towels and badges.

POWEROF WOMEN

15p

MAGAZINE OF THE INTERNATIONAL WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK CAMPAIGN

No.5



What's happening to women and what women are making happen. How and why we are organising, and where—at home, on the farm, in the factory, hospital and school—all over the world.

When women stop everything stops

Iceland, October 24th, 1975—General Strike of women. Full-time housewives, factory workers, teachers, typists, actresses, childminders, telephonists, prostitutes, bank clerks, school girls, mothers, grandmothers came out on strike together.

Birth Announcement Black Women for Wages for Housework Group is born.

The State is the biggest pimp The strike of prostitute women in France.

Family Allowance Canada and Britain. Women organise to defend the mother's money and demand money for all women.

Organising for welfare United States: women fight welfare cuts.

International Lesbian Conference Women discuss being able to be openly lesbian, child custody, sex, money, how to organise.

ORDER FROM: Campaign addresses above (please enclose 15p plus 8p for postage).
Trade orders to Falling Wall Book Service, 79 Richmond Road, Montpelier, Bristol 6.