The Wages for Housework Campaign: Its Contribution to Feminist Politics in the Area of Social Welfare in Canada

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Introduction

Most social movements formulate their goals within a pre-existing set of ideological constraints. It is more interesting when a social force comes forward with ideas that represent a fundamental challenge to the prevailing discourse, and alters that discourse by having its ideas accepted.[1] Feminist politics concerning poverty and the social welfare system are contained within a political discourse that has largely been shaped by more powerful and pre-existing actors in the social policy community—progressive/liberal organizations like the Canadian Council on Social Development, the National Council of Welfare and the National Anti-poverty Organization (federally).

In the early 1970s, a small radical political force, the "Wages for Housework" campaign, came forward with ideas concerning women, poverty and social welfare. It had a perspective which posed a direct challenge to the prevailing discourse. While the group never attained full legitimacy within the women's movement, its Marxist feminist approach to social welfare issues helped to generate debate in this area within feminism and ultimately helped facilitate a shift in the dominant discourse toward socialist feminist directions.

In the first part of this paper I will describe the ideological basis of the Wages for Housework campaign, the nature of its political activism in Canada, and its positioning in relation to the various sectors of the women's movement. I will then focus on feminist discourses in the area of social welfare in Canada. While it is often assumed that there is only one feminist position on the question of women and poverty, in the early 1970s there were in fact a number of distinct feminist discourses in this area, including that put forward by the Wages For Housework (WFH). My focus here is on the influence that the Wages for Housework campaign had on feminist politics. I will suggest that while it was a politically marginal actor in the social welfare field, WFH was a force to contend with within the feminist circles of the 1970s; the debates it fueled ultimately contributed to the shape of feminist politics in this area today.

Wages for Housework

Ideology

The ideological origins of the Wages for Housework campaign lay in the theoretical work of Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James.[2] Canadian feminists were exposed to their analysis with the 1972 English publication of their pamphlet, "The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community," and Dalla Costa and James' speaking tour of Canada in 1972/73. Their analysis was a modification of a theory that had been developed by the radical left in Italy, the analysis of which was a reformulation of classical Marxism. The reformulated Marxism focused on transforming and transcending labour itself, rather than simply developing a class consciousness. The workers' consciousness would be changed by the abolition of the alienated labour they performed.

James and Dalla Costa extended this analysis to incorporate women's unpaid labour in the home. They asserted that women have a common status as unpaid domestic labourers whose labour is appropriated by husbands and fathers. Virtually all women, whether they work in the productive labour force or not, perform unpaid domestic labour. This labour "determines" women and shapes their consciousness. According to the general theory, the struggle is against the existing organization of labour itself rather than against those who profit from that labour. Women's struggle, therefore, must be for the abolition of domestic labour itself. Because this cannot occur within the existing capitalist structure, it would force the downfall of the system. The analysis also emphasizes the isolation of domestic work: "We pose . . . as foremost the need to break this role that wants women divided from each other from men and children, each locked in her family as a chrysalis in the cocoon that imprisons itself by its own work, to die and leave silk for capital."[3] It furthermore stresses the way in which a housewife's wagelessness makes her dependent on a man. To alleviate these problems, "housework" and other forms of domestic labour need to be taken out of the private sphere and reorganized in the public sphere.

The "Wages for Housework" slogan was not originally put forth as the ultimate objective, but as a means of directing attention to the way women laboured and to make the point that this kind of work is social, public labour that should be recognized through remuneration. A wage for housework would lead to the recognition that housework is work. It would provide women with leverage to reject the other kinds of low-paying, tedious jobs that are normally available to them: "Housewives . . . enter the factory weak because they are wageless."[4] Because they work without being paid in the home, they are only able to command low wages elsewhere, and can be brought in or dismissed at will.[5] Since it is considered natural for women to perform housework, it seems natural for women to be concentrated in "women's" jobs.[6] The abolition of domestic labour would give women financial autonomy (access to money), releasing them from economic dependence on men. This financial dependence underpins the male dominance and female subordination that are institutionalized in the family, and in turn reinforces men's dependence on their jobs.[7] With financial independence from men, women can break down the nuclear family founded upon the power of the man's wage over women and children.[8] Women thus gain the power to insist that men share the burdens of the home, and also to leave intolerable relationships:[9]

> . . . demanding wages for housework, winning some form of it, is an attack on the sexual division of labour, a struggle against our dependence as women, a struggle against our work and against the definition of femininity created by capital, a struggle against our role as social shock absorbers for capital . . . [10]

Supporters of this perspective reject the view that the solution for women is simply to enter the paid labour force as this will only create double slavery and further subject women to capitalist exploitation: "This 'double slavery' of being expected to carry the burden of two jobs, one inside and the other outside the home, is the most dangerous response to our rebellion."[11] Thus the Wages for Housework group viewed the trade union movement as reformist and counterrevolutionary, settling for a more contented set of slaves.[12] They thought the strategy of unions and more orthodox Marxist feminists of encouraging women to demand jobs would only drive wages down and trap women in a double work day — performing domestic labour and, for most women, low-paid, alienated labour in the paid workforce:

> Either we are trapped at home bearing and rearing children, in wageless isolation, serving men so they can serve capital, our will subordinate to theirs, or we go out of the home for a wages job at low pay, dumping our children at babyminders or state nurseries and doing a second shift when we get home, our will still subordinate to theirs.[13]

For Wages for Housework supporters, "feminism" was the alternative:

> Our feminism and our sisterhood represent a turn away from an obsolete tradition that incorporates capitalist relations of domination, that demands jobs (exploitation) even as a "transitional programme" rather than free money and free time, that fails to articulate a vision of real liberation and instead demands a redistribution of scarcity, a tradition that in the end fails to take us anywhere at all.[14]

The Organization in Canada

James and Dalla Costa's speaking tour of Canada and the U.S. in 1972–73 (covering 12 cities in all) sparked considerable interest among some feminists and Marxists in Canada.[15] Following this tour, women began to organize around the Wages for Housework perspective and WFH committees were formed in several cities including Toronto, Winnipeg and Regina.[16] Activists from Windsor, Montreal and Vancouver, and WFH members regularly travelled to attend feminist or anti-poverty demonstrations wherever they occurred. The actual membership of WFH in Canada was quite small — a June 1975 WFH mailing list consisted of 25 names. WFH literature, however, stresses the "international" character of the "movement."[17] The Toronto Wages for Housework Committee, formed in 1975, was the most cohesive and active of the groups in Canada and was a prominent player in the international WFH context. It had a relatively stable core of members (approximately 15 in 1975), mainly from "grass roots" or community and union organizing backgrounds.

While the actual payment of wages for housework was never meant as an end in itself by James and Dalla Costa, it in fact became *the* objective of the Wages for Housework campaigners in Canada. They saw their primary goal as organizing women to demand wages for housework from the government. Their organizing efforts tended to focus on groups of women who were disenfranchised and/or had limited alternatives to working in the home such as single mothers on welfare, prostitutes, lesbians and domestic workers. They were heavily oriented towards propaganda activities such as organizing rallies at which they would speak and distribute leaflets, and vying for radio, television and newspaper coverage.[18] They sought always to represent themselves as part of a significant and rising tide, often presenting separate protest activities, such as a strike by women workers, as testimony to their strength and power, and became very successful at attracting media attention.[19] The debate over wages for housework was a hot topic for a while in the mainstream media and WFH was able to take advantage of that.[20]

The organizational model of Wages for Housework groups was "democratic centralism," a form common to Marxist-Leninist organizations. This entailed an entrenched and powerful leadership organized within an international hierarchy.[21] Under this system members were required to either assimilate the politics of the group or face expulsion.[22] The methods of WFH were, furthermore, often deceptive and dishonest. For example, they are said to have attempted "deep entry" into target organizations in order to recruit for their own ranks and gain key leadership positions, from which they might steer such groups in their own preferred directions. Several members of WFH might attend a meeting of another organization and participate as if they were actually independent of each other, not revealing their link to WFH. They might then attempt to recruit to WFH anyone in these groups seen as having "independence of thought" or "power." The original members of such target organizations thus tended to find themselves having little or no input into their groups' agendas and without any basis for challenging the legitimacy of the new leaders.[23]

Political Activities

Much WFH activism took place within the social welfare field — an area neglected at the time by other sectors of the women's movement.[24] Its main focus was federal and provincial cutbacks and the tightening of social welfare programmes and social services occurring in the 1970s, involving programmes such as social assistance, daycare (provincial), unemployment insurance and the family allowance. During the mid-1970s, WFH had a strong presence at rallies and protests over cutbacks to these programmes. The message it spread was that cutbacks would increase the burden on women in particular: "The government cutbacks are forcing an increasing number of women out of their paid jobs and into total economic dependence on a man."[25]

The group supported the efforts of women, mostly single parents, to reform the welfare system. It supported and took part in demonstrations organized by the "Mother-Led Union."[26] Around 1975 this group was active in Toronto, as well as in other Ontario cities.[27] It originally grew out of the refusal of the Ontario Anti-Poverty Organization (an umbrella organization for welfare rights groups in Ontario) to pressure the Ontario government to end its plan to deduct the family allowance increase from the welfare cheques of single mothers. Its demands, which were presented in a demonstration at the Ontario legislature in March 1975, were for parity with foster parents in compensation for the job of raising children, a higher earning capacity under welfare and free community-controlled daycare for all women.

One of WFH's major projects in the mid-1970s was the organization of a national protest against the deindexation of the family allowance programme, which was announced in December 1975. It widely circulated a petition eliciting the support of welfare groups, community groups and Native groups among others. The petition was presented, along with a brief, to the Minister of Health and Welfare in May 1977. Demands included the reindexation of the family allowance as scheduled, the removal of family allowance from taxable income and wages for housework for all women to be paid by the state.[28] Wages for Housework raised this issue at every opportunity at rallies and in the media (e.g., letters to the editor).[29]

While WFH was mainly involved in social welfare programme issues, it also took up other feminist demands, and integrated the concerns of other marginalized groups of women into their agenda. In November 1977, for example, it mounted a "No to Rape in the Name of Love" protest, in which it drew a link between the prevalence of violence against women in the home and on the street to the poverty and financial dependency of housewives. Lesbian women who were WFH activists formed the Wages Due Lesbians Collective in the mid-1970s. This group, which was active for several years, mainly focused on the issues of child custody and sexuality, but from the WFH perspective. Its argument was that wages for housework would create the conditions that would free women from dependency on men and accordingly provide both greater freedom for lesbians and acceptance of lesbianism. This group was active in the WFH family allowance campaign as well as in the protests against cutbacks in social services. In 1978, lesbian WFH activists started the Lesbian Mothers' Defence Fund, which over the next several years provided resources (i.e., pre-legal advice, referrals, financial assistance and personal support) to lesbian mothers fighting child custody cases. They produced a regular newsletter, "the Grapevine," which focused on the problems of child custody for lesbian mothers.

Wages for Housework also got involved with prostitutes' rights, co-sponsoring activities with various groups for the decriminalization of prostitution. (One such event focused on making explicit the commonalities of "housewives" and "hookers".)[30] In the later 1970s, WFH was especially involved in the cause of domestic workers, most of whom were immigrant women. In fact, by the late 1970s and early 1980s, the conditions of domestic workers had almost become the sole focus of WFH activists. In Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal WFH activists turned away from the WFH campaign per se and toward direct and substantial involvement with domestic workers.[31]

Relationship to the Women's Movement

Despite the energy and enthusiasm they devoted to their cause, WFH groups were, even in their heyday, a marginal force in progressive politics in Canada. Their allegedly manipulative and deceitful tactics and their radical ideology set them apart from even the politically marginal groups of women (immigrant women, single parents) they attempted to influence. Furthermore, despite their affinity for the situation of poor women, WFH had virtually no relationship with their organizations. Poor women active in community-based organizations were organizing to upgrade their image as welfare mothers; they did not want to be seen standing up with the lesbians and prostitutes who were regular speakers at WFH organized events.[32]

Wages for Housework also remained at a distance from the dominant sectors of the "women's movement". The kinds of activities WFH engaged in and its conception of the working class were different from those of other

Marxist and socialist-oriented women's liberationists at the time. The latter were mostly active in unions, organizing working women and working within the New Democratic Party or mainstream feminist organizations like the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. They also tended to be involved in campaigns around abortion, childcare, lesbian rights and equal pay.[33] They centred on the employed and unionized work force, taking up issues like pay equity, employment rights, sex segregation in employment and the entrenched gender bias of the labour movement. Wages for Housework, on the other hand, focused much more on the "underside" of the working class — the unemployed, underemployed, unorganized, marginalized and poor.

Left feminists were, however, more sympathetic than were liberal feminists to the WFH perspective. A segment of the left wing of the women's liberation movement had a positive response to WFH, not because they agreed with it as a strategy, but because of its *theoretical* analysis of women's oppression. For some groups of feminists (notably expatriate Americans and francophones in Montreal), WFH might have represented their first real exposure to a Marxist feminist analysis. Linda Briskin (a Montreal left women's liberationist originally from the U.S.) saw the James and Dalla Costa tour as having given the women's movement in Canada "scope": "[it] . . . placed [the women's movement] for the first time within the mainstream socialist movement by clearly seeing women and the family in a pivotal economic relation to capitalism."[34]

Angela Miles has suggested that it was Marxist critiques of the James and Dalla Costa analysis of housework that formed the "domestic labour debate" of the mid-1970s.[35] The debate emerged around the question of whether housework produces "surplus value," as Dalla Costa argued, and turned, in large part, on the question of whether Marxist categories could be stretched to apply to hidden forms of work. It addressed such issues as whether domestic labour is essential to capitalism, whether it serves to raise or lower the value of the husband's labour, whether housewives were members of the working class and whether domestic labour could be replaced by capitalist commoditization.[36] Margaret Benston,[37] Peggy Morton[38] and Wally Seccombe[39] were central contributors to this debate, leading to crucial breakthroughs in theorizing the relationships between class and gender and between Marxism and feminism.[40]

As it became increasingly evident that WFH campaigners were more interested in wages for housework as an end in itself, left feminists more clearly aligned themselves with liberal feminists in their condemnation of wages for housework.[41] The demand for paid housework as a strategy was viewed by left feminists as vague, inconsistent, and ultimately destructive.[42] They viewed it as *reformist* (not revolutionary) in that it would not change the nature of the work itself. They felt work should be reevaluated in order to determine which tasks were necessary. The goal would be to find ways of alleviating the isolating nature of housework.[43] They did not agree that pay for housework would lead to working class solidarity. The isolated nature of housework did not lend itself to creating solidarity among women, and would inevitably undermine solidarity with male workers because of the potential for lowering male incomes. If corporations paid the wage it could mean lower wages for all of their workers (mainly male); if the wage were paid by the state it would again inevitably come out of the pockets of the workers and amount to little more than a "glorified family allowance."[44] Another difficulty lay in finding a basis for judging the worth of housework and deciding how houseworkers might be evaluated, and by whom.[45] Moreover, the mere payment of wages would only give more spending power to consumers and would not attack capitalism at its source. In addition, the demand would create a manipulative organizing situation: while Wages for Housework might acknowledge the demand to be less important than the struggle, women might nevertheless respond to the slogan believing that the money itself could alleviate their oppression.[46] However, the most objectionable aspect of the wages for housework proposal, for both left and liberal feminists, was that it would likely do nothing to challenge the sexual division of labour. It would instead solidify the heterosexual nuclear family form, with its female homemaker and male "breadwinner."

The more powerful sector of the women's movement, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), had decided by the mid-1970s that their goals were not compatible with those of WFH.[47] It was not until 1979, however, that WFH thoroughly alienated itself from NAC. In the late 1970s NAC was composed of two internal coalitions — a centrist group consisting of an alliance of women from traditional women's organizations (e.g., university women's clubs), and liberal feminists, and a leftist group, which included small radical feminist and socialist feminist groups. While these two coalitions were often in conflict with one another, such conflict was inevitably over questions of how to "do" politics, rather than ideology. The groups came together for the first time, however, over the issue of wages for housework.[48]

Both liberal and left factions were firmly opposed to the concept of paid housework as a strategy for women's liberation. Workforce participation was seen as the key to women's liberation; even with pay, housewifery did not fit the image of the emancipated women. Indeed, NAC's main emphasis throughout the 1970s was to encourage women into the workforce, the key to which was the concept of equal pay for work of equal value. Throughout the 1970s much of NAC's role involved getting this concept accepted by the lawmakers and politicians of the day. There was an effort, also, to package the equal pay issue with other more controversial issues, like childcare, law reform, abortion and birth control in order to make these other issues palatable to a broader range of people.[49] The Wages for Housework strategy was seen as contradictory to this whole effort, as it appeared to be *encouraging* the housewife role, hence reinforcing sex role stereotyping.

This conflict crystallized into an actual confrontation between WFH and NAC at NAC's annual general meeting in April 1979. Just prior to this conference, WFH had applied for membership to NAC and had been rejected for reasons enumerated by NAC according to its 1975 resolution—essentially because the goal of wages for housework contradicted NAC's own long-term goals of equal opportunity, equal pay and an end to sex role stereotyping. It had been the first time NAC had ever rejected an application for membership. WFH members came to the meeting in Ottawa anyway, along with supporters, including women from radical feminist groups such as Women Against Violence Against Women and poor women's organizations such as the Ottawa Tenants' Council). They were prevented from attending, however, ostensibly because they had not paid the registration fee; nevertheless, Marion Dewar, a left feminist sympathizer and Mayor of Ottawa at the time intervened on their behalf (and on behalf of the Ottawa Tenants' Council) and they were subsequently let into the meeting as "observers." The event resulted in bad press for NAC, with reports reaching as far as California: the episode was represented as a conflict between middle-class and working-class women, and NAC was portrayed as having a middle-class bias and lacking interest in the situation of poor women. The sensationalist tactics used by WFH in this situation, however, confirmed the view of NAC leaders that WFH was anti-feminist and out to divide the women's movement along class lines.[50]

In the aftermath of this clash, NAC apparently saw WFH as political opponents to be silenced: "The opposition and obstacles to achieving our goals are great enough without having to contend with the disrupting actions of the small group of women who focus on the questionable goal of wages for housework."[51] With the failure of the WFH group to achieve formal entry into the most powerful political organization of the mainstream women's movement, it lost whatever political credibility it may initially have had.

The Social Welfare Discourse

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, 'poverty' had been "rediscovered" in Canada, as it had been in much of the rest of the western world, and there emerged a rash of government reports on the topic.[52] In the new discourse; poverty was constructed as a social/structural problem rather than an individual/pathological one. New institutional actors emerged at this time to address the issue of poverty; the National Council of Welfare (NCW) was formed in 1970 and the National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO) in 1971. These organizations, together with the already established Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD), formed the core of the anti-poverty lobby at this time. There also emerged in this period a significant grassroots poor people's movement comprised of small community-based organizations such as tenants' associations, housing projects, welfare rights groups, urban renewal groups, single-parent groups, consumer groups, childcare groups, women's rights groups and so on. Much of the movement, especially the welfare-rights activists, was made up of and led by women, with a perspective that reflected their experience as single parents on welfare in public housing.

With the emergence of feminist organizations in the late 1960s, feminism began to enter the poverty discourse and the issues of poverty and welfare began to form part of the discourse of new feminism. In the early 1970s the Canadian women's movement was ideologically diverse, ranging from the grassroots, radical and socialist feminist positions to the institutionalized, liberal feminist ones.[53] To some extent these groups were able to accept each other's positions and work together politically.[54] The universe of political discourse concerning women, poverty and social welfare was relatively open and in flux. There was not at this time a single feminist perspective on women, poverty and social welfare; there were several.

Feminist Discourses

Poor women, who made up a significant proportion of the grassroots anti-poverty movement, had their own perspective. They wanted to promote a better image for the single mother on welfare: they wanted respect for the traditional role of women raising their children at home and encouraged the view that welfare was a salary for this work: "Women who raise children are doing work; we are working not only for ourselves and for the children, but also for the benefit of the country."[55] Their attention was mostly on changing "the system" — welfare, public housing, daycare, school, etc. — to achieve a better deal for women on welfare. The solutions they were looking for were increased social welfare benefits (or a guaranteed annual income) with fewer restrictions and less bureaucratic red tape, more daycare centres, job training, decent and affordable housing and help for their kids. They did not identify themselves as part of the women's movement and criticized it for its middle-class bias and elitism:

> Most middle-income women want to believe the myths about women on welfare, because, if they do not, the result is too frightening. They realize that it could happen to them. Through no fault of their own, even though they have been good, they could find themselves on the very bottom of the social scale.[56]

A different perspective flowed from the women's liberationists who were concerned with women's poverty. They tended to be dispersed politically, organizing around single issues, especially (in the early 1970s) abortion, daycare and trade union and strike support.[57] They were aware of the preponderance of women who were poor and on welfare, and emphasized the structural determinants of women's dependency. Articles in *Women Unite!* (a collection of writings by Canadian feminists of the late 1960s and early 1970s) reveal a fairly coherent ideological perspective: women are poor because the dominant ideology defines them as housewives: "The basic relationship between women and work in the home determines women's status as second class workers and second class citizens in the society at large."[58] Women's work in the home is not valued; it is placed among the "joys" of wifehood and motherhood: "Men work for money; women work for love. This basic assumption undercuts the productive value of women's work in the home and in the work force."[59] This keeps women tied to the home and family structure. The welfare system reinforces this dependency:

> The punitive nature of the welfare system, the isolation of mothers on welfare, the dependency-reinforcement of the welfare policies, the personal degradation recipients feel, the lack of alternatives in the job market all combine to push women on welfare into a traditional role. They become agents of control and stabilizers of the social, political and economic system. They are immobilized by the structural dependencies imposed on them.[60]

These liberationists felt women on welfare should organize themselves and become more conscious of their role in the family and of the social nature of their labour; they should fight to have their work recognized as a contribution to society equal to any other.

The views of more institutionalized, mainstream feminists on women and poverty largely reflected the liberal doctrine typified by the 1970 Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women.[61] Its chapter on women and poverty was probably the first public "intervention" into the issue of poverty by this faction of the women's movement.[62] It connected feminism and women's poverty, viewing the latter as a consequence of a socialization process that assumes women's dependency and the predominance of their role as mother and homemaker. It is also a consequence of discrimination in the labour market, inequalities in job opportunities, pay, housing and so on. The solution lies in greater financial independence for women, made possible through greater sexual equality in education, in the labour market (through equal pay and employment equity policies), in the family (through family law based on the concept of equal partnership), and by achieving more daycare and affordable housing. Poverty is associated primarily with two vulnerable groups of women — sole-support mothers and elderly widows.

The "feminization of poverty" is an important concept, referring to the rapid growth of poor, female single parents. This idea still has strong appeal as a way of at least partly explaining the existence of women's poverty:

> The only safeguard which stands between most married women and poverty is their husbands' incomes.[63]
> Much of women's poverty is associated with marriage breakdown and single parenthood.[64]

Women's poverty is linked to men's failure to support their families. Social welfare programmes like social assistance are viewed as necessary and justifiable on the grounds that they replace the missing income of a husband/father. It is overwhelmingly women as *mothers* that are the objects of concern. Rather than "liberating" women, social welfare programmes are seen as necessary to sustain them in their unfortunate circumstances.

The Wages for Housework Campaign implied a radically different vision from that held by mainstream feminists — one more akin to that of leftist women's liberationists but more explicitly intolerant of men and family. While WFH agreed that poverty is rooted in women's dependent position inside the traditional breadwinner family structure, its discourse repudiated the family altogether. It promoted a vision built upon women's autonomy and independence. Women, as *women*, were its objects of concern. Women's liberation (financial and personal) would come from women attaining "power" as women, not greater equality as family members. This would come by achieving independence from men. By winning wages for housework and more social services such as daycare, medical services and homes for the elderly, women would gain the independence granted by more money and more free time. This approach represented a direct challenge to the two-parent, heterosexual family ideal. By achieving financial autonomy women would be free to *not* have husbands, and to have or not have children in or outside of marital relationships, or to live as lesbians: "The dramatic increases in mother-led families is the index of the power women have gained to be independent of men and to have children on our own terms."[65]

> Wages for housework would mean the power to run our own lives: to have and keep the children we might want; to have a real choice in the jobs we might want; to live with whoever we want, not having to hide our lesbianism; and to have the time to build relationships we want.[66]

Child raising and housework were seen as socially necessary work deserving of pay. Social assistance — and more particularly the family allowance — were seen as constituting a wage, albeit a partial one, for the work of raising children and for housework. The family allowance was the right of all mothers as partial compensation for their work in the home.[67]

Women's work in the home was understood as an enormous subsidy to government and the economic system. Government-funded social services served in part to replace women's work in the home, so that cutbacks in these services meant a greater burden for women. Such cutbacks also hit women harder because women dominate social service employment:

> Clearly, it is we women who, as mothers, as service workers, as teachers, as nurses, have to deal with the ill-effects of the cutbacks on those women whom our lives and our work revolve around: men, children, the sick, the aged, the unemployed, and ourselves.[68]

Wages for Housework highlighted the importance of distinguishing "family income" from income earned by a woman in her own right. It attacked the idea of a guaranteed annual income programme that would have replaced many of the social welfare programmes based upon "individual" income criteria, like the family allowance and unemployment insurance, with family-based criteria. It also saw a family-based programme as a work incentive, encouraging women to take low-wage jobs:

> Such a scheme will be used to undermine whatever wage we have already won for our work in the home and force many of us into low-paying jobs to protect our present standard of living. It is designed to swell our ranks in the female job ghettoes . . . Our only other alternative will be greater dependence on men's higher wages in exchange for our hard-won autonomy.[69]

For WFH, social welfare programmes were not just benefits for the poor, they were potential instruments of the state for achieving larger social objectives, such as promoting an increased birth rate (as with the family allowance programme) or promoting low-wage labour (as with guaranteed annual income programmes).

Analysis

While a range of feminist perspectives on women's poverty existed in the early 1970s, the liberal perspective embodied in mainstream women's organizations like NAC, the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW) and the National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL), has come to be reinforced as the core position of the women's movement. The authority of these organizations is backed up by the greater power of mainstream anti-poverty organizations like CCSD, NCWand NAPO. Reports on women and poverty that have been prepared since the late 1970s and into the 1980s have tended to adhere to the approach first articulated in the Royal Commission Report.[70]

It is interesting that despite the ideological clash between the WFH and the dominant mainstream feminist and anti-poverty lobbyists, and despite the fact that WFH activists had virtually no credibility within the women's movement, many of the ideas they advanced ended up being central features of the dominant discourse. Wages For Housework was not the sole source of these ideas. The new left and women's liberation movements had been formulating and refining a Marxist feminist analysis of women's work in the home throughout the late 1960s and 1970s.[71]

Rather, WFH's early articulation of these ideas in the practical realm of social programmes and their drive to intervene in the politics of the mainstream women's movement invigorated the debate in this area. WFH pressured mainstream feminists into forming positions on social welfare matters and created openings for left feminists to advance more socialist principles in relation to social welfare. Socialist feminists of the women's liberation movement and those in and around mainstream women's organizations eschewed the Wages for Housework strategy and its political tactics. However, they saw the value of WFH's underlying doctrine and could pick up and support its main ideas, especially once the ever unpopular WFH groups themselves were no longer active.[72]

We can see WFH's contribution in relation to two socialist feminist principles that have become central to the mainstream feminist discourse on social welfare matters. The first is that women should be financially independent from men and that social programmes ought to respect this principle. This notion did not originate with Wages for Housework. The politics of opposition to the husband-breadwinner/dependent-wife homemaker family model has a long history in British feminism — an earlier moment being the campaign in the 1920s by British feminists for the family allowance.[73] Wages for Housework was, however, the first tendency in the period of second-wave feminism to advocate this principle in relation to social programmes in Canada.

From the early 1980s onward, this concept became central for feminists engaged in social welfare politics. The work of Margrit Eichler was especially critical in Canada in disseminating the idea that the use of "family income" as a basis of eligibility for social benefits is harmful to women.[74] The unemployment insurance programme has been a favourite target of the federal government with respect to moving from individual to family income based eligibility criteria. In a 1980 resolution, NAC stressed that UI should continue to be based on individual rather than family attachment to the labour force.[75] We also see this reflected in the response of women's groups to the 1986 Forget Commission's proposals:

> NAC categorically rejects . . . the family-income testing of UI benefits[76] This suggestion is perhaps the most iniquitous of all the proposed changes, as far as women are concerned (referring to family income eligibility to benefits).[77]

This principle has also formed the core of the feminist position on the income tax system: "NAC opposes the concept of "family income" in the Income Tax Act and all other legislation because it treats the family as a single economic unit . . . "[78] The family allowance programme has been defended time and again by women's groups on the grounds that it is often a woman's sole independent source of income.[79] Similarly, feminists strongly criticized the notion of a guaranteed annual income programme proposed by the Macdonald Royal Commission in 1985 on the grounds that it was based on a "family" income model: "If the Macdonald Commission's proposal for a guaranteed annual income is implemented, married women will be made even more dependent on their husbands."[80] This principle also fueled a major protest in the 1980s around social assistance. Feminists politicized (and partly defeated) the assumption in policy that a woman is automatically dependant on any man residing with her (known as "the spouse in the house" rule). The principle of financial independence for women has in fact nearly become standard to any discussion presented by women's organizations on women and the social welfare system:

> The independent financial security of women must not be eroded, but should on the contrary be reinforced. We are therefore categorically opposed to a reduction of the present benefits of wives on the grounds of their husbands having high incomes.[81]

The other WFH principle that was taken up by the mainstream feminist movement was the notion that the work of housewives should be recognized. Clearly Wages for Housework was not solely responsible for bringing this issue into the political arena. The "domestic labour debate" within new left and women's liberationist circles from the late 1960s onwards shifted the women's movement towards the recognition that paid labour and domestic labour were *both* necessary for the perpetuation of the capitalist system. However, this debate was certainly encouraged and heightened by the presence of the wages for housework perspective and political campaign, despite the fact that in some ways WFH actually did a poor job in conveying this message. It chose to campaign narrowly on the "strategy" of Wages for Housework rather than promoting the "ideology" that domestic work should be valued and respected as was other work. It even tended to pose the "strategy" of Wages for Housework in narrow terms, as a liberal welfare state programme, and as a strategic tool for incorporating the most marginal segment of the working class into the women's movement.[82] Nevertheless, the notion of revaluing domestic work *was* implied by the idea of wages for housework, and WFH's extreme position set the parameters of the debate and gave it vitality.

In the early 1980s, the idea of recognizing and valuing domestic labour emerged as a major political debate within mainstream feminism. The context of the debate at that point was reform of the pension system in Canada. A proposal for "pensions for homemakers" became a key point of tension within the women's movement. This debate created a cleavage within the movement with some groups, including NAC and CACSW, advocating that domestic labour be recognized by having homemakers covered by the Canada/Quebec Pension Plans, and other women's organizations (e.g., NAWL), anti-poverty groups (e.g., NCW, CCSD) and the labour movement (e.g., Canadian Labour Congress) opposing the plan on the grounds that it would ultimately favour single-breadwinner families.[83]

The notion of revaluing domestic labour provided a feminist rationale for the family allowance programme. Wages for Housework's family allowance campaign in the mid-to-late 1970s had the effect of shifting the perception of the family allowance from being a payment for children to being a payment for mothers for the socially valuable work they do. This perception continued into the 1980s as feminists once again mounted a defence of this programme:

> Family Allowances are paid to all mothers and constitute the only official recognition of the value of their work in the home and as educators of their children[84]
>
> Family allowances have come to be seen as some kind of recognition of the value of raising children. That particular benefit has been quite important to women . . . It's a recognition of their role as mothers.[85]

The argument that the family allowance is the only source of financial independence for many women was being used even in the 1990s to attack the Mulroney government's decision to eliminate the programme.[86]

The almost exclusive concentration of WFH on social welfare matters and the connection it made between state social programmes and women's liberation may have forced other sectors of the women's movement to engage more thoughtfully in this policy area. WFH itself claims that its family allowance protest spurred NAC and CACSW into putting forth their own statements in favour of retaining the scheduled increase.

In many ways WFH activists were ahead of their time in their understanding of the implications of the social welfare system for women. Many of the issues they raised and the analyses they gave still occupy the women's movement and social policy activists today such issues as whether single parents should be considered "employable" under social welfare policy, and the extent to which they should be "encouraged" to joing the workforce; and the assumption that when cutbacks in social services are carried out women can shoulder the extra burden because their "husbands" will support them, continue to be subjects of concern and debate for feminists.[87]

Conclusions

Wages for Housework never gained entry into the mainstream women's movement in Canada. Its ideas and tactics were seen as destructive and anti-feminist by mainstream feminism, and even today are held in contempt by many within the women's movement.[88] Moreover, its socialist Marxist vision was often expressed in narrow and uninspired terms. It did, however, help spark a theoretical debate within feminism and Marxism that pushed forward socialist feminist theory. Moreover, it made an important contribution to feminist politics in the field of social welfare policy.

Wages for Housework promoted a vision of social welfare that supports the principle of women's individual financial autonomy and acknowledges the value of domestic work. It was not the *only* source of these ideas but was the first to articulate their relevance in the realm of social welfare. In doing so it helped push mainstream feminism toward recognition of this policy field as a crucial arena for struggle. Its Marxist feminist approach to social programmes created openings for socialist principles to enter the social welfare discourse — a discourse that has otherwise been constrained by a liberal paradigm. The demands for individually based social programmes and for recognition of unpaid labour in the home — both central components of the Wages for Housework discourse — are now taken for granted as elements of the political agendas of the women's movement and other progressive social policy groups.

NOTES

1. These ideas are taken from Jane Jenson's concept of "the universe of political discourse," or the universe of meanings produced in the course of political struggle. The universe of discourse defines the actors considered legitimate, the issues considered legitimate for political debate, the policy alternatives considered feasible and the possibilities for alliances (Jane Jenson, "The Limits of 'and the' Discourse." In *Feminization of the Labor Force — Paradoxes and Promises*, edited by Jane Jenson, Elizabeth Hagen and Caellaigh Reddy (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988).
2. "The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community" was published in England in 1972, in the U.S. in 1973 and in Canada in 1975 (Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, October, 1972). An article by Dalla Costa appeared in *Radical America* in 1971.
3. Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, October, 1972), p. 48.
4. Selma James, *Women, the Unions and Work or What is to be Done and the Perspective of Winning* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press and London Wages for Housework Committee, 1972), p. 26.

5. Susan Wheeler, "Strategy for Liberation: Women and the Political Economy — Wages for Housework," *Our Generation*, 10,3 (Fall 1975): 44–61.
6. Wheeler, *Strategy for Liberation*, p. 56.
7. Ibid., p. 55.
8. James, *Women, the Unions and Work*, p. 28.
9. Ibid.
10. Wheeler, *Strategy for Liberation*, p. 58.
11. James, *Women, the Unions and Work*, p. 12.
12. Ibid., p. 30.
13. Ibid., p. 26.
14. Wheeler, *Strategy for Liberation,* p. 60.
15. Interest was particularly high among women's liberationists in Montreal. The James/Dalla Costa tour culminated in a "Feminist Symposium" organized by English-speaking women, held at McGill University and attended by 800 women. The participants passed a resolution demanding wages for housework from the State (WFH file, Canadian Women's Movement Archives (CWMA), Ottawa).
16. Information concerning the political life of Wages for Housework in Canada is based on conversations with Judith Ramirez, who was a very active member of the Toronto WFH Committee, Christine Bearchell, who was active in lesbian and feminist politics during this period and was/is critical of WFH politics and methods, and on a review of documents held with the Canadian Women's Movement Archives at the University of Ottawa.
17. The 1975 mailing list included members in England (5, including Selma James), Italy (4, including Dalla Costa), Australia (1), Mexico (4), and the U.S. (62). As another indicator of its actual numbers, a WFH Conference held February 22, 1975 in Montreal to discuss the direction of the movement was attended by 85 women from Canada, the U.S. and England (WFH File, CWMA, Ottawa).
18. One approach to spreading their message was the "Women's Liberation Bookmobile" which toured rural and urban Ontario for two summers in the mid-1970s with three paid staff. It had a collection of 300 texts, including WFH material provided by the Toronto Women's Bookstore, and had three paid staff (WFH, "Women Speak Out — May Day Rally," WFH file, CWMA, Ottawa).
19. For example, a May Day Rally organized by WFH in Toronto in 1975, was attended by 250 people, at which 8 members of the Toronto group spoke, prompting 5 or 6 radio interviews, national TV news coverage, 3 local TV news items and full-page coverage in the *Toronto Star* (i.e., "Should Housewives Be Paid?") (WFH, "Women Speak Out," CWMA, Ottawa).
20. For example, the widely distributed *Homemakers* Magazine covered the question of wages for housework in May 1979 and included the views of Judy Ramirez of WFH Toronto (WFH file, CWMA, Ottawa).

21. This characterization of the tactics and internal organization of WFH is based upon the views of Christine Bearchell. One must qualify this account, however, upon recognition of the small numbers of active participants involved. The "entrenched and powerful leadership" in this case consisted of a handful of women, one being Selma James.
22. There is evidence that in the early stages there was considerable disagreement among WFH members as to how best to structure and operate the organization. At one point the Toronto group split into two groups over these kinds of issues, with one of the groups claiming greater legitimacy as the WFH Collective (WFH, "Why we expelled Toronto Wages for Housework Group I — Notes on the First Day of the Montreal Conference, February 1975," WFH file, CWMA, Ottawa).
23. According to Christine Bearchell, some women ended up with severe emotional problems as a result of having been duped in this way by WFH members.
24. Again, this description and analysis was based upon the activities of the Toronto WFH Committee, which was the most active group both within Canada and internationally.
25. WFH, "Fact Sheet on Government Cutbacks," WFH file, Canadian Gay Archives, Toronto, January, 1976.
26. Given the way WFH operated, it is possible that they might have influenced the direction of the Mother-Led Union. I have no information on this.
27. Wages for Housework supported an equivalent group in Britain — the "Claimant's Union" — its core being single parent mothers on social benefits. Their demands were broad: a shorter work week, guaranteed income, control of their own bodies, equal pay, an end to price rises and free community-control of child care (James, *Women, the Unions and Work*, pp. 15, 16).
28. Wages for Housework Campaign of Canada, "In Defense of the Family Allowance," a brief presented to the Honorable Marc LaLonde, Minister of National Health and Welfare, March 1977, WFH file, CWMA, Ottawa.
29. The federal government reintroduced indexation to the family allowance program in January 1977.
30. WFH, "Housewives and Hookers Come Together," WFH file, Canadian Gay Archives, Toronto, 1977.
31. An "International Wages for Housework Campaign" is still active. The Campaign got a boost during the UN Decade for Women World Conference in Nairobi in 1985, when it won passage of a resolution in the UN Report "Forward Looking Strategies" calling for governments to count women's unwaged work in their GNP statistics. It has since been pressing governments to implement this commitment. A British Labour MP presented such a bill in April 1989. Selma James is still actively campaigning for wages for housework out of London, England ("Labours of Love . . . ," *The Times*, February 19, 1992, p. 6). There appear to be groups still active in London and San Franscisco. Recent Canadian publications refer, additionally to groups in Montreal and

Vancouver ("Women's Time Is Not Money," *Connexions*, 30, 1989; "International Wages for Housework Campaign," *Montreal Women's Network*, 12,2 (May, 1991): p. 3).

32. Dorothy O'Connell spoke on behalf of poor women at an event held in Regent Park, a public housing complex in Toronto. The other speakers represented "Beaver" (an organization of prostitutes) and lesbian mothers. According to O'Connell, it was a good conference but nobody came: "There was no way that women on welfare were going to ally themselves voluntarily with these groups and thus justify, they thought, the public image of women on welfare." Dorothy O'Connell, "Poverty: The Feminine Complaint." In *Perspectives on Women in the 1980s*, edited by Joan Turner and Lois Emery (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1989), p. 64.
33. Heather Jon Maroney, "Feminism at Work," in *Feminism and Political Economy*, edited by Heather Jon Maroney and Meg Luxton (Toronto: Methuen Publications, 1987) pp. 85–107; Varda Burstyn, "The Waffle and the Women's Movement," *Studies in Political Economy*, 33 (Autumn, 1990): 175–184.
34. Linda Briskin, "Toward Socialist Feminism? The Women's Movement: Where is it Going?" in *Our Generation*, 10, 3 (Fall 1974): 30.
35. Angela Miles, "Economism and Feminism: A Comment on the Domestic Labour Debate" in *The Politics of Diversity*, edited by Roberta Hamilton and Michelle Barrette (Montreal: Book Centre Inc., 1986), p. 168.
36. Heather Jon Maroney and Meg Luxton, "From Feminism and Political Economy to Feminist Political Economy" in *Feminism and Political Economy*, edited by Heather Jon Maroney and Meg Luxton (Toronto: Methuen Publications, 1987), p. 19.
37. Margaret Benston, "The Political Economy of Women's Liberation," *Monthly Review*, 21 (September 1969): 13–27.
38. Peggy Morton, "A Women's Work is Never Done." In *Women Unite!* (Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1972).
39. Wally Seccombe, "The Housewife and Her Labour Under Capitalism," *New Left Review*, 83 (1974): 3–24.
40. Important work on the theory of Marxism and feminism in Canada include: Roberta Hamilton, *The Liberation of Women* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1978); Pat and Hugh Armstrong, "Political Economy and the Household," *Studies in Political Economy*, 17 (1985): 167–176; and Patricia Connelly, "On Marxism and Feminism," *Studies in Political Economy*, 12 (1983): 153–161.
41. The response to wages for housework as a strategy can be found in Linda Briskin, *Towards Socialist Feminism*; Sheila Rowbotham, "The Carrot, the Stick and the Movement." In *The Politics of Housework*, edited by Ellen Malos (London: Allison and Busby, 1980); Caroline Freeman, "When is a Wage Not a Wage?" In *The Politics of Housework*, edited by Ellen Malos (London: Allison and Busby, 1980); and Joan Landes, "Wages for Housework: Political and Theoretical Considerations." In *The Politics of Housework*, edited by Ellen Malos (London: Allison and Busby, 1980).
42. Briskin, *Towards Socialist Feminism*, p. 33.

43. Carol Lopate, "Pay for Housework?" *Social Policy*, 5,3 (Sept./Oct. 1974): 48.
44. Actually, trade unions, but not left women's liberationists, were opposed to the idea of a guaranteed annual income. Left feminists saw GAI as having potential as a solution to poverty (Heather Jon Maroney, personal communication).
45. Anti-state, anti-regulation sentiment ran high at the time among leftists (Heather Jon Maroney, personal communication).
46. Briskin, *Towards Socialist Feminism*, p. 33.
47. Jill Vickers, *Politics As If Women Mattered* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), pp. 255–258.
    NAC was formed in 1972 as an umbrella organization of women's groups in order to press for the implementation of the 1970 recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. It tended to have a middle-class outlook, reflecting its composition. In the mid to late 1970s NAC had an underrepresentation of poor women, and an absence of Native, immigrant and lesbian women (Sue Findlay, "Feminist Struggles With the Canadian State: 1966–1988," *Resources for Feminist Research*, 17,3 (September 1988): 6.
48. Vickers, *Politics As If*, p. 255.
49. Lorna Marsden, "The Role of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women in Facilitating Equal Pay Policy in Canada." In *Equal Employment Policy for Women*, edited by Ronnie Steinberg Ratner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), p. 256.
50. WFH was the only group at the NAC general meeting to present a video — an indication that they had financial backing — which increased the suspicion of some that they were part of an international Marxist plot, or at least, American-backed (Jill Vickers, personal communication). Evidently, NAC had "sent someone" over to the Ottawa Tenants Council office just before their 1979 general meeting with the warning that WFH represented an "International Marxist Plot" and to stay away from them (Members of WFH had stayed at the OTC house during their visit to Ottawa) (Dorothy O'Connell, personal communication).
51. Kay MacPherson, "Politics Within the Women's Movement," *Status of Women News*, 5,4 (Summer 1979): 7.
52. Studies on poverty were prepared by the Economic Council of Canada in 1968, the Canadian Welfare Council in 1969, the Special Senate Committee on Poverty (and *The Real Poverty Report*) in 1971, the Quebec Commission of Inquiry on Health and Social Welfare in 1971, and the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1970.
53. Jill Vickers, "Bending the Iron Law of Oligarchy." In *Women and Social Change: Feminist Activism in Canada*, edited by Jeri Dawn Wine and Janice Ristock (Toronto: James Lorimer and Co., 1991), p. 78; Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin, and Margaret MacPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change — The Contemporary Women's Movement* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988).

54. Vickers, *Bending the Iron Law.*
55. O'Connell, *Poverty*, p. 91.
56. Ibid., p. 47.
57. For a fuller description of the grassroots feminist movement in Canada in the late 1960s and early 1970s, see Briskin, Adamson, and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing*, pp. 42–51.
58. Lynn Lang, "Women on Welfare." In *Women Unite!* (Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1972), p. 152.
59. Ibid., p. 155.
60. Ibid., p. 157.
61. Royal Commission on the Status of Women, *Report* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1970).
62. Evidently the Commissioners, and many of the women's organizations that had pushed for a Royal Commission, had not given the topic of poverty much thought and were not prepared for the force of the presentations by poor women (Ian Adams, *The Poverty Wall* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1970), p.73.
63. National Council of Welfare, *Women and Poverty Revisited* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1990), p. 3.
64. Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, *Women and Labour Market Poverty* (Ottawa: CACSW, 1990), p. 210.
65. WFH, "In Defence of the Family Allowance", p. 8.
66. Wages Due Lesbians "Lesbians Join the Family Allowance Protest," Wages Due Lesbians file, Canadian Gay Archives, Toronto, July, 1976.
67. Wages for Housework, *In Defence of the Family Allowance.*
68. Francis Wyland, letter to the editor, *Globe and Mail*, March 9, 1976, page unknown, Wages Due Lesbians file, Canadian Gay Archives, Toronto.
69. WFH, "In Defence of the Family Allowance," p. 11.
70. Some of the reports on women and poverty issued by these organizations include, by the NCW: *Women and Poverty* (1979), *One in a World of Twos* (1976), *In the Best Interests of the Child* (1979), *Better Pensions for Homemakers* (1984), *Women and Poverty Revisited* (1990); by CCSD: *Women in Need* (1976), and *Women and Pensions* (1978); and by CACSW: *Women and Labour Market Poverty* (1990).
71. Maroney and Luxton, *From Feminism and Political Economy.*
72. Lorenne Clark argued in a 1980 article in NAC's publication that the wages for housework "perspective" should be distinguished from the "groups", and that it is valuable and should be given more attention by the women's movement (Lorenne Clark, "The Wages for Housework Perspective," *Status of Women News*, 6,2 (Spring, 1980): 22–24.
73. Eleanor Rathbone, *The Disinherited Family* (Bristol, England: Falling Wall Press, 1986 [1924]).
74. Margrit Eichler, "'Family Income'— A Critical Look at the Concept," *Status of Women News*, 6,2 (Spring, 1980); Margrit Eichler, *Families in Canada Today* (Toronto: Gage Publications, 1983).

Feminists in Britain mounted a campaign in late 1970s to promote the idea of "disaggregation" (of family income) with respect to social welfare program eligibility (London Women's Liberation Campaign for Legal and Financial Independence and Rights of Women, "Disaggregation Now! Another Battle for Women's Independence," *Feminist Review*, 2 (1979): 19–31.

75. National Action Committee on the Status of Women, Resolutions Accepted at the Annual Meeting, March 1980, in *Status of Women News*, 6,3 (Summer, 1980).
76. National Action Committee on the Status of Women, *The Problem is Jobs . . . Not Unemployment Insurance — A Brief to the Commission of Inquiry on Unemployment Insurance* (Toronto: NAC, March 25, 1986), p. 32.
77. Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, *Brief Presented to the Commission of Inquiry on Unemployment Insurance* (Ottawa: CACSW, January, 1986), p. 22.
78. NAC, *Resolutions Accepted*, 1980.
79. Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, *Discussion of the Federal Government's Proposals Regarding Canada's Economic Situation and Social Programs* (Ottawa: CACSW, March 1985), p. 26.
80. Jennifer Dundas, "Economist Warns of Right Wing Support For Annual Income," *Herizons* (January/February 1987): 7.
81. National Action Committee on the Status of Women, *Brief on Child and Elderly Benefits* (Toronto: NAC, March 21, 1985), p. 7.
82. Vickers, *Politics As If*, p. 259.
83. John Myles, "Social Policy in Canada." In *North American Elders, United States and Canadian Perspectives*, edited by Eloise Rathbone-McCuan and Betty Havens (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), pp. 37–53.
    Evidently, so much has the concept of valuing domestic labour been accepted as "common sense" that Statistics Canada is now trying to measure it.
84. CACSW, *Discussion of the Federal Government's Proposals*, p. 26.
85. Dundas, *Economist Warns*, p. 7.
86. The family allowance programme was abolished in January 1993. The new child benefits system is delivered through the tax system — no longer to mothers, but to low-income "families" (Geoffrey York, "Family allowances come to an end," *Globe and Mail*, July 17, 1992).
87. The right-wing has periodically taken on the Wages for Housework strategy but as a way of shoring up the traditional family model. One instance of this was the uproar caused in the 1980s when the government proposed the elimination of the spousal exemption under the income tax system. Traditionalists argued that the exemption was recognition of the work of full-time homemakers (Adil Sayeed, "Spousal Exemption Debate Revisited," *Perception*, 7,1 (Sept./Oct. 1983): 22).
88. I was told that because of the unpopularity of WFH, I would have difficulty finding anyone who would even admit to their participation in this group.

Notice of National Conference

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