

WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK IS NOT ENOUGH BU T
ITS NECESSARY

THE DISCUSSION

The last thing I wrote was confused and confusing. I want to get clearer. I don't want Big Flame to polarise into 'fors' and 'againsts' or to have a vote without thorough discussion. To me, what is agreed or disagreed in the course of the discussion - about housework, housewives, the womens movement, etc - is just as important as what we decide in the end on Wages for Housework.

The discussion so far has already uncovered disagreements, differences in emphasis, confusions and vaguenesses (?). It's not an academic debate. It raises very concrete, practical questions and concerns the development of our general perspectives in the womens movement and Big Flame.

I was forced to think about Wages for Housework, and became sympathetic to it for two reasons. 1) While writing the unemployment pamphlet I talked about a few ongoing struggles which pointed in that direction. I had to be woolly and avoid it when the most direct and obvious thing to say was W for H. 2) On Tower Hill we organise with full-time housewives. Every one of them has picked up on W for H more quickly than a lot of other things. Even if they disagree with it they can remain sympathetic, and come round to agreeing with it. They change their minds (like me) but are always interested. Some are clearly, firmly in support of it. I think this is because its the only existing working class and feminist demand which directly relates to their situation. But we in Big Flame have had to sidestep it.

In both cases I feel really hampered by not knowing whether I agree or disagree; by the fact that some people are so opposed to it in BF that we can't even investigate it in practice or mention it in writing; and by the fact that in ignoring it we've ignored any alternative ways of dealing with the questions it raises.

If I'm convinced it's wrong fair enough. Even if I'm not, but the discussion forces me to reserve my judgement, then I will. But so far I'm unhappy about it because some of the arguments seem woolly and to me even wrong in the terms of Big Flame's own theory.

So I still think Wages for Housework is right, correct and necessary. I agree its not enough. I've concentrated on it and isolated it because we decided to talk about it specifically. I see it being used alongside other demands. But I also think that like any demand worth anything it helps to clarify others; helps to assert revolutionary feminism against reformism in other struggles; helps to build a general, offensive perspective for the development of womens autonomy. That's why I've confused everyone by seeming to collapse the whole struggle for communism under one slogan.

Also I share other womens criticisms of the Power of Women (but maybe not all of these criticisms.) Here, when I talk about Wages for Housework I mean just that - and not the POW. We have to talk about them as the group which initiated the campaign and suffers an extreme sectarianism towards other women. (I don't reduce all the criticisms of the left to that sectarianism.) And as the group that now defines and controls the campaign, sometimes in wrong ways. But we must talk about the demand itself in terms of the struggle for womens power. We don't drop the 35 hour week because Jack Jones has got his horrible little fingers on it. We define and fight for it on our terms. I talked about the POW last time because we must acknowledge where struggles and demands come from - especially as the left has a habit of belittling and sabotaging the womens movement and then laying claim to its ideas and victories. But for the time being lets talk about Wages for Housework.

1) WOMENS STRUGGLE

I agree that womens struggle goes on at many different levels, against both material conditions and ideology. It can't be reduced to one or a few slogans. But as the class struggle goes on, it should become easier to sum up more of it, to generalise and express it as a programme for action. In that process, we should always be looking for the wood through the trees, see where its all going and look for what's missing.

First of all, many women are organising in many different ways. But which women are doing what, why and how? What do each of these struggles say to other women who aren't involved in them? How do they each express the general class interest of women and how do they relate to the mass of women, millions of who still haven't found the strength or opportunity to organise their struggle?

In K's article "Why Wages for Housework Isn't Enough", she says that in the womens movement "The most pressing debate is no longer which demands, but how to win them". In the class struggle generally we've moved "from a period when the main push was expressed through demands, to the current period when the question of forms of organisation begins to predominate."

I don't know if this is true or not as a tendency. But the two questions interweave. The working class has to know what it wants before it knows how to get it. And few clear, general demands which express its interests as a class have yet emerged. In the womens movement I think we still don't know what we want clearly enough, and that's one reason why the question of organisation is so difficult. We haven't gone past the stage of summing up what we want in demands, slogans, struggles or whatever. That's a continuing struggle and always the forms of organising develop and change as an instrument for achieving what we want.

In other words, I don't think it's all happening and the main problem is just to find how to organise it. I think there's a lot missing, and this problem of the political content of our struggle gets more and more concrete and urgent as the crisis goes on. The crisis makes the necessity of communism much clearer. Every struggle is more likely to become more general and obviously political. As well as being more vulnerable to the forces of the state (e.g Criminal Trespass Law; Prevention of Terrorism Act). But the working class as a whole is not yet conscious of the necessity of the revolution or of the fact that what we want and need puts us on the communist road. Of course one problem is not knowing we've got the power if we organise it. But interwoven in this is the problem of expressing, generalising, crystallising what we want right now and into the future. I don't think revolutions fail because the forms of organising haven't been worked out. They fail on a political level, expressed in one way as organisational, military, weakness.

I'm going to concentrate on housework and women as housewives, because its crucial but there's a lot missing from this struggle. The particular interests of housewives are still being submerged. So political mistakes are made, and central questions ignored, even in the womens movement, and even in feminist campaigns like the Abortion campaign. Mistakes which can lead to holding back struggles, preventing them from becoming generalised and crystallised.

Of course one main reason why they're submerged is that housewives aren't there organisationally. (but this again requires political solutions beyond just the means to organise.) Women who suffer the most from housework are the women who have most problems organising. Its fantastically hard to get out and direct the struggle when you're an unpaid housewife, or holding down two jobs, especially when you've got children. Nobody else will prove so well that housework is at the centre of class struggle. When housewives are absent the whole question is submerged, diluted or even forgotten.

Take the Abortion Campaign. This is fantastically important. Thousands of women are involved. The slogan "A Woman's Right to Choose" is one slogan/demand that has clarified and crystallised the interests of women against capitalism and sexist ideology. Over the last year or so it's moved from a fairly uninspired campaign confined to the Left and Womens Liberation and found roots inside local areas, inside the ebb and flow of class struggle.

But inside the campaign all sorts of little blossoms grow, and they don't all smell very nice. The "Right to Choose" has got to be asserted even more clearly to deal with them. Women expressing their interests as housewives would be one crucial way of doing it. But the women who'd most urgently do this aren't always there. There are more working class housewives involved in the campaign than ever before. But I suspect they're still a minority in many areas, still less actively involved with less power to define the campaign, and certainly pretty well absent from its national organisation.

Here's a couple of these little blossoms. The Communist Federation of Britain leafletted our Liverpool demo with a load of tripe. The Right to Choose had disappeared altogether. Instead they said women must have abortions so they can go out to work and 'join' the class struggle. Abortion is therefore 'less important' than equal pay and job opportunities. Abortion is just a means to that end.

In Struggle Notes we quoted, completely uncritically, a speech from the platform at the national NAC demo. An Asian woman spoke of "the difficulties faced by Asian women in this country kept in poverty by large families". This is wrong and dangerous. They're kept in poverty by capitalism.

I don't think either of these examples can be dismissed. The CFB might be a tiny organisation, but they said in a more extreme way what many Right to Workists would say. And that in itself is a political tendency which has roots in labourism, trade unionism. Forces that are not to be dismissed. The other example isn't an isolated accident either. It reduces the struggle to abortion as a solution to poverty forced on us by the bosses. The crisis itself is a powerful force which strengthens that attitude - more women will have to have abortions and still won't know what they really want or feel that they're making a choice.

It comes dangerously close to the ideas of middle class family planners who want to 'help these poor unfortunate women kept down by large families'. This in turn has links with fairly common prejudices against large families. Ever heard about Catholics, the Irish, and blacks 'breeding like rabbits'. Or the arguments against letting immigrant children in - why should we fucking pay for them. Ever read those letters in the papers from 'angry sensible, childless taxpayers' wailing about having to pay for other people's children. Or the article in the British Movement magazine talking about sex-mad Jews breeding like rabbits? These are attitudes that will come out more and more in the crisis.

Womens Liberationists and groups like Big Flame do assert the Right to Choose. But its mainly defined as the right not to have children. Because a high proportion of women in the womens movement experience it most directly in this way - through their educational and class background, income, jobs, political involvement etc which have given them some alternatives. The right not to have children is then a main way of refusing to be defined as housewives and mothers.

So, in the last Struggle Notes, even we concentrated mostly on abortion as the fight against being 'breeding animals'. This gives more space than we should be giving to wrong and dangerous ideas. The tendency to think of housewives and mothers as a lesser order of being. The tendency which will want women to have abortions because its cheaper or because women don't know what's best for them etc etc. We've got to say clearly and continually, that we want the Right to Choose. The right to abortion and the right to refuse it when its forced on us by poverty, overwork or state planning. The right to refuse strings like sterilisation. The right to have children, to have large families, to have the cash and services needed to keep us and them

alive. The right to fight against being defined as housewives and mothers and still have children. This is asserting the interests of the mass of working class women against all those, left or right, who'll use the campaign, distort it and reduce it. Even turn it against us.

So, that's one example of how struggles can be strengthened or weakened according to whose interests they represent. Housewives don't need to get involved for the sake of it. They have something particular to say, and something particular to win, and when its expressed it redefines the struggle. But there's another problem. If they are involved their interests aren't automatically expressed. And the problem of how they get involved isn't just finding ways to organise. Both these problems exist because, among other things, a clear working class consciousness of the role of housework hasn't yet emerged. And if you don't know what you want how do you organise for it?

Take the existing struggles that housewives are most often involved in. There are hundreds or thousands of fights against the cuts and for more, better services which reduce the work and poverty of the housewife. But how often are these struggles expressed or generalised in that way? How often are the particular interests of housewives against housework, against poverty and economic dependence, right out in the open? These struggles are the easiest (though still really hard) for them to get involved in, because they're local and flow directly out of housework. But then they're often judged in the same way. A fight for school buses is 'for the kids'; for community services is 'for the community'; a fight for housing is 'for the family'. Its also for themselves but that sounds selfish to women who give their lives for others. And when they say its for the kids etc. their fella's more likely to tolerate it. Her interests are held back, kept invisible, subordinated to the 'general interest'. The particular struggle is then harder to generalise - its just part of and not consciously against housework. And it doesn't come together as an offensive, forward-looking policy for socialisation or anything else.

Historically housework hasn't been seen as 'real work'. Even the women who do it and know it is, see it as all mixed up with feelings, love, personal relationships. So its hard to come out and explicitly organise against it. The left then submerges it under headings like "Fight the Cuts" or "Nurseries so that women can have the right to work". Or it stays localised and isolated. On Tower Hill we've had fights for school buses, zebra crossings, safety barriers, nurseries, houses etc. Mostly organised by women but never defined openly as in their direct interests. All these struggles have come and gone, remained separate from each other, with no sense of continuity leading anywhere in particular. The generalisation has remained the property of the revolutionaries. It remains theoretical. On one of the most militant, organised and experienced estates in the country.

Having said all this, I think women in Big Flame have a lot of ideas about what to do about it. We support strong, local action groups in the Abortion and Cuts campaigns. These can draw struggles together; **give more people, including housewives, the chance to organise; and relate the campaigns to the mass of people in the area who aren't yet involved.** We also support womens groups and womens centres which build bases for women to organise more easily and build their power. This helps women to define what their interests are and how to fight for them. It helps to keep a continuity between particular struggles. Battered wives centres go even further, by showing a concrete, collective alternative to dependence, and rotten marriages. Women in them organise in an even more independent way, which can strengthen the whole womens movement. And we have Struggle Notes to try to bring lots of invisible struggles out in the open and draw the lessons together.

The most obvious point is that having no independent money you can't go to womens conferences, meetings, buy womens pamphlets, etc.

We use the slogan guaranteed adequate income to define all struggles for money in terms of need and not productivity. Concretely we've never considered launching a campaign on anything so general. We use it to draw out the content of more concrete demands like full lay-off pay, higher wages separate from productivity, Equal Pay with no strings, social security, for school students etc. Its a general aim which is made concrete by particular sections of the class. So Wages for Housework isn't an alternative - its used in the same general framework but made concrete in relation to the struggle for housewives.

And it is just one way of doing this. I don't suggest we drop all other struggles for money. But we can't drop Wages for Housework either, because its the most concrete way of talking about a guaranteed income for housewives. And the only way so far of dealing with the two questions- 1) that housewives need money and 2) Their work has got to be paid for because if its not they pay for it themselves. In other words immediately lose any money they get, just on that work.

WHY WAGES?

When workers demand that work is paid for with wages, or when they demand that the wages are increased, that doesn't necessarily mean you're tying your need to live to productivity. Its the same with housework. In any struggle there's a fight between tendencies - reformist, revolutionary or right wing. In a struggle for Equal Pay there's a fight to make sure its without strings, which some people won't understand. Wages will be tied to productivity by bosses and trade union leaders if they can get away with it. That doesn't mean we refuse wages. We have to fight for communism as the abolition of wage labour but we don't go round saying 'abolish wage labour' or 'we don't want wages'.

Now what about work that isn't paid for with wages at all? Do we or don't we demand that it is? For example, in Norfolk, unemployed building workers and apprentices are building a surgical unit unpaid. In hospitals voluntary workers work for free while waged workers are sacked. Unemployed workers do more 'community work' unpaid - everything from running playgroups to giving pensioners meals.

What do we say?. Do we say, oh its all right as long as they get a guaranteed income off the dole. Bet your bottom dollar we don't. We would and will have to say that work should be paid for with wages. Its a more and more important question as cuts in public spending result in more unpaid labour. The only alternative to a demand for wages is to agree that the working class should do charity work for the bosses. More work, less money. And to let that be concealed behind the dole money or the wages we get for other jobs which just about keeps us alive.

And on what basis do we exclude housework done in the home? If we support wages for home helps, child-minders etc why can't we support it for housewives? This is the point that's avoided and hidden by just saying guaranteed income. Housewives are doing more and more unpaid work which was and should be paid for with wages in hospitals, nurseries etc, and should be paid for wherever its done. This is concealed by the little money she gets off her husband, Social Security or wages for another job. It would continue to be concealed if she got a guaranteed, adequate income off the state. What's the result? Its charity work, a labour of love, part of a womans 'nature' and 'identity', a personal service something to do with personality. And again, she does more of it. The money that her husband brings in doesn't pay for it. So she pays with her time and energy, scrimping and saving, making ends meet, repairing clothes instead of buying them etc etc. She does more of it when it is not paid for in socialised services or in the home.

I think its the last activity we're weakest on. Struggle Notes is good, but it reflects our tendency to avoid pinpointing what's going on. Our tendency to rejoice when lots of people are doing things as though that's an end in itself. Some of the articles are interesting in themselves but don't seem to be in SN for any particular reason except that its working class women in action. Its not clear what it means for the class, or for SN public women in particular. (This was one friendly criticism made at our London/meeting.)

Now, I'm not saying we should always write articles full of heavy messages. All the articles do have a message, but its sometimes confused and unclear. And I'd on't think the struggle will be drawn together through Big Flame (although the party is the draw ing together of the struggle in the end). We don't have to try to sum everything up in slogans and demands. But at the moment we are tending to sum it up in words in Struggle Notes rather than in action inside the mass struggle of housewives.

I believe that Wages For Housework could be one way of beginning to deal with all these problems. 1) A demand or slogan is a way of acting on a political line and shaping the struggle instead of just commenting on it. A good example is Abortion: A Womans Right to Choose. So the struggle isn't just summed up inside revolutionary organisations or the Womens Movement. It isn't just words in leaflets, pamphlets and papers. It makes the political line concrete and active. Its not the only way of doing this but its one.

2) Demands and slogans - the shaping of a programme for action - helps to link present struggles with future aims; helps to draw out what the working class needs now and into the future. We should look at the struggle of housewives like we look at everything else. The seeds of communism exist in the struggle now. What is particular to women as housewives? a) Housework has to be socialised. This can only happen on our terms under communism. In the meantime there'll be a long struggle, spearheaded by housewives, to force the state to provide socialised services e.g nurseries, and to pay for them. At a local level this produces a number of demands. More generally, in the womens movement and BF for example we say community controlled services, paid for by the state, to define what we mean in working class terms, towards communism. b) Housework, like all work, must be paid for by the bosses and their state. Again, until communism exists, either its paid for by the state or its paid for by working class housewives, families and communities. There is a constant tussle over who should pay for socialised services that take on some of this work. The one struggle that hasn't surfaced is who should pay for it when its done in the house. It remains a personal, invisible battle inside the family. Wages for Housework is the only demand that has yet made this battle visible, and organisable on a mass level. And in the process puts housework out front, wherever its done. It links the struggle in the home to the struggle for socialisation, and so helps break that barrier between the two which keeps housework as womens work, a labour of love, which undermines the fight against housework even when women fight for socialised services. c) Housewives, like everyone else, need an independent income. They need to live. Until communism abolishes wage labour and money and we all get according to our needs, we need money to live on. Housewives have fought in the Claimants Unions and the Family Allowance Campaign for that independent income; in rent strikes to keep the little they've got; with their husbands for a bigger share of the wage. A guaranteed adequate income is the framework, the general aim, inside which we look at all struggles for money. For housewives its stressed as independent. Wages for Housework is defined in these terms, not in terms of productivity. Its a particular form of guaranteed income, based on the needs of housewives. Like Equal Pay with no strings is one form of it that's come from the struggle of women as waged workers.

3) Wages for Housework is one demand that housewives can start defining for themselves, which will help them to define their interests in other struggles as well. It puts them up front instead of trailing behind everyone else. Too often women are organising while housewives are still at home. And I think this is a problem of what the struggle is for as much as finding the means to organise. And its one way of linking what active, militant women are struggling for to the mass of women who are still not organising - its a unifying demand in that sense.

organisation of production, isn't just maintained by ideology but also by material conditions like housing policy, higher productivity which makes men want servants, the forced economic dependence of women. Battered wives centres exist now because Womens Liberation and other things have knocked holes in ideology; and also because social security exists, empty houses exist, and some state provision has been made after a long struggle.

Young people are conditioned in dependence; young women have the added conditioning of their mother's dependence and their future prospects of the same. A lot of girls rely on men to buy ale, clothes, to drive them around in cars and get them into clubs. (Often older married men who take the money off their wife's housekeeping - one reason why married women can be suspicious and jealous of younger single women.) You fuck, sometimes because you want to, sometimes to pay for the meal ticket, sometimes in fear because he thinks he's owed. How do you tell the difference? How do you separate your sexual feelings from economic necessity, or know what they are? Most don't carry on like this for long. You want kids, or more stability; you start feeling you're being used and want to be loved; you realise you're getting called an old slag; or you want an excuse to get out that fucking factory. So you end up pregnant and married. What alternative have you experienced except a life with men? If you want kids, say, it seems better than living with mum forever, or living alone, or being poor on social security, or getting a job on top of all the housework.

And then, as a housewife, poverty and dependence on his wage colours everything. I think its one primary reason why women are trapped in housework, defined as housewives, isolated and emotionally dependent on men. Capitalism turns human dependence into a division of power. Old people, the sick and disabled, children, are physically weaker and need other people's help to stay alive. Capitalism can't use them so much in production and doesn't want to pay too much for their survival. So as far as possible it makes them economically dependent on their own class. Under fascism, apart from healthy children, they're likely to get exterminated as surplus humans. This all affects the way they're seen and how they see themselves. Their families and neighbours can resent their dependence. They can resent other people's power over them, or feel guilty or 'grateful.' It makes you even weaker. You fight or submit to the people you depend on.

Its the same with housewives. Historically women have 'depended' on men for some things because of being pregnant and nursing babies for a large part of their lives. This basic division of labour became a division of power with class society and capitalism. Now women are atomised, individually dependent on individual men for the means to live. The division of labour can be transcended more and more through contraception, socialisation of housework, housing policy etc, but is held back by capitalism. Economic dependence maintains the image of women as weak and vulnerable, as 'born' housewives and mothers, as the people who should do this work privately.

It directly forces you to do the housework. Having no money you have to earn it for a start, and prove to the man that you're worth sweating in the factory for. Because you're money comes through that man, your struggle for it is a personal hassle with someone you love (or hate). You don't win it by refusing the work, but by working harder, sucking up to him, using your 'female wiles'. And if you haven't got money you can't buy labour-saving equipment, prepared food, baby sitters, nights out with the girls etc. You stay tied to the work and to him.

It also affects how much you can struggle with other women. We also have to build our independence through womens centres etc. But all the time you're returning home to the same situation, which constantly undermines your power. There's still the basic fact that he slogs his guts out to provide for the whole family; that you still have to get your money off him. We experience this all the time on Tower Hill. If you just concentrate on making him hand more money over the problem always rears its ugly head again - and his control of the money isn't just out of male aggro, but also out of his own material needs.

2) ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

One argument against Wages for Housework is that its 'economistic' because it 'reduces' everything to money. Its even been said that the struggle for money isn't as important as other things. I don't agree. - and its the same whether we're talking about a guaranteed income, equal pay, family allowance or wages for housework.

Firstly we don't usually label any struggle as 'economic' just because its for money. Its not 'separate' from politics or the struggle for power. Capitalism is a system in which the mass of people, the working class, are dispossessed of the means to live. We're forced to depend on money, and we're forced to work for it. We labour to create all wealth, and we're given as little of it as possible - that's how profits are made. Our human needs directly conflict with the needs of the bosses. We struggle against work because its dangerous unhealthy and a drag - and the human struggle is always to get the means to live at less and less cost to those who produce it. Communism is the system that will allow that struggle to progress - through machinery, more collective sharing of work, more lasting goods etc. A constant struggle to live better and suffer less, work less. Capitalism is the opposite - it requires constant drives for higher productivity, more work, more robot-like slavery. We find our need for communism in opposing it. At the same time we struggle for the money, goods and services that we need to live on. Communism is the system which will allow for production of what we need and ensure we get it. Capitalism ties our needs to wage labour, makes us produce all kinds of crap and won't let us have the necessities.

This is the heart of the class struggle. The struggle for power and communism isn't an added extra. - Its transformed and poses different problems at different historic times - but all the time its a struggle to assert the needs of the working class against capitalism, against its power. In the end that means taking power, destroying that system, creating a society in which classes cease to exist and the human race can progress.

For women as housewives its the same struggle, conditioned by the particular nature of the work they do and their particular situation as economically dependent as well as poor. These two things are fundamental to our powerlessness. The more housework you do, the less money you have, the more economically dependent you are, then the less power you have. The fight against that work, for money, is also a fight for power inside the class and against capitalism. Against the way they make the working class share its poverty, fight over the crumbs, pay for its 'dependants' in order to increase profits. And the way they maintain divisions in the class by giving some sections a false power - feeling they've got something because its better than someone else.

Women/^(and men) have other struggles as well, but none of them can be rigidly separated from this. We have to fight to define our sexuality, to control our bodies, to win sexual freedom. This means fighting sexist ideology, but it also means fighting for the time to live and think, against endless, tiring work; for healthy bodies that aren't weakened and destroyed by work; for economic independence, without which we can't be independent emotionally or sexually. We have to fight for the physical means to be independent - womens centres etc. But that too means fighting for wealth from the state - buildings, equipment, cash - and fighting for the time and money to get out the house in the first place. Etc, etc.

We don't automatically become independent when we have an independent income. There are other things to fight for. And changes in our material conditions don't immediately change our ideas. We have a lifetime's conditioning behind us and a whole society to change. But economic independence is crucial as part of all this and as one factor that conditions women from birth.

Children aren't just told that women do housework and have less freedom and are dependant on men. They see it and live it, in a family structure that spotlights a hierarchy of power through size, strength, work, freedom to go out and be independent etc. That structure which is necessary to the capitalist

People say Wages for Housework will tie women to housework. This suggests that housewives are the only section of the class incapable of separating wages from productivity. It suggests that housework is not work, or the only work which should be paid for by the working class itself instead of by the bosses or the state. That's the only alternative.

Anyway, women are tied as much as they ever will be, right here and now. They're tied because they have to find the money to pay for it and get it off a man. They're tied because while its not paid for it increases, and what you can't pay for with money you pay for with time and energy. They're tied to it by it being part of their identity - there's no other way to define it.

There's no alternative to Wages for Housework which deals with this. There are other demands, slogans and struggles alongside it. But while we avoid this one we just find ourselves working out ways of sharing rather than reducing work; we accept that the working class must share its poverty while it does charity work for the bosses. Its demand for money for housewives and a demand that housework as work (not as womens work or womens nature) gets paid for whoever does it and wherever its done and however its organised.

SOCIALISATION

Socialisation of housework and Wages for Housework aren't alternatives. They go together and define each other. We are in a long struggle for socialisation. At the moment its hard enough defending what we've got, let alone getting any more. And we won't get it until we've got communism - not fully, or on our terms. Are we saying that for all that time women doing that work in the house shouldn't get paid for it?

And I'm very dubious about this argument that 'paying women in the house' is wrong because what we should be doing is socialising the work. It seems to me that housewives should have some say in the matter. And, until communism starts guaranteeing their interests, as well as everyone else's they must have the power to choose and dictate how that work is organised. Its a struggle to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of working in the house, running a collective playgroup, letting the state organise one etc etc. Wages for Housework, because it pays for that work wherever it is done, is one way of giving them that power, that choice. Or do we know whats best for them?

And this demand does help to clarify the kind of socialisation that's in our interests now. If housewives run a playgroup and the state refuses to pay with buildings, equipment, wages etc, you can end up doing a lot more work and paying out a lot more money that you haven't got in the first place. The thing then never gets off the ground or it folds up.

I definitely and absolutely do not agree with CM's view that "the answer is to organise against the capitalist organisation of work and not against the work itself". In the struggle against capitalist production the two things interweave; in the struggle for communism they continue to do so. The human race needs to destroy all unnecessary work, which is work created by capitalism alone (like hand-washing laundry because the machines don't exist or break down or are too expensive). It needs to lessen the burden of necessary work or make it more tolerable. It needs to re-appropriate human activities which capitalism now turns into work and organises like a chore some or all of the time (like child-rearing and sex). One part of the struggle against work is the struggle against its organisation - so that its organised at minimum cost to us. (But producing asbestos, for example, kills you whether its organised by capitalism or communism. Peeling spuds is a drag whether its done by a housewife or with 50 other women in a canteen).)

Whether its inside or outside the house its a struggle to win more of the wealth that will pay for that work so it can be reduced and organised in our interests; and for the power to impose those interests.

SORRY THIS IS SO LONG. I WARN YOU, ITS NOT MY LAST WORD. SEE YA FOLKS!