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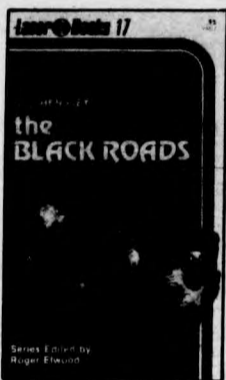
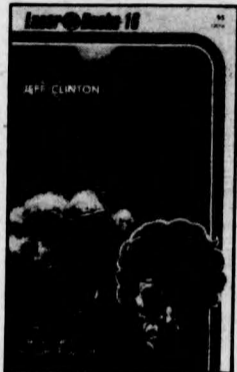
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Opinion

Housework merits wages

By JOAN SPARLING

Wages For Housework is the articulation of struggles which have been taking place for a long time.

Black women in the United States were making struggles in the late 1960s for higher welfare rates because they recognized that raising children is work and they want to be paid for it.

When the English government threatened to take the Family Allowance away from the women and give it to their husbands, the women formed the most massive protest England has ever seen. They demanded that they retain the money themselves and for it to be increased. That money was all they got for their work and they were not about to give it up.

These are just two examples of the struggles which began to break down the weakness of women by challenging the whole notion that raising children and doing housework is a natural attribute of women. These struggles, and many like them all over the world, have led to the actual articulation of a demand for wages

for housework.

The Toronto Wages For Housework Committee is part of an international network which has seen the commonality of our situation as women and which believes that our fundamental powerlessness as women is the identification that is universally made between being a woman and being a housewife.

Regardless of our country of origin or our education, our personalities and our futures are crippled by the work that society has trained us to do - housework. Housework, then, could no longer be considered a natural attribute.

Winning a wage for the work that all women do not only indicates our unwillingness to be burdened with this enormous amount of labour, without which society could not function, but it also gives us the power to refuse this labour.

A wage would break the blackmail of housework being work that is done for love. When a woman has been trained to believe that she is working for love there are

no limits to the end of that work. A wage means that we are financially independent and have many options open to us which a wageless woman simply does not have.

Concretely, it means that women will be able to afford to leave relationships with men which are intolerable, that we will be able to afford to have children if we want them, and that we will be able to accept a job outside our home on terms more favourable to us.

When women begin to look at all their unpaid labour and demand money for it, the possibility opens up for other sectors of the population to do likewise.

Wages For Schoolwork is the culmination of the struggles students have been making, recognizing the fact that we are workers in the schools. Most notable of these struggles is the strike of CEGEP students in Quebec in 1974. These students were demanding free tuition plus the minimum wage for going to school.

Schools and universities are not simply institutions of higher learning, they are the training ground, both in terms of discipline and skills, for the paid labour force.

WFS would mean that we, as students, would no longer be forced into financial dependence on our parents or into student loans which tie us to a job once we leave school to pay it off.

We do see these cutbacks as an attempt to weaken the situation of women and students. When the government decreased the Family Allowance and cut massive numbers of jobs which employ women and students, it had the effect of driving women into dependence on men and students into greater dependence on parents and government loans.

By demanding WFS and WFH we are saying that we refuse to remain in positions of powerlessness any longer.

For further information or discussions on WFS and WFH call the WFH office at 466-7457 Monday to Friday from 11 to 5. The office is at 745 Danforth Avenue, Suite 301.

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**VIOLENCE IN THE FAMILY:
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Moderator:

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