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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE: Judy Paterson, Margaret Beardsley, Dannie McArthur, Judy McManus, Nina Westaway, Ruth Houle, Astrid Davidson, Sandra Boucher, Joyce Meissenheimer, Sam Lyons, Roz Zech, Nancy Love, Cynthia Flood, Kate Dillon, Pat Hynking, Sally Hunter.

If you would like to work on Priorities, please phone Roz at 738-1497 or Judy at 327-8875

COVER: Paul Houle

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Correspondence and subscriptions to:

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"The issues and demands raised by the Women's Liberation Movement are integral to the development of a democratic socialist society. The NDP actively encourages and provides support for women organizing around the demands of the women's liberation movement and commits an NDP government to creating the legislation necessary to realize these demands."

(From the B.C. NDP policy on Women's Rights)

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WAGES AGAINST HOUSEWORK

A REVIEW

by ARDITH ROSCOE

To say that we want wages for housework is to expose the fact that housework is already money for capital, money that capital makes and has made out of our cooking, smiling, fucking. At the same time, it shows that we have cooked, smiled, fucked throughout the years not because it was easier for us than for anybody else, but because we did not have any other choice. Our faces have become distorted from so much smiling, our feelings have got lost from so much loving, our oversexualization has left us completely desexualized.

I am glad to see the discussion in Priorities of wages for housework. I think that this is one of the key issues in the women's struggle, and one on which no clear analysis has been made by the women's movement in Canada.

Silvia Federici, in her article "Wages Against Housework" answers many of the difficulties and contradictions which women express in discussing the problem. She sees the source of these difficulties in the failure to see the issue as a political perspective. Many women when considering wages for housework conclude that it would not make that much difference in their lives - either because they have other choices a career, an enlightened husband, a communal life - or, for other women it would not change the boredom, the isolation, the depression. This view point detaches the end result of the struggle from the struggle itself - in Ms. Federici's view, it is in the process of struggling for it that we will revolutionize our family and social relations. " To say that we want money for housework is the first step in refusing to do it - because the demand for a wage makes our work visible, which is the most indispensable

Silvia Federici

condition to begin the struggle."

The unwaged condition of housework has been the most powerful weapon in reinforcing the common assumption that housework is not work, thus preventing women from struggling against it.

Ms. Federici replies to those who think we should demand the socialization and collectivization of housework rather than the wages -free laundromats, day-care, equal pay. These however are only working conditions, and if we confine our struggle to these we will fail to achieve any real change, unless we attack our female role at it's root the only change will be a fairer and more efficient welfare state.

There are women who do not see the importance of the issue of wages for housework because they do not want to identify in any way with the housewife as they know that this is the most powerless position in society. The author replies "We want and have to say that we are all housewives, we are all prostitutes, we are all gay, because until we recognize our slavery we cannot struggle against it, because as

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UNITED BANK WORKERS

The following interview was conducted for Priorities by Sandra Boucher, with Jackie Ainsworth and Dodie Zerr of United Bank Workers, Local #2 of SORWUC (Service, Office & Retail Workers Union of Canada). Jackie and Dodie have been--and are--involved in organizing in the downtown banks in Vancouver.

Priorities: Dodie, what position do you hold in the Union?

Dodie: I'm the president of the United Bank Workers.

P: How long have you been involved in organizing?

D: Well, I started in organizing with the banks in August of this year, and the people in our bank decided that our only step as far as improving our working conditions and getting better wages would be to have a union.

P: Jackie, how are you involved in the Union?

Jackie: Well, I've been in SORWUC since it started, which was October 1973. I had been working as a waitress for about 8 or 9 years before then...we had joined the established unions, by which I mean the American unions, and had had such bad experiences in them both just as workers and also as women that we decided if we were going to join a Union at all we were going to join one we had some control over. We formed SORWUC then. After that I worked at UBC for a while and was involved in the organizing drive of the office workers out there, and then moved to Princeton, and then when I came back I got a job in a bank. I'd been working there 4 or 5 months when we had our first meeting to discuss working conditions and wages in the bank..a very informal get-together of the women in the bank, and I guess about a month later we applied for union certification at our branch.

P: How many women were involved at the bank?

D: Well, in our bank, being the first branch to apply, we were really nervous about who we were going to talk to for fear of losing our jobs, because the possibility of unionizing in banks had been something that was just never discussed or had never been brought up for many years. So at first it started with a few of us who had gotten together at the meeting and were really quite fed up with what was happening at our branch. From then we just approached people who we thought would be interested in it, but we had to be really careful in our branch because everybody was really scared.

J: We applied actually with less than a majority of our branch signed up, and there are 22 employees.... Now of course that it's established