

Housework is Work, Should Be Paid Work

(Source: The Link)

by Karen McCairley

MONTREAL (CUP) - If Sara Fisher gets her way, all women will get paid for their work.

Fisher is a 40-year-old single mother of four who says having children is a job in itself and should be recognized as such by the government.

"Women who are financially better off don't have the same

problems as poorer women," Fisher says. "They can pay other women to look after their children or help in their home. But having a job outside of the home really makes it more complicated for women who are not as well-off."

Anna T (she won't use her father's name) is an Universite de Montreal student working hard to turn Fisher's hopes into reality. She's setting up the first Cana-

dian chapter of the International Wages for Housework Campaign in Montreal.

The IWFHC, already well established in Europe, lobbies for the emotional and physical work of women to be included in a country's Gross National Product (GNP), and that the money from the world's military budgets be diverted to pay the wages.

Anna T says women's "work"

includes raising children, and being a homemaker and wife to a husband working outside the home.

"Women are constantly on duty," Anna T said. "We are constantly assessing society, always expected to consider men's emotions and it's all because that's the way we were brought up."

Along with her support group, Anna T organized

this month's visit to Montreal by IWFHC founder Selma Jones.

In a speech, Jones explained the hopes women have of sharing household responsibilities with their husbands usually remain a dream. Women still end up doing most of the work.

Jones said that all too often women who try to juggle a career and work at home end up giving up their career when they have children. But their husbands are not hindered from continuing their careers.

Anna T said Jones' visit sparked the interest of many women who want to be remunerated for their work and make connections with others.

Part of the IWFHC's campaign is the circulation of a petition nationwide asking that all governments count women's unpaid work in the GNP.

According to the UN, approximately half of a country's GNP is produced by women, if volunteer work is included. The most recent Canadian figures state that women's unpaid work total 40 per cent of the GNP.

The 1985 UN Decade for Women Conference in Nairobi agreed in theory that all governments should count women's paid and unpaid work in their GNPs.

Fisher, whose children range from ages seven to 16, said being paid for housework does not mean women will take advantage of it.

"People used to say the same thing about family allowance," Fisher said. "I think the worries people have about women being fixed in the home because they get paid is besides the point, they end up doing it anyway."

Fisher used to make money playing music, and now receives welfare. She said the money shouldn't be a substitute, but rather an addition to what women may already have.

"It's hard to put a figure on housework," she said. "A lot of it is emotional, I think the welfare rate is as low as I would go as a wage."

Anna T looks to the family allowance system in Britain as a possible method of payment.

According to her, three weeks of the world's military budgets could feed, clothe and house the world for a year.



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