The “social wage,” from public education (a form of child care, let’s not forget) to eldercare to national healthcare for everyone, are programs as important to freeing women from unpaid, unwilling service in the home, in the family and in the nation as is the right to contraception and abortion.
- from Women’s Liberation & National Health Care: Confronting the Myth of America

WOMEN OF COLOR CAUCUS PRESENTS
A Consciousness-Raising: The Social Wage

WHAT IS THE SOCIAL WAGE?¹
The social wage is a social version of the fringe benefits system that we have in the United States. The social wage refers to social benefits such as health care, parental leave, child care and elder care. When these social benefits aren’t restricted on the basis of age, financial means, marriage or job type and are based on the principle of universal entitlement rather than public charity, women are freed from the unpaid responsibility of family care work that often falls on us. It also gives women access to those benefits in our own right and not as dependents of a male partner’s benefits.

AS A WOMAN ARE THERE SITUATIONS IN YOUR LIFE THAT WOULD BE IMPROVED IF THERE WERE MORE AND BETTER SOCIAL WAGE PROGRAMS IN THE UNITED STATES?²

YES! Right now:

- We are making life decisions because our benefits are tied to our jobs, including taking a job or staying in a job because it provides health insurance or staying in a relationship because we receive our benefits through a male partner.

- We have less economic independence when we are dependent on the men in our lives for our benefits. One woman could not get a job because she had to take care of her child who had special needs. Because she did not have money to leave, she stayed in an abusive marriage.

- We need social wage programs that do not require us to be extremely poor before we can qualify for them.

The Women of Color Caucus (WOCC) is an organizing think tank composed of women of color associated with Redstockings of the Women’s Liberation Movement and Gainesville (Florida) Women’s Liberation. We believe that women of color involved in the women’s liberation movement must also meet separately in order to address problems specifically affecting women of color.

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² We posed this question to women who attended the WOCC 2004 National Retreat and these answers are based on their responses.