

Mike Harris – Opinions on Women are humans not Machines: Ontario's Cruel Welfare System

300886753

Eric Spalding

MACS 110 Assignment 1

Abstract: Since the late 20th century, Ontario women have been victims of the restructuring of Welfare Policy. In 1995, under Mike Harris citizens were exposed to major welfare cuts that led to financial instability for many welfare recipients particularly for women in Ontario. Under this neoliberal policy women, in particular, have had their social citizenship rights dismantled as they are left vulnerable to the harsh regulation of the Workfare model. Regulations under the workfare model have made it difficult for many women, to be economically independent as they endure difficulties trying to support themselves and their kid's basic needs. Specifically, the non-recognition of childcare costs under the workfare model has had a negative impact on women's financial stability in Ontario.

Introduction:

Everyday after school and work, many adults enter a clean home, with warm feelings, as they are greeted by that one specific woman who wakes up early to scrub the floors, prepare the kids for school, cooks the meals, does the daily house chores, and then rushes out to go to work. But then this is also the woman that rushes home, during rush hour to be the first one home to greet the kids, her partner, with a warm smile, but also a meal prepared on the table. It is during dinnertime, we often hear from this tired woman the words " how was your day kids?" Or, " how was your day honey"? This is the woman, that cleans up after the family mess, prepares for the following day, without being able to take a second to relax like everyone else does in the family. This is the woman that wakes up early on weekends, to run errands such as grocery shopping, before having to go to birthday parties with kids, or any other functions that may take place on weekends. This

is the woman who needs to provide all this for free, and then has to manage selling her labor in exchange for a wage either full-time or part-time as she is either the primary wageearner, or needs to help her spouse make ends meet.

The activities described above form part of what is referred to as social reproduction. The very general understanding of social reproduction is that is a form of unpaid labor that many women carry out on a daily basis. It's a type of work that women are performing on an ongoing basis, which takes up lengthy amount of hours in a women's life, but also affects them emotionally, physically, mentally, and physiologically. As Mimi Abramovitz mentions, they are activities that are created by societies to " further procreation, socialization, sexuality, nurturance and family maintenance" (15). Social reproduction furthermore can also be understood as a way of preparing the next generation of workers, making sure that the health of the workforce is in good shape and lastly it can also be seen as caring for those who may be ill, young, or disabled and therefore need assistance for someone to care for them (16). Most often social reproduction is evident within the home, conducted by women, as it is described to be critical for the well being of the family (16). The problem however with this type of work that women specifically carry out on a daily basis is that our liberal capitalist system does not compensate women for these activities because it is not considered 'work'. This is because, in the past and now, women are expected to perform their traditional gender roles such as to be a loving, caring, and supportive mother for the family without expecting to be compensated for this. In the past, most women only performed their social reproductive role, and didn't also work in exchange for wage, as men were the primary breadwinners of the family.