Working parents’ difficulties affording child-care, the devaluation of unpaid caretaking, and the privilege accorded gendered breadwinner/caretaker divisions of labor within marriage - all of these are longstanding themes in feminist critique of U.S. social policy. Often they seem mutually incompatible, as in “mommy wars” over tradeoffs between employment and caretaking. This paper offers an integrated analysis of these problems as they arise in means-tested cash assistance programs for low-income families with children, programs that now condition assistance on work. All three problems arise in part from poverty measurement techniques that reduce economic activity to market activity and that assume child care occurs outside markets. Both errors can be corrected by redesigning means tests to treat child care as a basic need of all households and by treating nonmarket caretaking as work insofar as it helps meet that need. Tracing these relationships suggests opportunities for feminist theory and practice that take on all three faces of the family wage system in mutually reinforcing ways.