

Domestics' Cross-Cultural News

monthly newsletter of the International Coalition to End Domestics' Exploitation

APRIL 1985

HISTORIC GAIN FOR ONTARIO DOMESTICS!

On April 1, 1985, domestic workers in Ontario finally came under the protection of the Workers Compensation Act. Any domestic who works over 24 hours per week now has the right to all benefits and services offered to workers injured on the job. These include payment for medical expenses and loss of wages, vocational rehabilitation services, disability pension, and death benefits for surviving dependents.

Under the Workers Compensation Act employers of domestic workers are required to register with the Workers Compensation Board and pay for the coverage of their workers. They are assessed by the Board under Rate No. 907 and must pay \$2.15 for every \$100.00 of wages paid to the domestic worker. For example, an employer who pays the current Ontario minimum wage of \$757.00 would be required to pay \$16.00 per month.

If an employer fails to register with the Workers Compensation Board, the domestic worker is still protected by the Act. She or he can report the accident/illness to the Board and it will investigate the claim. An employer who is not registered with the Board is liable for the full cost of the claim as well as any assessments due.

INTERCEDE began lobbying for the inclusion of domestics under the Workers Compensation Act since our inception in 1979. We welcome this long-overdue measure as an historic gain for Ontario's 75,000 domestic workers. In a recent CBC radio interview, INTERCEDE co-ordinator Judith Ramirez said "We are cautiously optimistic, we will be watching closely how the Board handles claims by domestics and whether it goes after employers who do not register."

DOMESTICS' RIGHTS AN ELECTION ISSUE

Women's groups across the province are asking their local politicians what they intend to do to strengthen the protection of domestic workers under Ontario labour laws.

The Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues has prepared a very helpful booklet called "A Woman's Guide to the 1985 Ontario Election". Under the section on domestic workers they say:

The issue is:

DOMESTIC WORKERS DO NOT RECEIVE THE SAME PROTECTION FROM ONTARIO'S LABOUR LAWS AS IS AFFORDED OTHER WORKERS

* Live-in domestic workers are not covered by the overtime provisions of the Employment Standards Act. It is still legally possible in Ontario for a live-in domestic to either work or be on call to her employer for up to 120 hours per week! This reduces her real wage rate to \$1.47 per hour!

Ask:

When will you introduce legislation to ensure that live-in domestic workers have the same protections given other workers in Ontario?

Immediately after the election INTERCEDE is planning to launch a province-wide letter-writing campaign to the new minister of labour demanding the regulation of the hours of work for live-in domestic workers.

NEW HOME FOR INTERCEDE

We have recently moved and our new address is:

INTERCEDE
Cecil Community Centre
58 Cecil Street
Toronto, Ontario M5T 1N6
Tel. (416) 977-3467

COCO'S CALENDAR

Recent happenings...

- * on March 8 INTERCEDE attended the International Women's Day address by noted Black activist ANGELA DAVIS
- * on March 27 INTERCEDE attended a public forum on mandatory affirmative action at the St. Lawrence Centre
- * on March 28 INTERCEDE attended an Open House at the WOMEN'S COUNSELLING REFERRAL AND EDUCATION CENTRE
- * on March 31 INTERCEDE held a well-attended INCOME TAX CLINIC staffed by student lawyers from CLASP...many thanks!

Coming up soon...

- * on Sunday, May 5, INTERCEDE is hosting an OPEN HOUSE to celebrate the re-newed funding of our Service Unit, at the Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil Street, 2 - 5 pm...everyone welcome!
- * on May 11 the PHILIPPINE-CANADIAN LADIES CIRCLE will hold its Anniversary and Induction Ball at the Ildicos Lounge. For information call Linda at 449-3828
- * by popular demand we are holding another INTERCEDE DANCE! It's set for Saturday, June 22, at the Cecil Community Centre DJ...Door prizes...Free buffet...\$5...

...AND CONGRATULATIONS!

- * to our new landed immigrants ASUNCION BILAG, CONCHITA BALCITA, AMELIA CRUZ, REMY NAVIDAD, DELIA ONATE, CONCHITA RAMOS and LUZ INEZ from the Philippines...and to EILEEN SHEPPARD from the U.K.
- * a special greeting to our new friends at the CECIL COMMUNITY CENTRE where the new INTERCEDE office is located!

Tune in again next month!

- Columbia Diaz

Newsletter Committee:
Columbia Diaz, Desiree Hipplewith, Lynette Munian, Judith Ramirez, Pamela Skeete, Sonia Thomas, Daphne Tucker

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

INTERCEDE has received many complaints from domestic workers who don't know what deductions their employers are making and who do not receive their T-4 slips at the end of the year.

Please note that if you have worked full-time or part-time for the year 1984, your employer is required by law to issue you a T-4 slip by the end of February 1985. If he or she has not done so, do not hesitate to ask for your slip.

Upon receipt of your T-4 slip you should file your income tax return with Revenue Canada on or before April 30, 1985.

If you are dissatisfied with your deductions discuss your T-4 slip with your employer. Should your employer refuse to give you a T-4 slip you have the legal right to file a formal complaint with the government.

For further information contact Revenue Canada at (416) 869-1500 or write to:

REVENUE CANADA TAXATION
36 Adelaide Street East
Toronto, Ontario
M5C 1J7

If you need assistance with any aspect of your income tax return contact us at:

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT (416) 977-3467

- Desiree Hipplewith

JOIN INTERCEDE

\$5 Year

SUPPORT THE GROUP THAT SUPPORTS YOU!!

NEW OFFICE HOURS:

As of May 1 the Service Unit will be open daily, Monday to Friday, from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. We will also be open every first Saturday of the month, starting May 4. Please telephone in advance to make your Saturday appointments. Thank you!

MELROSE MORGAN SPEAKS OUT!

It has been nearly one year since Melrose Morgan, a domestic worker from Jamaica, first came to the Service Unit for help. She had been refused landing under the Foreign Domestic Program due largely to the fact that she had not upgraded herself while working in Canada. The employer she had been working for simply refused her the necessary time off.

As a result, Mrs. Morgan was hurled into a long and complex series of appeals, bureaucratic delays, broken promises, and insensitive decisions by immigration officials. Since October 1, 1984, she has been in Canada illegally, seeking just treatment under a policy which promises to land all qualified applicants. What follows is Melrose Morgan's account of her ordeal:

" I have been in Canada since June 1979. I came to work for a family of four. A family I would never work for again in my life. Seeing them they seem very nice. But from the first week it been a tough experience until I leave 3 1/2 years later.

I work so many long hours without extra pay, sometime not even proper food to eat. They treat you like you are not human. They even told me not to bring no friends in their home. It hurt but I go along with it just for the sake of my children. They have an old saying 'if you want good your nose have to run'. That is why I live with it so long.

I did not know it would work out this way with that family. When I ask her for time off to take a course to upgrade myself she told me she can't afford to give me two evening off a week. Besides her friend's helper is not taking course so why should I take course.

I started one anyway, but at the same time I took sick and could not complete the course. After coming out of the hospital I decided to leave the job. I went to immigration and got a new extension, and a week

after I get a letter from them saying I have to leave the country at the end of the extension. My God it hurt so much! I did not know what to do. My hope was so high before thinking I would be able to apply for landing and that I could have my children with me.

It wasn't fair to be treated this way. I was advised to see a lawyer and the lawyer made several appeals for me but they were all turn down. So they turn my case over to INTERCEDE, they go to any length to help me. For the past long months it's been a tough time for me. I can't work and I don't know what the outcome is going to be, but I trust in God it will work out. "

- Melrose Morgan

EMILY PARCHMENT FINALLY LANDED!

Emily Parchment is a domestic worker from the West Indies who has been in Canada since October 1978. After working here for six years she was refused landing under the Foreign Domestic Program. She was notified to leave the country by February 5, 1985.

Ms. Parchment turned to the CLASP Clinic for help who, in turn, referred her to the INTERCEDE Service Unit. As her counsellor, I interviewed her about her educational background, upgrading in Canada and plans for the future. She has since completed several dress-making courses at George Brown College, including one at the advanced level.

Her CLASP student lawyer, Mary Hart, made submissions on her behalf to the regional office of immigration asking them to review Ms. Parchment's case on the basis of her excellent performance in upgrading.

Many months passed, but finally the original decision to deny landing was reversed and Ms. Parchment was accepted for landing in Canada.

Congratulations, Emily!

- Desiree Hipplewith

LAND MELROSE MORGAN!

LANDED STATUS FOR CONCEPTION URBINA

Conception Urbina is a Filipina domestic worker, widow, mother of five children, who came to Canada in 1981. She was refused landing under the Foreign Domestic Program in May 1984, and notified to leave the country by March 12, 1985.

Last June Ms. Urbina contacted the INTERCEDE Service Unit. As her counsellor, I advised her about steps to take in the areas of upgrading, future career plans, and community integration.

In February 1985, I wrote to Catherine McMurray, manager of the Canada Immigration Centre at 480 University Avenue. I requested a re-assessment from Ms. Urbina on the grounds that she had significantly strengthened her application for landing.

On March 12, 1985, Ms. Urbina was re-assessed by immigration and granted a one month extension, pending a final decision. INTERCEDE is happy to announce that Ms. Urbina has now been accepted for permanent residence.

Congratulations, Connie!

- Columbia Diaz

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

Monday - Friday 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Open every first Saturday of the month

Tel. (416) 977- 3467

Evenings and week-end leave a message on our machine and we will return your call!

All INTERCEDE services are free of charge.

DOMESTICS CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS
c/o INTERCEDE
Cecil Community Centre
58 Cecil Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5T 1N6

First Class

CITY HONOURS JUDITH RAMIREZ

On March 6, 1985, INTERCEDE co-ordinator Judith Ramirez received the CONSTANCE B. HAMILTON AWARD from the City of Toronto on Civic Honours Day.

Presiding over the ceremony in Council Chambers was Toronto Mayor Art Eggleton, who praised Judith's pioneering work on behalf of immigrant women.

For the past ten years Judith has been active in the development of innovative programs run by and for immigrant women. In 1975 she founded Toronto's Immigrant Women's Centre, a health advocacy group for Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, West Indian and Chinese women. In 1978 she helped form the Immigrant Women's Job Placement Centre, a cross-cultural group which deals exclusively with the employment-related needs of Toronto's immigrant women. In 1979 Judith was a driving force behind the formation of the International Coalition to End Domestic's Exploitation.

In presenting the award Mayor Eggleton noted that it is given once a year to a person who has "significantly contributed to securing equitable treatment for Toronto women in any aspect of Toronto's economic, social or cultural activities".

In accepting the award Judith said she was happy to receive it in recognition of her work and "on behalf of the many other immigrant women who have worked tirelessly, often against great odds, to build a strong voice for our rights".

GET YOUR TICKETS FOR THE DANCE EARLY!

Place
Stamp
Here