

# Domestics' Cross-Cultural News

monthly newsletter of the International Coalition to End Domestics' Exploitation

APRIL 1988

## FIRST DOMESTIC CLAIMS OVERTIME PAY!

Mary Jo Delorme, a foreign domestic worker from France, is the first person to go public about filing a claim with the Ministry of Labour for overtime pay.

Last October Ontario's domestics finally got some protection in the Employment Standards Act against unlimited unpaid overtime. But many employers are ignoring it.

At INTERCEDE's monthly meeting on April 10, Mary Jo Delorme told her story to a crowd of two hundred and fifty domestic workers.

In March 1987 Ms. Delorme went to work for a couple with two small children. Her contract said she would work fifty hours a week and have a private room. Instead, she shared a room with an infant she was responsible for around the clock. And although she worked the stipulated fifty hours she was only paid for forty four.

Since last October 1 when the law changed, Ms. Delorme expected to be paid for the extra six hours of work per week. But she received neither overtime pay nor time off in lieu of extra pay.

The situation continued unchanged for six months. In March 1988, Ms. Delorme spoke to her employers about overtime pay and the fact that they were deducting for a private rather than a shared room on her pay cheque. They refused to budge.

Shortly after, Ms. Delorme gave her employers two weeks' notice and re-

signed. One morning, the following week, they fired her and went off to work as usual. Because she was caring for their infant child, Ms. Delorme stayed in the employer's home until they returned from work in the evening. Then she packed her bags and left.

In addition to overtime pay, her former employers owe Ms. Delorme two weeks' pay and four per cent vacation pay which is now part of her claim with the Ministry of Labour.

"I believe in fairness", said Mary Jo Delorme to her fellow-domestics, "I did the work and I deserve to get my pay".

## WILL YOU BE NEXT?

Mary Jo Delorme is standing up for her rights. She is claiming roughly two thousand dollars from her former employers and has a good chance of winning.

We know there are thousands of domestic workers who are in the same position as Mary Jo Delorme. You work hard and keep your end of the bargain but your employer does not pay you the overtime you are owed. Then you quit or you are fired and you go on to your next job.

Now that the law has changed you can claim the money you have rightfully earned. The INTERCEDE Service Unit can help you file a claim with the Employment Standards Branch of the Ministry of Labour. Call our counsellors at:

591-1625  
591-7036

Our assistance is free and confidential.

## COCO'S CALENDAR

Recent happenings...

- \* on April 12 INTERCEDE and LEAF held a meeting to discuss the new overtime affidavits
- \* on April 15 Daphne Clarke of Windsor Women Working with Immigrant Women visited our office
- \* on April 16 I attended the Induction Ball of a new Filipino organization, Reach Out
- \* on April 16 INTERCEDE attended a fundraising dinner hosted by LEAF to honour feminist philanthropist Nancy Jackman

Coming up soon...

- \* the SERVICE UNIT will be open on Saturday, April 30, 10am - 2pm. Call 591-1625 or 591-7036 for an appointment or just drop in!
- \* INTERCEDE's next monthly meeting is set for Sunday, May 1, 3pm. All domestic workers welcome!

...AND CONGRATULATIONS!

- \* to our new landed immigrants MARLENE RAMIREZ, LINDA AVELINO, & LEONORA BALLENA, from the Philippines; and IONEY SHIRLEY, from the Caribbean
- \* Happy Birthday to INTERCEDE volunteer MAGDA AGUADA and to LEONORA BALLENA...many happy returns!
- \* our deepest sympathies to AMELIA CRUZ on the death of her father

If you have any juicy gossip for the Calendar call me at 591-1625!

That's all for this month!

- Columbia Diaz

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Last month we dealt with how to avoid a negative job history when you are 'assessed' under the Foreign Domestic Program. This month we have some tips on language and skills upgrading.

Fluency in English is being stressed by Immigration more than in the past. If English is not your native tongue, you should look into English as a Second Language courses which are offered by Boards of Education and many community-based groups.

Skills upgrading is not a strict requirement for landed status. It is something you should do to update or improve your skills in the field you wish to work in after you are landed. You should always try to build on the skills and work history you already have.

For example, if you plan to stay in domestic work, you can upgrade your cooking skills by taking a cake-decorating course, or upgrade your emergency skills by taking a first aid in the home course.

Or, if you were a nurse or legal secretary back home, you can take a refresher course here in order to compete with recent graduates.

Fianlly, here are a few general tips:

- \* if you are taking a credit course, request a letter from the school clearly stating the name of the course & the fact that it is for credit
- \* present this letter to Immigration to get a student permit (this is mandatory!)
- \* once you start a credit course try not to drop out or fail as this can work against you when assessed
- \* always keep your receipts from courses for income tax purposes

- Joan Ann Gravesande

## GOOD NEWS FOR SRI LANKAN DOMESTIC!

In our last issue we told the story of Sally Beebee, a foreign domestic worker from Sri Lanka who fled her employers' home after being physically assaulted. For the past month Ms. Beebee has been staying in an emergency shelter while INTERCEDE and the Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre help her look for another job, file a claim for back pay, and sort out her immigration status.

At our last monthly meeting on April 10, INTERCEDE Co-ordinator Judith Ramirez spoke about Sally Beebee's plight and asked everyone present to contribute to an emergency fund. Her fellow-domestics gave generously and two hundred dollars was raised to help her with immediate expenses. Several people also donated clothing.

We are happy to report that Canada Immigration has just placed Ms. Beebee under the Foreign Domestic Program. Now she can remain in Canada on her own steam and does not have to remain tied to her former employer's work permit. She is scheduled to undergo her first assessment this coming July.

We are also happy to report that Ms. Beebee has not only found a new job but has also enrolled in an English as a Second Language class and a nurses' aid course. Her claim for back pay has now been filed with the Ministry of Labour and she is currently awaiting their decision.

Sally Beebee is well on her way to making a new life for herself here in Canada. She has a husband and two children back home in Sri Lanka and she looks forward to the day they will be re-united.

INTERCEDE thanks all those who contributed to the emergency fund. Congratulations and good luck to you, Sally!

## 'HOW TO ORGANIZE FOR CHANGE'

INTERCEDE has just issued its final report on two training workshops for immigrant and visible minority women. Held at the Brownstone Hotel in Toronto, the aim of the workshops was to provide a collective training experience on how to lobby effectively from the grass roots.

The workshops were organized in response to requests from groups across Canada. Among those who sent participants were:

Alberta Network of Immigrant Women  
Household Worker Support Centre Association of Alberta  
Household Worker's Association of Montreal  
Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba  
National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women  
Ottawa-Carleton Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO)  
Vancouver Society of Immigrant Women  
West Coast Domestic Workers' Association  
Windsor Urban Alliance on Race Relations (Women's Committee)  
Windsor Women Working with Immigrant Women  
Fredericton Women Working with Immigrant Women

The first workshop focused on INTERCEDE's experience in lobbying both federal and provincial governments; mobilizing a grass roots constituency; working with allies in the community; and developing successful media strategies.

The second workshop focused on the participant's own lobbying experience; in-depth treatment of media strategies; and organizational development, especially conflict-resolution.

INTERCEDE Co-ordinator Judith Ramirez was the facilitator for both workshops. Other resource people included Beverley Bowen, of the Globe & Mail; Maria Minna, President of COSTI-IIAS;

'HOW TO ORGANIZE FOR CHANGE' con't

and former domestics Eulene Boyce, Past President of INTERCEDE; Columbia Diaz, Service Unit counsellor; and Melita Carbungco, plaintiff in the overtime court case.

Feedback from workshop participants was very positive. In answer to the question, 'What did you personally gain from this workshop?', here are some of the replies:

"Lots of stimulating discussion, a sense of mutual support, a greater sense of our own power"

"Better insight into what is involved in lobbying and a better sense of how to co-ordinate such an effort"

" That to influence government it means a systematic approach with definite skills"

"A greater awareness of the power of organizing"

INTERCEDE thanks all the participants and resource people for their invaluable contribution to the workshops' success. We also thank the Secretary of State for funding this project.

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WELCOME TO MARTHA RANS,  
our new Charter Worker !!

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INCOME TAX REMINDER!

The dealine for filing your income tax return is April 30, 1988.

If you have not filled in your return yet and you need assistance, call your local library. Many offer free help; all you need to do is call for an appointment.

You can also call the INTERCEDE Service Unit and we will refer you to the group or legal clinic nearest you.

Remember to take in your T-4's and receipts from school, etc. to the person who is filling in your income tax return.

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

Place: Cecil Community Centre  
58 Cecil Street  
Toronto, Ontario

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

Telephone: (416) 591-1625  
591-7036

Free and confidential counselling to all domestic workers on immigration, employment, human rights and emergency social services. A free legal clinic is also held at our monthly meetings.

Call us today for an appointment!

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c/o INTERCEDE  
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Toronto, Ontario  
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Place  
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First Class

NEXT MONTHLY MEETING ON MAY 1!