

Domestics' Cross-Cultural News

monthly newsletter of the International Coalition to End Domestic's Exploitation

DECEMBER 1984

THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF LANDING POLICY

On November 18, 1984, a special forum was held at Saint Basil's Church celebrating the third anniversary of the policy allowing foreign domestics to become landed in Canada. Organized by the Kababayan Community Centre, in co-operation with the Silayan Community Centre, the forum drew many Filipina domestics who have come to Canada since the new policy was introduced in November, 1981.

In welcoming the crowd, Carmencita Hernandez, of the Kababayan Community Centre, underscored the need for domestic workers to know their own history of struggle in order to go forward.

A panel addressing the question "Where do we go from here?" focussed on the link between the past and the present. INTERCEDE Co-ordinator Judith Ramirez warned that "we cannot rest on our laurels because policies come and go with changes in ministers and governments". She emphasized the need to be vigilant and ready to fight to keep past gains. She expressed concern that INTERCEDE has had no response to its request to meet with new Immigration Minister Flora MacDonald to "determine where the Mulroney Government stands on the rights of foreign domestic workers".

Linda Lising, President of the Philippine-Canadian Ladies Circle, told the crowd of how she arrived in Canada in November, 1981, and immediately decided to join the INTERCEDE demonstration for landed status a few days later. "I was a little scared", she said, "but I decided then and there that I had to fight for my rights".

Columbia Tarape-Diaz, a counsellor at the INTERCEDE Service Unit, spoke about the many practical problems which domestics still face as they seek to qualify for landing. She emphasized the rights of every domestic worker to receive free

and confidential counselling, a sentiment echoed by Max Comia, of the Silayan Community Centre, and Liling Cortez, Co-ordinator of Kababayan Community Centre.

A spirited "open-mike" session followed the panel presentations as many domestics took the floor to share their experiences. The afternoon's activities ended with everyone in laughter at a skit performed by Elvira Boncato and Rosalinda Caneda about a typical day in the life of a domestic worker!

SERVICE UNIT NEEDS YOUR HELP!

Many supporters of INTERCEDE's work are unaware of the fact that our Service Unit is only funded for one year, until the end of February, 1985.

Last March, we received a special grant from former Immigration Minister John Roberts, through the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP). The Minister arranged the grant personally because ISAP only funds services for newcomers who are landed, not those on temporary status. In other words, foreign domestics fall outside the funding criteria, and services to them are not eligible for financial support!

INTERCEDE is currently preparing a special report on the Service Unit for submission to the new Immigration Minister Flora MacDonald. In it we evaluate our success in meeting our stated objectives and we appeal to the new government for continued funding.

INTERCEDE also appeals to all its friends to write letters of support which we will attach to the report. The Minister needs to hear from the community directly. If you want the Service Unit to continue, please write a letter and send it to us no later than JANUARY 15, 1985. Thank you for your support!

COCO'S CALENDAR

Recent happenings...

- * on November 18 the Kababayan and Silayan community centres sponsored a well-attended forum for domestics at Saint Basil's
- * on November 19 INTERCEDE attended a meeting called by Dan Heap, MP (Spadina) to inform the community of his dealings with the new government on immigration matters
- * on November 29 an excellent article appeared on the front page of SHARE on Melrose Morgan and her fight to be landed

Coming up soon...

- * INTERCEDE monthly members meeting on December 2, 2 - 5pm, at 58 Cecil Street. This is also our Christmas Social and everyone is welcome!
- * the Philippine-Canadian Ladies Circle is hosting a Christmas Party on Saturday, December 15, at ILDICOS DINNER LOUNGE. Tickets are \$7 per person. For information call Linda Lising at 533-4290
- * CARDING, a play by the Filipino-Canadian Cultural Workshop, is at Harbord Collegiate on November 30 and December 2 at 7:30pm. Tickets are \$3 per person

AND CONGRATULATIONS...

- * to Carmelita Panopio on her forthcoming marriage...our sincere best wishes!
- * to Guia Rada who is celebrating a birthday this month...many happy returns!
- * and to our new landed immigrants AVRIL EDWARDS (West Indies) and AURORA TAMONDONG (Philippines)...welcome aboard!
- * Bon Voyage to all who are going home to the Caribbean, the Philippines, and elsewhere for the holiday season
- * and a very MERRY CHRISTMAS to all our members...see you next year!

- Columbia Tarape-Diaz

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

If you are a foreign domestic on a temporary work permit, and you are authorized to live-out, your employer cannot deduct room and board from your pay. The law allows for a maximum deduction of \$238 per month from a domestic's pay if she is living in with her employer.

Recently INTERCEDE received a complaint from a domestic worker who lived out with the approval of Immigration, but whose employer was deducting room and board every month. We took the case to the Employment Standards Branch of the Ontario Department of Labour and, following their investigation, the employer was ordered to pay back all the money he had illegally deducted!

If you are in a similar situation or know of someone who is, take action! Call the INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT at (416) 929-3240 and we will assist you in filing a complaint.

- Desiree Hipplewith

IMPORTANT REMINDER!

If you are planning to take upgrading courses you must get a student permit from your local Canada Immigration Centre. This is a requirement under the landed status policy, so please don't go to school without one!

MELROSE MORGAN AWAITS MINISTERS DECISION

Since our report last month, INTERCEDE has spoken to Dennison Moore, Political Advisor to Immigration Minister Flora MacDonald, about Mrs. Melrose Morgan.

Mrs. Morgan was refused landing under the Foreign Domestics Program, and we appealed to former Immigration Minister John Roberts to review the case personally. He promised to re-assess Mrs. Morgan if she completed upgrading, but failed to do so before leaving office.

Following the election, INTERCEDE appealed to new Immigration Minister Flora MacDonald to grant Mrs. Morgan the promised re-assessment. While she awaits the Minister's decision, Melrose Morgan is in Canada illegally, unable to work.

Newsletter Committee:

Columbia Tarape-Diaz, Desiree Hipplewith,
Judith Ramirez, Pamela Skeete, Sonia Thomas,
Daphne Tucker

BOOK REVIEW

"Cry of the Illegal Immigrant"
by Joyce Fraser
Williams-Wallace Publishers

Joyce Fraser migrated to Canada from Guyana in 1970. She arrived here with a head full of dreams which only materialized after three years of struggle for freedom and self-sufficiency.

Her book, "Cry of the Illegal Immigrant", depicts the typical life of an illegal in Canada with its daily battles for survival.

Joyce came to Canada illegally, and her vision of North America turned out to be completely different from what she experienced once she got here. She left Guyana confident that Canada would be a place where she could better her life and eventually have a comfortable and secure existence.

She left her husband and children behind hoping that they would one day be a family again. But this dream was shattered when she divorced her husband because he was being unfair to her as she made sacrifices for the betterment of the family.

She worked in different homes as a domestic, and because she was an illegal, her hours were very long and the pay was terribly low. She changed from job to job hoping to find something more decent. Then she heard that many illegals were being hired as factory workers, so she decided to do factory work.

One day her boss came over to a group of workers and, to her amazement, asked them if they were all landed. Fearful of getting caught, they all lied and said "yes". But Joyce followed him to his office and told him she was illegal, only to find out that the immigration authorities were in the building checking up on everyone. She ran from his office shouting "immigration", and the entire building was evacuated in minutes. Some people were caught as they fled, but Joyce jumped fences and escaped to safety.

She continued to work under assumed names, but had to keep changing jobs to avoid being found out. During this period she resorted to organizing social gatherings and selling booze to other illegals in or-

der to make enough money to keep her going.

Then she heard of another way to "beat the immigration system", which was to cross the Buffalo border into the USA. She hesitated at first because she was terrified of getting caught. But eventually she was talked into it by a friend who arranged border crossings for a living.

She entered the USA and stayed there for a brief period before deciding she didn't want to live there for the rest of her life. She returned to Canada for an immigration hearing, having turned herself in voluntarily. After many appeals on her behalf, she was finally landed in 1973.

Despite her struggles with immigration authorities, the loneliness, humiliation, and the fear of getting caught, Joyce kept busy and always believed that her dreams for a better life would materialize one day.

They did. Joyce is now happily re-married, her children have joined her, she is a Canadian citizen, and she own a successful business, J.R. Fraser Fashions.

- Desiree Hipplewith

JOIN INTERCEDE

\$5 Year

SUPPORT THE GROUP THAT SUPPORTS YOU!!

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS TO ALL OUR FRIENDS...
and a special thank you for your support
in 1984 to:

- * YWCA's Social Action Committee
- * Osgoode Hall Law Schools CLASP
- * Toronto Rape Crises Centre
- * PLURA
- * Jean Augustine
- * William Doyle-Marshall
- * Jules Elder
- * Mayor Art Eggleton
- * Harry Gairey
- * Dan Heap
- * Carmencita Hernandez
- * Massi Lombardi
- * Ceta Ramkhalawansingh

A CHRISTMAS APPEAL!

Pilar de Torres is a thirty-eight year old domestic worker, from the Philippines, who has been in Canada for only four months.

She was recently diagnosed as having breast cancer and her condition is deteriorating very rapidly.

At the end of October, Pilar underwent chemotherapy treatment with Dr. Robert H. Wilkinson of North York General Hospital. Since then she has developed severe pain and her doctor has advised her that she can no longer work. He has urged her to return home as soon as possible to be with her family and friends.

Because Pilar has only been in Canada for four months, she has virtually no savings. Groups in the Filipino community have launched a public appeal to raise money for Pilar's airfare back to the Philippines. She would like to be with her loved ones for Christmas.

The Philippine-Canadian Ladies Circle has already raised \$300. INTERCEDE members are taking a collection at the December 2 Christmas Social. We urge all our friends in the community to donate as much as you can afford.

Please send your cheques and money orders marked "Pilar" to:

INTERCEDE
348 College Street
Toronto, Ontario M5T 1S4

-Columbia Tarape-Diaz

OTHER GROUPS HELPING DOMESTICS IN ONTARIO

Ottawa

Ottawa-Carleton Immigrant Services Assoc.
Ottawa Household Workers Association
425 rue Gloucester Street
Ottawa, Ontario Tel. (613) 238-4256

London

Cross Cultural Learner Centre
533 Clarence Street
London, Ontario Tel. (519) 679-6281

Windsor

Windsor Women Working With Immigrant Women
356 Pine Street
Windsor, Ontario Tel. (519) 253-8783

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

348 College Street, 2nd Floor
Toronto, Ontario

MONDAY - FRIDAY 9:30am - 4:30pm

Tel. (416) 929-3240

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

All INTERCEDE services are confidential and free of charge.

MARK THIS DATE!

INTERCEDE's next monthly members meeting is set for Sunday, January 6, 2 - 5pm, at the Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil Street.

DOMESTICS CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS
c/o INTERCEDE
348 College Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5T 1S4

Place
Stamp

First Class