

# Domestics' Cross-Cultural News

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

DECEMBER 1985

## WALTER MACLEAN MEETS WITH INTERCEDE

On Friday, December 6, new Minister of Immigration Walter MacLean met with INTERCEDE Co-ordinator Judith Ramirez, at the Chelsea Inn, in Toronto. The hour-long meeting focused on the future of the highly-successful Service Unit, operated by INTERCEDE since March 1984.

The Service Unit assists foreign domestic workers who are seeking landed status in Canada. It works closely with lawyers, immigration officials and members of the community to ensure that all domestics get a fair chance under the Foreign Domestic Program.

Ms. Ramirez told Mr. MacLean that the current grant for the Unit runs out in February 1986, and that INTERCEDE has had no response to its request for re-newed funding. The Minister said he had heard "excellent reports" about INTERCEDE's work, and his special assistant Dennison Moore said that "everyone in government agrees that the Service Unit should continue".

In the past two years, the Service Unit has received "special grants" directly from Ministers of Immigration John Roberts (1984) and Flora MacDonald (1985), through the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP).

INTERCEDE has called for a long-overdue change in ISAP's funding criteria to allow services to non-landed immigrants, such as foreign domestic workers, to be eligible for direct ISAP grants.

Walter MacLean said that "changes in funding criteria sound reasonable, and I'm not sure why it wasn't done long ago". Ms. Ramirez told the Minister that as long as foreign domestics are present in Canada in record numbers (15,765 in 1984!), the CEIC has a responsibility to provide community-based assistance and advocacy services. Mr. MacLean replied that he "agreed completely" and said he would discuss it with senior staff in Ottawa the following week.

Since that time, INTERCEDE has received a telephone call from the Minister's assistant Dennison Moore assuring us that a change in ISAP funding criteria is now imminent. Whether by "special grant" or by direct ISAP funding, we are now more confident that, with the support of the new Minister of Immigration, the Service Unit will continue serving domestic workers in the new year!

## SERVICE UNIT CASES WAY UP!

A special report on the Service Unit was recently prepared which compares the first three quarters of the current year (March to November 1985), to the same period last year. The news is that there is a dramatic increase in the overall number of cases: 1,326 in 1985 as compared to 833 in 1984 - an increase of 59%!

The total number of "new cases" was up to 711 from 587 last year - an increase of 21%. Also, the total number of domestic workers served rose by 12%.

Analysis of Service Unit statistics shows that we are very much on target

COCO'S CALENDAR

Recent happenings...

- \* on November 22 INTERCEDE attend-  
ed a CEIC seminar on "Employment  
Equity for Racial Minorities"
- \* on December 5 Judith Ramirez at-  
tended a meeting/reception for  
Sylvia Gold of the Advisory Coun-  
cil on the Status of Women hosted  
by Black educator Jean Augustine
- \* on December 10 INTERCEDE attended  
an International Human Rights Day  
luncheon hosted by the Minister of  
Multiculturalism Otto Jelinek

Coming up soon...

- \* INTERCEDE's next monthly meeting  
is set for SUNDAY, JANUARY 5,  
3 - 5PM, at the Cecil Centre, 58  
Cecil Street, Toronto
- \* on December 21 the Philippine-Can-  
adian Ladies Circle will hold its  
annual CHRISTMAS PARTY at the  
East York Community Centre. For  
information call Linda at 921-1697

AND CONGRATULATIONS..!

- \* to MELITA SISON...a belated happy  
birthday
- \* to BRIGIDA VILLAREAL who is enga-  
ged to be married
- \* to CELY MISSION and JOE DICION for  
their recent wedding
- \* and to our new landed immigrants:  
ANNETTE CARTER, from the West In-  
dies; ACELA MARQUES, JUN & JENNY  
TORRES, FLORIE BANG-ASAN, and SE-  
GUNDINA TIMBOL, from the Philip-  
pines...welcome one and all!

Tune in again next year!

- Columbia Diaz

A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU & YOURS

SERVICE UNIT...con't

in meeting our stated objectives. In  
1985, 86% of our cases were foreign  
domestic workers; 76% were women from  
Third World countries; and 90% sought  
assistance with immigration-related  
problems.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

After three months of employment, a  
domestic worker is entitled to seven  
statutory holidays each year. These  
are: New Year's Day, Good Friday, Vic-  
toria Day, Dominion Day, Labour Day,  
Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

Your employer may - but only with your  
agreement - substitute another working  
day for the holiday. However, this  
substitute day shall not be later than  
your next annual vacation.

If the holiday falls on a non-working  
day or in a vacation period, your  
employer must designate a working day  
as the holiday or, with your agreement,  
give you an additional day's pay du-  
ring the pay period in which the holi-  
day falls.

Remember, then, you are entitled to  
CHRISTMAS DAY and NEW YEAR'S DAY off  
work. Have a happy holiday!

For more information contact:

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT (416) 977-3467

- Desiree Hipplewith

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JOIN INTERCEDE

\$5 Year

SUPPORT THE GROUP THAT SUPPORTS YOU

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

## QUEEN'S PARK IS STALLING!

When INTERCEDE met with Minister of Labour Bill Wrye last August, we were encouraged by his interest and open-minded approach to making changes in the labour laws affecting domestic workers. The Minister and his special assistant Mordechai Ben-Dat said that changes in the Employment Standards Act would be forthcoming by the end of December.

Since that time, INTERCEDE has been lobbying government officials and building community support for our recommendations. Chief among these is that the hours of work for live-in domestics be regulated.

We have received support from a wide cross-section of the community including: Ian Scott, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, the Ontario Federation of Labour, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, the YWCA, the Metro Labour Council, the Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues, the Mayor's Committee on Community and Race Relations, etc.

In addition, hundreds of domestics and their friends have signed an "open letter" to the Minister of Labour urging him to "...end the sexism and racism now sanctioned by Ontario law".

In a meeting with Mordechai Ben-Dat on December 11, INTERCEDE was told that the expected changes would not be made by the end of this year but "sometime next spring", because "other issues are more pressing"! In other words, domestic workers have been relegated to the bottom of the Liberals' list of priorities.

Members of the INTERCEDE Executive Committee have communicated to the Minister's office our frustration at this display of insensitivity. Concerned individuals and groups have also been contacting the Minister to protest the delay and urge

that domestic workers' rights be put high on the agenda in the new year.

## NDP GOES TO BAT FOR DOMESTICS!

On November 18 NDP Labour Critic Bob MacKenzie called on the Liberal Government to end the exploitation of domestic workers. He rose in the Legislature at Queen's Park to ask Ian Scott, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, when the Employment Standards Act would be amended to protect live-in domestics from unpaid overtime.

Mr. MacKenzie presented example, provided by INTERCEDE, of domestics working 60 - 80 hour work-weeks for less than \$2.00 per hour.

Mr. Scott responded by saying that he had met with INTERCEDE recently and knew of our concerns. When Mr. MacKenzie pressed him about "...a timeframe in which we can expect some relief in this current session before Christmas...", Ian Scott passed the buck to the absent Minister of Labour Bill Wrye, by saying: "That is not my area of responsibility... I will relay to the Minister again the fact that the question was asked".

In a press release immediately afterwards, the NDP took Ian Scott to task by saying "Ontario's labour laws discriminate against domestic workers and virtually all domestics are women. Stopping the exploitation of domestics is not just a labour issue. It's also a women's issue. An issue of fairness".

The NDP has been pressing for domestic workers' rights at Queen's Park for many years, and we are counting on their continued support to win overtime pay for live-in domestics.

## SERVICE UNIT CLOSING FOR HOLIDAYS

We will be closing from Tuesday, December 24, to Wednesday, January 1. We will re-open bright and early on Thursday, January 2. A very happy holiday to all our clients and friends!

MEET INTERCEDE'S VICE-PRESIDENTS!

The INTERCEDE Steering Committee has recently elected a five-person Executive Committee, which includes two vice-presidents, Columbia Diaz and Avril Higginson.

Columbia "Coco" Diaz was born and educated in the Philippines. She completed a two-year pre-nursing program at the University of Baquio; a Bachelor of Arts program at Baquio Colleges Foundation; and a Social Work program at St. Louise University, in Baquio.

From 1974 to 1979 Ms. Diaz worked for the Ministry of Social Services as a youth development worker. Her responsibilities included working with school drop-outs, young offenders, and students from low-income families.

In 1979 Ms. Diaz left the Philippines to work as a companion in Spain. The following year she came to Canada to work in the domestic field. She became a landed immigrant in 1981.

Since 1980 Columbia Diaz has been an active member of INTERCEDE. In 1981 she played a critical role in organizing Filipina domestics in support of landed status.

Since gaining permanent residence she has worked at the Toronto General Hospital and at the INTERCEDE Service Unit where she is a full-time counsellor. Ms. Diaz is married and the proud mother of twin boys.

Avril Higginson was born in Liverpool, England. She left school at the age of 15 but continued to attend night school. She has taken courses in a wide variety of subjects, including: typing, shorthand, bookkeeping, car maintenance, french, secretarial skills, etc.

Ms. Higginson worked for five years as a legal secretary for a firm in Liverpool, before coming to Canada in 1976. For the next four years she divided her time between Canada and the UK, working and studying in both countries.

In 1981 she decided to make Canada her permanent home, and in 1983 she was granted landed immigrant status. A year later she found employment as a legal secretary with a firm in Toronto. She plans to continue in that field.

Avril Higginson has been actively involved in INTERCEDE since 1981. She helped rally nannies from the UK in the "landed status campaign". As she looks back she has this to say:

"...it was INTERCEDE who helped me get my landed and I am extremely grateful for the help they have given, not just to me but to a lot of other women... INTERCEDE has done a lot and will do a lot more to help domestic workers fight for their cause. We just all have to stay together in the fight".

Ms. Higginson is a member of the Personnel Sub-committee of the Steering Committee.

Next month meet INTERCEDE's President, Eulene Boyce, a former domestic worker from Barbados.

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DOMESTICS CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS  
c/o INTERCEDE  
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Place  
Stamp  
Here

First Class