

# Domestics' Cross-Cultural News

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

FEBRUARY 1986

## NEW IMMIGRATION FEES UNFAIR

Beginning February 3, 1986, the federal government is charging fees for processing immigration documents. A request for permanent residence now costs \$125.00; an employment authorization is \$50.00; a request to extend a visitor's visa beyond 90 days is \$50.00; and a request to verify landing or amend landing record is \$25.00.

Short-term visitors to Canada and refugees are excluded from paying these fees, but foreign domestic workers are required to pay.

The Canadian Bar Association is opposed to the imposition of processing fees because they are not linked in any way to improved services. "If paying the fee meant that you could go into an immigration office at 8:00am and be served at 8:30 rather than at 4:00pm, then most people would probably be glad to pay" says immigration lawyer Barbara Jackman. However, service is not only not improving, "it is steadily deteriorating", according to the Association.

Domestic workers couldn't agree more. At a recent INTERCEDE meeting where the new fees were announced, the reaction was overwhelmingly negative. A domestic from the Philippines said: "If your employer lets you go because she decides to stay home or whatever, why should you have to pay out \$50 for a new work permit?" Another domestic from the Caribbean, added: "We're already under pressure to save money, go to school, which costs a lot, and now everytime we go to Immigration

we come out poorer".

INTERCEDE is completely opposed to the new processing fees, especially for foreign domestic workers. In spite of the recent gains, foreign domestics in Canada are still at the bottom of the wage scale. The rate of pay required by the Immigration Commission in Ontario is only \$9,930 per year - a mere 9.3% above the minimum wage.

The government's brochure states that "the new fees will not cause hardship for most immigrants and visitors". That may be so, but they will certainly be onerous for the majority of foreign domestics who are already under the gun due to low wages.

INTERCEDE calls on the Immigration Commission to re-examine its new policy and, at the very least, exempt foreign domestics from having to pay the fees.

## POSITION AVAILABLE

The INTERCEDE Service Unit is looking for a full-time counsellor to work with domestics from the Caribbean. The successful applicant will have the following minimal qualifications:

- experience as a foreign domestic in Canada
- previous employment in an office
- post-secondary school diploma
- strong inter-personal skills
- familiarity with domestics' rights issues

Please submit a written resume by Friday, March 14, to the Hiring Committee, c/o INTERCEDE, 58 Cecil St., Toronto, Ontario M5T 1N6.

COCO'S CALENDAR

Recent happenings...

- \* on January 29 INTERCEDE attended a press conference called by the ONTARIO COALITION OF VISIBLE-MINORITY WOMEN
- \* on February 3 Judith Ramirez participated in a meeting with Multiculturalism Minister Otto Jelinek sponsored by the URBAN ALLIANCE ON RACE RELATIONS
- \* on February 12 INTERCEDE met with the WOMEN'S LEGAL EDUCATION & ACTION FUND to discuss mounting a Charter case on domestics' rights

Coming up soon...

- \* INTERCEDE's next monthly meeting is set for SUNDAY, MARCH 2, 3-5PM at 58 Cecil Street. Our yearly INCOME TAX CLINIC will be held - free of charge - so remember to bring you T-4 slips! All domestic workers are welcome.
- \* on February 22 INTERCEDE will attend a dinner in honour of new race relations commissioner Dan McIntyre sponsored by the AFRO-CANADIAN CONGRESS

AND CONGRATULATIONS!

- \* to Barbara Jackman who recently gave birth to a baby girl named SARAH
- \* to Evelyn and Lorne Cohen for the birth of a healthy baby boy
- \* Happy Birthday to Rose Pierre, Brian & Ponia Williams, Lilia Rodillado, and Iluminada Suopan!
- \* our warmest best wishes to Steering Committee member Barbara Donaldson who just got landed status

Tune in again next month!

- Columbia Diaz

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

If you are a domestic worker your employer is required by law to issue you a T-4 slip with your earnings and deductions for 1985 by the end of February 1986.

When you receive your T-4 you should make sure that the information outlined on the slip is correct. If it is not, raise it with your employer before accepting the T-4.

If you have been supporting any dependents outside Canada, you have a right to claim for the support of your spouse or dependent children provided you have receipts to prove it. Valid receipts include those issued from post offices, bank money orders, cancelled cheques, etc.

A one-page form titled "Declaration of Support of Non-resident Dependent Spouse and Children" must be submitted along with your income tax return. These forms will be available at INTERCEDE's INCOME TAX CLINIC on March 2.

For further information contact:

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT (416) 977-3467  
 REVENUE CANADA (416) 869-1500

- 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

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THE SERVICE UNIT IS LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS...GIVE US A CALL AT 977-4432 !!

## GOING TO COURT FOR DOMESTICS

The Women's Legal Education and Action Fund has recently decided to challenge the injustices to live-in domestic workers under the Ontario labour laws. Because the overwhelming majority of domestic workers are women, the provisions in the Employment Standards Act which exclude them from 'hours of work and overtime' protection are considered by LEAF to be discriminatory under the Charter of Rights.

LEAF is a national non-profit organization whose objective is to research legal issues affecting women, and work closely with other organizations who champion historically disadvantaged groups such as visible minorities, native people, people with disabilities, and people facing economic disadvantage.

The Charter contains two sections of special importance to women. Section 15(1) forbids discrimination based on sex (and other grounds) in the law and its application. Section 28 guarantees the rights and freedoms of the Charter "equally to male and female persons".

LEAF's role is to help organizations like INTERCEDE plan a legal strategy for taking a case to court, to choose the cases most likely to win, and to follow up victories with similar cases that will reinforce important legal principles as they are established.

In a meeting on February 12, INTERCEDE discussed the details of a Charter challenge to the labour law with LEAF litigation director Gwen Brodsky. Also present at the meeting was Prof. Robert Sharpe, of the University of Toronto's 'Constitutional Litigation Programme', who has been retained by LEAF to fight this case.

At a time when Queen's Park is moving at a snail's pace to end the

exploitation of live-in domestic workers, INTERCEDE is confident that this new initiative will signal the community's determination to get justice under the labour laws of this province.

## NO ACTION AT QUEEN'S PARK

Speaking of injustice, when the Legislature closed down on February 12 for a two-month recess, the Liberal Government had taken no action whatsoever on domestics' rights.

Since the House resumed sitting on January 6, Labour Minister Bill Wrye had been under pressure by the opposition parties to take immediate action. INTERCEDE had been promised changes in the Employment Standards Act by the end of 1985, but all we have gotten so far is a lot of vague assurances that "we are moving as fast as we can".

The latest promise made by the Minister, through his senior policy advisor Mordechai Ben-Dat, is that "all the Employment Standards issues will be a definite priority in the next session of the House".

The Legislature re-convenes on April 22 and INTERCEDE will re-double its efforts to get action to end the long-standing exploitation of domestics in Ontario.

## MONEY FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The Women's Legal Education and Action Fund needs your support. Over the next five years the organization needs to raise \$10 million, most of which will go toward court cases such as INTERCEDE's.

It is likely that most of the cases LEAF takes will go all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada, a long and expensive legal journey.

Support equal rights for women. Make a donation to LEAF today. LEAF, P.O. Box 6989 Station A, Toronto, Ont. M5W 1X7

MEET INTERCEDE'S SECRETARY!

When the Steering Committee recently elected its first Executive Committee, the person selected to fill the post of 'secretary' was law student Cathy Gilbert. She brings to her new responsibilities a real knowledge of the problems confronting foreign domestics and an impressive record of community-based volunteer work.

Ms. Gilbert is a native Torontonian who graduated from the University of Toronto with a B.A. in Political Science. In 1983 she entered Osgoode Law School and is currently in her graduating year. She was recently hired by the law firm Holden, Murdock and Finlay for her articling year.

While in law school, Ms. Gilbert has been active in the Community Legal Aid Services Program (CLASP), achieving the position of 'division leader'. She has also worked with the Parkdale Community Legal Services, in downtown Toronto.

In 1983 Ms. Gilbert volunteered in INTERCEDE's monthly legal clinic and, after attending for the first time, decided to become actively involved. "I was very struck by the strength and energy of the members in standing up for their rights", she recalls. The following year she was elected to the Steering Committee.

While in university, Ms. Gilbert was a "Big Sister" and a volunteer tutor at Central Neighborhood House, in Regent Park. She has also done volunteer work with the Bay Centre for Birth Control.

In her spare time (!) Ms. Gilbert takes classes in Tai Chi, a form of marshall arts, and she has also completed several courses in Wen Do (women's self-defense).

In 1984 Cathy Gilbert married her high-school sweetheart, Rohan Walters, a native of Kingston, Jamaica, who is currently studying architecture at the University of Waterloo.

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

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

Location: Cecil Community Centre  
58 Cecil Street  
Toronto, Ontario M5T 1N6  
(one block south of College St. just east of Spadina)

Telephone: (416) 977-3467

All our services are confidential and free of charge.

Please Note:

The Service Unit will be open SATURDAY, MARCH 1, 11:00am - 2:00pm. Please call for an appointment!

RETURN TO SENDER  
RENOI A L'EXPÉDITEUR  
 Unclaimed  
Non réclamé  
 No such address  
Adresse inconnue

NEXT MONTHLY MEETING SUNDAY MARCH 2!

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

First Class