

# DOMESTICS! CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

monthly newsletter of the Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers' Rights

February 1992



(INTERCEDE)

## DOMESTIC WORKERS TURN JANUARY 5 MEETING INTO MARCH AGAINST TEMPORARY STATUS

"FDM for better not for worse!" "Good enough to work, good enough to stay!" "Immigrant status for foreign domestic workers NOW!"

Domestic workers cried these slogans as about 300 of them turned their monthly meeting, January 5, into a march on Tory Headquarters in Richmond Street.

The protest was sparked by reports that the Federal Immigration Ministry is thinking of eliminating the Foreign Domestic Movement (FDM) program and going back to a temporary work scheme.

Even if Immigration has denied that the FDM is ended and officials have not confirmed any changes to INTERCEDE, most of the women workers felt it necessary to protest any regressive action by the Ministry.

Before marching out of their meeting at Cecil Community Centre, they signed letters to Immigration Minister Bernard Valcourt saying that a temporary program would heap more abuses and threats on them and that their "work deserves proper value".

Pura Velasco, current president of INTERCEDE, encouraged the members to do more than just hope and to "assert that it is our right to be permanent residents since we take care of our employers' children, clean their houses, and provide skilled and much needed service."

Columbia Tarape-Diaz, INTERCEDE counsellor, recalled the fight to change the temporary work program in 1981 that led to the FDM and allowed foreign domestic workers to apply for permanent residence from within Canada. She reminded that everyone needs to work together to stop the federal government from taking away this right that was won by domestic workers themselves 10 years ago.

INTERCEDE members responded to these challenges by deciding to march and declaring: "What do we want? Equal rights - Immigrant rights! When do we want it? TODAY!"

On Sunday February 2, INTERCEDE will hold a public meeting and march to protest any reversal to a temporary worker program.

### Improve Discriminatory Foreign Domestic (FDM) Program Not Go Back to Worse Pre-1981 Temporary Scheme

#### **PUBLIC MEETING AND MARCH**

Sunday, February 2, 1992

2:00 pm Meeting

3:00 pm March

OISE Building, Main Auditorium 252 Bloor Street West  
(St. George Subway, Exit on Bedford)

*1-2 pm - processing of membership applications and renewals for 1992. All members with ID numbers 1 to 1137 who don't renew will be dropped from the list of members.*

On the same day, a march will also be held by Household Workers of Montreal according to Catherine Benoist, coordinator.

Domestic workers organizations in other cities have been actively organizing against any Immigration move to worsen the situation of foreign domestic workers. The West Coast Domestic Workers Association held a protest rally on January 12 in Vancouver and has launched a postcard campaign. On Monday, February 3, domestic workers will demonstrate in front of the Parliament building in Ottawa according to a plan by the Ottawa Multicultural Homemakers Association. In Alberta, the Alberta Domestic Workers Association and Household Workers Association of Alberta together with other groups have held information and planning meetings. In Winnipeg, The Mary Poppins Group Inc. sought the support of the Liberal Party which held a press conference on January 7.

Meanwhile, letters to Valcourt have echoed the protest against a temporary work scheme and called for improving the current FDM program. INTERCEDE received copies of letters from : Member of Parliament Dan Heap, NDP; Catherine Frazee, Ontario Commissioner of Human Rights; Judy Rebeck of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women; Federation Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario; Canadian Chemical and Textile Union; members of the University of Alberta Department of English; Assaulted Women's Helpline; Coalition of Visible Minority

Women; North Bay Immigrant Support Services; Alexandra Dagg of International Ladies Garment Workers Union; Quinte United Immigrant Services; Black Coalition for Aids Prevention; J. Robert Hinchcliffe, Christine A. Tell and Bonnie Wasser.

### LABOUR REFORM MUST BENEFIT WOMEN WORKERS

Women now make up almost half of the paid workforce. But they still earn less than men, many more women than men have only part-time work and visible minority women, including domestic workers and garment home-workers, can be found in the lowest-paid and least regulated jobs.

These are some realities that any reform in Ontario's labour legislation must address.

Together with some hundred women workers, INTERCEDE members joined discussions about proposed changes to the Ontario Labour Relations Act (OLRA) in a one-day workshop last January 11.

We wish to thank the Employment and Immigration Canada (Immigration Settlement and Adaptation Program); Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Women's Program); Ontario Ministry of Citizenship; Ontario Women's Directorate; the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto (Community and Social Services); and the City of Toronto Grants Review Board for their continuing support.

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INTERCEDE Members :	FREE	Non-member Domestic :	\$5.00
Non-Profit Organizations:	FREE	Others	\$10.00

While the women welcomed proposed changes (one is allowing domestic workers to form a union), they felt that the proposals did not go far enough to give women workers, particularly visible minorities, effective organizing and bargaining power.

Women workers need more protection and more effective enforcement of their rights. So even though we need to upgrade the OLRA, upgrading the Employment Standards Act must be a priority, according to Judy Fudge of Parkdale Community Legal Services who chairs the Employment Committee of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC).

The growth of "precarious" employment, more workers having insecure jobs and more women in part-time jobs, increasing number of women in the service sectors - all point to changes needed in the way workers organize, the forms that their "unions" take, and the effective ways they can negotiate or bargain.

INTERCEDE found many things common between domestic workers and home-workers in a workshop together with Alex Dagg of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union : the challenge of organizing unorganized women workers in isolated work situation; defining their "employer" and negotiating with individual employers; barriers resulting from Immigration regulations; lack of mechanisms to enforce legal rights, etc.

Domestic workers and home-workers need legally enforceable mechanisms that will help them to effectively organize for better work conditions and more benefits.

**ORIENTATION MEETING  
FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS  
SPECIALLY NEWCOMERS**

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1992**

**10 AM - 4 PM**

**George Brown College**

**Room 541**

**200 King Street East (King Subway)**

**FREE LUNCH**

**Participants will receive Orientation Kits  
and Certificates after the meeting.**

**Register with Eva 324-8751**

**QUESTION & ANSWER**

**RELEASE LETTERS NO LONGER REQUIRED !**

**Do we still need to get release letters from our employers in order to get a renewal of our employment authorization ?**

INTERCEDE was informed that release letters are no longer required by Canada Immigration or Canada Employment !

**If I lose my job and am not able to find a new employer immediately, will I be paying more than \$75 for renewal of my employment authorization ?**

Immigration will give you up to three months to get a new employer without having to pay another \$75 for your renewal of employment authorization. However, if you don't find an employer after three months, you will be charged \$75 for extension. You may be advised to go to Canada Employment for counselling if you can't find an employer within four to six weeks.

**My employment authorization expires on January 30 and I am changing employers. I am afraid that if there is a long delay and I accept a new job that I will be working illegally?**

If you start working for a new employer before you receive your employment authorization for that employer, you may be considered to be working illegally. Immigration advises that if you are changing employers that you make sure to put on the envelope and cover paper "NEW CONTRACT" so they will process your application quicker.

**Will I get medical care even if my OHIP card is expired ?**

OHIP has advised us that they will extend their coverage of medical care to compensate for effects of the strike by Immigration, but only until the end of December 1991. The Ministry of Health office requires a valid employment authorization, once your card has expired, before they will extend your medical coverage. You should always make sure that you extend your OHIP card before it expires.

**I am continuing my school course but renewal of my student authorization is delayed. Can I go ahead and enrol and continue my course ?**

If you have an open student authorization, you can enrol and continue studying as long as it is the same course and the same school while the renewal of your student authorization is being processed.

**HOW TO CALCULATE YOUR PAY**  
Effective January 1, 1992

	MONTHLY (12/YEAR)	BIWEEKLY (26/year)	WEEKLY (52/year)
<b>GROSS WAGES*</b>	\$1144.00	\$528.00	\$264.00
<b>DEDUCTIONS :</b>			
Room & Board**	320.67	148.00	74.00
Income Tax***	148.40	68.00	33.90
Canada Pension Plan	21.06	9.72	4.86
Unemployment Insurance	34.32	15.84	7.92
<b>NET PAYMENT</b>	<b>\$619.55</b>	<b>\$286.44</b>	<b>\$143.32</b>

Minimum wage in Ontario is currently \$6.00 per hour. Even though your employer / worker agreement or "contract" may have stated your wage at less, your employer must pay you the current legal minimum wage.

Gross wages are based on a 44 hour week with no overtime. If you work more than 44 hours in a week, you should get overtime pay, or, if you agree, paid time off instead. Overtime pay is "time-and-a-half" your regular hourly wage. If you are paid the minimum wage of \$6.00 per hour, your overtime pay is \$9.00 per hour. You may or may not agree to take paid "time-and-a-half" off instead. For example, if you worked ten hours overtime, you should get 15 hours off with pay within the next 12 weeks.

The maximum deduction for board is \$46.20 per week (\$2.20 per meal). No deduction is allowed unless you actually eat the meals. So, if you miss all six meals during your two days off, only \$33 (\$46.20 less \$13.20) should be deducted from your pay for meals. Room is calculated at a rate of \$27.80 per week for a private room or \$13.90 per week for a shared room.

Income tax deductions are based on Code 1 exemption. If you are supporting dependant children, your tax deductions will be lower and your net pay will be higher. Income tax is calculated on gross wages.

**IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS**

Canada Immigration Centre	973-4444
Educ & Skills Training Ctr, Labour Council	971-5893
Employment Standards Enforcement	328-7180
Immigrant Women's Health Centre	367-1388
Immigrant Women's Job Placement Centre	656-8933
OHIP Toronto	482-1111
Scarborough	1-800-263-3814
Mississauga	275-2730
Ontario Human Rights Commission	328-9511
Revenue Canada (Taxation)	869-1500
Toronto Rape Crisis Centre (24 Hr line)	597-8808
Unemployment Insurance	730-1211
Workers' Compensation	927-9555
<b>EMERGENCY HOUSING</b>	
Nelle's Hostel	461-1084
Evangeline's	762-8636
<b>LEGAL SERVICES</b>	
Parkdale Community Legal Services	531-2411
CLASP (Osgoode Law School) Legal Clinic	738-5029
Kensington-Bellwoods Community Legal Serv.	363-0304
Metro Tor. Chinese & SE Asian Legal Clinic	971-9674
Toronto Workers' Health & Safety Legal Clinic	971-8832

Your employer is required by law to withhold Income Tax deductions, Canada Pension Plan (CPP) contributions and Unemployment (UI) premiums from your gross wages. Your employer sends these deductions together with his own contributions to Revenue Canada every month. Each pay day, your employer is also required by law to give you a Written Statement of Earnings

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