

Domestics' Cross-Cultural News

monthly newsletter of the International Coalition to End Domestics' Exploitation

JANUARY 1985

ONTARIO ABOLISHES DOMESTIC WAGE GAP!

Last month the Ontario Government announced its much-awaited changes in the labour laws affecting domestic workers. The news is both good and bad.

The minimum wage for domestics will finally rise to the standard rate of \$4.00 per hour, thereby ending the discriminatory differential of \$.50 per hour in effect since 1981. This is an important step, and INTERCEDE commends Minister of Labour Russ Ramsay and Deputy Premier Robert Welch for removing a major obstacle to the full labour rights for Ontario's domestic workers.

Overtime pay has also been extended to live-out domestics who work over 44 hours per week, and live-in domestics who work during their 48-hour weekly rest period. The concept of overtime and the right to time and 1/2 is something most workers take for granted, but for domestics who toil in the isolation of private households, it is a long overdue gain.

The big blow to domestic workers' rights is Queen's Park's failure to regulate the hours of work of live-in domestics. In spite of the community pressure brought to bear on the government, it is still legally possible in Ontario for a live-in domestic to work or be on call to her employer for up to 120 hours per week!

This reduces a live-in domestics' real wage rate to \$1.47 per hour and utterly fails to recognize and pay for overtime during the regular work week. In other words, live-in domestics are still wide open to exploitation.

INTERCEDE condemns the Ontario Government for its failure to take action on the hours of work and overtime of live-in domestics. This failure undercuts their own stated intent of ensuring more equitable treatment for this historically unprotected group of workers.

The new regulations also leave babysitters, companions, and part-time domestics comple-

tely stranded. The Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues took Queen's Park to task in its press release:

"The word 'babysitter' conjures up the image of your neighbour's teenager hired for the evening- but this is far from the truth!

Under the law, a babysitter is someone who is employed to spend more than three-quarters of her time on duties relating to the care of children, such as supervising, dressing, and preparing meals.

We are concerned that unscrupulous employers will still be able to hire a domestic worker as a "babysitter", who may end up working as a full-time domestic worker excluded from the benefits of the law."

Also unchanged by last month's announcement are the room and board deduction of \$55.00 per week which INTERCEDE recommended be lowered, and the explicit bar to unionization of domestic workers in the Labour Relations Act.

The new regulations come into effect on March 1, 1985. But rather than provide effective protection from exploitation to Ontario's domestics, they will only recognize, in principle, their right to receive equal pay and overtime like any other group of workers.

INTERCEDE calls on Minister of Labour Russ Ramsay to introduce further changes prior to March 1, 1985, which regulate the hours of work of live-in domestics, thereby guaranteeing them a real wage rate of \$4.00 per hour, and overtime pay after a set number of hours.

We call on all supporters of domestic workers rights to renew your pressure on the Ontario Government, and we thank the following organizations for their steadfast support thus far: YWCA's Social Action Committee; National Congress of Black Women in Canada; United

Church of Canada; Mayor's Committee on Community and Race Relations; Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto; Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues; Women's Services Network; Kababayan Community Centre; Philippine-Canadian Ladies Circle; Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants; Ottawa-Carleton Immigrant Services Organization; Ottawa Household Workers Association; Cross Cultural Learner Centre (London); and Windsor Women Working With Immigrant Women.

INTERCEDE MEETS WITH OPPOSITION PARTIES

On December 5, 1984, INTERCEDE representatives met with members of the two opposition parties at Queen's Park to discuss the inadequacies of the new regulations for domestic workers.

INTERCEDE Co-ordinator Judith Ramirez led the delegation which also included Columbia Diaz, former domestic worker; Carmen-cita Hernandez, of the Kababayan Community Centre; and Alison Kerr, of the YWCA's Social Action Committee.

In speaking with Liberal Labour Critic Remo Mancini, Judith and Columbia stressed the need to make comprehensive changes rather than piecemeal ones which leave historic injustices unrectified. Mr. Mancini assured INTERCEDE that the Liberal Caucus will be reviewing our recommendations and including a call for stronger laws in its election platform.

In speaking with senior policy advisors to NDP Leader Bob Rae, the INTERCEDE delegation expressed dismay at the government's failure to provide greater protection for live-in domestic workers. "The new regulations simply don't get to the heart of the problem...it's like the government is hard of hearing" said Judith Ramirez. The NDP voiced strong support for all the INTERCEDE recommendations and pledged to make domestic workers' rights an election issue.

Meetings between INTERCEDE and opposition party leader Jim Peterson, and NDP Leader Bob Rae, are planned in the near future.

Newsletter Committee:

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

COCO'S CALENDAR

Recent happenings...

- * on December 5 INTERCEDE met with representatives of the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party at Queen's Park
- * On December 6 feminist photographer PAMELA HARRIS held a successful exhibit at the Harbourfront Art Gallery...Pam is also working on a photo project on domestics for the National Film Board
- * on December 17 INTERCEDE attended the Christmas Social of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations which featured the launching of FRANCES HENRY's new book "Victims and Neighbours"

Coming up soon...

- * INTERCEDE's monthly members meeting on Sunday, January 6, at 58 Cecil Street, 2 - 5 pm. For information call 929-3240
- * on January 20 INTERCEDE will attend an invitational meeting on visible minority women's rights called by members of the Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women

...AND CONGRATULATIONS

- * to BETH UDASCO who just gave birth to a bouncing baby boy...best wishes from us all!
- * to our new landed immigrants IRENE LOZANO and CHIT RAMOS, both from the Philippines
- * a special thank you to all who sent lovely Christmas cards ...they've been on display at the Service Unit office!
- * a HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR to all our members and friends!

- Columbia Diaz

JOIN INTERCEDE

\$5 Year

SUPPORT THE GROUP THAT SUPPORTS YOU!

CALL THE INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT DAILY
MON - FRI 9:30AM - 4:30PM AT 929-3240

COMMUNITY RALLIES BEHIND SERVICE UNIT!

The response to our call for support of INTERCEDE's Service Unit has been truly heartening. The one-year grant to launch the Unit runs out at the end of February 1985, and in order to continue operating, Minister of Immigration Flora MacDonald must renew the special grant made by her predecessor last year.

In last month's newsletter we appealed to community organizations to write letters of support urging the new Minister to continue the Service Unit's funding, and we have been overwhelmed with the response.

Here is what the community is saying:

" INTERCEDE has been in the forefront of struggles for the just and equal treatment of domestic workers for many years.

The service that INTERCEDE provides must continue...We therefore urge you to give due consideration to this service by funding and supporting the continuance of this very essential unit. "

- AKUA BENJAMIN, President
The National Congress of Black Women in Canada (Toronto)

" I would urge you most warmly to renew (INTERCEDE's) grant so as to maintain this important service for foreign domestic workers. "

- CHAVIVA HOSEK, President
National Action Committee on the Status of Women

" I am writing on behalf of the 170,000 members of the Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto to request that your Ministry renew the grant for INTERCEDE's Service Unit.

Historically, foreign domestic workers have been an exploited group of workers. Recently INTERCEDE has played a major part in providing these workers with much more dignity and justice on the job. Their Service Unit is a vital part of their operation that must be maintained for the benefit of the hundreds of foreign

domestics it serves. "

- MICHAEL LYONS, Executive Secretary
Labour Council of Metro Toronto

" The work being done by the Service Unit for domestic workers is invaluable and we urge you to continue financial support...As you know, domestic workers are among the most exploited workers in this country - the vast majority of them being female.

Our Council is confident that you will do everything in your power to ensure that the Service Unit receives the funding it needs. "

- SAM ION, President
Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues

" INTERCEDE provides a worthwhile community service and I would appreciate it if due consideration could be given to their funding request. "

- ART EGGLETON, Mayor
City of Toronto

" As Chairperson of the Metro Toronto Task Force on Public Violence Against Women and Children, I became aware of the excellent work INTERCEDE was doing, by virtue of the representation of the immigrant women's community by Judith Ramirez. I believe their work is extremely valuable, and for the relatively low amount of money involved, enables a great many women become useful and valuable contributors to the Canadian economy. "

- N. Jane Pepino
Lawyer

" The Urban Alliance on Race Relations believes it is imperative that the (Service) Unit receive the financial support of your Ministry for another year.

The sheer volume of inquiries...is evidence of the important service that INTERCEDE has provided. "

- CAROL TATOR, President
Urban Alliance on Race Relations

SPECIAL REPORT ON SERVICE UNIT

A special report on INTERCEDE's Service Unit was submitted last month to Minister of Immigration Flora MacDonald.

The report assesses the performance of the Service Unit in meeting its principal objective of "providing information and assistance to foreign domestic workers seeking landing in Canada."

The report presents the following statistics for the first three quarters of 1984-1985, that is, for the period from March 5 to November 31, 1984:

Total Service Unit Cases	833
Total Legal Clinic Cases	57
GRAND TOTAL	890
Service Unit Cases (domestics only)	530
Service Unit/Legal Clinic (domestics only)	587

Total Service Unit Cases

Country of origin	273 / 47% (West Indies)
	172 / 29% (Philippines)
	27 / 5% (U.K.)
	115 / 19% (Other)
Nature of Problem	537 / 90% (Immigration)
	25 / 4% (Employment)
	36 / 6% (Other)
Status in Canada	511 / 87% (Temporary)
	76 / 13% (Permanent)

The above breakdown shows that the Service Unit has been successful in reaching its

NEXT INTERCEDE MEETING ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3!

stated target group: foreign domestics, especially from Third World countries (76%), in Canada on temporary work visas (87%), seeking assistance with immigration (90%).

Based on the figures for the first three quarters, the projected totals for year's end stand as follows:

Total Service Unit/Legal Clinic	1187
Total Number of Domestics Served	783

INTERCEDE is very proud of the record set in the Service Unit's maiden year, and we end our special report by appealing to Flora MacDonald for the funding necessary to continue a second year.

PILAR GOES HOME FOR CHRISTMAS!

Last month INTERCEDE appealed to its members and friends to raise money for Pilar de Torres, a Filipina domestic worker who was recently diagnosed as having terminal breast cancer. She was advised by her doctor to return home as soon as possible.

We are happy to announce that Pilar was able to go home for Christmas to be with her family and friends.

A collection was taken at the December 2 INTERCEDE Meeting which raised \$110.00. An additional \$99.00 was sent in by newsletter readers. Along with donations made by the Philippine-Canadian Ladies Circle and individuals in the Filipino community, enough money was raised to cover the cost of Pilar's airfare back to the Philippines.

We thank everyone who cared enough to contribute.

- Columbia Diaz

Next month: news on MELROSE MORGAN's case !

DOMESTICS' CROSS CULTURAL NEWS
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Place
Stamp
Here

First Class