

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

monthly newsletter of the Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers' Rights

January 1989

(INTERCEDE)

IRMA CHARLES DID NOT HAVE TO BE DEPORTED

A few days after she was advised by the Ministry of Immigration that she must leave Canada on January 17, Irma Charles, a Trinidadian mother of two boys, came to INTERCEDE to seek assistance.

It was in November 1985 that Irma had voluntarily presented herself to Immigration and revealed that she had been working here illegally. She had hoped that with her efforts to integrate in this society and to prove her stability and self-sufficiency, she would be allowed to stay. At the end of December, 1988, she got her notice of deportation.

Appeals not only from Irma's lawyer, Barbara Jackman, and INTERCEDE, but also from scores of organizations and individuals including provincial and federal members of parliament, fell on deaf ears.

Immigration Minister Barbara McDougall, who was on holiday, did not reconsider Irma's case even after INTERCEDE suggested that Irma be allowed to reenter Canada on the Foreign Domestic Program (FDM) from Buffalo, instead of forcing her to return to Trinidad.

In a press conference held by INTERCEDE on January 15, Ms. Jackman scored the tough stance taken by Minister McDougall that ignored the compassionate needs of people like Irma who have been in this country for a long time. Eva Smith, INTERCEDE Board member and member of the Jamaican Canadian Association, expressed her concern that many "stranded" workers like Irma will take this cue to keep hiding and leading fugitive lives.

INTERCEDE has consistently favored regularizing the status of illegal domestic workers who have been in Canada for a long time yet have not been able to get included in the FDM.

While the Ministry of Immigration was not moved by the appeals made, it conceded it would have no objections if Irma Charles reapplied from Trinidad to reenter Canada under the FDM.

When INTERCEDE asked for this reassurance, the executive assistant to the Minister, Mr. Firdhaus Kharas said his office had sent the following telex:

"The Minister has no objections to Irma Charles returning to Canada as a foreign domestic worker or as an independent immigrant once she satisfied the necessary criteria for either of these programs."

Meanwhile, Irma's employer has hastened to make an offer of employment to get Irma back to her three children who have grown to love Irma and are missing her now.

INTERCEDE will continue to monitor Irma's case and will reraise the issue of regularizing the status of illegal domestic workers like Irma Charles.

INTERCEDE'S Board of Directors announces Logo Competition

If you have an idea for INTERCEDE's official LOGO, send it to us by February 22, 1989. The entry that will be chosen as INTERCEDE's LOGO will win a prize!

Come to INTERCEDE's monthly meeting on Sunday, February 5, 1989 from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil Street.

We will discuss rules for members, make suggestions for this year's activities and socialize.

CLASP and INTERCEDE counsellors will be available to entertain clients.

HECTIC THREE WEEKS FOR NEW INTERCEDE COORDINATOR

Counsellors and board members welcomed Fely Vilasin, new coordinator, on her first day at INTERCEDE January 3.

Fely found her first three weeks hectic but very interesting and challenging. The highlights of this initial period included chairing the first monthly meeting of 1989, and intervention efforts on behalf of Irma Charles, a domestic worker from Trinidad who was deported last January 17.

At the January 8th meeting, members had a chance to review the format of the monthly meetings and discuss some ways to include new features or improve old ones. It was decided that rules and privileges of membership be clarified for all new members. The membership is now poised to plan 1989 activities and form different committees to organize them.

An added feature of the monthly meetings is holding counselling services on site to complement the legal clinic conducted by CLASP.

* * * * *

After taking note of numerous complaints from domestic workers and employers, the coordinator wrote on their behalf to Jim Campbell, manager of the Eglinton Immigration office, asking him to institute a more efficient system of handling appointments for domestic workers. Lately, because of the difficulty of getting appointments, people have been lining up outside the office at odd hours like 5:30 a.m.

or midnight, or have even resorted to waiting overnight just to be able to transact business at this office.

* * * * *

After reading highlights of "Transitions", the report of the Social Assistance Review Committee, Fely wrote on behalf of INTERCEDE to Ontario Premier, David Peterson, to support recommendations that would ensure eligibility for social assistance in Ontario on the basis of need rather than immigration status, among others.

* * * * *

In connection with the Irma Charles case and the FDM program in general, Fely was interviewed over CKCO, CIUT and Radio Canada International. City-TV and the Toronto Star covered the press conference about the case.

According to Fely, INTERCEDE is currently monitoring an increasing number of delayed or postponed assessments as well as pending cases at Immigration. She is asking those with similar problems to contact INTERCEDE.

? I HAVE A QUESTION?

I arrived and was employed last November 14, 1988 with a salary based on the previous minimum wage. Do I qualify for the new minimum wage rate effective October 1988?

Answer. Yes, you qualify for the current minimum wage rate of \$4.75 per hour. You can ask to be paid this minimum wage rate retroactive to your first day of work, which is November 14, 1988.

If you or someone you know has not received this newsletter because of a change of address, please tear the slip below and mail to:

INTERCEDE
489 College Street
Suite 402

Toronto, Ontario M6G 1A5

I have changed my address. Please send DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS to my new address:

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY/PROVINCE

POSTAL CODE

My new telephone number is

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Those of you who are preparing for your assessment at Immigration will be wondering whether your efforts to upgrade your skills have been appropriate to qualify under one of the important criteria for obtaining a landed status in Canada.

Classes usually start in January so now is a good time to consider your career plans and what courses you should be taking as you prepare to settle permanently in this country.

One thing to remember: the upgrading courses you take should correspond to your career plans. For example, if you intend to follow a career in health care and you choose to take courses in hairdressing, you will not be satisfying immigration requirements.

If you have worked in a particular field before you came to Canada and you wish to pursue that field later, the upgrading courses you take should help you develop and improve on what you already know in the same field.

For example, if you have worked as a secretary before and you plan to go back to that profession in the future, then you should be taking classes related to your secretarial skills.

For information on the schools located near your residence and courses available, you can call the Adult Learning Line at 924-6923.

JUST A REMINDER: Tax-paying time is here and your employer should give you your T-4 slips by February 24.

The T-4 should show your gross earnings and all the deductions your employer has made from your gross earnings. Gross earnings are the total amount of money you earned in 1988.

For example, if you have been working with the same employer since November 1987, your employer should give you a T-4 slip showing how much total salary you were paid from the first day of January 1988 to the last day of December 1988. The T-4 should also show deductions in the same time period.

If you started working with your present employer in October 1988, then the T-4 given to you should show your total earnings and deductions from October 1988 to December 1988. In this case, another T-4 from your previous employer will show your gross earnings and deductions for the period from January 1988 to September 1988.

Joan-Ann Gravesande

COCO'S CALENDAR

Thank you notes...

To Akua Benjamin who was our guest speaker at the January 8th meeting. A member of the Toronto chapter of Congress of Black Women, Ms. Benjamin reiterated the need to be organized and united because wherever we originally come from, we have a common experience and a common aspiration to seek a better life.

On behalf of Irma Charles, thanks to everyone who called INTERCEDE to convey their words of encouragement and solidarity. Thanks specially to individuals and organizations that made their concerns known to Minister Barbara McDougall and appealed to stop Irma's deportation.

To the volunteers who helped in answering the phones, who typed our letters and updated our mailing list, thank you Delia Llena, Andrea Gerna, Hanne Schapiro, Sister Chit Bautista, Elisa Dullas, Celia Tababan, and of course, to our Board secretary, Magda Aguada.

For Valentine...

If you have no plans yet, CAMDI (Philippine Campaign for Democracy and Independence) will feature the first prize singer of PND 1988, Emil Zarris Jr. at their Valentine dance on Saturday, February 11 at 519 Church St., just above Wellesley. Tickets at \$7.00 will be sold at the door, or contact 567-4037.

Mark your calendar...

The UCFAC, United Council of Filipino Associations in Canada, is holding a dialogue on domestic workers' issues on March 10, 11 and 12. If you are interested, call Mila Eustaquio at 890-0397.

Watch for the Carlos Bulosan Cultural Workshop's next theatre play: "If My Mother Could See Me Now", to be presented in May. It's a dramatic presentation about the life of Filipino domestic workers in Toronto.

Good news...

Board vice president Joyce Stanford, whom we missed at the last meeting, is now up and about after recovering from a back sprain.

Calling volunteer locksmith...

We are still looking for someone who can help us with a pesky office problem.

Columbia Diaz

KNOW YOUR ORGANIZATION

The Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers' Rights (Intercede) is an advocacy and lobby group for domestic workers. It was formed in 1979 as a coalition of community, women's and immigrant organizations. Today it has a membership of over 1,000, the majority of whom are domestic workers from the Caribbean, the Philippines, other countries of Southeast Asia and Europe.

It is incorporated as a non-profit organization in the Province of Ontario and its work is coordinated by a board of directors elected by the membership at the annual general meeting.

Service Unit

Intercede has a Service Unit to work in cooperation with the community and immigration officials in ensuring that all foreign domestic workers benefit fully from the landed status program.

At present, there are two counsellors, Coco Diaz and Joan Ann Gravesande. They:

- * provide in-depth counselling on how to meet landing criteria;
- * liaise with immigration officials; provide escort services to government offices;
- * provide counselling on employment-related problems;

- * liaise with Canada Employment Centres; do advocacy work with the Ministry of Labour and the Human Rights Commission;
- * provide information and referral on health, social services and emergencies;
- * provide workshops, forums, seminars on domestic workers' rights.

Other activities of the organization include lobbying for legislative change, speaking at conferences and community events, publishing a monthly newsletter, organizing social, recreational and other events.

Monthly meetings take place on the first Sunday of each month (second Sunday in case of a holiday weekend), and are presently held at Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil Street, from 3 to 5 p.m. A free legal and counselling clinic is available. An informal social hour is usually part of the afternoon's activities.

**This is your newsletter!!!
Write your contribution and
send in by February 22, 1989.**

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Canada Immigration Centre	973-4444
Unemployment Insurance	973-4727
Employment Standards Enforcement	965-5251
Ontario Human Rights Commission	965-6841
Revenue Canada (Taxation)	869-1500
OHIP	965-1000
Immigrant Women's Job Placement Centre	656-8933
Immigrant Women's Health Centre	367-1388
Education & Skills Training Centre, Labour Council	971-5893

Emergency Housing	
Nellie's Hostel	461-1084
Evangeline's	762-9636
Legal Services	
Parkdale Community Legal Services	531-2411
CLASP (Osgoode Law School) Legal Clinic	736-5029
Kensington-Bellwoods Commtly Legal Services	363-0304
Metro Toronto Chinese & SE Asian Legal Clinic	971-9674

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

Place: 489 College St., Suite 402, Toronto, Ontario
Time: Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Telephone: (416) 324-8751

DOMESTICS' ' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS
c/o INTERCEDE
489 College St., Suite 402
Toronto, Ontario
M6G 1A5

FIRST CLASS