

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

monthly newsletter of the Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers' Rights

January 1992

(INTERC

2 YEARS SINCE INTERCEDE ASKED FOR CHANGE BUT FDM PROGRAM STILL DISCRIMINATORY

In December 1989, INTERCEDE sent recommendations to then Minister of Immigration Barbara McDougall to eliminate the discriminatory aspects of the Foreign Domestic Movement (FDM) program.

Other organizations advocating on behalf of foreign domestic workers such as the West Coast Domestic Workers' Association did the same thing.

But two years later, no positive response has come from Immigration.

Even after McDougall told INTERCEDE members in October 1990 that she had already received a preliminary report and that she would soon be announcing changes, no such announcement has been made.

Cont'd next page

NEWSFLASH AND ACTION ALERT

PROTEST MULRONEY GOVERNMENT'S BACKWARD STEP TO TEMPORARY SCHEME FOR FOREIGN DOMESTIC WORKERS

Foreign Domestic workers have been handed a cruel Christmas gift by the Mulroney government : Eliminating their right to become immigrants, a right that foreign domestic workers fought for and won in 1981 !

Instead of improving the defective Foreign Domestic Movement (FDM) program, according to a Globe and Mail article December 20, Minister Bernard Valcourt of Immigration is reverting to a pre-1981 temporary work scheme that will not allow foreign domestic workers to settle permanently in Canada and will reinforce the "bonded" nature of their labour in this country.

INTERCEDE did not receive confirmation of this policy reversal from Immigration but is alarmed at its implications.

It is in fact the two to three years of temporary status, coupled with forced live-in and other requirements in the FDM program, that has made foreign domestic workers vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

The insecure status of a temporary worker is the context in which many foreign women, mostly women of colour, live a life of insecurity and fear - fear of leaving an employer, fear of not meeting the requirements of permanent residence, fear of deportation!

Cont'd back page

Come to INTERCEDE's monthly meeting on Sunday, January 5, 1992, from 3-5 pm at the Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil Street.

We will discuss the proposal to reform the Ontario Labour Relations Act that will include giving domestic workers the right to form their own union.

2-3 pm - processing of applications for and renewal of membership for 1992.

All members with ID numbers 1 to 758 will be dropped from the list of members if they do not renew by January 5, 1992.

Meanwhile thousands of women from outside Canada continue to be accepted under conditions of bonded labour through a "special program" that

- keeps them on temporary status for at least three years instead of entering Canada as immigrants with the rights that immigrants have;
- restricts them to domestic work only and with only a specified employer;
- requires them to live-in with their employer and thus be accessible round the clock;
- imposes requirements for permanent residence that forces them to remain with abusive employers to show a "satisfactory employment record", forces them to do volunteer work, to show a pattern of saving through their bank books, and to upgrade their skills by taking courses.

It is also now taking foreign domestics longer than three years to get permanent resident status. And with stricter rules on family sponsorships, hopes of reuniting with their families are getting dimmer, specially for those who are married or have children.

Delay spawns threats, rumours

Immigration's inaction has created a climate of fear among domestic workers.

This fear has bred rumours that the Mulroney government would revert to the pre-1981 temporary workers program that did not allow foreign domestic workers to stay permanently in Canada. Worse rumours have also spread that the government will close the doors entirely to domestic workers.

INTERCEDE has to consistently calm domestic workers wanting to verify rumours that they can no longer be admitted as permanent residents. Several times, rumours had to be denied in this newsletter to decrease workers' anxiety.

The threat of an immigration clampdown affects this very vulnerable sector of women in an agonizing way. Instead of

contemplating a future where their life and work conditions are improved to meet human rights standards, they perceive things as changing for the worse.

Such threat deepens domestics' sense of powerlessness in relation to their employers. It also reinforces their perception that Immigration is an appointed master of their destiny.

Canada a haven?

Indeed, Canada is perceived as a haven of opportunity by women escaping poverty in their own countries and seeking a better life for their families.

But Canada does need immigrants, among them women willing to do domestic labour.

In INTERCEDE's view, there is no excuse for a "special program" that brings in foreign women and accords them less rights than other immigrants, other women and other workers. The very principle poses a danger of eroding all women's rights in Canada.

If domestic work pays decently, offers healthy and safe conditions, if domestic work is dignified work and if it is needed, then immigrants coming to Canada may voluntarily fill that demand.

The fear of Immigration authorities that if accepted as immigrants, these women will "not remain domestic workers" much less meet the demand for live-in domestic help is a shameful excuse for allowing any form of slavery to exist in Canada.

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.

TO ALL SUBSCRIBERS

Please renew your subscriptions for 1992 by sending the form below.

If we don't receive your renewals by February 1992, we will have to remove your name from our newsletter mailing list.

RENEWAL SUBSCRIPTION :

(only until December 1992)

NEW SUBSCRIPTION :

CHANGE OF ADDRESS :

MAIL TO : INTERCEDE, 489 College St., Suite 402, Toronto, Ontario M6G 1A5

Please send **DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS** to :

MEMBER ID NUMBER : _____ NAME : _____

ADDRESS : _____

CITY/PROVINCE : _____

POSTAL CODE : _____ TELEPHONE : _____

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION RATES :

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

INTERCEDE HIRES COUNSELLOR /PROJECT ASSISTANT

We would like to welcome Carol Salmon to the staff of INTERCEDE. Carol is a graduate of Honours Psychology at McMaster University.

Carol started work on December 1 after finishing a contract with the Ministry of the Attorney General as the acting coordinator for the Victim/Witness Assistance Program. In that capacity, she assisted victims of wife and partner assault, child abuse and sexual assault throughout the criminal court process.

Carol is looking forward to meeting all members of INTERCEDE and embracing the challenges ahead.

HR COMMISSION AGAINST LIVE-IN; CHRISTMAS PARTY A DOUBLE CELEBRATION

Over 300 members partied on December 1 with three special guests from the Ontario government and welcomed the news that the Ontario Human Rights Commission is seeking changes to federal regulations that require foreign domestic workers to live in with their employers.

Elaine Ziembra, Minister of Citizenship, Amy Go, President of the Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues, and Ontario Human Rights Commissioner Catherine Frazee, each had strong words of support for domestic workers' efforts to improve their living and working conditions in Canada.

Ziembra encouraged INTERCEDE members to support reforms to Ontario labour laws that sought to give them more protection. She then formally presented the "Orientation Kit for Newly Arrived Foreign Domestic Workers" that INTERCEDE produced with funding from her ministry.

Amy Go, a longtime community activist, stressed the responsibility of government to make positive changes in the lives of foreign domestic workers and presented Facilitator's Certificates to new members who had recently completed the Facilitators Workshop series.

Commissioner Frazee's announcement was a highlight of

MEETING OF DOMESTIC WORKERS FROM THE CARIBBEAN

Sunday, January 19, 1992

3 - 5 pm at INTERCEDE
489 College Street, Room 402
(take Bathurst Subway, then Bus 511 to College and Bathurst)
Call 324-8751 for more information

the Christmas celebration. In a letter addressed to Federal Minister of Immigration, Bernard Valcourt, Frazee supported INTERCEDE's effort to make changes to the FDM and asked for the "removal of the live-in requirement from the FDM program and allowing participants to make their own housing choices."

Frazee expressed her concerns that the live-in requirement leads to various forms of exploitation by employers and acts as a barrier to the independence, personal privacy and safety of the domestic worker. Frazee's announcement was met with thunderous applause.

"This support from the Ontario Human Rights Commission is important for us, but when will Immigration remove the live-in requirement?" some workers wondered.

This question was momentarily forgotten as Andy Gabriel serenaded everyone with his songs and Zeny Reyes, Ellen Benigno and Hermie Palanca led in a sing-along of favourite Christmas tunes to the guitar backup of Zeny Estoco. A group of Chinese singers introduced by Ginger Chung and a dance number from Thai participants captivated the audience as did Noemi Jamon's Hawaiian dance

Throughout the afternoon, prizes and gifts were given out and Matilde Papa's delicious spread of food added cheer to the party.

CALLING ALL BOARD MEMBERS, FACILITATORS, AND OTHER INTERESTED MEMBERS

Must Attend:

One-day Workshop for Women Workers
on changes to the Ontario Labour Relations Act

Sat. January 11, 1992 from 9:30 am to 4 pm

Sir Sandford Fleming Bldg., Room 1105 (Auditorium)
Univ. of Toronto, 10 Kings College Road,
Confirm attendance or location by calling Eva 324-8751

Free Lunch provided

COCO'S CALENDAR

Congratulations to Maureen Woods, Tessie Garaygay, Prima Visaya and Evelyn Estregan who have been approved for landed immigrant status !

Condolence and Deep Sympathy to Mary Ann Dichoso whose mother died; to Luzminda Bersamin whose mother died; and to Felicidad Salvador who lost a sister.

Reminding all domestic workers who are terminating and moving out of their employer's home, be sure to give a forwarding address where your T-4 will be sent.

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS AND WISHING ALL OF YOU A
HAPPY NEW YEAR !**

DON'T FORGET TO RENEW MEMBERSHIP FOR 1992 !

Members whose ID number is from 1 to 758 must renew by January 5, 1992 meeting to remain in INTERCEDE's list of members for 1992.

Members whose ID number is from 759 to 960 must renew their membership by February 2, 1992.

Renewal must be done at the monthly meeting, we don't accept renewal applications by mail.

Cont'd from first page

For this reason, INTERCEDE again raised the domestic workers' 1980 demand to enter Canada as immigrants, just like other workers for whom there is a demand in this country. In December 1989, INTERCEDE sent recommendations to then Minister Barbara McDougall to improve the FDM program.

The Mulroney government's response is a backward and regressive policy that signifies that foreign women's domestic labour is allowed into Canada but not the women themselves. It is not only demeaning and abusive to women workers, its implication is racist!

We call on all domestic workers, all equality seeking supporters specially in the women's movement and labour to address their protest against this decision to go back to a temporary work scheme to

Minister Bernard Valcourt
Employment and Immigration
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
FAX : (819) 994-0448

(Please fax your message today and copy INTERCEDE

EMPLOYEE WAGE PROTECTION PROGRAM : CLAIM UP TO \$5000 OF UNPAID WAGES

The Employee Wage Protection Program of the Ontario Ministry of Labour will make sure you get paid for what you are owed in wages as long as you have a valid claim.

How?

You can receive up to \$5000 compensation for wages due you on or after October 1, 1990. To file a claim, you don't need an appointment, just go to the nearest Ministry of Labour office for a claim form. If you go in person, you can phone to get a form sent to

You will need to show proof of where you worked such as wage slips, or record of hours worked. Or if such proof is not available, you will need to estimate the number of hours you worked each pay period.

Are you keeping records?

It is important for you to always keep a record of all hours worked each day, overtime hours, the net minimum wage payment you should be receiving and the actual wage you received during your pay periods.

What's the effect on immigration status if you claim?

An employer cannot deport you, only Immigration can. And filing a claim for unpaid wages under Ontario's Employee Wage Protection Program is no reason for deporting you.

Need help?

If you want some help in taking advantage of this program and filing a claim, feel free to contact INTERCEDE or make an appointment with one of the counsellors.

Remember

You have a right to be paid the correct amount for all our hard work and sacrifice.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Canada Immigration Centre	973-444
Educ & Skills Training Ctr, Labour Council	971-589
Employment Standards Enforcement	326-7181
Immigrant Women's Health Centre	367-1381
Immigrant Women's Job Placement Centre	656-893
OHIP Toronto	482-1111
Scarborough	1-800-263-381
Mississauga	275-2731
Ontario Human Rights Commission	326-9511
Revenue Canada (Taxation)	869-1501
Toronto Rape Crisis Centre (24 Hr line)	597-8801
Unemployment Insurance	730-1211
Workers' Compensation	927-9551

EMERGENCY HOUSING

Nellie's Hostel	461-108
Evangeline's	762-8631

LEGAL SERVICES

Parkdale Community Legal Services	531-2411
CLASP (Osgoode Law School) Legal Clinic	736-5029
Kensington-Bellwoods Community Legal Serv.	363-0304
Metro Tor. Chinese & SE Asian Legal Clinic	971-8674
Toronto Workers' Health & Safety Legal Clinic	971-8832

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

Place :
Time :
Telephone :

INTERCEDE STAFF

Coordinator/Editor :
Counsellors :

Intake Worker :

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

c/o INTERCEDE

489 College Street., Suite 402

Toronto, Ontario

M6G 1A5

FIRST CLASS