

Domestics' Cross-Cultural News

monthly newsletter of the International Coalition to End Domestics' Exploitation

JULY 1986

EMPLOYERS STILL IGNORING WORKERS COMP

Over one year has gone by since domestic workers in Ontario were brought under the protection of the Workers Compensation Act - the historic day was April 1, 1985.

At the six-month point, INTERCEDE requested statistics from Bob Elgie, Chairman of the Workers Compensation Board, and we were told that only 919 employers had registered their employees with the Board. Taking into account only the foreign domestic workers in Ontario (roughly 10,600), it meant that a mere 9% of employers had bothered to register!

Recently INTERCEDE requested further statistics from the Chairman to assess how much progress has been made since last October. Mr. Elgie replied by outlining the Board's efforts to encourage employers to register: advertisements in major Ontario newspapers, brochures distributed through the Canada Employment Centres, employer seminars, etc. The results show a definite improvement: 3,783 employers have now registered with the Board, a jump of over 300% as compared to last fall.

However, the overall picture is anything but rosy. Again, taking into account only the foreign domestic workers in the province, a full 2/3 of them have not been registered by their employers! It must be remembered that the Ontario Ministry of Labour has estimated that there are up to

75,000 domestic workers in this province. Clearly, the overwhelming majority of employers are simply ignoring their legal obligations and behaving as if they are exempt from the requirements of the law.

According to the Board's statistics, 80 claims have been submitted by domestic workers since April 1985. Fifty-three of these claims required time off work, 25 were for health care costs, and 2 involved a permanent disability.

Domestic workers who are employed more than 24 hours per week are eligible for full coverage under the Workers Compensation Act regardless of whether their employers register. Failure to register can result in having to pay back assessments plus a fine. But for the domestic worker it can result in missed deadlines, red tape, etc. which can jeopardy her claim.

If you are a full-time domestic worker and you suffer illness or injury on the job, contact the INTERCEDE Service Unit immediately and we will assist you in filing a claim.

POSITION AVAILABLE

The INTERCEDE Service Unit is looking for a part-time counsellor to assist domestic workers from the Caribbean. Minimal qualifications include:

- * secondary school diploma
- * basic clerical skills
- * experience in community work
- * good inter-personal skills
- * experience in domestic work preferred

Please submit a written resume by ...2

COCO'S CALENDAR

Recent happenings...

- * on July 3 INTERCEDE took part in a meeting between the Immigrant & Visible Minority Women's Action Committee and the Ontario Immigrant Women's Network
- * on July 11 we sat down with Niki Kelly of Women Working With Immigrant Women to discuss the brief she is writing on the needs of immigrant women
- * on July 16 Judith Ramirez spoke about grass-roots organizing at the Human Rights Centre in Ottawa
- * on July 17 INTERCEDE met with Richard Clarke of the Ministry of Labour to discuss abuses of domestic rights
- * at the Annual General Meeting of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations, Judith Ramirez was re-elected to the Board of Directors

Coming up soon...

- * INTERCEDE's next monthly meeting is set for Sunday, August 10, 3 - 5pm, at the Cecil Centre

...AND CONGRATULATIONS!

- * to Janice Husbands, a long-time member of INTERCEDE from Barbados, for her recent marriage
- * happy birthday to Flor Larraquel!
- * good luck to our new landed immigrants: Liz Thompson, from Jamaica; Lynne Filio, Nida Rios, Lerma Capuchinu, and Elma del Prado, from the Philippines
- * best wishes to Delia Onate who recently got married

Tune in again next month!

- Coco Diaz

Position Available...con't

Friday, August 15, to the Hiring Committee, c/o INTERCEDE, 58 Cecil Street Toronto, Ontario M5T 1N6. For more information call (416) 591-6351.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Starting July 1 the income tax deduction is changing - they want more! - so your 'take-home' pay will be a little lower. Here are the exact figures if you are a foreign domestic on a temporary visa:

*You start with:	\$827.50 (Gross Pay)
*Your employer can deduct up to:	238.00 (Room & Brd)
*Yours employer <u>must</u> deduct:	11.15 (C.P.P.)
	19.45 (U.I.C.)
	82.65 (Income Tax)

*That leaves you:	476.25 (Net Pay)

This is only the minimum an employer is required to pay. If you are experienced or have special skills, you should negotiate with your employer for higher pay.

If you have any questions or concerns contact the INTERCEDE Service Unit at (416) 591-1625.

The new flyer on 'How To Calculate Your Pay' will be available at the next monthly meeting on August 10.

INTERCEDE'S NEW PHONES !!

591-1625

591-6351

LEAF PREPARES DOMESTICS FOR COURT

On July 11 two foreign domestic workers from the Philippines met with LEAF litigation director Gwen Brodsky and INTERCEDE co-ordinator Judith Ramirez.

The meeting was the first in a series to prepare domestics to testify in the upcoming Charter challenge to the Ontario Employment Standards Act.

At present the ESA excludes live-in domestic workers from its overtime provisions. That means a domestic can work 13 hours per day but only get paid for the standard eight hours.

The exploitation this state of affairs leads to was highlighted by both domestics interviewed at the July 11 meeting:

Manolo

1st job in Canada: 1981 - 1984
Hours of work: 8am - 9pm, -
7 days per week
(91 hrs wk)
Time off: not a single day
in 3 years!
Pay: \$350 - \$426mo
or \$1.17hr (net)

Manalili

1st job in Canada: 1985 - 1986
Hours of work: 7am - 7pm,
5 days per week
+ babysitting
(69 hrs wk)
Time off: Sat & Sun
(free babysitting
every other Sat
night)
Pay: \$478mo or \$1.73hr
(net)

These accounts of long hours and low pay will be documented and presented

as evidence in the court case against the labour laws of Ontario. In order to make a strong case we need a lot more domestic workers who will stand up and testify about the abuses.

If you are a live-in domestic who has suffered the kind of injustices described above, now is your chance to tell your story! For more information about how to participate in the INTERCEDE/LEAF charter challenge contact Judith Ramirez at (416) 591-6351.

BILL WRYE DISAPPOINTS DOMESTICS

Ontario's domestic workers were counting on Minister of Labour Bill Wrye's promise that he would announce 'important changes' to the Employment Standards Act before the Legislature adjourned in mid-July.

The Minister had originally said that changes would be made by Christmas 1985. Then his office said 'in the new year', after that 'in the spring', and finally we were told 'before the House rises for summer recess'.

Well, Queen's Park has emptied out for the holidays and no changes have yet been announced. INTERCEDE spoke to the Minister's policy advisor Mordechai Bendat after the adjournment, and he said that the proposed changes are now in Cabinet committee and that there is a 'substantial consensus'. He predicted that the long-awaited announcement will come well before the House re-convenes in October. Let us hope so!

Domestic workers and their allies have been circulating INTERCEDE's open-letter to Bill Wrye, and many community organizations have written to the Minister supporting our two key recommendations:

- * inclusion of all domestic workers under the hours of work and overtime provisions of the Employment Standards Act
- * granting domestic workers the right to unionize under the Labour Relations Act

JOIN THE 'REVOLUTIONARY TEA PARTY'!

Well-known dub-poet Lillian Allen has just released her first solo LP, Revolutionary Tea Party! Playing to a packed house on July 19 at the Horshoe Tavern, she launched her new record with a sizzling performance of many of her best-loved poems - 'I fight back', 'Riddim 'an hard times', 'Nelly belly swelly', and more.

The show was introduced by Lorraine Segato, lead singer of Parachute Club and featured a special guest, dub-poet Clifton Joseph.

The back-up band and vocals on the new LP include such well-known artists as Billy Bryans, Laurie Conger, Julie Masi, and Lorraine Segato, of Parachute Club, and Quammie Williams, of Truth and Rights.

Lillian Allen is a native of Jamaica who originally came to Canada as a domestic worker. She earned a political science degree at York University, and in recent years she has earned a well-deserved reputation as the leading dub-poetry exponent in Canada.

Many INTERCEDE members remember Lillian Allen from her benefit performance at a fundraising dance we held two years ago.

To order your copy of Revolution-

ary Tea Party send \$10.00 (cheques & money orders only!) to:

Lillian Allen
P.O. Box 301, Station L
Toronto, Ontario M6E 4Z3

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

Location: Cecil Community Centre
(second floor balcony)
58 Cecil Street
Toronto, Ontario

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

Telephone: (416) 591-1625

Counsellor: Columbia Diaz

INTERCEDE provides a full-range of services and referrals for all domestic workers. Everything is confidential and free of charge.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The INTERCEDE Service Unit will be open Saturday, August 9, 10am - 2pm. Please call Columbia Diaz for an appointment at (416) 591-1625.

FREE LEGAL ADVICE

If you are a domestic worker who needs advice on immigration or any other legal matter there is a free community service for you:

CLASP Legal Clinic (416) 736-5029

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c/o INTERCEDE
58 Cecil Street
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Place
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First Class

NEXT INTERCEDE MEETING AUGUST 10!