

Domestics' Cross-Cultural News

monthly newsletter of the International Coalition to End Domestic Workers' Exploitation

JULY 1987

WEST COAST DOMESTICS ORGANIZE!

Following the lead of their Ontario sisters, domestic workers in Vancouver have recently formed the West Coast Domestic Workers' Association which is fighting for overtime pay. The key objective of the new organization is "to be a political lobbying tool and an educational group" according to Kyong-ae Kim, one of the group's founders.

The association is made up of roughly twenty domestic workers who, along with community supporters, are working to challenge the exploitation of British Columbia's 5000 domestic workers. Their efforts build on the work of previous groups such as the Committee for the Advancement of the Rights of Domestic Workers and the Domestic Workers Union, both active in the 1981 landed status campaign.

The new organization is working closely with the Women's Legal Education & Action Fund (LEAF) to develop a court challenge for overtime pay under the Charter of Rights. In British Columbia, as elsewhere, domestic workers are completely excluded from hours of work and overtime protection under the labour law.

The group estimates that the average working day for a live-in domestic in Vancouver is twelve hours. Under the Employment Standards Act, the daily rate of pay for a live-in worker is \$32.00, regardless of the number of hours worked. At twelve hours per day, the pay rate is only \$2.67 an hour. Sound familiar?

Danielle, a foreign domestic from

Europe, is a typical member of the new organization. Her immigration agreement stipulates a 40-hour work week, but in fact she works 10 - 12 hours daily, for a total of 50 - 60 hours per week. Needless to say, she receives no overtime pay. Her employer is a widower with two children who expects her to babysit more than the two evenings a week stated in her contract. And although he seldom tells her what time he will be home, "he always expects a hot dinner ready and waiting for him".

In a recent issue of the association's newsletter they wrote:

Domestic workers are often seen as live-in slaves, constantly on call at the whim of the employer... There are powerful stereotypes which are attached to working in the home. One man said: ' Domestic work is something women do on the side for extra money or for free because they like doing it and it comes naturally '. Domestic workers are expected to step in and take over this stereotypical role which totally exploits women's labour.

The new organization has already had some successes in advocating on behalf of foreign domestics. One woman was laid off and her employer stopped payment on her last pay cheque saying she would have to sue for it! A claim was made to the Employment Standards Branch and the employer was ordered to make full payment to the domestic worker.

INTERCEDE salutes the West Coast Domestic Workers Association! We wish you every success in your fight for equal rights in British Columbia. You can count on our support!

COCO'S CALENDAR

Recent happenings...

- * on July 11 our board members & staff attended a leadership development workshop with the UNITED WAY
- * on July 12 I attended a meeting of domestics at the First Filipino Baptist Church
- * on July 22 INTERCEDE took part in a meeting of the United Council of Filipino Associations in Canada
- * on July 23 Judith Ramirez & Mary Mouammar attended an open-house hosted by MPP Susan Fish

Coming up soon...

- * INTERCEDE's Service Unit will be open on SATURDAY, AUGUST 8, 10am to 2pm. Please call for an app't
- * there will be no monthly meeting in August! Our annual meeting is set for SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13!

...AND CONGRATULATIONS!

- * to the recently-landed GLORIA CUMMINGS, BRIGIDA FORTIN & IRIS FRANK from the Caribbean; LINDA ANTIPORTA, LINDA COSME & SOLEDAD GANABAN from the Philippines; ROSEMARY SVADIPORN from Thailand; LAURA LOPEZ from Mexico; and MARINA OELER from Europe..welcome aboard!
- * happy birthday to YOLY GRACIA, LINDA AVELINO & ROSE FUNGO
- * wedding bells for AURORA AGAPAY, LINDA SUBIDO & DIONISIA CASAO
- * best wishes to CINDY PRINCE who gave birth to a beautiful baby boy
- * and happy holiday to GLORIA THOMAS who is headed for Jamaica & CATHY GILBERT who is going to Australia!

Stay cool 'til September!

- Columbia Diaz

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

If you are a live-in domestic worker it is extremely important that you keep records of your hours of work and your wage payments.

You should have a calendar or a note book where you record each day the time you start work and the time you finish (eg. Wednesday, July 29, started 7am, finished 5pm).

As you know, although your contract may say that you are required to work eight hours per day, in reality you may be working ten or more hours.

If you are under the Foreign Domestics Program, a record of hours worked will help you when you go in the Immigration to make a complaint and/or request a change of employment.

Also, you should keep a written record of all the dates and amounts you are paid. If, for some reason, your employer fails to pay you or the cheque bounces, note it down in writing. The more evidence you have the stronger your case will be if you make a formal complaint with Immigration or the Employment Standards Branch. You want to avoid a situation where it's just your word against the employer's.

As of October 1, 1987, you will have the right to compensation (either money or paid time off) for any hours you work over 44 per week. Keeping a written record will give you the evidence you need to make a strong claim against your employer with the Employment Standards Branch.

If you think you have grounds for a complaint contact:

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT	591-1625
EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS	965-5251

- Joan Ann Gravesande

NO NEWSLETTER IN AUGUST ! !

NANCY JACKMAN HOSTS FUNDRAISER

Women's rights activist Nancy Jackman, recently hosted a fundraising cocktail party for INTERCEDE at her home in Rosedale.

The event was sponsored by a wide cross-section of women to "celebrate the success of INTERCEDE's work with domestics". Among them Barbara Mac Dougall, Mary Eberts, Evelyn Gigantes, Nola Crewe, June Rowlands, Doris Anderson, and many more.

Approximately eighty people attended the late-afternoon party and mingled in Nancy's beautiful garden. Among the guests present were:

Chaviva Hosek, former president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC)

Ellen Campbell, executive director of the Toronto YWCA

Nadine Nowlan, Toronto alderman
Lee Grills, of the Ontario Committee on the Status of Women

Jane Pepino, of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Mary Bruce, equal opportunity director for the City of Toronto

Jean Woodsworth, of the Social Planning Council

Maria Minna, president of COSTI

Glenna Carr, former head of the Ontario Women's Directorate

Madhu Das Gupta, of the Alliance of Black Trade Unionists

Margrit Eichler, of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

Pamela Harris, feminist photographer

Judy Steed and Vivian Smith, of the Globe and Mail

Kay MacPherson, long-time peace activist

Ceta Ramkhalawansingh, of the Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues

Diane Marshall, of the Anglican Church of Canada

Anne Swarbrick, of the Metro Labour Council

The party featured an array of "celebrity bartenders" who took turns serving drinks to Nancy's guests. The line-up was headed by Attorney Gene-

ral Ian Scott and also included:

Dr. Dan Hill, Ontario Ombudsman

Dr. Robert Elgie, chairman of the Workers Compensation Board

Dan McIntyre, race relations commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission

Dan Marks, Toronto school board trustee
Khaled Mouammar, of the Canadian Ethnocultural Council

The Bartenders' Union operated the bar free of charge as their contribution to domestic workers' rights.

Members of the INTERCEDE board of directors who were present included: Catherine Gilbert, Patricia Yuen, Gina Hayden, Shirin Perston and Mary Mouammar. The board is pleased to announce that over \$4,000 was raised from ticket sales.

The organizing committee for the event did a splendid job and included, Judith Ramirez, Ceta Ramkhalawansingh, Beth Symes, and Cathy Gilbert. The volunteers helped the party run smoothly and made an invaluable contribution.

INTERCEDE warmly thanks Nancy Jackman for hosting this successful event and helping to further the cause of domestic workers rights!

JEAN AUGUSTINE TO SPEAK AT AGM

INTERCEDE will be holding its annual general meeting on Sunday, September 13, at the Cecil Community Centre. This year we are pleased to have as our guest speaker Jean Augustine, a well-known figure in Canada's Black community.

Born in Grenada, West Indies, Jean Augustine completed her high school education there and began a teaching career. In 1960, the opportunity to come to Canada under the "domestic scheme" presented itself and she arrived here with eight other young women from Grenada.

After completing the one year obligatory service, she continued her career in education. Ms. Augustine holds a B.A. degree from the University of Toronto

Jean Augustine...con't

and an M.A. degree from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). She also holds the prestigious Ontario supervisory officers certificate.

Today Ms. Augustine is an elementary school principal with the Metro Separate School Board in Etobicoke.

Her community involvements are many and varied. She has received several awards for volunteer work including the Caribana Award for outstanding member of the Black and Caribbean community, and the Woman of Distinction Award from the YWCA.

Ms. Augustine has served as a board member of Harbourfront and has sat on the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

At present, she is the national president of the Congress of Black Women of Canada as well as a board member of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations and the Catholic Children's Aid Society. Recently, she was also appointed to the Ontario Judicial Council.

Ms. Augustine has travelled extensively throughout the Orient, Africa, Europe and the Caribbean to learn about educational practices. She conducts seminars and workshops and is always in demand as a speaker in

the areas of multiculturalism, race relations, minority women's rights and education.

INTERCEDE invites the community to hear Jean Augustine speak on Sunday, September 13, 3 - 5pm at the Cecil Community Centre. Everyone welcome!

SUMMER BREAK FOR SERVICE UNIT!

INTERCEDE's Service Unit will be closed for a two-week period, AUGUST 17-28. We will re-open for business on Monday, August 31. If you have a pressing problem, please contact us before August 15, so we can assist you before the summer break. HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

Place: Cecil Community Centre
58 Cecil Street
Toronto, Ontario
Time: Monday - Friday
9:00am - 4:00pm
Telephone: (416) 591-1625
591-7036

Free and confidential counselling to all domestic workers on immigration, employment, human rights, emergency social services, etc.

A free and confidential legal clinic is also available at our monthly meetings.

DOMESTICS CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS
c/o INTERCEDE
58 Cecil Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5T 1N6

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