

Domestics' Cross-Cultural News

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

JUNE 1986

LILY MUNRO BACKS CHANGES IN LABOUR LAW

INTERCEDE's current drive for greater protection of domestic workers under Ontario's labour laws has gained a new ally, Minister of Citizenship & Culture Lily Munro.

On June 10 an INTERCEDE delegation headed by Judith Ramirez met with Ms. Munro at Queen's Park. Also representing INTERCEDE were two foreign domestic workers, Patricia Yuen, of Malaysia, and Rose Pierre, of Grenada. Community representatives included Irene Harris, of the Ontario Federation of Labour Women's Committee; Ellen Campbell, of the Metro Toronto YWCA; Mary Mouammar, of the Arab Community Centre; and Ceta Ramkhalawansingh, of the Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues.

The main focus of the meeting was the exclusion of domestics from the hours of work and overtime provisions of the Employment Standards Act. As we have stressed for many months, this means that a live-in domestic is only paid for 8 hours work per day even if she works 16! Patricia Yuen described to the Minister how she routinely worked during her daily 'rest period' and late into the evening without a cent in overtime pay.

Munro asked INTERCEDE how prevalent such abuses were and we underscored the fact that the average work week for live-in domestics is 65 hours. The present law leaves live-in domestic workers wide open to exploitation. "Any employer who wants

to take advantage is given the green light", said Judith Ramirez.

Both Irene Harris and Ceta Ramkhalawansingh emphasized that from a women's rights and a labour rights standpoint, INTERCEDE's demands are only 'the bare minimum protection'. Ellen Campbell noted that what domestics are fighting for is taken for granted by most other workers, and she appealed to Munro to support 'simple justice'.

Lily Munro responded by saying that she agreed fully with our call for basic protection of domestic workers' rights. She said that as women and as immigrants, domestics face more barriers to equality than most workers. She also said she is committed to being an 'advocate' in the Cabinet on all issues affecting immigrant and visible minority women. The 45-minute meeting ended by Ms. Munro assuring us that she would speak to Minister of Labour William Wrye in support of our recommendations for change.

INTERCEDE MEETS WITH PC LABOUR CRITIC

On June 10 INTERCEDE also met with Phil Gillies, provincial labour critic for the Progressive Conservative Party. The same delegation that met with Lily Munro held a productive hour-long exchange with Mr. Gillies.

Gillies acknowledged that all the changes INTERCEDE is seeking were ignored by his party when they were in power. He agreed that from a labour and a women's rights standpoint the issues we are raising deserve immedi-

COCO'S CALENDAR

Recent happenings...

- * on May 26 INTERCEDE attended the Poets Against Apartheid event at the Bamboo Club
- * on May 31 we attended the Queen's Park rally against apartheid and heard the inspired words of Bishop Desmond Tutu
- * on June 11 Judith attended a reception hosted by Multiculturalism Minister Otto Jelinek to open a new store front office
- * and on June 14 we joined our friends at the well-attended picnic at Seton Park celebrating Philippine National Day

Coming up soon...

- * the SERVICE UNIT will be open on Saturday, July 5, 10am - 2pm. Call us for an appointment at 591-1635!
- * INTERCEDE's next monthly meeting will be held on Sunday, July 6, 3 - 5pm, at the Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil Street...all domestic workers welcome!

...AND CONGRATULATIONS!

- * to our new landed immigrants VENERA COLEY and VIVIA CAMERON from the West Indies, and to FE GOROZA and FLOR LANAGUEL from the Philippines...best of luck!
- * our warmest best wishes to BRIGIDA VILLAREAL who recently got married
- * and Happy Birthday to LORY BADUA and AMY BUMABAT

Talk to you again next month!

- Columbia Diaz

PS. phone me with juicy tidbits!

PC LABOUR CRITIC...con't

ate attention.

Mary Mouammar, of the Arab Community Centre, pressed Gillies on the timing of PC support. The Government has been saying that it will bring in changes before the Legislature adjourns later this month. He assured us that he would raise the issue at the next weekly meeting of the PC caucus and press for full support of INTERCEDE's recommendations.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Summer is around the corner and every domestic worker should know her 'vacation rights' under the law. If you are a full-time domestic you are legally entitled to two weeks paid vacation per year.

You can take your vacation in one period of two weeks or two periods of one week. Although your employer has the right to decide when you take your holiday, always try to negotiate if you have a preference.

If you are a live-in domestic worker and you leave your employer's home during your holiday, you are entitled to receive the money normally deducted for room & board. The maximum deduction in Ontario is \$55 per week.

Remember that foreign domestic workers on temporary permits have the same rights under the labour laws as anyone who is landed or a citizen of Canada.

For more information or assistance contact:

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS BRANCH	956-5251
INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT	591-1625

INTERCEDE'S NEW PHONE LINES

591-1625

591-6351

DOMESTIC WORKERS UNDER APARTHEID

The recent Arts Against Apartheid Festival focused Toronto's attention on the fight for justice by the Black majority in South Africa.

M'Pho Tutu, daughter of Bishop Desmond Tutu, was the featured speaker at an educational forum on women and poverty held at City Hall. She told the audience that Black women in South Africa are the greatest victims of apartheid:

" In a land of brutal oppression, women are the most brutalized, for we bear the double burden of racism and sexism...In South Africa, women are perpetual minors. First we are the wards of our fathers. We then become the wards of our husbands, uncles, brothers, and sometimes we become the wards of our sons. "

Tutu emphasized that a virtual army of Black women work in white urban areas as servants in white homes. Domestic work, she said, is not considered work in South Africa, so 'domestic labour is not covered by South African laws'. Domestic servants are thus among the most exploited and least protected workers under the apartheid regime.

INTERCEDE salutes the fight of Black domestic workers in South Africa and we add our voice to that of many others calling for an end to modern-day slavery.

DOWN WITH THE NEW
IMMIGRATION FEES!

SUPPORT FROM WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

The Ontario Committee on the Status of Women recently wrote to Ontario Minister of Labour William Wrye regarding the lack of protection for live-in domestic workers under the provincial labour laws. Zeroing in on the long hours of work, the Committee said:

" After much thought and discussion, we fully support the recommendations made to you by INTERCEDE and urge that you move to include live-in domestic workers under the hours of work and overtime provisions of the Employment Standards Act, and also grant domestic workers the right to unionize under the Labour Relations Act.

We do not believe that legislative protection should be denied solely because domestics labour in other people's homes. "

LEE GRILLS
for the Steering Committee

DOMESTICS WANT MEETING WITH MCLEAN

At the INTERCEDE monthly meeting held on June 1, the new immigration 'processing fees' were again a big topic of discussion. Walter McLean, Minister of State for Immigration replied to INTERCEDE's letter asking that foreign domestic workers be exempt from having to pay the fees. A portion of his reply was read out loud to the meeting:

" I do sympathize with the concerns you expressed over the difficulties and extra costs faced by foreign domestics for employment authorizations and permanent residence applications. However, it is not possible to exempt individual groups of foreign

IMMIGRATION FEES...con't

nationals from fees under the Immigration Cost Recovery Program. Only a few rare exceptions to this principle have been made, for example, for Convention refugees and members of designated classes. "

Domestic workers present protested loudly. "We aren't getting through to him", said one woman from Guyana. "My employer just moved to Vancouver and I had to pay out \$50 for a new job permit", said a domestic from the Philippines.

A lively discussion followed on what to do next. Many domestics reported on the reaction of their friends to our open-letter to McLean (mostly favourable!). In the end there was a consensus that INTERCEDE should ask the Minister for a meeting so he can talk directly to domestics about these fees.

Two weeks later Walter McLean was in Toronto to give an address on 'Economic Justice for Women'. INTERCEDE co-ordinator Judith Ramirez attended the event and gave Mr. McLean a letter requesting a meeting at the earliest possible time.

PUBLIC FORUM FOR CHINESE DOMESTICS

About one hundred people attended the community meeting on June 7 for Chinese-speaking domestics and other workers on temporary permits. Held at the Cecil Community Centre, the forum was sponsored by Dan Heap, MP (Spadina) and INTERCEDE.

Immigration lawyer Barbara Jackman explained the Foreign Domestics Program and the details of how you qualify for landed status. Other topics covered were occupational health and safety, workers compensation, income security and human rights violations. Special speakers from various government departments were on hand to clarify issues, and many questions were asked from the floor.

Cristina Chu and Diana Lai provided translation services for many in attendance who did not speak English. They had their hands full throughout the meeting and, without them, there would have been chaos!

It was a productive meeting that made the Chinese community more aware of their rights and of groups like INTERCEDE who can offer help.

- Cheryl Lim

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT 591-1625 / 6351

DOMESTICS CROSS CULTURAL NEWS
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Place
Stamp
Here

First Class

NEXT INTERCEDE MEETING ON JULY 6!
