

Domestics' Cross-Cultural News

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

MARCH 1985

MELROSE MORGAN FIGHTS FOR LANDING

Last fall INTERCEDE made public the case of Melrose Morgan, a domestic worker from Jamaica who has been living and working in Canada since 1979. She was refused landing under the Foreign Domestic Program in the spring of 1984, due to the fact that she had not upgraded herself. The reason she had failed to take upgrading courses, however, was that her employer would not allow the time off work, even though this is required under the policy.

INTERCEDE appealed the decision to deny landing to then-Minister of Immigration John Roberts. His office promised to re-assess Mrs. Morgan if she successfully completed the health care aid course she was enrolled in. Mrs. Morgan worked very hard and, in June 1984, she passed her course with flying colours! Mr. John Roberts, however, never followed through on his promise to authorize another assessment of Mrs. Morgan.

After the election INTERCEDE appealed to new Minister of Immigration Flora MacDonald to give Mrs. Morgan the chance she had been promised and then denied. On September 30, 1984, Mrs. Morgan's work visa expired, and since that time, she has been in Canada illegally, unable to work, awaiting the new minister's decision.

Late last month INTERCEDE was notified that Flora MacDonald's office in Ottawa had decided not to allow a further assessment of Melrose Morgan. The news came as a blow to all of us who know Mrs. Morgan. She is an honest and hard-working woman who has won the respect of her former employers, her friends and family, her fellow-church members, and the entire INTERCEDE family.

For nearly six months already Mrs. Morgan has been uncertain about her future, unable to earn a living, and under considerable stress. However, she has just decided to con-

tinue her fight for landed status in Canada. "This has been my home for more than five years now, and my sister and close relatives all live here. I've worked so hard and been apart from my children for so long to make a future for us together", she said at a recent INTERCEDE meeting. She has asked that we continue to advocate on her behalf, and after seeking legal counsel, INTERCEDE has decided to take Melrose Morgan's case to federal court. In spite of the many months of waiting, Mrs. Morgan's fight for just treatment is not over yet. In next month's newsletter, she will share with all her supporters the story of her ordeal in her very own words.

GRANT FOR GUIDE TO DOMESTICS' RIGHTS

The Ontario Women's Directorate has awarded INTERCEDE a grant to produce a popular guide to domestic workers' rights under Ontario labour law.

Domestic workers across the province will finally have their own information about what the law does and does not do for them. Included in the guide will be sections on the Employment Standards Act, the Workers Compensation Act and the Human Rights Code.

The guide will also have tips on how to negotiate with your employer and how to get help if you have been exploited or discriminated against by an employer.

In preparing the guide, INTERCEDE will consult with other organizations who are actively concerned with the rights of this historically unprotected group of workers.

The guide will be available free of charge and it will be distributed extensively across the province. It is scheduled for completion by the end of the summer.

COCO'S CALENDAR

Recent happenings...

- * on February 11 Desiree attended a meeting sponsored by Dan Heap, Member of Parliament for Spadina, to discuss immigration issues
- * on February 13 Judith attended a special meeting of the Task Force on Contract Compliance and a reception afterwards hosted by Mayor Art Eggleton
- * on February 15 Service Unit staff attended an Open House hosted by the Canada Immigration Centre at 130 Bloor Street West
- * on February 20 INTERCEDE attended an exciting evening of dub poetry and music at the Bamboo Club in honor of Black History Month

Coming up soon...

- * on Wednesday, March 27, there will be a public forum on affirmative action, co-sponsored by the Urban Alliance on Race Relations ...for information call 598-0111
- * INTERCEDE's next monthly meeting is set for Sunday, APRIL 21, 2 - 5 pm, at the Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil Street
- * INTERCEDE will be hosting an Open House to celebrate renewed funding for the Service Unit, on Sunday, MAY 5, 2 - 5 pm, at 58 Cecil Street...mark this date in your calendar!

...AND CONGRATULATIONS

- * to APOLONIA AQUI on her forthcoming marriage to BRIAN WILLIAMS...our sincere best wishes!
- * to CHITA ONAS and ELSIE ANTENCIO, both engaged to be married
- * to MELGIE HACOLA who recently gave birth to a "bouncing baby girl"
- * and finally to our new landed immigrants ERLINDA CUADRO, GLORIA DOMINGO, and BRIGITTE ROSAL, all from the Philippines...welcome to the growing crowd!

Tune in again next month!

-Columbia Diaz

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

On April 1, 1985, domestic workers in Ontario will become eligible for coverage under the Workers Compensation Act.

If you are a domestic worker employed for more than 24 hours per week, your employer should register with the Workers Compensation Board. He or she will pay the Board at the rate of \$2.15 for every \$100 paid to you in wages. This will entitle you to the following benefits if you are injured on the job:

- *payment for medical expenses
- *payment for loss of wages
- *vocational rehabilitation
- *disability pension
- *death benefits for surviving dependents

If you work less than 24 hours per week for any one employer, you can register with the Workers Compensation Board as an "independent operator" and pay for your own coverage.

Please note that you are not eligible for these benefits if you are employed by a member of your own family.

For more information on how to register call:

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT	929-3240
WORKERS COMPENSATION	965-8864

-Desiree Hipplewith

JOIN INTERCEDE

\$5 Year

SUPPORT THE GROUP THAT SUPPORTS YOU!

Newsletter Committee:
 Columbia Diaz, Desiree Hipplewith, Lynette Munian, Judith Ramirez, Pamela Skeete, Sonia Thomas, Daphne Tucker

PRODUCTIVE MEETING IN OTTAWA

Last month INTERCEDE Co-ordinator Judith Ramirez met in Ottawa with Dennison Moore, political advisor to Canada's Minister of Immigration Flora MacDonald.

In the two-hour meeting a broad spectrum of issues was discussed, including the just treatment of domestic workers who fail to qualify for landing because their employers default on their obligation to provide time off for upgrading. Mr. Moore expressed grave concern about cases such as Melrose Morgan's and indicated that he will personally review these cases as they arise.

INTERCEDE also requested a detailed breakdown of statistics for the third year of the Foreign Domestic Programs' implementation. The figures will tell us who - by country of origin, age and number of dependents - is being rejected under the Program. The statistics requested are the same as those released to INTERCEDE by the previous government. Mr. Moore readily agreed to make the new statistics available.

At the close of the meeting, Mr. Moore assured Judith that Flora MacDonald has taken a personal interest in INTERCEDE's work as indicated by her recent decision to renew funding for the Service Unit.

INTERCEDE is looking forward to a closer working relationship with the Minister's office in the coming months.

YVONNE FLEMMING ACCEPTED FOR LANDING!

Yvonne Flemming is a domestic worker from St. Kitts who came to Canada in January of 1979. She was refused landing under the Foreign Domestic Program and notified to leave Canada on or before January 17, 1985.

Ms. Flemming retained the services of a lawyer, who appealed the decision to deny landing to the Minister of Immigration. But Ms. Flemming was turned down for a second time. Her lawyer referred her to the INTERCEDE Service Unit, and, as her counsellor, I asked the local immigration office to review the case.

Her assessing officer, Mr. Hadley, of the

Toronto Central Immigration Office agreed to review Ms. Flemming's case and submit a report to the Minister's office. She was re-assessed and granted an extension of her work visa until Ottawa made its decision.

Yvonne Flemming is highly regarded by the pastor of her church, her employer, and other members of the community, all of whom made submissions to immigration officials on her behalf. Her local member of parliament also urged the Minister of Immigration to act favorably on the case.

INTERCEDE is happy to announce that on February 13, 1985, Ms. Flemming was notified in writing that Flora MacDonald's office had reversed the original decision and accepted her for landing.

CONGRATULATIONS YVONNE!

-Desiree Hipplewith

YOU ASKED FOR IT!

At last month's members meeting, the crowd of approximately sixty-five domestic workers voted overwhelmingly in favor of holding a series of special educational sessions on the legal rights of domestics.

Cathy Gilbert, a student at Osgoode Hall Law School, has agreed to conduct a series of three sessions. Each session will include a presentation and a question and answer period. Mark these topics and dates in your calendar:

- * MARCH 3
"How to sponsor your family to Canada"
- * APRIL 21
"Your rights as a tenant"
- * JUNE 2
"Consumer rights protect your purse"

A special thank you to Cathy for volunteering to conduct these sessions!

BY POPULAR DEMAND INTERCEDE IS HAVING ANOTHER DANCE ON SATURDAY, JUNE 22....

DOMESTICS OF ONTARIO STAND UP!

" Recently I have been attending Intercede Community Meetings and I listen to many individuals speak. When I hear their pain and their problems about how they have been treated by their employers it makes my heart wonder if we as domestic workers in Ontario do have any rights at all. Some of us have not been treated fairly. "

" We as immigrants are trying our best to make a life the hard way, by doing domestic work. Some of us who have the chance to go to school and gain credits have employers who intend to make it hard for us to get landed status. And because some of us are so afraid of getting turned down we put up with the unrighteousness of the employer. "

" What we would like very much is for the Minister of Labour to regulate the hours for live-in domestics, otherwise it seem we all are loseing our rights little by little as domestic exploitation goes on. "

" What we would like is to see something done by the Minister of Labour. Please don't just say "yes" but do something so that we as domestic workers in Ontario can be optimistic about our life and future. "

-Almaida Providence

(Almaida is a domestic worker from the Caribbean.)

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

The Service Unit is located at 348 College Street, 2nd Floor, Toronto, Ontario, M5T 1S4.

The Service Unit is open daily, Monday to Friday, from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm.

Evenings and week-ends leave a message on our machine and we will return your call. Tel. (416) 929-3240

All INTERCEDE services are confidential and free of charge.

FROM THE PHILIPPINES

Recently INTERCEDE received a letter from Pilar DeTorres thanking all those who contributed to her air fare back home. Pilar had to return to the Philippines after only four months in Canada because she was diagnosed as having terminal cancer. Since returning home at Christmas Pilar has resumed chemotherapy treatments and her condition has improved somewhat.

IMPORTANT REMINDER!

We cannot stress enough that if you are having problems with immigration about qualifying for landing under the Foreign Domestics Program, then the sooner you contact us the more we will be able to help you out! Don't put it off. Give yourself a fighting chance.

DOMESTICS CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS
c/o INTERCEDE
348 College Street
Toronto, Ontario
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First Class