

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CANADIAN NEWS

monthly newsletter of the Toronto Organization of Domestic workers' Rights

March 1989

(INTERCEDE)

FILIPINO DOMESTICS WANT CHANGE TO ALLOW ENTRY AS IMMIGRANTS

The "National Dialogue on Domestic Workers' Issues" held March 10 to 12 in Toronto called for domestic workers' organizations all over Canada to "begin work to change government immigration policy to allow foreign domestic workers to enter as landed immigrants."

Coming from different provinces (Ontario, B.C., Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, PEI, Quebec, Nova Scotia etc.), Filipino domestic workers shared their experiences and compared provincial legislations that exclude them from full protection of their rights as workers.

"Domestic workers have rights and are entitled to protection under Canada's laws; however, the threat of deportation is still very real. Domestic workers make a substantial contribution to Canada but can become easy victims of abuse in the workplace and elsewhere. Domestic workers and concerned members and organizations should work together to create a stronger voice towards obtaining the same rights as those enjoyed by other workers in order to stop the exploitation of these vulnerable workers," said INTERCEDE president Cornelia Soberano.

According to a study prepared by Alma Estable, discrimination against domestic workers "is built right into the labour and employment laws of each province". Most provinces set no limit to

domestic workers' hours of work; most exclude them from minimum wage laws and full overtime protection. In seven provinces, including Ontario, domestic workers have a right to maternity leave but in most places they are not entitled to paid vacation nor statutory holidays.

While the conference participants saw the need to lobby for better laws, they realized that the abuses and exploitation they undergo stem from the uncertainty of their status during the two years before they could qualify to be landed immigrants.

During those two years or more before they obtain landed status, foreign domestic workers are forced to tolerate abusive conditions to the utmost limit rather than "make waves". Undergoing a "probationary" period in which these workers must prove stability, self-sufficiency and capacity to successfully integrate into Canadian society, effectively prevents them from freely making choices in determining their lives and conditions of work.

INTERCEDE participated in the week-end dialogue which was organized by the United Council of Filipino Associations in Canada (UCFAC). together with 24 other Filipino organizations in Toronto and other cities.

***Come to INTERCEDE's monthly meeting on Sunday, April 2, 1989
from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil Street.***

We will watch a documentary film, "Voice of Our Own", made by Premika Ratnam and Ali Kazimi about the organizing done by visible minority women in Canada.

Then CLASP will continue their presentation on assessment of foreign domestic workers.

CLASP and INTERCEDE counsellors will be available to serve clients.

CRITERIA USED TO ASSESS DOMESTIC WORKERS

At the March 5, 1989 meeting, CLASP made a presentation on the criteria used by Immigration to assess domestic workers. Discussions on these criteria were led by Toni Schweitzer and John Petrykanyn. They began with an overview of these assessment criteria and divided the discussions into two parts. After April 2, 1989, we will publish a summary of the important points under the following criteria:

1. **Experience** - employment history in Canada.
2. **Language** - working knowledge in English or French.
3. **Financial security** - financial responsibility shown by the foreign domestic worker.
4. **Skill upgrading** - domestic worker needs to show that she has a career goal and is taking or has taken the courses needed to implement this goal.
5. **Social adaptation** - domestic worker needs to show that she is making efforts to interact and have contact with the community. This is shown through volunteer work and her activities during her spare time like sightseeing, traveling to other parts of Canada, etc.
6. **Personal suitability** - evaluation by the Immigration officer of the domestic worker's personal motivation and adaptability to life in Canada, based on how she/he fills the other criteria.
7. **Dependents** - to get permanent status, the foreign domestic worker must show that she/he will be able to financially provide for her/his family.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

(Continued from February issue)

Canada Pension Plan (CPP)

Your employer is required to deduct money from your gross earnings for CPP. This deduction entitles you to retirement benefits when you reach age 60 or 65. If you are under age 65 and become disabled, your CPP contributions entitle you to receive disability benefits.

All deductions made from your salary for CPP and UIC benefits and for Income Tax have to be remitted to Revenue Canada by your employer. Be sure your employer is making the necessary deductions from your gross earnings and remitting these deductions to the government. If your employer fails to do any of these things, call Revenue Canada.

Any refund amount you may receive from Revenue Canada after you have filed your Income Tax return belongs to you unless Revenue Canada advises you differently.

In some cases, domestic workers' contributions to pension plans in their country of origin may be combined with their CPP contributions here if an international agreement exists for that purpose between Canada and their country of origin.

If you leave Canada because you were rejected from becoming landed or for any other reason, when you reach age 60 or 65, you are entitled to the retirement benefits that you earned from making your contributions to CPP during your stay here.

CPP Tel. 926-0311

Revenue Canada Tel. 869-1500

Joan-Ann Gravesande

If you or someone you know has not received this newsletter because of a change of address, please tear the slip below and mail to:

INTERCEDE

489 College St., Suite 402
Toronto, Ontario M6G 1A5

I have changed my address. Please send DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS to my new address:

NAME:.....

ADDRESS:.....

CITY/PROVINCE:.....POSTAL CODE:.....

TELEPHONE:.....

?I HAVE A QUESTION?

How does one become a voting member of INTERCEDE?

Answer: Current INTERCEDE by-laws provide that all members have to attend at least five meetings out of 12 after the last Annual General Meeting in order to qualify to vote in the next AGM. The last AGM was held October 2, 1988.

Can INTERCEDE help me find a job?

Answer: INTERCEDE's mandate does not include finding jobs for domestic workers. However, there are times when employers call our office and leave information about a vacancy. If we know of any person who is between jobs, we give information about such vacancy. Usually, we advise domestic workers to inquire at Canada Employment Centre or to look through newspaper advertisements.

Are employers compelled to give domestic workers an allowance for upgrading?

Answer: In your contract of employment, the employer is required to give you a monthly allowance of \$20 for your upgrading. This \$20 is over and above the regular salary paid to you. However, there is no current penalty or sanction imposed against an employer who does not give you this allowance.

Do employers have the right to enter our room and search our personal belongings without our knowledge?

Answer: No one has the right to search your personal belongings as you have a right to privacy in the room you pay for through the deduction for room and board.

If your employer searches your personal belongings without reasonable cause, this can constitute an invasion of your privacy and you should let your employer know it. If you consider the situation serious enough, you should seek legal advice.

As a live-in domestic, am I allowed to go out during my free time other than days off, for example in the evenings after I have finished my work day?

Answer: Yes, once you have finished working for the day, you can go out for a walk, a movie, etc... If your employer refuses to give you a key to the house, you will have to make arrangements that are convenient for both you and your employer. For example, an employer may not give you a key but is willing to wait for you until a certain time to let you in.

We wish to thank the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), Ministry of Immigration (Canada) and the Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) and Secretary of State (Women's Program) for providing our core funding.

We also wish to thank the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture (Ontario), the City of Toronto and the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto for their continuing support.

COCO'S CALENDAR

Thank you notes...

to the guests during our celebration of International Women's Day (IWD) last March 5:

Souad Sharabani for sharing her experiences as a one-time domestic worker who became a radio producer and film maker and inspired us all to strive to go beyond the limits of our dreams.

Toni Schweitzer and John Petrykanyn of CLASP who made presentations on a topic of great interest to us: the criteria for Immigration assessment of foreign domestic workers.

A special Thank You to Angeles Velasco, who was the only one to send an entry to suggest INTERCEDE's logo. The competition was no competition so we have asked for suggestions from another artist, but your effort was not for nothing, Angie.

Mark Your Calendar...

"If My Mother Could See Me Now", a theatre play about Filipino domestic workers will be showing in English on Saturday, May 27 at 2 p.m., and on Sunday, May 28 at 7 p.m. at St. Michael's Theatre, 121 St. Joseph Street, Toronto.

The same play in Pilipino, "Inay, Kung Alam Mo Lang", will be shown on Friday, May 26 at 8 p.m., Saturday, May 27 at 8 p.m., and Sunday, May 28 at 2 p.m.

For tickets, at \$10, call 567-4037, or look for Martha Ocampo during INTERCEDE's monthly meeting.

Coming and Going...

Our board members were busy in March representing the organization in various events:

President, Cornelia Soberano, and Second Vice President, Mary Jarrell, spoke about foreign domestic workers' rights to an English class in Humber College.

On March 4, Cornelia attended a workshop on Immigration sponsored by the Canadian Bar Association. One of the speakers was former Board member Barbara Jackman. There was discussion of the Foreign Domestic Program.

Mary attended a consultation meeting last March 2, on Public Education on Workplace Rights and Responsibilities during which she spoke with representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Ontario Women's Directorate about the concerns of domestic workers and their difficulties in enforcing their rights.

Mary and Cornelia also participated in a forum on Women and Work at Trent University on March 7. The forum was part of a week-long celebration of International Women's Day (IWD). Then she represented INTERCEDE at a meeting about Women and Well-Being, held by the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women in Ottawa last March 12-14.

My partner in counselling, Joan-Ann Gravesande spoke about the Foreign Domestic Program to a Community Services class in George Brown College and on March 8, presented our display at the Ontario Women's Directorate IWD open house.

Board members, Eusebio Aquintey, Dolores Alapide, Clementina Martinez, Carmencita Hernandez and Cornelia were active as presenters or facilitators in the UCFAC National Dialogue on Domestic Workers' Issues held March 10-12 at the downtown Holiday Inn.

Manang Clem made a presentation about her role in the domestic workers' struggle for landed rights. Our coordinator, Fely Villasin shared her ideas about community organizing while I moderated the first morning session.

Congratulations...

Angeles Suyat and Gloria Thomas who are now landed immigrants.

Happy Birthday...

Fely Comilang, Elsie Subido and Josie Balisan, may you have many more birthdays in Canada.

Happy Easter To All!

Columbia Diaz

This is your newsletter!!! Write your contribution and send in by April 19, 1989.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Canada Immigration Centre	973-4444	Emergency Housing	
Unemployment Insurance	973-4727	Nellie's Hostel	461-1084
Employment Standards Enforcement	965-5251	Evangeline's	762-9636
Ontario Human Rights Commission	965-6841	Legal Services	
Revenue Canada (Taxation)	869-1500	Parkdale Community Legal Services	531-2411
OHIP	965-1000	CLASP (Osgoode Law School) Legal Clinic	736-5029
Immigrant Women's Job Placement Centre	656-8933	Kensington-Bellwoods Commtly Legal Services	363-0304
Immigrant Women's Health Centre	367-1388	Metro Toronto Chinese & SE Asian Legal Clinic	971-9674
Education & Skills Training Centre,		INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT	
Labour Council	971-5893	Place:	489 College St., Suite 402, Toronto, Ontario
		Time:	Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
		Telephone:	(416) 324-8751

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FIRST CLASS