

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

monthly newsletter of the Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers' Rights

March 1991

(INTERCEDE)

The live-in requirement

Is it Acceptable? Is It Legal? Does it Violate a Human Right?

These are questions that should determine whether we should challenge the requirement that domestic workers in the Foreign Domestic Movement program must live-in the home of their employment, according to Doris Anderson, a past president of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, former editor of *Chatelaine* magazine, currently a columnist writing in the *Toronto Star*.

Anderson was the main speaker at INTERCEDE's February meeting where she described the events that led to Clause 28 of the Canadian Charter of Rights. Clause 28 states that men and women are equal.

The well-known advocate for women's rights stressed the significance of February 14th when, ten years ago, about 1400 women gathered in Ottawa for a conference that was opposed by the Canadian government, but that ultimately forced changes to the Charter of Rights resulting in the inclusion of Clause 28.

Anderson proclaimed this a "major triumph for Canadian women". In other countries, including the United States, women are still struggling for

a similar equality guarantee in their constitutions.

"Over 100 years ago, women began to demand the right to vote. It took over 40 years for us to get the vote. Until recently, women were denied the right to sit in the Senate because according to the the British North America Act, women were not persons," Anderson said. Five women from Alberta challenged this all the way to the Supreme Court in 1916, where they were defeated. Unbowed, they brought their challenge to the Privy Council in England which finally declared in 1929 that women were in fact "persons".

Anderson recounted instances when women seemed to have lost but ultimately triumphed. An example is the divorce case of Irene Murdock. She had worked on a ranch side by side with her husband who had decided to divorce her but not before breaking her jaw in two places. Their divorce settlement entitled the wife to only \$200 per month. Murdock decided to challenge the courts' decision that undervalued her work. Her case reached the Supreme Court where she lost.

INTERCEDE monthly meeting will be on Sunday, March 3, 1991, from 3-5 p.m. at the Cecil Community Ctr, 58 Cecil St (near corner Spadina).

"HEALTH, SEXUALITY & AIDS" - these important topics will be discussed by:

SIMONE HAMMOND - a health counsellor from Immigrant Women's Health Centre;

***RHONDA HACKETT - a counsellor from Aids Committee of Toronto; and
MILA PAREDES - project coordinator of Immigrant, Refugee & Women of Colour's Project: Education Sexual Assault.***

There will be CLASP Legal Clinic. No INTERCEDE counselling.

Applicants for membership or renewal must come at 2 p.m.

(We do not accept applications by mail).

But Canadian women won in the end because there developed a strong public pressure to change the divorce law. In time, women won the right to the assets of a marriage, whether they worked in the family business or at home contributing to the well-being of the family.

The equality guarantee in the Charter of Rights has been used to increase protection for women - against sexual harassment, against being identified in the media when she is a victim of

sexual assault, against pregnancy discrimination, etc.

"Equality Eve", as February 14th has been designated, will commemorate the determination of Canadian women to enshrine equality in the Charter of Rights. Anderson said women must be informed and involved; they must know what they want so they'll know what to do to get it.

War does not resolve Gulf conflict

This was the theme of the other speaker at the February meeting, Ann Rowan of the Toronto Disarmament Network. "People working for peace are very disappointed that our leaders did not try to work for a more peaceful settlement of problems in the Gulf", she said.

"When we consider the kind of weapons - chemical and nuclear - that now exist, this war becomes even more frightening", Rowan said. The effect of the use of these weapons on human lives and on the environment is incalculable and estimates are that it would take 235 years to restore the ecosystem to its pre-war state. Rowan explained "we are all linked in the environmental web, destruction of the environment affects us all. The war is not restricted to a little place on this globe."

We should not allow wars to divert us from the real problems of people in developing countries such as the enormous debt crises they face, the

poverty these debts worsen, inequality in the distribution of wealth and inequality in economic relations among nations.

She made an appeal that it is time we find another way to solve conflicts. She said we need to send a message that war is not the answer and that war adversely affects all of us. For example, there are hundreds of thousands of migrant women working as domestics in the Gulf region who now are not able to support their families. Meanwhile, the tremendous expenses for the war will likely result in lesser monies for social services in Canada.

Career/Job Search Counselling

for domestic workers in the FDM and on open permit available Saturday mornings by appointment, tel. 324-8751 Ask for a telephone interview if this is more convenient.

We wish to thank the Employment and Immigration Canada (Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program); Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Women's Program); Ontario Ministry of Citizenship; Ontario Women's Directorate; the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto (Community and Social Services); and the City of Toronto Grants Review Board for their continuing support.

RENEWAL SUBSCRIPTION:

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Please send DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS to:

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It's That Time Of Year . . .

INCOME TAX RETURNS

The deadline for filing your Income Tax Return is April 30, 1991. You should receive a T4 slip from your employer(s) and use that as the basis for completing your Income Tax Return. Blank tax return forms are available at Revenue Canada offices or at the Post Office.

The **T4 Slip** is a record of your gross earnings and all deductions made for Income Tax, CPP, UI and room and board for the previous year.

By February 28, 1991, you should receive a T4 Slip from all the employers you worked for during the year 1990, even if you only worked for an employer for a short time. (A reminder from Revenue Canada tells employers that if they fail to distribute 1990 T4 slips to their employees by February 28, 1991 they will have to pay Revenue Canada a penalty of \$25 per day to a maximum of \$2500).

Your employer is required by law to withhold Income Tax deductions, Canada Pension Plan (CPP) contributions and Unemployment Insurance (UI) Premiums from your gross pay whether you are paid monthly, bi-weekly or weekly. Your employer must send these deductions together with his or her own contributions to Revenue Canada every month.

If you do not receive a T4 slip from an employer, call Revenue Canada and file an official complaint. Even without a T4, you will still have to file your income tax return by April 30, 1991. Just estimate your gross income and your deductions when filling out the income tax form. Include a letter with it explaining that your employer failed to give you a T4 slip.

Once you send in your income tax return, Revenue Canada will assess if you have paid too much taxes (in which case you would get a refund) or if you have not paid enough (in which case you would have to pay more taxes to Revenue Canada).

Any refund you may receive from Revenue Canada belongs to you and not to your employer, unless Revenue Canada advises you differently.

You can claim exemption for dependents that you are supporting. You must be the recognized

supporter of these dependents, for example your children living in Canada. This means no one else can claim to be supporting the same dependents.

If you are supporting your children who are not living in Canada, you will have to fill out an additional form, **T1E-NR** (included in the tax return form package). **You must also provide receipts for the money sent to support them**, such as money orders, bank drafts, remittance receipts etc. You cannot claim exemption for your parents if they are living outside of Canada. If you are supporting dependent children, your income tax deductions will be lower than those for a person without any dependent children.

Providing you have kept your receipts you can claim the following expenses on your income tax return:

1. your tuition fees for the courses you have taken during the calendar year, 1990;
2. some have been able to claim the \$75 fee paid to Immigration for employment authorizations (also known as your work permit) under "Annual Dues";
3. medical expenses;
4. donations to charitable organizations.

If you need help filling out your income tax return, many community organizations offer **Income Tax Clinics** where you can learn to complete your own income tax return. You can find out where there is a Tax Clinic nearest you by calling the Community Information Centre at 392-0505 or inquiring at the nearest library.

If you have to pay taxes to your country of nationality, inquire about this at your local consulate or at an information centre of your own community. For example, Filipino domestic workers may call Kababayan Community Centre, 532-3888, about Philippine taxes they should pay.

If you need to talk to someone...

about something personal ... or if you need emotional support ... CALL for appointment, TEL. 324-8751

?! I HAVE A QUESTION?

I want to learn about Canada because I am new here.

Answer: INTERCEDE holds one-day orientation sessions for newly-arrived domestic workers. The next is scheduled for Sunday, March 17, 1991. You may register during the monthly meeting (March 3rd) to be able to attend this session or call 324-8751. You will be told of the site for this orientation at that time.

I am working for employers who were recently divorced and am now made to work in two places, each of their residences. Taking care of three children and two homes has become very difficult for me. Am I justified in quitting and looking for another employer?

Answer: Yes because this is not what you agreed in your contract. Your contract specifies that you would work in one specific place, an employer's household and not in two households for two employers. If you want to continue working with one of your divorced employers, talk to them about this and come to an agreement so that they and you are not violating your contract.

Is Canada closing its doors to domestic workers ("McDougall to Close Doors on Immigrants", Toronto Star, Jan. 30, 1991)?

Answer: Domestic workers come to Canada with pre-arranged employment so we believe this news does not apply to you. According to this piece of news, the "clamp-down" applies to applicants with no immediate

family or pre-arranged employment or business interests in Canada.

As a domestic worker in the FDM, am I entitled to sick leave?

Answer: Domestic workers are usually not entitled to sick leave with pay. This should not mean, however, that you should be forced to work even if you are sick.

Can I take courses in a University for my upgrading?

Answer: You must get a student permit from Immigration to do this. We would advise you to consider this decision carefully according to how much time is available to you for attending classes and studying for them.

I am a Filipino domestic worker on open permit and I have been asked to get a "police clearance" as a requirement for my landed status; where should I get this?

Answer: Mrs. C. Sleep of the Immigration office at 4900 Yonge Street has informed INTERCEDE that domestic workers who are applying for landed status and are on open permits are required to get a "police clearance" through the consulates of their countries of nationality.

Some domestic workers are complaining, however, that they have been asked to furnish police clearances not just from their country of nationality but also from the last country, and even from all of the countries, where they previously worked. If this is your case, be sure to contact INTERCEDE.

In your case, you should obtain a "police clearance" (or "NBI clearance") through the Philippine Consulate at 151 Bloor Street West, Ste 365, Toronto, tel. 922-7181.

COMING EVENTS

International Women's Day March - Domestic workers must be heard!
Saturday, March 9, 1991 10:30 am Rally at the University of Toronto Convocation Hall
12 noon March behind INTERCEDE's banner from U of T to Ryerson Polytechnical Institute

Orientation for newly-arrived domestic workers on Ontario Labour Laws
Sunday, March 17, 1991 10am-4pm at George Brown College, St. James Campus. 200 King St. East, rm 185. Register at March 3 INTERCEDE meeting or call 324-8751.

Domestic Workers on Open Permit - Meeting
Sunday, April 28, 1991 2-5 pm at Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil Street
We will discuss problems such as delays in obtaining landed status, housing, employment, UIC, etc.
Register by calling 324-8751. Tell your friends.

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

Place: 489 College St.

Time: Monday - Friday

Telephone: (416) 324-8751

INTERCEDE STAFF

Coordinator/Editor: Fely

Counsellors: Columbia Diaz
Karen Serwonka

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