

Domestics' Cross-Cultural News

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

MAY 1984

SERVICE UNIT OPENS!

Sunday, May 6, is the BIG DAY. All our members and friends are invited to an OPEN HOUSE to mark the official opening of the INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT. We celebrate the only community-based service in Canada dedicated exclusively to the needs of foreign domestic workers.

The SERVICE UNIT will operate on a full-time basis and offer in-depth counselling to domestics applying for landing. It will also handle employer-related problems and human rights issues. Information and referral will also be available on social service, health and emergency matters.

INTERCEDE lobbied long and hard to make the SERVICE UNIT a reality, and it is an important victory for the rights of domestics in this country.

The SERVICE UNIT is funded for one year by Immigration Minister John Roberts, through a special grant from the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP).

Two full-time counsellors, COLUMBIA TARAPE, from the Philippines, and DESIREE HIPPLEWITH, from Guyana, have been hired by the Steering Committee. Since coming on staff in March, they have been undergoing an intensive training program. Already, Coco and Desiree have counselled over 100 domestic workers.

INTERCEDE Co-ordinator JUDITH RAMIREZ is supervising the daily operation of the SERVICE UNIT. She brings to it many years of experience developing grass-roots services by and for immigrant women.

SERVICE UNIT HOURS

MONDAY - FRIDAY 9:30 AM - 4:30 PM
Evenings and week-ends: leave a message on our machine and we will return your call promptly! Tel. (416) 929-3240

APPEALING REJECTIONS

If you have been refused landing in Canada, don't take "no" for an answer! You may have grounds for appealing the decision.

The SERVICE UNIT is working with local immigration offices to have rejections reviewed. We also take cases directly to Immigration Minister John Roberts in Ottawa. The minister has recently appointed a special assistant to review cases.

So, if you have been turned down, don't get discouraged! Call the SERVICE UNIT at (416) 929-3240 and we will look into your case without delay.

All INTERCEDE services are free of charge.

MELROSE MORGAN WINS APPEAL

Mrs. Melrose Morgan is a domestic worker from Jamaica, mother of four, and has been in Canada since 1979. She was turned down for landing in April 1983.

Two reviews of her case, the first by the local immigration office and the second by Ontario Region, both upheld the original decision to refuse landing.

On March 30, 1984, she contacted the SERVICE UNIT and we took her case directly to Ottawa. Immigration Minister John Roberts has granted her a six-month extension, and she is now completing her upgrading and looking forward to another assessment under the program. Congratulations, Mrs. Morgan!

SERVICE UNIT ADDRESS

INTERCEDE
348 College Street
Second Floor
Toronto, Ontario
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COCO'S CALENDAR

Recent happenings...

- * on March 14 the GLOBE & MAIL carried an article on the Service Unit by Dorothy Lipovenko...it sparked lots of calls from domestics and employers
- * on March 15 Judith and Desiree were interviewed by Joe Coté on CBC radio's METRO MORNING...lots more calls!
- * an informative write-up on the Service Unit appeared in the March 6 issue of SHARE, Toronto's largest ethnic paper
- * Desiree was profiled in the well read Black community newspaper CONTRAST in its April 6 issue
- * a full-page feature on me appeared in the bi-weekly Filipino newspaper BALITA on March 18
- * "Good Enough to Stay", an article on INTERCEDE's work by Judith is in the latest issue of CURRENTS, journal of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations

Coming up...

- * our new brochure INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT is now available...it tells you exactly what we can do for you
- * on Sunday, June 3, the INTERCEDE ANNUAL MEMBERS MEETING will be held at the Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil Street, from 2 - 5 pm. All members are urged to be there to elect the new Steering Committee
- * SWING INTO SUMMER...INTERCEDE dance on Saturday, June 30, at 58 Cecil Street. DJ, Free Buffet, Door Prizes, Cash Bar Tickets : \$5 per person (members: \$4) At the door or call (416) 929-3240

Newsletter Committee:

Zeny Dumlao, Desiree Hipplewith, Lynette Munian, Judith Ramirez, Pamela Skeete, Coco Tarape, Sonia Thomas, Daphne Tucker

...AND CONGRATULATIONS!

- * to Steering Committee members EULENE BOYCE for her new job as Junior Bookkeeper, and AVRIL HIGGINSON for her new position as Legal Secretary...good luck !
- * to our new landed immigrants: DEBRA BOYCE, EFFIE HENRY, LINDA LISING, and LOLIT DAYAO...welcome to the growing crowd!
- * to MARION THOMSON, Steering Committee member for 3 years, who's heading back home to the U.K. to study...INTERCEDE will surely miss you!
- * to Steering Committee member FRANCES GREGORY, Osgoode Hall law student, for her recent election to the chairmanship of the Community and Legal Aid Services Program (CLASP)

That's it for this month, folks!

- Columbia Tarape

JOIN INTERCEDE

\$5 Year

SUPPORT THE GROUP THAT SUPPORTS YOU !

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

On March 1, 1984, the Ontario minimum wage for domestic workers went up to \$3.35 per hour. The new rate for foreign domestics on work permits is:

\$ 792.50 Gross Pay (per month)

From that amount, your employer can deduct:

\$ 234.00 Room & Board

Plus, the employer must deduct:

\$ 70.15 Income Tax

11.27 Canada Pension

18.23 Unemployment Insurance

That leaves you with: \$ 458.85 Net Pay

SUPPORT FOR PROVINCIAL BRIEF

Last November, INTERCEDE met with Ontario Labour Minister Russell Ramsay. We presented him a brief calling for immediate changes in provincial labour laws to take domestic workers out of the dark ages.

Chief among our recommendations is bringing domestics up to the standard minimum wage.

At present we lag a full 50¢ behind other workers. In our brief we said:

In regulating a below-the-standard minimum wage for domestic work, the Government of Ontario both reflected and reinforced the traditional prejudice against work in the home.

The other key issue is including domestic work under the hours of work and overtime provisions of the Employment Standards Act. Did you know that in Ontario it is legally possible for a domestic to work or be on call to her employer for up to 120 hours per week. That brings her real hourly wage down to \$1.00 and change. In our brief we said to the minister:

INTERCEDE wishes to underscore the fact that domestic workers...are still among the most exploited and under-protected workers in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Ramsay assured us that he would be studying our recommendations carefully, but so far, six months later, we have had no response from the minister.

The only recent change is that, as of March 1, 1984, domestics are entitled to an additional 12 hours off per week. But these do not have to be consecutive to the first 36!

INTERCEDE has launched a province-wide drive to pressure the Ontario Government to act without further delay.

Letters of support for our recommendations have been sent to Russell Ramsay from the Social Action Committee of the YWCA, Metro Labour Council, the United Church of Canada, and prominent individuals such as Toronto lawyer Mary Eberts.

WHAT OUR SUPPORTERS ARE SAYING:

"Domestic workers have historically been among the most exploited in Canada. Although recent administrative and legislative amendments have improved matters, more needs to be done to bring the working conditions of domestic workers in line with those of other workers in Ontario.

" We call upon you (Russell Ramsay) and your government to pass the amendments requested by INTERCEDE."

- Wally Majesky, President
Labour Council of Metro Toronto

" I write to you (Russell Ramsay)...(as) a mother of three, who is in the work force, and employs a full-time nanny..."

" I try to raise my children to have respect for domestic work, for people who work for them, and for one another. I do not think that it is possible to raise children who have a real appreciation of human dignity if those children are raised in a home where exploitation of another human being is practiced on a regular basis. People who see the undervaluing of their nannies, and others who may give services in the home to their families, will not themselves be able to grow into respecting and respected human beings.

"...The longer this government tries to get child care "on the cheap" or countenances the efforts of private individuals who try to get child care "on the cheap", the more this government is short changing out future."

- Mary Eberts
Tory, Tory, DesLauriers & Binnington

SPECIAL THANKS TO

PLURA

FOR FUNDING THIS NEWSLETTER !

DESIREE'S CROSS-COUNTRY DIGEST

In the past year, INTERCEDE Co-ordinator JUDITH RAMIREZ has been travelling across Canada reaching out to domestics and hearing their cry:

- * in March, she was in London, Ontario, where she appeared on two CBC television programs and met with local groups. Women Immigrants of London and Cross Cultural Learner Centre are both concerned about the rights of domestics in the London area, and are now offering assistance with the SERVICE UNIT as back-up
- * last November, Judith gave the keynote address at a seminar on domestic workers' rights in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The event was sponsored by the Philippine Homemakers Association, the Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba, and the Congress of Black Women. The seminar was widely covered by the media, with articles in the Winnipeg Free Press, the Winnipeg Sun, and the Toronto Star.
- * last September, Judith was in Halifax, Nova Scotia, for the "First Provincial Immigrant Women's Conference". She gave a keynote address on lobbying for legislative change. The event was sponsored by the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association and attended by representatives from 18 local groups.

Tune in next month for more!

- Desiree Hipplewith

CROSS--CANADA GROUPS HELPING DOMESTICS

Ottawa

Ottawa-Carleton Immigrant Services Assoc.
Ottawa Household Workers Association
425 rue Gloucester Street
Ottawa, Ontario Tel.(613) 238-4256

London

Cross Cultural Learner Centre
533 Clarence Street
London, Ontario Tel.(519) 679-6281

Windsor

Windsor Women Working With Immigrant Women
356 Pine Street
Windsor, Ontario Tel. (519) 253-8783

Winnipeg

Philippine Homemakers Association
Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba
c/o 700 Elgin Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba Tel. (204) 786-1232

Edmonton

National Household Careers Corporation
15105 Stony Plain Road
Edmonton, Alberta Tel. (403) 484-6755

Vancouver

Domestic Workers Union of British Columbia
1992 West 1st Avenue
Vancouver, B.C. Tel. (604) 733-8764

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c/o INTERCEDE
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Toronto, Ontario
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FIRST CLASS