

Domestics' Cross-Cultural News

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

MAY 1985

INTERCEDE APPEALS TO ORGANIZED LABOUR

Last month INTERCEDE co-ordinator Judith Ramirez was a guest speaker at an affirmative action conference sponsored by the Ontario Federation of Labour. Held at Toronto's Westbury Hotel, the conference was attended by three hundred and fifty delegates from all over the province.

Speaking on a panel on "unorganized women workers", Judith emphasized the resolute struggle of foreign domestics to win rudimentary labour rights in this country. She listed the conditions of "modern-day slavery" which were common when INTERCEDE began its work five years ago: no protection under Ontario labour laws, no chance for landed status in Canada, and exclusion from the Workers Compensation Act and the Labour Relations Act. Judith stressed that it is "no accident that the lowest paid and least protected workers are not only women but members of visible minorities".

Judith then described the determined efforts of domestic workers, and their allies in women's rights groups, immigrant service groups and church organizations, to end the historic exploitation of women who work in the home. She told of the letter-writing campaigns, meetings with ministers, rallies, etc, which brought domestics together across ethnic and racial lines.

To sustained applause, Judith listed the key victories in recent years: a chance for landed status after two years of working in Canada; protection under some of the key provisions of the Employment Standards Act; and coverage under the Workers Compensation Act and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Judith ended her speech by underscoring the fact that live-in domestics are still wide open to exploitation because their hours of work are not regulated by law. It is still possible in Ontario for a domestic to work or be on call to her employer for up to

120 hours per week! This makes a mockery of the minimum wage and reduces a domestic's real rate of pay to \$1.47 per hour. And domestic workers are still forbidden by law to unionize!

Judith told the assembled trade unionists that INTERCEDE needs more support as we go into battle to strengthen the labour laws for domestics. She called on organized labour to "raise your voice against this shameful state of affairs" and to "put some of your considerable power at the disposal of Third World women still fighting for basic labour rights".

Organizers of the conference were quick to respond to INTERCEDE's appeal. The Women's Commission of the Ontario Federation of Labour said that it wants to play a more active role in the continuing struggle of domestic workers in this province.

WELCOME TO BETH UDASCO!

As many of you know, one of our Service Unit counsellors, Columbia Diaz, is away on maternity leave until September. The person who has been hired to replace her is Ms. Lilibeth Udasco.

Ms. Udasco came to Canada from the Philippines in 1983. She is an experienced social worker with a Bachelor of Science diploma in the field. Prior to coming to Canada she held positions with Foster Parents Plan International, in Iloilo City, and Isabela Emergency Hospital, in Isabela, Negros Occidental.

Since her arrival in Canada, Ms. Udasco has been employed as a community worker with the Kababayan Community Centre in Toronto. She has developed extensive knowledge of the Filipino community in the city and is already known to many of INTERCEDE's members.

Ms. Udasco is married and has a five-month old son.

LILIBETH'S CALENDAR

Recent happenings...

- * on May 4 INTERCEDE's Service Unit began opening for business every first Saturday of the month...please call in advance to make an appointment or if you have no specific problem just drop-in to say "hello" !
- * on May 6 INTERCEDE attended the Eaton's Boycott Extravaganza at Massey Hall... many of the Eaton's strikers are immigrant women and we're behind them all the way
- * on May 10 Judith Ramirez at a conference on "women and ethnicity" sponsored by the Multicultural History Society of Ontario
- * on May 11 the Phil-Can Ladies Circle elected its new officers at a Lovely ceremony. Attending for INTERCEDE were Columbia Diaz and Desiree Hipplewith

Coming soon...

- * on June 8 the Philippine National Day Alliance is hosting a celebration at Seton Park. It will be a "barrio fiesta" type event and everyone is welcome to join in!
- * on July 7 INTERCEDE will be holding its Annual General Meeting at the Cecil Community Centre. For information call 977-3467

...AND CONGRATULATIONS!!

- * to EVELYN DESTACAMENTO and LORNE COHEN who were married on April 20
- * to ELSIE ANTENCIO and WILLY IBANA who were married on May 11
- * to our new landed immigrants : PRECILLA VITTO, MARCY BARRETE and LENA GUILLERMO, all from the Philippines
- * to FRANCES GREGORY, former co-ordinator of INTERCEDE, for completing law school this spring...we're proud of you!

That's it til next month!

- Beth Udasco

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

If you are in Canada under the Foreign Domestic Program you are entitled to go to school to better yourself. Upgrading your education and job-related skills will increase your chances of qualifying for landed status when Immigration assesses you.

If you have an educational/vocational goal in mind, and you plan to take courses in the fall of 1985, you should make the necessary arrangements now.

Check with the various school boards and community colleges between the months of June and July about course offerings in the fall. You should collect brochures which list the courses you are most interested in.

Having selected the course(s) you wish to pursue, check with a counsellor or an instructor to ensure that you have all the relevant information. To be on the safe side, you can also request a qualifying exam to determine that you are capable of handling the work in your chosen area. Enroll very early, before the deadline, in order to ensure placement before the class is filled.

As soon as you have been formally accepted in your course(s), report to your local immigration office with your acceptance letter in order to obtain your student visa. Under the Foreign Domestic Program you cannot study without special permission from immigration.

If you are unsure of what course of study is best for you, the Service Unit can help you sort out your options. Call us at:

(416) 977-3467

- 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, Beth Udasco

WE MISS YOU, COCO!

OPEN HOUSE A REAL CELEBRATION!

INTERCEDE members were in a festive mood as they greeted community representatives on Sunday afternoon, May 5, at the Cecil Community Centre. We had all looked forward to this opportunity to thank our many friends for their generous and enthusiastic support.

In welcoming the guests, INTERCEDE co-ordinator Judith Ramirez said "It has been exactly one year since we launched the Service Unit at an Open House, and, because of the tremendous vote of confidence you gave us, we are here celebrating the extension of our funding for a second year".

Father Rodolfo Imperial, of Saint Basil's Roman Catholic Church, opened the afternoon's program with an invocation which was followed by greetings from a number of community organizations including Kababayan Community Centre, National Congress of Black Women of Canada, and the Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues.

The big highlight of the program was the heartfelt speeches given by domestic workers who had turned to the Service Unit when they were in dire straights with Immigration.

Barbara Donaldson, from Jamaica, told the crowd how when others had given up on her case INTERCEDE took it up and solved it. Patricia Figueroa and Precilla Vitto, both from the Philippines, spoke of how close they came to losing their chance for landing before INTERCEDE stepped in. All three women are now landed and they urged all foreign domestics to "support the group that supports you!"

A special moment in the program came when Doctors Hospital was recognized for its longstanding support of INTERCEDE's work. A framed letter of appreciation was presented to Diana Moeser, Director of Community Health Planning for Doctors Hospital.

Following the program all our guests lined up for a delicious buffet of ethnic foods prepared by INTERCEDE members. Among our special invited guests were Harry Garey, distinguished Black activist; Pamela Harris,

feminist photographer; Lillian Allen, dub poet; Liling Cortez, Director of Kababayan; Joseph Maviglia, Italo-Canadian writer; Walter Bye and Ingrid Gonsalves, from Canada Immigration Centres.

Also present were representatives from the Cecil Community Centre, the Ontario Women's Directorate, Saint Christopher House, the Urban Alliance on Race Relations, the Toronto Public Health Department, and the Canada Employment Centres.

EULENE BOYCE HAS THE LAST WORD

Eulene Boyce, originally from Barbados, is a senior member of the INTERCEDE Steering Committee. She made the closing remarks at the Open House and this is what she said:

" Chairperson, invited guests, members of INTERCEDE and friends.

It gives me great pleasure to give the vote of thanks and say a few words on behalf of the domestic workers and INTERCEDE.

INTERCEDE was started in 1979, the same year I came to Canada. Being an outgoing person I was searching for places where I could get acquainted with others in the same field. I came across an article in the GLOBE & MAIL about INTERCEDE and a number where they could be reached. I contacted them and since then I've been actively involved in their work.

It has been a long, hard battle to achieve what we wanted, but with a leader like Judith, staff and dedicated domestic workers we have won some of our battles. One of the greatest battles won was for domestics to gain landed status from within Canada...

...I must say I was one of the first women accepted for landing. Many girls have a hard time and some get rejected. But INTERCEDE has also received money for the Service Unit which is helping a lot of people...

In my opinion INTERCEDE has come a long way and I sincerely hope that it will keep growing because domestic work is very important, especially to the children of this country...Thank you.

PHIL-CAN LADIES CIRCLE HOLDS PARTY

The Philippine-Canadian Ladies Circle held its annual induction party on Saturday, May 11, at the TRANZAC CLUB. The event is held every spring to swear-in the new executive of the organization. This year the "induction officer" was Mr. Walter Bye, supervisor at the Canada Immigration Centre at 130 Bloor Street West. Mr. Bye introduced the new officers and congratulated them on their appointment. They are:

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Linda Lising | President |
| Elsie Ibana | Vice-president |
| Elvira Boncato | Secretary |
| Patria Jubilo | Treasurer |
| Tessie Visya | Business Manager |
| Virginia Himaya | Business Manager |
| Myrna Manongdo | Public Relations |
| Lilia Santerva | Public Relations |
| Rosalina Caneva | Sergeant at Arms |
| Gloria Domingo | Sergeant at Arms |

As guest speaker for the event, Mr. Bye encouraged the many domestic workers present to put their best foot forward as they seek landing in Canada.

Following the induction ceremony, everyone was invited to dance up a storm to the music of a live band. Many danced until the wee hours of the morning!

- Desiree Hipplewith

NEWSLETTER IS ONE YEAR OLD!

With this issue "Domestics Cross-cultural News" enters its second year of publication. When we launched our newsletter last May, our mailing list consisted of approximately five hundred individuals and groups. A year later, the mailing list is fast approaching the 1000 mark!

INTERCEDE is thrilled that there is so much interest in the community in our work!

Last year the newsletter received a grant from PLURA, a coalition of churches in Ontario. This year we have no grant money and we appeal to our readers to help us with our costs.

We suggest a subscription rate of \$25 per year for government departments, \$10 per year for community organizations, and \$5 for individuals. Domestic workers will continue to receive the newsletter free of charge. Donations in any amount are very welcome.

On behalf of the Newsletter Committee, a heartfelt "thank you" for your interest and support.

COME TO THE INTERCEDE DANCE ON JUNE 22!

DOMESTICS CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS
c/o INTERCEDE
58 Cecil Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5T 1N6

Place
Stamp
Here

First Class

NEXT INTERCEDE MEMBERS MEETING ON JUNE 2!
