

Domestics' Cross-Cultural News

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

NOVEMBER 1985

IAN SCOTT BACKS CHANGES IN LABOUR LAWS!

On November 13, 1985, an INTERCEDE delegation met with Ontario's Attorney General Ian Scott, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues.

Led by INTERCEDE Co-ordinator Judith Ramirez, the delegation also included Ellen Campbell, Executive Director of the Toronto YWCA; Maria Wallis, of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women; Ceta Ramkhalawansingh and Bridget Vianna, of the Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues.

The hour-long discussion focused on our current efforts to win changes in the Employment Standards Act and the Labour Relations Act to protect domestics from exploitation. Ian Scott was clearly familiar with the key issues, and he commended INTERCEDE on our "research and hard-nosed positions".

One of the points raised by the Minister was the danger of adversely affecting demand for live-in domestic work is wages rise "beyond what the market can bear". We replied that demand has actually risen since the Immigration Commission has been requiring a pay rate of 25% above the Ontario minimum wage for foreign domestics. When the policy was first introduced in 1981, there were roughly 11,000 foreign live-in domestics in Canada, but by 1984 the number had risen to over 15,700 - an increase of 43%! An estimated two-thirds of these domestics live and work in Ontario.

Mr. Scott also raised the issue of recordkeeping. In calling for a limit on the hours of work of live-in domestics, INTERCEDE has been stressing the need to require employers to keep

records. Some employers are opposed to this, presumably because it involves government bureaucracy "invading" their homes. The Minister suggested that domestic workers keep the records and that employers' sign them. We replied that our main concern is insuring that there be some mechanism for employer accountability. If there isn't, then any limit set on the hours of work will not be taken seriously.

At the close of the meeting Mr. Scott assured INTERCEDE of his personal support, and he indicated that he would communicate our concerns to Minister of Labour William Wrye.

BOB RAE PLEDGES NDP SUPPORT

The week before our meeting with Ian Scott, INTERCEDE met with Ontario NDP Leader Bob Rae. Also present were Bob MacKenzie, NDP Labour Critic, and Evelyn Gigantes, NDP Women's Issues Critic.

Judith Ramirez and Cathy Gilbert represented INTERCEDE at the meeting, and they were joined by Shirin Perston, of the YWCA's Social Action Committee.

Our delegation emphasized the fact that live-in domestics are denied the minimum wage, to which they are legally entitled, because there is no control of the hours of work. "It's a case of giving them the money with one hand and taking it away with the other" said Judith Ramirez.

Mr. Rae asked INTERCEDE to provide him with recent case histories of abuses by employers. He said that the information would strengthen the NDP's efforts to pressure the Liberal Government to take immediate action. We agreed to provide the documentation,

COCO'S CALENDAR

Recent happenings...

- * on November 7 Judith met with Immigration Minister Walter MacLean prior to his speech on the Nairobi Conference at the Toronto Convention Centre
- * on November 14 INTERCEDE discussed problems in the Foreign Domestic Program at a community meeting hosted by Dan Heap, MP (Spadina)
- * on November 15 Judith attended a reception given by the new Multiculturalism Minister Otto Jelinek
- * this one we have been interviewed by the Toronto Star, Share, and CBC radio, about our provincial drive to change the labour laws

Coming soon...

- * INTERCEDE monthly meeting on Sunday, December 1, 3 - 5 pm, at the Cecil Community Centre. This is our annual Christmas party, so bring family & friends!
- * on December 15 the Cecil Centre is hosting a holiday luncheon for staff & friends...we'll be there!
- * on December 21 the Philippine-Canadian Ladies Circle will hold its annual Christmas party at the East York Community Centre. For information call 921-1697

...AND CONGRATULATIONS!

- * to EULENE BOYCE for her promotion at the Coro Jewellery Co.
- * to DELIA ONATE who landed a good job at the Chelsey Inn Park Nursing Home

Tune in again next month!

-Columbia Diaz

BOB RAE...continued

and have since drawn nine cases from our current files for Mr. Rae (see page 3).

At the close of the meeting Bob Rae assured INTERCEDE of his personal commitment to domestic workers' rights and said he and his party would work closely with us to achieve legislative reform.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

If you are a live-in domestic worker you are entitled to one free period of 36 consecutive hours and another free period of 12 consecutive hours per week. The two periods can be combined so you get one free period of 48 consecutive hours, if your employer agrees to it.

No deduction from your wages can be made for your weekly time off work. It is time off with pay.

Your employer can ask you to work during your two free periods, but only with your consent. You have a right to say NO!

If you do agree to work during a free period, you are entitled to compensating time off at the rate of 1½ hours off for every 1 hour worked. You have up to four weeks to add this extra time to one of your free periods.

If you do not get the extra time off, you are entitled to overtime pay (\$6.00 per hour) for each hour worked. This money is owed to you in addition to your regular weekly or monthly wages.

Keep your own records so you will know what time or money your employer owes you!

For more information contact:

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT (416) 977-3467

- Desiree Hipplewith

MERRY CHRISTMAS & A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR!

FROM DAWN TO DUSK...

Here are four case histories from INTERCEDE's current files on the working conditions of live-in domestics in the Toronto area. The names have been changed to protect the privacy of the women.

NAME: Nora
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: Guyana
PERIOD OF EMPLOYMENT: 11/83 - 1/85
SIZE OF HOME: Large 4 bedroom
NUMBER OF CHILDREN: 2
DUTIES: housework, laundry, cooking, childcare
HOURS OF WORK: 14hr day / 84hr wk
TIME OFF: 1 day wk

NAME: Anna
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: Germany
PERIOD OF EMPLOYMENT: 1/84 - 10/85
SIZE OF HOME: 2 storey, 3 bedroom
NUMBER OF CHILDREN: 2
DUTIES: housework, laundry, cooking, childcare
HOURS OF WORK: 13hr day / 65hr wk
TIME OFF: 2 days wk

NAME: Linda
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: Philippines
PERIOD OF EMPLOYMENT: 6 - 10 /85
SIZE OF HOME: 4 bedroom farmhouse plus barn
NUMBER OF CHILDREN: 3
DUTIES: housework, laundry, cooking, feeding animals, cleaning barn
HOURS OF WORK: 14hr day / 70hr wk
TIME OFF: 2 days wk

NAME: Carol
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: Jamaica
PERIOD OF EMPLOYMENT: 4 - 9 /85
SIZE OF HOME: 15 rooms
NUMBER OF CHILDREN: 2
DUTIES: housework, laundry, cooking, childcare, care of pet dog
HOURS OF WORK: 14hr day / 70hr wk
TIME OFF: 2 days wk

"...Women are an integral part of Canada's economy and its economic performance. Whether in the paid labour force, or doing unpaid work within or outside the home, women's contribution to the economy is pivotal, and should be accorded appropriate recognition..."

Premier David Peterson

Right. So when are you going to recognize the right of live-in domestics to overtime pay?

COMMUNITY KEEPS SPEAKING OUT!

Community organizations continue to raise their voices in support of domestic workers' rights. We quote from a number of letters recently sent to Minister of Labour William Wrye.

"...We are particularly distressed about the fact that live-in domestic workers are denied the right to unionize and are not included under the hours of work and over-time provisions of the Employment Standards Act. We appeal to you to act immediately and end the sexist and racist ways Ontario law now treats live-in domestic workers."

- MICHAEL LYONS, President
Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto

"We strongly endorse, at this time, INTERCEDE's call for regulating the working hours of domestics and for granting these workers the right to unionize."

We are aware that many domestics are abused and exploited by their employers who fail to recognize and to uphold their worker's right to regular working hours."

- AKUA BENJAMIN, President
Congress of Black Women of Canada (Toronto Chapter)

JOIN INTERCEDE

\$5 Year

SUPPORT THE GROUP THAT SUPPORTS YOU

con't...

" We were shocked when we realized that live-in domestic workers have so little protection under Ontario labour law. Although these workers perform a valuable service - what could be more valuable than caring for children? - there is no provision in the law to ensure that they are receiving overtime pay. They are paid for 44 hours a week, but can be required to work up to 120 hours a week, which means that they can end up working at approximately one third of the minimum wage. These women are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and we would certainly like to see them given the same protection under Ontario law as other workers.

The Liberal government has thus far demonstrated an awareness and concern about women's issues and we hope that you continue to show this by proposing legislation to protect domestic workers."

- KAREN THOMPSON
Women of Halton Action
Movement (WHAM)

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

NEW INTERCEDE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE!

For the first time since INTERCEDE formed in 1979 the Steering Committee has elected an Executive Committee. We are happy to announce the names of those serving on the new Executive Committee:

- PRESIDENT: Eulene Boyce
VICE-PRESIDENTS: Columbia Diaz
Avril Higginson
SECRETARY: Cathy Gilbert
TREASURER: Lynette Munian

In next month's newsletter we will tell you a little about each member of our Executive Committee.

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

Offices located at the Cecil Community Centre, at 58 Cecil Street, Toronto, (one block south of College St. just east of Spadina).

Office Hours: Monday - Friday
9:00 am - 4:00 pm
1st Saturday of month
11:00 am - 2 pm
(please call for appn't)

All our service are confidential and free of charge.

SERVICE UNIT OPEN ON SATURDAY, DEC 7!!

THIS MONTH'S MEMBERS' MEETING ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1ST!

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

Place
Stamp
Here

First Class