

Domestics' Cross-Cultural News

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

NOVEMBER 1986

IMMIGRATION FEES COSTING MILLIONS!

Last February the federal government introduced immigration processing fees which are costing foreign domestic workers a fortune from their meagre earnings.

Under the new cost-recovery program, every foreign domestic is required to pay \$50 for each employment authorization, even though she can only change employers if she loses her job 'through no fault of her own'. She must also pay \$125 for her landing application, regardless of whether or not she is accepted for permanent residence.

INTERCEDE estimates that the processing fees will cost foreign domestics over one million dollars this year! If we consider only the \$50 work permit fee, and multiply approximately 15,000 domestics times 1.5 permits each, then the government is making a tidy \$1,125,000. This is a very conservative estimate which leaves out entirely the fees to process landing applications.

INTERCEDE believes that this enormous subsidy to government from the lowest paid sector of immigrant and visible-minority women is unconscionable. Many foreign domestics change jobs because they are laid off or their employers are violating their rights. Why should they be penalized for simply moving on to another job?

Last February INTERCEDE protested the imposition of the new fees to then-immigration minister Walter McLean. Recently we wrote to his successor Gerry Weiner, asking for a meeting to discuss exempting domestic workers from paying the fees.

Recently, the Ontario Council of

Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) wrote to Mr. Weiner supporting our recommendation. In his letter, OCASI President Yew W. Lee said:

"...The \$50 fee for a work permit is particularly painful for domestic workers. Domestic workers are the most underpaid workers in the country...under the new cost-recovery program, job loss carries with it not only the problems faced by other workers, but effectively a \$50 fine. "

INTERCEDE has just launched a new letter-writing campaign to the minister of immigration which underscores the inequity of the present program:

"...we have already paid millions into the Unemployment Insurance Commission and the Canada Pension Plan without getting anything back...if we leave our jobs because we are overworked, underpaid or sexually exploited, why should the government profit by charging us for our new work permits? "

Foreign domestic workers all over Ontario and across Canada are circulating our open-letter to Mr. Weiner. We call on all our allies and friends to support this effort.

Please take a moment to sign the enclosed letter and mail it to Ottawa today'. No postage is necessary. You can help us fight this important battle. Take a stand for domestic workers' rights!

For more copies of the open-letter please write to us:

INTERCEDE
58 Cecil Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5T 1N6

Tel. (416) 591-1625

LILIBETH'S CALENDAR

Recent happenings...

- * on November 6-9 INTERCEDE attended the second National Conference of Immigrant & Visible Minority Women in Winnipeg, Manitoba
- * on November 19 we attended a 'Child Management Workshop' sponsored by the Catholic Children's Aid Society

Coming up soon...

- * INTERCEDE's next monthly meeting is set for Sunday, December 7, at 3pm, at the Cecil Centre. This is our Christmas social so bring a friend...everyone welcome!
- * on December 14 the Cecil Community Centre is holding its 'Christmas Volunteers' Party' at 1:30pm. For more information call Beth or Joan Ann at 591-1625

...AND CONGRATULATIONS!

- * to Board member Clementina Martinez for her promotion at work
- * to FLORA CLARO, BEVERLEY DALY, CLEM MARTINEZ, LIGAYA MANUEL, EDITHA PASCUA, GLORIA THOMAS, and CECILIA TUBOG who celebrated their natal days...many happy returns!
- * many thanks to the 'food donors' who brought home-made goodies to our 5th anniversary celebration of the landed status policy
- * and to our new landed immigrants AMBROZINE YEARWOOD from the Caribbean; EVELYN DESTACAMENTO, CORA CABUNTOCAN-SANTOS, and ELISABETH LANGIT from the Philippines... we are proud of you!
- * and finally, we wish all our members & friends a very happy holiday

- Beth Udasco

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

As of October 1, 1986, the cost of board has gone up from \$1.60 per meal to \$1.70 under Ontario labour law.

If you are a live-in domestic worker your employer can deduct for 3 meals per day for a total of no more than \$35 per week.

For every meal you do not eat at your employer's home you are legally entitled to receive an extra \$1.70 in your pay-cheque. For example, if you leave your employer's home on Saturday after breakfast, and return Sunday night after supper, you are entitled to an extra \$8.50 in your next pay-cheque (5 meals X \$1.70 = \$8.50).

In addition, when you take your two week's vacation, your employer is required to pay you an extra \$70.00 for missed meals (\$35 per week X 2 = \$70.).

This money adds up: if you leave your employers' home every week-end you will be owed an extra \$34 at the end of every four-week period (\$8.50 X 4 = \$34.). By the end of the year you should have an extra \$425 in your hands (\$8.50 X 50 weeks = \$425.)!

If you insist that your employer does not deduct for meals you haven't eaten, you could have \$425 extra spending money at Christmas time!

And speaking of the holidays, if your employer goes away for Christmas and leaves you in charge of the house, you are not on holidays so you should be paid normally and your meals should be provided for you.

For more information contact :

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT 591-1625
(Mon - Fri 9:00 am - 4:00 pm)

- Joan Ann Gravesande

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

LILLIAN ALLEN WINS JUNO AWARD!

INTERCEDE Board member Lillian Allen has just won a coveted Juno Award at a star-studded ceremony in Toronto! Her recent LP Revolutionary Tea Party won in the reggae category and signalled the wide acceptance her hard-hitting album has received since its release four months ago.

Lillian Allen is considered the god-mother of dub (raggae) poetry, which originated simultaneously in Jamaica and England in the late 19-70's. It is an extension of the African communicative oral approach to poetry, with a heavy emphasis on the rhythmic life of the word.

Allen's poems, ranging in subject from apartheid to childbirth, are brash, burning and lyrical social commentary aimed at the heart of the listener. For your copy of Revolutionary Tea Party send \$10 (cheques & money orders only!) to:

Lillian Allen
P.O. Box 301, Station L
Toronto, Ontario M6E 4Z3

GLORIA MEDINA GETS LANDED

Gloria Medina is a domestic worker who came to Canada from her native Philippines in 1982. Family problems back home hampered her application for landed status, and she contacted our Service Unit for help.

As her counsellor, I interviewed her extensively and found that she was in need of legal assistance due to complications in her marital status. She was referred to CLASP at Osgoode Hall Law School with INTERCEDE's continued involvement.

During her four years in Canada, Mrs. Medina has done much to im-

prove herself intellectually, socially and financially. She is a strongly motivated and self-reliant woman. INTERCEDE had no reluctance in recommending her for landing.

After many months of delay and many personal sacrifices to sponsor her family back home, INTERCEDE is happy to announce that Gloria Medina received her landing papers on October 21, 1986!

- Beth Udasco

NEW DROP-IN FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS!

INTERCEDE Board member Patricia Yuen has been working with the staff of the Cecil Centre to develop a weekly 'caregiver's drop-in'.

This new program will begin on January 7, 1987, and be held every Wednesday morning from 9:30 - 11:00 o'clock.

All caregivers and the children they look after are invited to participate in the new drop-in program. It will feature a well-stocked toy library where the children can play and learn together. Domestic workers can socialize with other caregivers and take a break while the children mingle with each other.

The aim of the drop-in is to bring together caregivers from many different backgrounds and cultures. The only money involved is a small charge (25¢) for tea or coffee. Registration is free.

If you would like to register as a participant or volunteer, please call Pat at 591-1625, or drop in at the Service Unit anytime, Monday - Friday, 9am - 4pm.

- Joan Ann Gravesande

NO NEWSLETTER IN THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

SERVICE UNIT HOLDS ITS OWN!

For the first two quarters of this year (March - August 1986), the Service Unit held its own in spite of a temporary staff cut. From March to August we had only one full-time counsellor instead of two, but the drop in services is nowhere near the 50% mark.

The total number of inquiries for the six-month period was 801, as compared to 885 for the same period last year, or a drop of only 9%! The total number of face-to-face interviews was 96, as compared to 120 last year, or a drop of only 20%. And we counselled a total of 296 domestics, as compared to 399 last year, a drop of less than 30%.

The staff cut is due to the fact that we have been temporarily underfunded. When we became a regular project of the Immigrant Settlement & Adaptation Program (ISAP) last March, they cut our funding by 11%. Our counsellor, Columbia Diaz, as well as co-ordinator Judith Ramirez worked very hard to maintain a high level of service in spite of the unexpected cut.

In September we were able to hire a new part-time counsellor, Joan Ann Gravesande, who is working with the Caribbean domestics.

The INTERCEDE Board of Directors is very proud of the Service Unit's

performance and it is hard at work seeking additional funding.

DOMESTICS PUT ON CULTURAL SHOW!

At last month's INTERCEDE meeting a cultural show was presented for the first time by a group of members. The event marked the 5th anniversary of the landed status policy and included a 20-minute skit and songs accompanied on guitar.

The skit was an often-humorous portrayal of the struggles to get landed status back in 1980-81. Congratulations to everyone who took part!

Cast members: Eloisa Gonzaga, Clementina Martinez, Rose Fungo, Joyce Stanford, Merriam Rabanillo, Avelina Villanueva and Soledad Laurente. Duet: Eloisa Gonzaga and Jenie Isaac. Solo: Soledad Laurent. Guitar: Eloisa Gonzaga.

INTERCEDE Board members Lillian Allen and Clementina Martinez have just set up a 'Cultural Committee' to work with interested members.

IMPORTANT NOTICE!!

The Service Unit will close for the holidays from December 24 to January 4. We'll be back on Monday, January 5!

Also, since there will be no newsletter in December, this is your only notice of January's meeting! It is set for SUNDAY, JANUARY 11, 1987. Don't forget!

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c/o INTERCEDE
58 Cecil Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5T 1N6

Place
Postage
Here

First Class

Next meeting on December 7!