

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

monthly newsletter of the Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers' Rights

November 1994



(INTERCEDE)

WE HAVE MOVED!

As of October 24th INTERCEDE's new office will be located at:

**234 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 205
Toronto, Ontario M4P 1K5**

New Phone Number (416) 483-4554
New Fax Number (416) 483-9781

NEW OFFICERS OF INTERCEDE

At INTERCEDE's Annual General Meeting in September, members and friends listened intently as prospective Board members detailed their qualifications to sit on the volunteer Board of Directors of INTERCEDE.

All candidates were acclaimed and will be responsible for making decisions regarding program, policy, planning and the allocation of funds during the upcoming 1994-1995 term.

Welcome back Joan Grant-Cummings, Denyse Stewart, Leah Guion, Maize Lai Kwan Mak, Elisa Bisenio, Jean Jovero, Sherry Lacson, Beverley Richards and Toni Schweitzer. New on-board are Cora Montilla, Anelise Araujo-Forlot, Evelyn Cruz and Claudia Farfan.

Executive officers for 1994-1995 were elected by the new Board of Directors at their October meeting. Congratulations to Denyse Stewart, President; Sherry Lacson, Vice-President; Cora Montilla, Treasurer and Beverly Richards, Secretary.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND WOMEN MEXICAN DOMESTIC SERVICE WORKERS

Mexican domestic workers must have a right to social security, a right which guarantees health and welfare to all people and their families, especially food, clothing, housing, medical assistance and basic social services such as unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood and retirement benefits.

However, the reality is that a great number of workers are suffering from the violation of these human rights. For the thousands of women workers who provide domestic services, their working situation has not surpassed the conditions of slavery, isolation, exploitation and economic disadvantage that were seen in the beginning of this century.

An estimated 197,551 domestic service workers can be found in Mexico City and the surrounding metropolitan area. A figure which represents the greatest concentration of domestic workers in the Mexican Republic.

Contd. Pg 2

Come to INTERCEDE monthly meeting on Sunday, November 6, 1994, 3 - 5 p.m. at Cecil Community Center, 58 Cecil Street, (South of College & Spadina)

2 - 3 p.m. New member application and renewals. Members with ID No. 93-0505 to 93-0573 must renew or be dropped from membership list.

3 - 5 p.m. **POLLUTION FREE HOUSEWORK** with Wilhelmina Nolan, President and C.E.O., Bio Business International, Inc.

CLASP Legal Clinic will be open.

From Pg 1

The majority of this workforce is composed of women, young women in particular. They seek employment in this sector due to their economic need -- they don't have the possibility of finding other positions because they don't have the education or qualifications that other jobs demand.

In the homes where they work, they are usually treated as "servants" by their employers and considered as "property" rather than workers with human and labour rights.

In many cases, these women workers are required to be available at all hours to carry out whatever task is needed. This leads to the workers especially those who also live in the home to work 12 to 14 hours a day. With this kind of schedule their health often deteriorates within a few years. It also leaves them exhausted with little chance for free time or to relax. In extreme cases employers themselves decide for the worker what she can do with her free time; if she can go to school, what friendships she can have and how she should dress.

Many times these women do not even receive a minimum wage that would cover their basic financial needs. This is due in part to the division of the workers salary some of which is given in cash and the other in-kind which includes room, services and/or food depending on the agreement.

The employer assigns the value of the in-kind salary unlike here in Ontario where the

maximum amount that can be deducted for room and board is decided objectively by the Ministry of Labour. The value assigned to the in-kind salary items is usually more than its true worth. The worker often has to share a room with the children, the food is typically unequal to what the employer and his/her family eat and the biased value of the in-kind items is often used as an excuse not to raise her salary.

Given the lack of respect to the minimum rights of Mexican domestic service workers, it is no surprise that their other labor rights are even less recognized and followed. These rights include paid vacation, medical benefits, vacation pay, sick leave, overtime, maternity, national holidays, etc.

These workers are also subjected to the humiliation of being a constant target of mistrust and unjustified accusations of thievery just for being the "outsider" to the family.

They are often told to do tasks in a very demeaning manner and insulted for not fully satisfying the employers or the families wishes.

Contd. Pg 3

VANCOUVER CDWCR
Committee for Domestic Workers' &
Caregivers' Rights
(an INTERCEDE Affiliate)
Contact Julie or Lorina (604) 739-1894

DID YOU CHANGE ADDRESS?
Please inform us by phone or mail so that you can continue getting your newsletter and we don't waste postage expenses for returned mail!

TO ALL SUBSCRIBERS since November 1993 (Does not apply to current members)
INTERESTED TO CONTINUE RECEIVING THIS NEWSLETTER? SEND THE FORM BELOW WITH PAYMENT.
IF NO RENEWAL SUBSCRIPTION BY END OF NOVEMBER, WE'LL REMOVE YOUR NAME FROM OUR MAILING LIST.

RENEWAL SUBSCRIPTION NEW SUBSCRIPTION CHANGE OF ADDRESS
MAIL TO : INTERCEDE, 234 Eglinton Ave East, Suite 205, Toronto, Ontario M4P 1K5
Please send *DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS* to:
NAME : _____
ADDRESS : _____
CITY/PROVINCE : _____
POSTAL CODE : _____ TELEPHONE : _____

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION RATES :
INTERCEDE Members : FREE Non-member Domestic : \$20.00
Non-Profit Organizations: FREE Others \$25.00

From Pg 2

This is usually done without any personal consideration for the worker's feelings.

Workers may also suffer from rape by their boss or the son and/or friends of their employer but are seen as not credible should the case go to trial. "Campesina" or farmer women are further discriminated against because they come from poor backgrounds with limited education, a different culture and customs.

Generally, it is believed that the woman worker has no problems or worries. She does not tire or get sick. She has no feeling or aspirations. She lives in a world apart from her employers -- they are often not conscious of her value as a person or the value of her work.

In closing, these women that make up the Mexican domestic service worker sector represent the most telling case in our country as they experience violations of almost all of their human and labor rights.

This article is taken from COLECTIVO ATABAL, A.C. De Apoyo y Promocion a la Organizacion de las Trabajadoras del Servicio Domestico in Mexico City.

Credit Counselling Service of Metropolitan Toronto
A Non-Profit Community Service Since 1966

FREE MONEY MANAGEMENT SEMINARS

Financial Control A Take Charge Approach To Saving and Spending

A presentation of the Education Department of
CCS-MT - Robert Tusi, Co-ordinator

27 Carlton Street, Suite 301
(east of Yonge St. above Harvey's)
College Subway Station

NOVEMBER 23 and DECEMBER 14, 1994
Wednesday, 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

- * Control - How do we get it? *
- * Financial Planning - What is it? *
- * Setting short, intermediate & long term goals*
- * Steps in making a budget *
- * Starting a savings program *
- * 10 basic rules of money management *
- * Techniques for successful budgeting *

For Reservation Call CCS-MT at
(416) 593-7434 ext 204 or
1-800-267-2272

DIPLOMAT'S DOMESTIC WORKER ALLOWED TO STAY

INTERCEDE's August 1994 newsletter featured an article detailing the exploitation of Sauda Saman who was admitted to Canada as a diplomat's domestic worker in 1991.

Ms. Saman was recently informed by Immigration officials that her application to remain in Canada on Humanitarian grounds has been accepted and that she will be processed for landing. No reasons were given for this decision.

As you may recall, Ms. Saman's employer was seeking to have her deported as quickly as possible. Ms. Saman had fled from her employer's home after she could no longer tolerate the verbal abuse, low wages, long hours, isolation, and deterioration to her health. This action made her employer very angry and vengeful.

"No one has the right to inflict unjust and cruel treatment on another human being, not even if he has diplomatic immunity", said Fely Villasin, INTERCEDE Coordinator.

Ms. Saman's counsel was told by the reviewing officer that she felt that the facts of the case were compelling and was satisfied that there were sufficient humanitarian and compassionate factors in the case to warrant a positive decision.

Although a humanitarian decision such as this does not set a precedent for future domestic workers in similar cases, it is reassuring to know that there are still some Immigration officers with a heart.

Cheers to legal counsel, Toni Schweitzer of Jackman & Associates, Barristers and Solicitors.

INTERCEDE CONFERENCE

- * Share Experiences * Education and Information
- * Organizing and Advocacy

Friday, Nov. 11 to Sunday, Nov. 13, 1994

Chestnut Park Hotel
108 Chestnut Street (corner Dundas Street)

Register Now - Fee \$20.00 (Members Only)
For info call 483-4554

STOP IMMIGRATION PROPOSAL TO PREVENT DOMESTIC WORKERS FROM ENTERING CANADA

ACTION ACTION ACTION

Immigration Minister Marchi has said he has not yet decided to accept the recommendation to abolish the Live-In Caregiver Program.

He has to hear from you and your friends and many other people. We have to do something!

1. Send a letter telling the Minister that he should ~~to~~ abolish the LCP in order to allow foreign domestic workers to enter Canada as landed immigrants without discriminatory conditions; or

2. Complete and mail a postcard along the following lines to

Hon. Sergio Marchi

Minister of Citizenship and Immigration

Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1L1

Remember, **NO POSTAGE STAMP IS NECESSARY.**

Date

Minister Marchi,

We reject the reasons given for the recommendation to abolish the Live-In Caregiver Program (LCP) and to stop admission of domestic workers to Canada.

We recommend instead that you stop discrimination against domestic workers and caregivers by admitting them as landed immigrants with no discriminatory conditions.

Yours truly,

(Signature)

PRINT Name and Address

We wish to thank the Citizenship and Immigration Canada (Immigration Settlement and Adaptation Program); Canadian Heritage; Multiculturalism and Citizenship; Ontario Ministry of Citizenship; Ontario Ministry of Health; Ontario Ministry of the Environment; 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.

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

Place: 234 Eglinton Ave. E., Suite 205,
Toronto, Ont. M4P 1K5

Time: Monday-Friday, 9 am - 4 pm

Tel: (416) 483-4554 Fax: (416) 483-9781

INTERCEDE STAFF

Coordinator/Editor: Fely Villasin

Counsellors: Columbia Diaz

Carol Salmon

Intake Worker: Eva Jacob

DOMESTICS' CROSS CULTURAL NEWS

c/o INTERCEDE

234 Eglinton Ave. East, Suite 205

Toronto, Ontario

M4P 1K5

FIRST CLASS