

Domestics' Cross-Cultural News

monthly newsletter of the International Coalition to End Domestics' Exploitation

OCTOBER 1985

EMPLOYERS IGNORE WORKERS' COMPENSATION

On April 1, 1985, domestic workers in Ontario came under the protection of the Workers' Compensation Act. In the event of illness or injury on the job they now have the right to benefits such as payment of medical expenses and loss of wages; vocational rehabilitation; disability pension, etc.

The Workers' Compensation Board requires employers of domestics to register and contribute at the rate of \$2.15 for every \$100 of wages paid. But in the first six months of coverage for domestic workers, few employers have bothered to comply.

Recent media reports quote Board spokesman Richard Murzin as saying that only 900 employers have registered so far, out of a potential 75,000!

INTERCEDE expressed real concern last April that employers would be slow to come forward and register. We wondered out loud - on CBC radio - whether the Board would mount a strong enough registration drive, and go after employers who failed to co-operate.

Here we are, six months later, with 99% of employers completely ignoring their legal obligation to register their domestic workers!

INTERCEDE has written to the President of the Workers' Compensation Board Robert Elgie, requesting information on the claims made by domestic workers in the first six months of coverage. We want to determine whether there has been any real benefit to domestics thus far, or whether coverage under the Act, at this point, means only protection from legal action for the employer.

ATTENTION ALL FOREIGN DOMESTICS!

Thousands of foreign domestic workers continue to arrive in the Metro Toronto area every year. Many have no idea of the community resources, such as the INTERCEDE Service Unit, which are available to them. As a result, they miss out on assistance and advocacy which they are legally entitled to.

Many others are ill-informed and think that the Service Unit is only for domestics who are "in trouble" with immigration authorities. They tend to contact us only after an emergency has developed, cheating themselves of the help which might have prevented the crisis to begin with!

Here are three easy guidelines for when to use the Service Unit:

- 1) as soon as you arrive in Canada; to get independent information on the landing program and a head-start on how to meet landing criteria
- 2) after your "first assessment"; to make sure you have a strong plan of action, and for help with upgrading options, letters of reference, etc.
- 3) before your "second assessment"; to be thoroughly prepared for your interview by organizing all your information and answers for the big day!

The Service Unit is staffed by two full-time counsellors who are ex-domestics. Both know what it's like to "go through it all" to get landed. Call Columbia Diaz or Desiree Hipplewith at (416) 977-3467, Monday to Friday, 9AM to 4PM.

COCO'S CALENDAR

Recent happenings:

- * on October 19 INTERCEDE participated in the ONTARIO ADVISORY COUNCIL ON WOMEN'S ISSUES's youth conference TOMORROW'S WOMEN
- * on October 20 INTERCEDE spoke at a workshop at the Filipino Baptist Church. The event was sponsored by COSTI and attended by domestics recently arrived in the country
- * on October 22 INTERCEDE held a very productive meeting with the OFL's WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

Coming up soon:

- * our next monthly members meeting is set for SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 3 - 5 PM, at the Cecil Centre, 58 Cecil Street, Toronto
- * on October 26 the CONGRESS OF BLACK WOMEN is hosting a fundraising concert at the Adult Learning Centre, 1 Danforth Avenue, 7:30 pm
- * on November 13 INTERCEDE will be meeting with IAN SCOTT, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues

...AND CONGRATULATIONS!

- * to SUSAN and ROLAND DE ROSA for the birth of their baby girl
- * to our new landed immigrants: MARCIA ALEJANDRO and MARVIN ROMERO, both from the Philippines

That's all for this month!

- Columbia Diaz

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

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Since April 1, 1985, domestic workers in Ontario have been eligible for full coverage under the Workers Compensation Act.

If you are a domestic worker, employed for more than 24 hours per week, your employer is legally required to register with the Workers' Compensation Board. He or she must pay premiums at the rate of \$2.15 for every \$100.00 paid to you in wages. This entitles you to the following benefits if you get sick/injured on the job:

- payments for medical expenses
- payments for loss of wages
- vocational rehabilitation
- disability pension
- death benefits for surviving dependents

If your employer has not registered, you are still legally entitled to benefits, and your employer is liable for back assessments plus a penalty.

If you think you might be eligible for a workers' compensation claim contact:

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT (416) 977-3467

WORKERS' COMPENSATION (416) 965-8864

- Desiree Hipplewith

JOIN INTERCEDE

\$5 Year

SUPPORT THE GROUP THAT SUPPORTS YOU!

WELCOME BACK, COCO !!

Columbia Diaz, Service Unit counsellor is back on the job after taking maternity leave. It's great to have you back!

COMMUNITY SPEAKS OUT ON LABOUR LAWS

In response to our call to "take a stand with INTERCEDE", scores of people have signing our "open-letter to Ontario Minister of Labour William Wrye. Domestic workers all over the city are circulating the letter to their friends and associates.

Allies of domestic workers are doing their part, as in the past, by writing directly to Queen's Park in support of INTERCEDE's recommendations. Here is what they are saying:

" I call on you to take immediate action to end the sexism and racism now sanctioned by Ontario law.

I strongly support the recommendations made to you by INTERCEDE, and urge you to:

- 1) Include live-in domestic workers under the hours of work and overtime provisions of the Employment Standards Act
- 2) Grant domestic workers the right to unionize under the Labour Relations Act "

-CAROL TATOR, PRESIDENT
URBAN ALLIANCE ON RACE
RELATIONS

" The Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues has long recognized the invaluable work being done by INTERCEDE on behalf of domestic workers.

...The Council strongly urges you to continue to improve conditions for the approximately 75,000 women who work as domestics in Ontario. We ask that you take steps to provide greater coverage for domestic workers...particularly in the area of hours of work and the right to unionize. "

-SAM ION, PRESIDENT
ONTARIO ADVISORY COUNCIL
ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

MEETING COMING UP WITH IAN SCOTT

An INTERCEDE delegation will be meeting next month with Ontario's Attorney General, Ian Scott. Mr. Scott is also the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, and, in that capacity, we have appealed to him to support the cause of domestic workers' rights.

At the meeting, scheduled for November 13, we will discuss with Mr. Scott the recommendations INTERCEDE has made to Minister of Labour William Wrye, and urge him to join us in our call for immediate action.

In a recent letter to INTERCEDE, Ian Scott said: "I am aware of the significant accomplishments of your organization on behalf of domestic workers, and I look forward to meeting with you."

OFL'S WOMEN'S COMMITTEE ON BOARD!

On October 22, 1985, INTERCEDE met with the Ontario Federation of Labour's "Women's Committee" to ask for the support of trade union women in our current fight for domestic workers' rights.

The meeting was attended by representatives of fifteen unions from across Ontario. Everyone was strongly in favor of getting involved with our drive for better labour laws. A unanimous resolution was passed calling on the OFL to write a letter to the Minister of Labour in support of INTERCEDE's recommendations.

The women also agreed to circulate our "open-letter" to William Wrye in all their union locals and at upcoming OFL conferences.

TAKE A STAND WITH INTERCEDE

Mail in your letter to Queen's Park today! If you need more call us at (416) 977-4432...we'll supply your church, club, or community group with as many copies as they need!

EVANGELINE DARAN GETS LANDED STATUS

Evangeline Daran is a domestic worker from the Philippines who came to Canada in 1978 on a diplomatic visa. Two years later she was granted a regular work permit and began working for a Canadian family.

Due to a lack of upgrading, Ms. Daran was rejected for landing in January of 1984, and notified to leave the country by November.

Three weeks prior to her departure date Ms. Daran came to the Service Unit for help! As her counsellor, I reviewed her case thoroughly and found that she had been hard at work improving herself. She had completed three English courses, a course in health care aid, and "hobby" courses in sewing and cake decorating. In addition, she had been doing volunteer work in two nursing homes, had worked for only one employer, and had saved a reasonable amount of money.

I confidently wrote to the manager of the CIC in Mississauga who had turned down Ms. Daran's request for landing. But a further assessment was refused because our client had had the benefit of the full three years to qualify for landing!

INTERCEDE then appealed to the Ontario Regional Office of the Immigration Commission. We asked that special consideration be given to Ms. Daran because she had taken such important steps to improve her position.

We are happy to announce that Ms. Daran has now been accepted for permanent residence in Canada! While she waits for her papers to be processed she is working in a Toronto nursing home and enjoying it very much.

Congratulations, Vangie!

- Columbia Diaz

"VOICES SPOKEN, VOICES HEARD"

The Toronto YWCA's "Committee on Violence Against Women Internationally" is sponsoring an event on the concerns of immigrant and visible-minority women in the area of violence against women.

Titled "Voices Spoken, Voices Heard", the event includes an evening of cultural activities and a full day of workshops, films, and spontaneous discussion. The goals of the event are:

- 1) to exchange experiences about violence against women in the diverse communities of Toronto
- 2) to discuss ways of organizing against violence - in the home, on the street, and in the workplace
- 3) to link the concerns of violence against women around the world
- 4) to support each other's struggles in eliminating violence against women

The event is scheduled for November 29 and 30. For information call Fern Cristall at (416) 961-8100.

INTERCEDE MEMBERS MEETING ON NOVEMBER 3!

DOMESTICS CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS
c/o INTERCEDE
58 Cecil Street
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Place
Stamp
Here

First Class