

# Domestics' Cross-Cultural News

monthly newsletter of the International Coalition to End Domestics' Exploitation

OCTOBER 1987

## RIGHTS GUIDE HOT OFF THE PRESS!

INTERCEDE has just released its new guide to domestic workers' rights in Ontario. Titled KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!, the 40-page booklet is the first comprehensive guide for domestics ever published in this province. It covers a wide range of subjects, including:

- \* the new overtime regulation
- \* statutory holidays & vacations
- \* termination of employment
- \* workers' compensation
- \* unemployment insurance
- \* family allowance
- \* pregnancy leave
- \* health insurance
- \* human rights
- \* emergency welfare

The guide also includes a section on 'helpful hints' in dealing with government officials and employers. As well, it lists community-based services where free assistance is available in dealing with employment, emergency housing, sexual assault, and other common needs.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS! is written with the foreign domestic worker in mind. Historically, she has been the least protected worker in the paid labour force. In the guide's introduction, Judith Ramirez notes that:

"When INTERCEDE was founded in 1979 to fight for the rights of

domestic workers, there was virtually no protection against their exploitation in Ontario's labour laws. No minimum wage. No overtime pay. No vacations. No statutory holidays. No workers' compensation. A booklet on domestics' rights would have been full of blank pages. Although many domestics, especially live-in workers, still face exploitative conditions, the difference now is that there are laws and policies which offer some protection."

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS! is an indispensable tool for domestic workers as they stand up to exploitation in their day-to-day lives. It provides them with valuable information on rights and benefits, the appropriate government departments to contact, and who to turn to for help in the community.

INTERCEDE is delighted to release this much-needed guide to domestic workers' rights! We gratefully acknowledge the grant received from the Ontario Women's Directorate as well as the excellent services of the Learnx Press. Please use the form below to order your copy today!

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### ORDER FORM

I am a domestic worker and I would like to have \_\_\_\_\_ copies of KNOW YOUR RIGHTS! at \$2.00 per copy. Enclosed is my cheque or money order for \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. \_\_\_\_\_

Please cut out and mail to:  
INTERCEDE, 58 Cecil Street, Toronto,  
Ontario, M5T 1N6

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COCO'S CALENDAR

Recent happenings ...

- \* on Oct.1 Judith Ramirez was interviewed by Joe Cote on CBC's Metro Morning about the new overtime regulation
- \* on Oct.8 INTERCEDE attended the OCASI AGM at Geneva Park as a member organization
- \* on October 15 Judith was interviewed on CFRB radio's "The World at Noon" about our new rights guide

Coming up soon ...

- \* INTERCEDE's next monthly meeting is set for Sunday, November 1, 3 pm, at the Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil Street
- \* the Service Unit will be open on Saturday, November 7, from 10 am to 2 pm. Please call 591-1625 for an appointment!
- \* INTERCEDE's Christmas party is coming up on Sunday, December 6 ... if you can volunteer call me at 591-1625!

AND CONGRATULATIONS!

- \* to our new landed immigrants ROSITA DE GUZMAN, HILDA ATUTUBO, ELENA ORPIA and LUZ MUSTACHO from the Philippines
- \* happy birthday to LINA FLOR SEAT, MARITNESS PULIDO, TITA PALAGOT, MERCEDES TURLA and MARILYN SALVADOR - to all of you, many happy returns!
- \* special thanks to the volunteers who helped out at the Cecil Centre Open House - JENNY ISAAC, CLAVEL SANCHEZ, EUGENIA YUEN and SHIRIN PERSTON.

That's all for this month - Happy Hallowe'en!

- Columbia Diaz

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Attention! There were a few errors in the September newsletter regarding the figures for monthly and bi-weekly rates of pay. The corrected figures appear below. It is important to remember that these are only sample guides to give you an idea of the wages you should be receiving with-out overtime.

The one figure to remember now is the hourly rate of \$4.55 which is the Ontario minimum wage. All domestics and nannies (except live-in sitters working less than 24 hours per week) are entitled to the minimum wage. The standard work week is 44 hours long - if you work more than 44 hours in one week, you are entitled to time and a half. The present overtime rate is \$6.83/hr.

MONTHLY:	\$867.53	Gross Pay*
	247.00	Room & Board
	92.95	Income Tax
	12.52	Canada Pension
	20.39	Unemploymt. Ins.

That leaves: \$494.67 Net Pay

BI-WEEKLY:	\$400.40	Gross Pay*
	114.00	Room & Board
	43.10	Income Tax
	5.78	Canada Pension
	9.41	Unemploymt. Ins.

That leaves: \$228.11 Net Pay

WEEKLY:	\$200.20	Gross Pay*
	57.00	Room & Board
	21.15	Income Tax
	2.89	Canada Pension
	4.70	Unemploymt. Ins.

That leaves: \$114.46 Net Pay

\* Gross pay is based on 44 hrs. a week with no overtime.

- Michele DuCharme

### GUEST SPEAKER ON OVERTIME

On Sunday, October 4, INTERCEDE held a special educational on overtime pay for domestics. The session coincided with the new overtime regulation which came into effect the first of the month. The objective was to give clear and detailed information on how the new regulation works so that no domestic is subjected to long hours of unpaid overtime.

Our guest speaker was Suzanne Klein, senior policy analyst with the Ministry of Labour. She began her speech by saying "I understand from your employers that you are the most protected workers in Ontario"! Amid laughter and applause, she went on to congratulate the crowd of over 200 domestics for the "tough fight" waged to win overtime protection.

Ms. Klein said the government is informing both employers and domestic workers of the new overtime pay requirement through a special brochure. She stressed the following points:

- the daily, weekly and monthly minimum pay has been abolished - the only thing that counts now is \$4.55/hr. up to 44 hrs. a week and time and a half, \$6.83, after that
- a domestic should keep her own record of hours worked per day, in the event of a dispute - your employer's version of your hours may be quite different from your own!
- a domestic has two years to make a claim for overtime wages owing - if you're not being paid properly by your present employer you can still make your claim after you leave
- an employer can only give lieu time instead of time and a half with the domestic's consent -

if you don't want it, say NO!

After Ms. Klein's presentation, there was a lively question and answer period. Many domestics gathered around to speak to her personally when the meeting ended, and she was among the last to leave the hall. A heartfelt 'thank-you' to Suzanne Klein from all of us at INTERCEDE!

### INTERCEDE AT CHARTER CONFERENCE

Last month the Calgary Civil Liberties Association held a conference on 'Multicultural Canada: The Impact of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms!' The event was attended by representatives of the immigrant and and visible minority communities in Alberta, as well as by human rights specialists.

The conference was opened by Gordon Fairweather, Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. The keynote panel on "How to Use the Charter" featured INTERCEDE Co-ordinator Judith Ramirez speaking on the fight for overtime pay and the Charter challenge launched last spring on behalf of Ontario's domestic workers.

Ramirez said that the 'Charter route' was chosen because extensive lobbying had been slow to yield results. She stressed that the mere threat of a Charter challenge finally dislodged the Ontario government and resulted in a new overtime regulation in the Employment Standards Act (ESA). In evaluating the effectiveness of Court action, Ramirez noted that the attendant organizing and publicity has brought a large new influx of domestic workers to INTERCEDE's monthly meetings and other activities.

Other panel members included Patricia Cooper of the Women's Legal Education & Action Fund (LEAF) and the Canadian Advisory Council

CHARTER CONFERENCE ... con't

on the Status of Women; and Richard Goreham, of the Canadian Council on Social Development (Court Challenges Program).

The conference was brought to a close by Dr. Wilson Head, of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations who said that the goals of human rights actions must be "to put the rank and file in the driver's seat." He cited INTERCEDE as an example of successful grass-roots organizing and encouraged the groups present to follow our example.

WOMEN TAKE BACK THE NIGHT!

Every year in Toronto women stage a rally and march through downtown streets to protest violence against women and to 'take back the night'. Spearheaded by the Rape Crisis Centre, the event is sponsored by a wide cross-section of women's organizations.

This year's rally was held on September 18 and focused on the theme of 'violence in the home'. Three keynote speeches set the tone of the rally before the one thousand women present marched through the streets with banners and chants.

One of the speakers was Shirin Perston, of INTERCEDE's Executive Committee. She spoke about three kinds of violence domestics face working in the home:

\* physical violence; sexual advances

and rape; being worked to the bone and being denied time off to recuperate

\* economic violence; getting the minimum wage, without endless hours of unpaid overtime, has been a long fight which is still not over

\* spiritual violence; not being valued as a person for the work you do; suffering verbal abuse from employers and immigration officials; not knowing when you'll see your family again or whether you'll get landed status in spite of your best efforts

Perston concluded by saying that domestic workers are actively fighting back against violence in the home. She cited the Charter challenge to get overtime pay and recognition as workers in the labour laws, not only in Ontario but also in British Columbia and Quebec.

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

Place: Cecil Community Centre  
58 Cecil Street, Toronto

Time: Monday - Friday  
9:00am - 4:00pm

Telephone: (416) 591-1625 / 7036

Free and confidential counselling to all domestic workers on immigration, employment, human rights, emergency social services, etc. A free and confidential legal clinic is also available at our monthly meetings.

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

First Class

NEXT MONTHLY MEETING ON NOVEMBER 1!