

# Domestics' Cross-Cultural News

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

SEPTEMBER 1987

## STANDING ROOM ONLY AT AGM!

Two hundred and fifty people crowded into the auditorium of the Cecil Community Centre on Sunday, September 13th, for INTERCEDE's Annual General Meeting. It was the culmination of an exciting year of hard work and growth. The mood of the meeting was one of celebration and re-newed commitment.

Chaired by INTERCEDE Vice-president Catherine Gilbert, the meeting began with a welcome by President Clementina Martinez who thanked "all our members, friends and community supporters who took part in our work and are here today in such large numbers." A number of special guests were introduced including Donna Hill, community activist and wife of Dr. Dan Hill, Ombudsman of Ontario, and Maria Bazzo, of the Immigrant Settlement & Adaptation Program (ISAP).

INTERCEDE Co-ordinator Judith Ramirez presented the Annual Report and highlights from the past year's work:

- \* a meeting with Minister of State for Immigration Gerry Weiner and Director General for Immigration for Ontario David Conn
- \* closer co-operation with Immigration on problems in the implementation of the Foreign Domestic Program (eg. release letters)
- \* a high-profile campaign to gain overtime pay for domestic workers in Ontario which included meetings with Minister of Labour William Wyre and special advisor to the Premier Hershell Ezrin

- \* the launching of a court challenge under the Charter of Rights & Freedoms with a press conference at Queen's Park
- \* changes in the Employment Standards Act which, for the first time, give domestics the right to some overtime compensation
- \* a 16% increase in counselling services provided by INTERCEDE through our Service Unit
- \* a successful workshop on grassroots organizing and lobbying for immigrant and visible minority women from across Canada
- \* the doubling of attendance at our monthly meetings (100-200 is standard now!) as well as the doubling of our mailing list for Domestics' Cross-Cultural News (it's up to 1,200!)
- \* the expansion of our funding base to include all three levels of government and private fund-raising

INTERCEDE's enormous growth in the past year was underscored by Secretary Shirin Perston who reported that our membership had risen from 300 to nearly 700! This included both our voting and associate members and is due to extensive media coverage on the fight for overtime pay. The overwhelming majority of our members are foreign domestic workers.

The highlight of the AGM was hearing from our distinguished guest speaker, Jean Augustine, president of the Congress of Black Women of Canada. Her address was an inspiring mixture of personal experience,



COCO'S CALENDAR

Recent happenings...

- \* on August 18 Judith Ramirez spoke to students at the 'Summer College' sponsored by the Human Rights Institute at the University of Ottawa
- \* on August 27 INTERCEDE attended a meeting on the Meech Lake Accord sponsored by the Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues
- \* on September 2 INTERCEDE attended a special breakfast at the Westin Hotel to meet women candidates running for the New Democratic Party

Coming up soon...

- \* INTERCEDE's next monthly meeting is set for Sunday, October 4, 3 pm, at the Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil Street
- \* on Saturday, October 3, the Service Unit will be open from 10 am to 2 pm. Please call 591-1625 for an appointment!

AND CONGRATULATIONS!

- \* to our new landed immigrant YOLANDA GRACIA from the Philippines
- \* happy birthday to JOYCE STANFORD and NORIE CAMACHO ... many happy returns!
- \* best wishes to JANE LIBERTINO, GINA ATUTUBO and MARTINA MARIANO on their recent marriages. Good luck to you all!
- \* welcome back to LAURA LOPEZ from Mexico and board member CATHY GILBERT just back from Australia!
- \* and to JOAN ANN and DEREK on the birth of their bouncing baby boy, RYLAND KEIL GRAVESANDE!

That's all for this month!

- Columbia Diaz

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

As of October 1, new wage rates come into effect! Here's how to calculate your pay if you're a live-in domestic worker:

MONTHLY:	\$866.75	Gross Pay*
	238.00	Room & Board**
	92.95	Income Tax***
	12.51	Canada Pension
	20.37	Unemployt. Ins.

That leaves: \$502.92 Net Pay

BI-MONTHLY:	\$400.03	Gross Pay*
	109.84	Room & Board**
	42.05	Income Tax***
	5.77	Canada Pension
	9.40	Unemployt. Ins.

That leaves: \$232.97 Net Pay

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

That leaves: \$114.46 Net Pay

\* Remember that gross wages are based on a 44 hour week with no overtime.

\*\* Board is calculated at the rate of \$1.75 per meal, or no more than \$36.00 per week. You should get an extra \$1.75 in your pay for each meal you don't eat at your employer's home. Our room calculation is based on \$21.00 per wk. for a private room/\$10.50 for a shared room.

\*\*\* Income tax deductions here are based on standard (code 1) exemptions. If you are supporting dependent children, your income tax deductions will be lower and your net pay will be higher.

- Michèle DuCharme



## DOMESTIC TO GET HER DAY IN COURT

Recently the story of a non-status domestic worker hit the front page of the Toronto Star. Janice Adharsingh, 20, came to Canada last January after being recruited in her native Trinidad to work for a Markham couple with two small children.

For \$300 a month, she did most of the housework, cooking and child-care, and worked 12 hours a day, 7 days a week. In the first 3½ months on the job, she got only 4 or 5 nights off. "I was a slave with a capital S-L-A-V-E", she told the press.

Then Ms. Adharsingh was beaten by her employer and she went to the police. A charge of aggravated assault was laid. But because of her illegal status, she was sent to an immigration inquiry which ordered her to leave the country by August 7.

Ms. Adharsingh contacted the Community Legal Aid Services Program (CLASP) who also run our monthly legal clinic. They appealed to immigration for an extension of her departure date but the request was turned down.

At issue was Ms. Adharsingh's right to remain in Canada long enough to testify against her alleged assailant. "I think it's a complete scandal", said Judith Ramirez, INTERCEDE's Co-ordinator. "After all, she's saying she was beaten up and all she wants is her day in court. That's the right of anyone living and working in this country regardless of their status".

INTERCEDE and CLASP appealed to Immigration Minister Gerry Weiner to grant Janice Adharsingh a minister's permit to remain in Canada. The Minister took immediate action and granted the requested permit so Ms. Adharsingh did not have to leave

the following day. Since that time she has been given permission to work while she awaits the trial of her former employer.

## OVERTIME PAY IS HERE!

INTERCEDE's October monthly meeting will be all about the new overtime regulation. Effective October 1, full-time domestic workers in Ontario are entitled to compensation for any hours worked over 44 in one week. Overtime pay, called time and 1/2, is calculated as follows:

$$\$4.55 + \$2.27 = \$6.82$$

But you can only receive time and 1/2 if you have not already received extra time off in lieu of overtime pay.

Every domestic worker should know about this new regulation.

Come to our monthly meeting on Sunday, October 4 and hear a guest speaker, Suzanne Klein, from the Ministry of Labour, explain how it works.

INTERCEDE will also be launching our new booklet Know Your Rights! It is a 40-page guide to domestics' rights in Ontario and includes information on labour laws, human rights, maternity leave, family allowance and other important topics. It is an indispensable tool for any domestic worker who wants to know what her rights are here in Canada.

## MORE FROM JEAN AUGUSTINE...

In her thought-provoking speech at INTERCEDE's Annual General Meeting, Jean Augustine often spoke from personal experience. She shared with the audience her own strategy for success, highlighting three points:

- \* setting a goal and making a long-term plan for attaining it



AGM...con't

the fight against racism and inequality, and practical advice on how to make your way in Canada. A former domestic worker herself, Ms. Augustine recalled discussions in the late 1970's with Judith Ramirez on the need to set up a group like INTERCEDE and she called on all domestics present to "support the group that has done so much to improve conditions over the years". Her speech was interrupted repeatedly by enthusiastic applause.

The meeting ended with Past-President Eulene Boyce presenting a framed letter of appreciation to member Ioney Shirley of Jamaica, for perfect attendance at monthly meetings in the past year. The special presentation came as a complete surprise to Ms. Shirley! In accepting it, she said that she would always be grateful to INTERCEDE: "I'm seventy years old and if it wasn't for you I wouldn't be in Canada today".

All of us at INTERCEDE look forward to another year of work that will help make a difference in the lives of thousands of domestic workers.

JEAN AUGUSTINE...con't

- \* sharing the goal with someone who believes in you and will encourage you to reach it
- \* avoiding people who are negative thinkers and who minimize the importance of your goal

INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

Place: Cecil Community Centre  
58 Cecil Street  
Toronto, Ontario

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

Telephone: (416) 591-1625  
591-7036

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.

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

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First Class