

## FACT SHEET

### WHO ARE HOMEWORKERS ?

Homeworkers are predominately immigrant women with limited english skills who work at home due to the lack of affordable childcare. Most homeworkers sew garments, but other types of homework, such as data processing, exist. Estimates suggest that there are 2,000 to 3,000 homeworkers in Toronto alone.

In a recent study conducted by the I.L.G.W.U., researchers found that the average hourly wage of homeworkers was \$4.64 (the current minimum wage is \$6.00). Few of the homeworkers surveyed received the vacation to pay to which they are entitled. All of the women provided their own sewing machines. In addition, the study found that homeworkers face serious health and safety problems such as fabric dust, poor ventilation, cramped work spaces and stress-related problems.

### WHO ARE THE MEMBERS OF THE COALITION FOR FAIR WAGES AND WORKING CONDITIONS FOR HOMEWORKERS ?

The members of the Coalition are the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, Workers' Information and Action Centre of Toronto, Chinese Workers' Association, Parkdale Community Legal Services, Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare, Ontario Coalition for Visible Minority Women, Ecumenical Council for Economic Justice, and other organizations involved with the issues of immigrant women and work.

### WHEN DID THE COALITION FORM ?

The Coalition was established at a November 2, 1991 workshop. The Coalition was publicly launched at a press conference at Queen's Park on November 14th. On December 9th, the Coalition presented a brief to the Ontario legislature outlining the situation of homeworkers in Toronto and proposed legislative changes to improve their working conditions.

### ACTIVITIES TO DATE

The I.L.G.W.U. has conducted a survey of Chinese speaking homeworkers which has shown the poor working conditions of these workers. A "Homeworkers' Hotline" was set up to provide homeworkers with information about their rights under existing legislation. A brochure with similar information was widely distributed. In addition, the Coalition is involved in lobbying the provincial government for legislative reform. The media response to these efforts has been favourable.

### FUTURE GOALS OF THE COALITION

- \* Homeworkers' Hotline: This will be re-established as a way to provide homeworkers with information and services that can benefit them.
- \* Homeworkers' Association: The funding provided by I.L.G.W.U. will only provide for an organizer for a limited period of time. The Coalition needs to raise funds to ensure that an organizer is employed long enough to establish an association of homeworkers.
- \* Public Education: Resources are needed to publish and distribute material to increase public awareness of the working conditions of homeworkers and to pressure the government to improve the regulation of homework and the services available to homeworkers.
- \* Conference: The Coalition would like to bring together local and international activists to discuss homework in all its forms.

**COALITION FOR FAIR WAGES AND WORKING CONDITIONS FOR  
HOMEWORKERS IS ENDORSED BY:**

Canadian Union of Educational Workers Local 2

The Ontario Coalition for Social Justice

The Canadian Council of Retirees

Advocates for Community Based Training Education  
for Women

Canadian Union of Educational Workers Local 3

Toronto Typographical Union Local 91

Peterborough Labour Council

Affirmative Action Committee  
St. Thomas and District Labour Council

Ontario Public Service Employees Union

United Steelworkers of America Local 5338

Ottawa and District Labour Council

Toronto Workers' Health & Safety Legal Clinic

Myer Siemiatycki

Ronald Monkman

Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 5

The Moment Project

Ground Zero Productions

Manitoba Division Canadian Union of Public Employees

Centre for Research and Works in Society

Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples

Canadian Auto Workers

Leo Panitch

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