

Background to the lock-out at Canadian Pizza Crust Ltd.

22 Indian women on afternoon shift at the Canadian Pizza Crust Ltd. factory, at 2345 Stanfield Rd. in Mississauga were locked-out on October 7th '82 for requesting wage increases promised them 2 months earlier.

The increases of 30¢ an hour had already been granted the day workers 6 weeks prior to October 7th. The day shift consists of 25 to 30 women and is racially mixed.

Up to the day of the lock-out management had made excuses, such as clerical and accounting errors for not giving the increases. At one point, the women were accused of stealing meat. The women feel that this was being used as another excuse not to give them the increase. The day shift was not questioned about the meat.

On the 7th the women asked management for a promise in writing to definitely give them their increase in the next paycheque. Management refused to promise on paper, turned off the lights and told the women to get out.

The women have worked at the plant for time periods ranging from 1 to over 6 years. On an average they earned \$4.60 an hour. Their shift usually began at 4 pm but they were never sure when it would end; anywhere from 11 pm to 4 am. In addition they had inadequate protective clothing, and arbitrary dinner breaks and rest periods, usually at the convenience of management.

The women came back to work on October 8th. Some were also accompanied by their families. They said they had come to work. Their families also asked management to let the women work. Management said No; and that it had already hired others, and didn't want these "stupid Indians".

The women waited outside the plant until 7 pm. They contacted the media, but only the Mississauga News turned up. Mississauga News took the information but didn't do a write-up. Management also called the police, who didn't leave until the women had left.

The following week the women went to collect their paycheques for the 4 days worked. In this cheque some of the women received the 30¢ increase for the 4 days, others didn't. In addition they received their vacation pay and separation slips, which stated that they had quit. This statement disqualifies the women from unemployment insurance payments for 6 weeks. They have never received any notice or severance pay.

At a meeting with the Labour Relations Board, the women were informed that the Board couldn't help them because they were not unionized. The Board did state that if the women filled the appropriate forms the Board would try and get them severance pay under the Employment Standards Act. The women refused to sign the forms saying they wanted their jobs and not severance pay.

On October 27th a complaint was filed with the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

Word of the lock-out spread in the Indian community and led to the formation of the Support Committee for Indian Women Workers and a public meeting on Nov 13th at the Malton Community Centre.

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The Committee consists of a majority of the women, community workers, trade-unionists, legal counsel and law students from the Parkdale Community Legal Services, and individuals from other community groups. We are working together to get the women reinstated.

Efforts by the committee members to contact the Human Rights office in Mississauga to obtain clarification of the case proved futile. This led to an impromptu visit to the office which resulted in the appointment of Joanna Kaczmarek as the investigation officer.

The women have also filed complaints with the Ministry of Labour's Employment Standards Branch in Mississauga.

Larry Taylor, a councillor at Mississauga City Hall has visited the factory and spoken with management. Management would only agree to hire the women back by attrition. This has been rejected by the women on the basis that it wasn't sufficient or immediate guarantee of reinstatement.

The Unemployment Insurance Commission has been contacted regarding the misinformation on the slips. This is under investigation by the Commission.

To date, the lock-out has received press coverage in the Mississauga News, Share, the Toronto Star, Globe and Mail and on CBC radio. The issue has also been raised in the Ontario Legislature by NDP leader Bob Rae. The Minister of Labour, the Honourable Russel Ramsay characterized the employer's actions as "completely unreasonable".

For further information contact: 651-1400 between 9 am and 5 pm.
And please leave a message.
or
Tania at 690-1204