

Women Working with Immigrant Women



Immigrant and visible minority women at press conference protesting CACSW's background paper on immigrant women. (L-R): Hernandez, Vice Pres., NOIVMWC, Ontario Region; Loucas, Women Working with Immigrant Women; Wallis, Coalition of Visible Minority Women; Benjamin, Congress of Black Women and Amy Go, Chinese-Canadian Nat'l. Council.

MAKING THE LINKS

Women Working With Immigrant Women plays a leading role in integrating the issues of concerns and interests of immigrant and visible minority women into the work of mainstream women's organizations. It also assists immigrant and visible minority women to increase their participation in these organizations.

Following is the speech delivered by Salome Loucas, WWIW co-ordinator, at the Rexdale Women's Centre celebration on International Women's Day.

The event attended more than 100 immigrant and visible minority women who participate in Rexdale Women's Centre programs and other WWIW member agencies' programs.

Women make up half of the world's population and one third of its paid work force; yet our contribution to society and our work is undervalued. Our oppression and exploitation is as old as is the oppression of all working people. Our struggle for equality is connected to the struggle of all people to free themselves from exploitation and the struggle for peace. The Women's Movement is one of the many fronts of this struggle.

The Women's Movement is made up of organized groups of women who look at the problems women face and work towards equality and recognition of women's rights. Women's issues and demands are different depending on the economic and political conditions of the country in which they live. For example, women in South Africa and the Latin American countries are fighting to free their people from dictatorships and foreign domination. When these women come to Canada, they are faced with new concerns that may seem very difficult to

relate to - but they confront new issues and find support by sharing with other women.

It is wrong to believe that women's struggle for equality is in competition with men. It is true that women experience oppression by men and this oppression is an issue which needs to be looked at; but we must remember that men also experience economic and political oppression in a society which promotes competition, violence and abuse of power.

In Canada, women's equality is recognized only on paper. Economic and political changes which will improve women's position in society are not taking place. There is still the belief that women work only to add to the income of the family and that their work is therefore temporary. It is this belief that employers use to justify why they pay women 40% less than men for work of the same value. Women are not temporary workers, yet this belief still keeps us out of the better jobs. Because of these ideas, women are not encouraged to educate themselves and training opportunities are lacking. Without these skills, women find themselves in low-paying jobs, mainly in the social services and light manufacturing industries.

Social services meet human needs and are funded by the government. They do not produce profits and are affected by government spending cut-backs. In the light manufacturing industries, women's jobs are threatened by the new technology and foreign competition - and by the lack of government measures to protect them. Many of the jobs in these industries will be eliminated by the free trade agreement.

The unemployment and underemployment which is the result of this govern-

ment's policies affect women more because we do not occupy the top jobs and if we are seen as only temporary workers, then we are the first to get laid-off. Even more disadvantaged in this situation are disabled women, immigrant women and women of racial minorities. Immigrant and visible minority women have additional problems such as lack of language skills; less educational and training opportunities; and racial, ethnic and cultural discrimination.

It is only in the last few years that the Canadian Women's Movement started to look at and address the issues of immigrant and visible minority women. This did not happen by chance, but because more and more women from the immigrant and visible minority communities are participating in the mainstream Women's Movement. The issues have also changed because more women from the Unions are taking part in these organizations which promote women's demands.

For many women, it is difficult to participate in the larger Women's Movement, because of family responsibilities, language barriers or because of long working hours. Women's issues only develop out of the experience of all women and we must support each other. By sharing your own experiences and supporting other women who are experiencing difficulties, and have similar problems, you are helping to develop the issues and you become part of the women's on-going struggle for equality.



Following is the speech delivered by Judy Vashti Persad, WWIW chairperson, at the 'Fight the attacks on Abortion Rights' rally.

I am proud to be speaking today on behalf of Women Working With Immigrant Women, and to add our voices to the hundreds gathered here today publicly pledging to continue to fight, for full access to free abortion.

I am a Caribbean woman, an immigrant to this country - and for most Asian, Black, Native, South Asian and other women of colour and immigrant women, choice is an illusion. The laws, institutions, and economic structures of this society perpetuate racism and sexism, denying us our reproductive freedom. Our right to choose whether or not to have children, our right of reproduction itself, has been denied us.

We know there is access to abortion, but it's very privileged access. Women with economic resources, who know how to use the health care system, have the right to abortion. It's the working class woman, the immigrant woman and the woman of colour, who does not have this access - And this we will not accept!

We need, not only the right to abortion, but the facilities in our own communities and our own languages, in order to make that choice a reality! That is why we raise the demand for full access to free abortion for every woman in this country.

This is not an abstract struggle for us. The issue we are fighting for, is real and immediate. Women are suffering every day, because the demands we are raising are not being

met.

We know we have the power to make changes, if we work together. The recent overturning of the federal abortion law has made it perfectly clear - change takes place through the strength of a movement.

But as we make gains, the attacks increase - as we have seen in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island.

The right is organizing. The federal government is threatening to bring in another abortion law. So our task is clear. We must continue to build the reproductive rights movement.

A movement which speaks to the reality of every woman's life, whether she is a woman of colour, an immigrant woman, poor, working class, disabled, young or old woman. A movement, which when speaks of, and struggles for reproductive freedom, must include a range of women's issues.

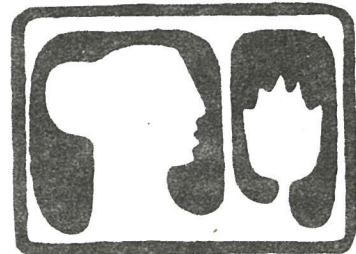
We must demand an end to forced or coerced sterilization, which particularly affect Native Women, Black Women, and Disabled Women. We must demand safe and effective birth control in our own communities and in our own languages. We must demand free universal childcare and parental leave. We must demand an end to the harassment of Native Mothers by the courts and Children's Aid. We must continue to demand full access to free abortion.

We do not want an abortion law which allow therapeutic abortion committees to control access - access which is based on racist assumptions, stereotypes and practices. We refuse to accept a law, which allows for doctors to insist on the sterilization of Black and Native Women, as a prerequisite for an abortion.

We joined together to overturn the racist/sexist federal law! And we must continue to build a fighting movement. This is the time to build a campaign from coast to coast. A mass movement made up of everyone, who has a commitment to equality and women's rights. We will have to mobilize our forces, so that the provinces understand, that we will not accept a woman being denied an abortion because medicare funding has been withdrawn or the services aren't there.

We say no to cutbacks and yes to full funding of abortion services. We must send a clear message to the federal government, that the people of this country will not accept another abortion law. We must continue to press for full access to free abortion in every province across the country.

The time has passed when we must justify ourselves and our needs to the state and professionals. The time has come when, by the strength of our movement abortion rights can finally be ours.



WORKERS' RIGHTS

By Dianne Urquhart

'Nila' finds a job doing home sewing on a piecework basis. Her pay cheque will be low, but she needs the money. After three weeks she gets her first cheque. It bounces. Her boss apologizes and gives her another cheque after five weeks of work, for all wages owing. That cheque bounces too. Desperate for money, Nila is forced to quit and find other work. She files a complaint with the Employment Standards Branch (Ministry of Labour) to try to get her unpaid wages. After months of waiting, she is told by the ESB that the employer has moved her business and they can't find her to get Nila's money back. She needn't feel alone though. This employer has a habit of doing this. She owes at least \$11,000 to several different workers, all of whom are in the same position as Nila!

Is this not outright theft? If Nila had stolen an equivalent amount of money from her employer, would the government have thrown up their hands and said, 'Sorry, Nila's moved. There is nothing we can do'. Certainly not! And yet unpaid wages, along with arbitrary firings, low pay, dangerous working conditions, anti-union activities, and uncertainty are everyday experiences for most non-unionized immigrant working women. While the newspapers gloat over the booming economy in Southern Ontario, women in factories and service industries across the province are working their way into poor health and poverty. As far as the government is concerned, it's perfectly acceptable that this 'boom' is being built on the backs of under-paid working people.

Many groups have organized around the problems faced by working immigrant women. Some provide direct services, some promote political organizing and lobbying, some assist organizing in specific workplaces, while others

combine several of these strategies.

In late February a small group of community workers from PARKDALE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES, WOMEN WORKING WITH IMMIGRANT WOMEN, DOWNTOWN EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, and WORKING WOMEN COMMUNITY CENTRE (all in Toronto) established the 'WORKERS' RIGHTS PROJECT'. They felt the need for a broader and more visible campaign to expose the terrible inadequacies of the Employment Standards Act and its enforcement, as a compliment to their individual work with non-unionized workers. The problems they identified will be no surprise to most readers:

- The minimum wage needs to be raised immediately;
- Overtime provisions are inadequate and unworkable;
- There is no requirement that benefits be pro-rated for part-time workers;
- Vacations do not increase with years of service;
- There is no provision for coffee breaks;
- There is no right to re-instatement for workers fired arbitrarily;
- Many workers are excluded from even the minimum standards set out in Act;
- The enforcement of the Act is totally inadequate.

As a first step, the Workers' Rights Project is starting a campaign to expose what amounts to a lack of enforcement of the Act by the Employment Standards Branch. We know that 'Nila's' situation is commonplace, and is replayed with variations all across the province, in many industries. In order to build the campaign, however, the Workers' Rights Project needs many more examples of workers' experiences with the ESB, in order to have a clear picture of the nature and scope of the problem. For example:

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CHARTER CHALLENGE

IMMIGRANT AND VISIBLE MINORITY ORGANIZATIONS CHALLENGE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S POLICY ON LANGUAGE TRAINING.
By Axelle Janczur

In July, 1987, Guadalupe Mendez, a Salvadorean woman newcomer to Canada, married with four children, applied for subsidized English language training at a Manpower office in Toronto. This request was and continues now to be denied, despite efforts made on her behalf by community workers with Manpower officials.

This scenario has been played out repeatedly at hundreds of Manpower offices across Canada and thousands of immigrant women have been discriminated against by CEIC policy that routinely denies subsidized ESL classes to persons whom they consider to be not destined for the labour force or not requiring either of the two official languages in order to obtain employment. Sponsored immigrants are altogether ineligible for this program. The result is that many immigrant women, in their majority sponsored by spouses or classified as not labour destined or unskilled workers, are condemned to a life of isolation, job ghettoization, decreased access to social and recreational services; their political and economic power is deliberately restricted and their ability to make a positive contribution as citizens in Canada is limited.

The CENTRE FOR SPANISH-SPEAKING PEOPLES, on behalf of Guadalupe Mendez and with the cooperation of Women's Legal Education Action Fund (LEAF) has decided to undertake a challenge to the federal government's policy on language training under the Canadian Charter of Rights. Section 15 of the Charter guarantees equality before and under the law, and the equal protection and equal benefit of the law. The regulations of the CEIC subsidized language training program are such that it is preferentially available to some and not others and the

challenge will consider the adverse impact that these regulations have on women.

There are many issues to be addressed in the challenge: 1) The idea of only labour-destined skilled workers being eligible for subsidies, and if fact being preferred, is just the latest version of immigration policies' preference for men; as the history of the administration of the program indicates, labour destined is just another name for head of household (a previous criterion); 2) Immigrant women are being penalized for not having had access to training in their countries of origin - they are classified as unskilled workers and the fact that they CAN find work in job ghettos is also used against them; 3) The criterion of not being a sponsored immigrant could also be identified, in its implementation, as discriminatory as well since the majority of immigrant women are sponsored.

This is a brief overview of the issues. LEAF will carry out the research, identify issues decide which aspects of the policy to emphasize, and in conjunction with the Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples and other agencies which have joined in the challenge, will identify plaintiffs and exert witnesses. The case will be launched in federal court trial division and all evidence must be introduced at this level.

Over 30 organizations working with immigrant and visible minority women have joined the work of the Charter Challenge, seeking out plaintiffs, sending support letters or publicizing the challenge in newsletters, meetings, etc.

One aspect of the work which is es-

pecially important is the consultation that will take place locally and nationally in order to prepare a non-discriminatory language training policy to be proposed as a remedy in the challenge. The other particularly exciting feature is the educational outreach at the grass roots level that will take place to ensure that immigrant women are aware of this challenge and are ready to take advantage of policy changes which must surely take place when the challenge is won. The impact, in terms of quality of life, for immigrant women, will be significant.



The Charter Challenge, however, is just one part of this action. The process of coalition building of pooling our energies and resources, is just one step on the road to immigrant and visible minority women claiming and exercising their rights in Canada; language training rights must be understood in the wider context of human rights, as must social, political and economic rights. This action will make us that much stronger.

WORKERS' RIGHTS CON.

- * Does the ESB take up all cases referred to it?
- * Does the ESB enforce its own orders?
- * In cases of unpaid wages do workers ever get the full amount owing to them?
- * On average, how long does it take the ESB to act?
- * What are the most common violations of the Employment Standards Act in different parts of the province and in different industries?
- * Has the ESB ever fined or imprisoned an employer who repeatedly breaks the Act?

These are only some of the questions which must be understood. If you or your organization has any experience with the Employment Standards Act or Branch please let the Workers' Rights Project know right away. The condition of non-unionized immigrant workers and especially immigrant women in this province is a national disgrace. This campaign by the Workers' Rights Project will not solve the problem alone. With information from your group, however, we can start to publicize the government's refusal to protect ordinary working people from the most blatant of abuses by their employers. To join the group or to provide information, contact:

The Workers' Rights Project
c/o Dianne Urquhart
Parkdale Community Legal Services
1239 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M6K 1L5
(416) 531-2411

IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN CANADA: A POLICY PERSPECTIVE

NEW STUDY BY THE CANADIAN ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

On January 26 the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW) released a new study on immigrant women. In this 1988 report it is stated that 'in almost every respect, immigrant women, as a group appear to be doing better economically than Canadian-born women' (Seward & McDade, 1988, p.8). Immigrant women as a group includes here all employed women who have entered Canada at any time as permanent residents or work in the country with temporary employment authorization, regardless of their country of origin, race/ethnicity, length of stay, educational level, language and job skills. It includes, for example, the well-educated white professional woman from the United States or the United Kingdom who has been living and working in Canada for 30 years and the woman from the Caribbean who has been employed as a domestic worker for a couple of years. It is also stated in this document that 'in 1981, immigrant women had lower unemployment rates than Canadian-born men or women' (p. 10). It is not considered anywhere in the report that official unemployment figures do not tell us how many people are actually without jobs, how many people are underemployed or are employed only part-time.

Unlike this new report, an earlier study by Estable (1986) prepared for the CACSW recognized clearly that immigrant women's lives differ tremendously. While on the average the statistics may support the report's general statements, figures based on aggregates of post-war immigration present a distorted view of most immigrant women's actual situation today. Immigration trends have not been analyzed in the 1988 study; nothing has been made of the statistic that average incomes for recent (1976-81) immigrants were over \$1,500 lower than for the previous

group (1971-75) of immigrant women (see p. 12 of the report). No questions were asked about how the higher average incomes for immigrant women as a group as compared to Canadian-born women came about. Perhaps by immigrant women having to work in several part-time, low-paying jobs with no security and benefits? Nor is it considered that unemployment figures may be lower for immigrant women because many of them may not have qualified for such benefits, some may not have known how to apply, or because they cannot afford not to have any paid employment while waiting for the first unemployment cheque to arrive.

Systemic discrimination on the basis of race and ethnicity is not addressed in the 1988 report - the scope of the paper did not permit it, the researchers wrote. Even sexism isn't addressed in this report, nor are questions of the interrelationships of sexual, racial, ethnic and class discrimination discussed. Yet, on the basis of this report policies will be formed. On the basis of this report immigrant women's groups' requests for language, employment training and extended social services are likely to be denied.

Since the main comparisons are made between all immigrant and all Canadian-born women, this report helps to conceal the problems and issues we may have in common with aboriginal women Canadian working class women, visible minority Canadian-born women, or with women who are single parents. By implication, this report effectively pits immigrant and non-immigrant women against each other.

In a press conference held at Queen's Park on February 8th, spokeswomen of immigrant, visible minority and black women's groups said that 'the report is insulting and grossly mis-

leading and flies in the face of other recent government studies which contradict some of its findings'; 'It misrepresents the status and plight of immigrant women' (The Toronto Star, 9 February 1988). As Salome Loucas, co-ordinator of WWIW stated, the report is a 'dangerous tool for the government to use in setting policies'. It can be used to manipulate public response to issues of concern to immigrant and visible minority women. She called the report 'insulting and patronizing,' both in its content and in terms of the process leading up to the release of this report.

At the end of January, individual immigrant women and representatives of some groups were called for a meeting to consult on what we were told was merely a draft on the same day that this report was officially released! This was no draft document, after all; it was the final report that some of us had in hand. To add insult to injury, we had only one working day to prepare a response to this document - an impossible task. At most, those who received copies of the report and managed to attend the meeting could have responded as individuals. There was no time to consult with WWIW member agencies, and for this reason the board of WWIW decided to attend the meeting, but respond only to the process that once again excluded immigrant and visible minority women's groups, rather than to the content of the report.

This report - both in its process and content - shows insincerity on the part of the federal government and its researchers when it comes to immigrant women's groups. Following the press conference, Sylvia Gold, president of the CACSW, said that she hoped 'the dialogue is still open.' There has been no dialogue, as WWIW has pointed out repeatedly to the Advisory Council. And Gold added that the Advisory Council would not consi-

By Eva A. Szekely

der the immigrant and visible minority women's groups' demands made at the press conference to retract, to stop the distribution or to launch a new report (The Toronto Star, 9 February 1988).

WWIW wants more than retraction and the stopping of the distribution of this 1988 report. We want new studies, done by us, immigrant and visible minority women's groups, about matters of our lives. For it is us, not the Advisory Council, who are the experts on issues of concern to us. We know better than anyone else what the facts are, but we do not have all of the figures to argue our case. Figures cost money, and that we have little. We need government funding for our own research and policy analysis. As the most recent Advisory Council study clearly demonstrates, the present government neither works with us nor do they do the research and policy analysis that would truly serve the diverse needs of immigrant women's groups.

RACIAL
and
ECONOMIC
EQUALITY



REPORTS

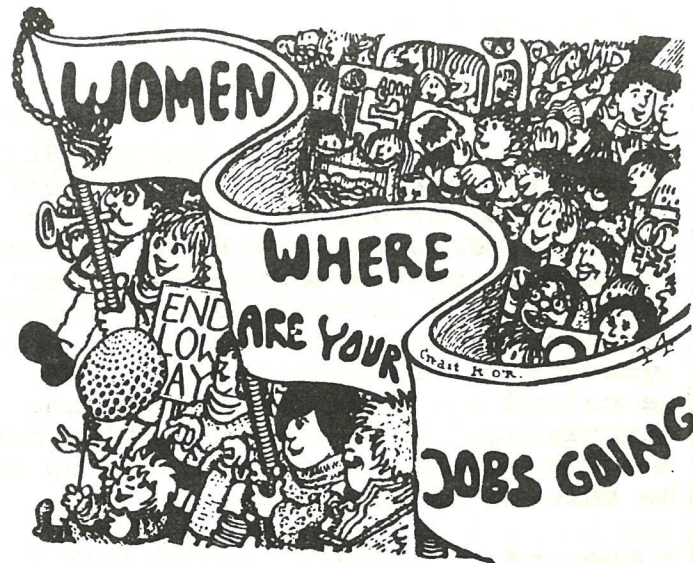
The Free Trade Agreement is one of the most important issues that Canadian people face today. Women Working With Immigrant Women we are concerned with the effects this agreement with the United States will have on the Immigrant Communities and, specifically, on Immigrant Women.

According to a study prepared by the Ontario Government, 'The Free Trade Agreement and Women,' Ontario Women working in manufacturing are overrepresented in sectors such as clothing, textile and footwear. These sectors are the second largest industrial employers in Canada and, most importantly, workers in these industries tend to be older immigrants. These industries are most likely to be affected by this AGREEMENT. Workers in these industries who lack language proficiency and have little Canadian education and skills training will be forced into ununionized, low-paid and less secure jobs that have fewer benefits.

Many of us, who have come to Canada from countries where similar agreements have created foreign economic and political dependency and destruction, fear that this AGREEMENT will have tremendous impact on the political, economic, and cultural sovereignty of Canada and on its multicultural character.

We feel that **NOW IS THE TIME TO ACT**, and we demand that the Canadian government respect the will of Canadian peoples and consider the interests of Canadian peoples first.

To promote our communities' concerns and interests, the education Committee of WWIW plans to organize public information sessions on the FREE TRADE AGREEMENT and its impact on our communities' lives. The information sessions will be held during May in Spanish, Greek, Portuguese, Chinese, and English.



* IMMIGRANT AND VISIBLE MINORITY AND RACE RELATIONS - SURVEY AND DEVELOPMENT OF ADVOCACY STRATEGIES.

This project was developed because of WWIW's experience, which lead us to believe that there is a gap in services regarding Human Rights and Race Relations issues. Institutions such as the Human Rights Commission are not readily accessible to individual immigrant and visible minority women and community groups. There is no mechanism, organization or service which specifically assists a community or an individual to develop a strategy for dealing with racial discrimination.

The objective of the project is to promote awareness of Race Relations, develop and implement a public education program, develop advocacy strategies for Human Rights and Race Relations issues, and to help bridge the gap between mainstream institutions and local groups.

* COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - WORKSHOPS

The first of these Community workshops, was organized in December of 1987, and it was attended by more

than 35 community workers and community activists. These workshops are organized in conjunction with the Cross Cultural Communication Centre, and the Ontario Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women. In these workshops participants learn about services and programs available in the community, analyze and discuss the effects of outside factors on the development and delivery of services, and how to maximize the strength of the community for the purpose of advocacy.

* COMMUNITY CONSULTATION MEETINGS

Although a wide networking system for communication exists in the community, often each one of us focuses on our specific area of work and we miss information as to what others are doing. We feel very strongly that our communities can become an organized force which can play a more active role in the social and political life of Canada.

This community consultation meetings will bring together umbrella organizations whose membership is active in Race Relations issues, Immigrant, Refugee and Visible Minority Women's issues, Community Development and Immigrant programs and service delivery.

The objective is to share information on trends, campaigns and issues of concern to our communities and share our experiences. These meetings will help us evaluate the community's progress and the success of our lobbying efforts to bring about changes in policies which will benefit the community. They will indicate how we can work together more effectively to build support and co-ordinate our activities and possibly develop common strategies.

* CHANGES IN THE IMMIGRATION ACT AND ITS REGULATIONS - THE EFFECTS ON IMMIGRANT WOMEN.

A draft of this research paper has been completed. In this paper WWIW aimed at compiling information about changes in immigration policies, regulations and procedures and providing an analysis of how these changes have affected visible minorities in general and specifically immigrant visible minority women.

This analysis examines: the situation of women and specifically immigrant visible minority women in our society, the history of Canadian immigration policies, changes in immigration regulations and procedures, the situation of refugees and domestic workers, and the effectiveness of settlement services which include language programs, employment training, accreditation and childcare.

The paper concludes with recommendations that aim at achieving equality for all immigrants and visible minorities and especially immigrant and visible minority women.

* PROUD WOMEN, STRONG STEPS.

The film 'PROUD WOMEN, STRONG STEPS' or videos can be rented from the Development Education Centre (597-0328)

The rates for the film are:
\$75.00 for institutions
\$50.00 for community groups.
The rates for the videos are:
\$55.00 for institutions
\$35.00 for community groups.

If you wish to purchase the film is \$725.00 and the videos \$495.00.

A study guide for the film will soon be available.

THE CANADIAN JOBS STRATEGY HAS NOT MET THE

The conservative government's Canadian Jobs Strategy has not met the training needs of immigrant women. That was the main point that Alison Kemper, Administrative Coordinator of New Experiences for Refugee Women, made in her presentation to the Standing Committee on Labour Employment and Immigration. Alison represented Women Working With Immigrant Women at the Committee's hearings on November 3, 1987.

Excerpts of her presentation follow.

What are the job training needs of immigrant women? First, immigrant women need language training in one of Canada's official languages. Although the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission offers language training and allowances through the community colleges under the National Training Act, few women can access this due to one of the following factors. One, they are married and therefore are considered sponsored and ineligible. Two, they have a low level of formal education or skill and are therefore deemed not to require upgrading to enable them to use their job skills. They are told to work as cleaners, garment workers, or assemblers.

Most immigrant women must then attend ESL programs, without training allowances or child care, offered by local boards of education, after eight hours of paid work, three hours of commuting, and countless hours of family responsibilities are over. Few are able to do it. The majority remain in low-paying, dead-end jobs that require no English.

Second, immigrant and refugee women require assistance in adapting to Canadian culture and values. The systems they had for coping with problems have been broken down in the

process of migration and must be built up. For immigrant women to be able to remain in stable employment, they must have stable relationships with other family members, adequate housing and transportation, good health, a supportive community, and day care. Few immigrant women have been able to put these supports together in Canada. Any program that seeks to provide them with permanent employment and employability must assist them with these issues.

Third, immigrant women require help accessing the job market. Immigrant women need to know how to read, sort through, and respond to newspaper advertisements.

Fourth, immigrant women often have low literacy levels, little formal education, and few marketable skills. In order to participate fully in Canadian job market, immigrant women must be able to access training which does not require a grade 10 education, a high level of English, but which does train them to do work in high-demand skills.

Fifth, immigrant women require programs which are stable and trustworthy, which are known in the community, and which do not impose any new financial hardships. They have to be able to get information about them from community members and Canada Employment Centres. They have to know that the program they choose is secure. They have to know that their families will not suffer if they have to go off social assistance and onto a meagre job re-entry program allowance, or that they would have to quit their jobs and go on unemployment insurance for six months to be eligible for a job development program. They have to know that they will move ahead

TRAINING NEEDS OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN

and not be shunted into another dead-end job at the end. They have to know that they will be dealt with fairly, that the program is high quality, and that it offers them some hope of improving their lives.

Given these needs, how is the Canadian Jobs Strategy measuring up? I will only speak specifically about Job Development for the Severely Employment Disadvantaged and Job Re-entry programs, because very few immigrant women are able to access other Canadian Jobs Strategy programs.

Job Development for the Severely Employment Disadvantaged and Job Re-entry are the two programs in which the vast majority of immigrant women trainees are found. Job Development SED programs are provided by the non-profit sector; that is, community-based voluntary agencies. They provide unified training packages to clients with high needs. They are each geared to youth, women, visible minorities, the physically disabled, persons in conflict with the law, or others.

Four of the 64 projects in Ontario are designed for immigrant or refugee women. These four programs provide support, life skills training, orientation to Canadian society, English as a second language, employment orientation, skills training, and job placement. Volunteers and staff of these programs have worked for years to build up the reputations of the training within the ethnic communities they serve, to learn the needs of their target group better and better, and to improve their means of meeting these needs.

Their waiting lists are almost always full. Close to half the women enter with family incomes under

\$ 10,000, and close to half are single mothers. Together these programs have placement rates of 80% to 100%. However, there are problems. There are only four of them, and they are always full. All of them maintain waiting lists. No immigrant outside Metro can access this training, because they are all in Metro. Until very recently, women who had to work because of economic necessity could not access these programs, because of the eligibility requirement of being unemployed 24 out of the last 30 weeks. Because the programs are forced to have 26-week training periods, either they must train the most disadvantaged to a low entry level or they must reject the less educated applicants in order to train others for more skilled jobs. None are able to bring the most disadvantaged to the skill levels that will allow them as much flexibility as they may require in the rapidly shifting job market.

As well, very few Canada Employment counsellors see immigrant women, know of these programs, and make referrals. Indeed, many Canada Employment Centre counsellors believe immigrant women should not receive training; instead, they should fill the ranks of the non-unionized, low-skill workers. They refer them to jobs as cleaners and garment workers.

All is not well within these agencies. They are extremely susceptible because of changing political priorities. My own program, New Experiences for Refugee Women, has had to operate under four different funding programs and four different sets of eligibility criteria in four years.

Each of these changes in eligibility requirements, allowance levels, and training program lengths has confus-

ed our client group. Each of these shifts has meant increasing uncertainty for an anxious staff. Some of the changes have meant lay-offs for highly skilled trainers. All have meant vast amounts of staff time and associated costs to re-tool our programs to meet the new guidelines.

As well, most of these changes have been accompanied by rumours, by leaks, by arbitrary implementation, and by a lack of communication among Ministers, Canadian Jobs Strategy bureaucrats, immigration officers, and manpower counsellors and managers.

The other major Canadian Jobs Strategy program for which immigrant women are eligible is Job Re-entry. There are a wide variety of these. Some one-third are sponsored by community agencies; some two-thirds are sponsored by private businesses. Many have connections with local colleges. They incorporate skills training with a subsidized job training placement. The good ones have English as a second language training, life skills and orientation components, supportive counsellors, and afford their graduates a chance at a variety of secure jobs.

The not-so-good ones take taxpayers' money to train new Canadians to do a low-skilled, low-pay job at the sponsoring company in order to reduce their own payroll costs. One local cleaning company landed a job re-entry contract to train immigrant women to be cleaners through on-the-job training on their janitorial teams. They even managed to negotiate a subcontract with a college which would provide classroom training in life skills, communication skills, and job search skills. The program was cancelled due to lack of interest.

All of the programs, whether based

in the community or in businesses, suffer from common problems. To qualify, a woman must be out of the labour force for three years. Immigrant women simply do not have the economic independence to do this. Most must take whatever work they can find in order to raise their family incomes to a subsistence level.

Once into the program, a woman receives a training allowance that is less than the minimum wage. The poor administration of these payments to the trainees has meant that many have waited eight or ten weeks, without money for food or rent, for their first cheque to arrive. Because of low funding levels, most programs can only afford to do the limited upgrading required to get immigrant women into pink-collar ghettos, and not the massive amount necessary to get them into secure, high-paying trades. This leaves immigrant women in the basements of banks doing data entry, or in mail rooms, or in any number of dead-end jobs for women. Only one of the sixteen local re-entry programs trains women for non-traditional occupations.

Some directions in which the CJS can move in order to improve its capacity to meet immigrant women's needs:

Funding: CJS funding has shrunk from a level of \$2.1 billion in 1985-86 to \$1.7 billion in 1987-88, of which only \$1.3 billion was spent on programs. A further cut is anticipated for the next fiscal year. These cuts mean training opportunities lost for women, struggling to find decent work, safe work, and challenging work. Programs must be stable to continue to attract women and to amass a quantity of experience and quality of training in this field.

Upgrading: The federal government

should continue to fund agencies that allow women to choose training in traditional employment as long as these fields have a future—for instance, word processing. However, immigrant women must be able to access training programs that are supportive, that provide English as a second language and math upgrading, that provide technical experience, and that allow a woman access to highly skilled jobs. The government should fund training programs for immigrant women that offer much more comprehensive training.

Access: Eligibility requirements for job re-entry programs must be relaxed—that is the * three-year requirement—and financial incentives must be improved. Too many women are turned away because they cannot be unemployed for three years or because they cannot afford to go off social assistance.

Target levels for immigrants must be set in all CJS programs. Immigrants in Canada suffer from very high underemployment. If Canada is going to gain from the abilities of this segment of the population, we have to ensure that seeds are set aside and that specific programs are designed for immigrants.

Quality control and privatization: Hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent annually to train Canadians at places whose businesses might be light manufacturing, cleaning, textiles, furniture making, or anything but training. These placements are often subsidies to the sponsor. Canadians should be trained by companies whose purpose is training, not improving shareholders' equity. To do otherwise is not a cost-effective policy. Not only does it cost more, it does not lend itself to monitoring of quality. The government is ripped off; trainees are ripped off. The government

should implement quality checks on the training itself and not just monitor cost per placement.

* Changes to Re-entry eligibility criteria were announced in March 1988 and will be implemented in July. We don't know what other changes an election year will bring.



WOMEN AGAINST FREE TRADE COALITION

15 Gervais Drive, Suite 202
Don Mills, Ontario
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(416)441-2731

Wednesday, May 4, 1988

"TRADING OFF THE ENVIRONMENT"

Forum on Free Trade
Steelworkers' Hall, 25 Cecil St.
8:00 p.m.

Thursday, May 5, 1988

WOMEN WORKING WITH IMMIGRANT WOMEN

Sponsoring a forum on Free Trade
for Spanish Speaking women
Gladstone Library, Gladstone & Bloor
(416)531-2059

**Saturday, May 7, 1988 &
Saturday, May 14, 1988**

PETITION DAY

Come out and help defeat the
Trade Deal!
193 Palmerston Avenue
10:00 a.m.
(We will be going to various
locations in Toronto.)

SOMETIME IN MAY

PROTEST THE IMPLEMENTATION LEGISLATION

Picket - 1 Front Street
(A Federal Government building on the
South-West corner of Yonge & Front St.)
4:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Two days after the legislation is
introduced to Parliament.

Sunday, June 12, 1988

**NATIONAL DAY OF PROTEST AGAINST
FREE TRADE DEAL**

Border Demonstration - Niagara Falls
Watch for further details or call WAFT
at (416)441-2731

Tuesday, May 24, 1988

WOMEN AGAINST FREE TRADE COALITION MEETING

NAC Office, 344 Bloor St., 5th Floor
7:00 p.m.

Produced by Volunteer Labour



WORKING
FOR PEACE



Women Working With Immigrant Women

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