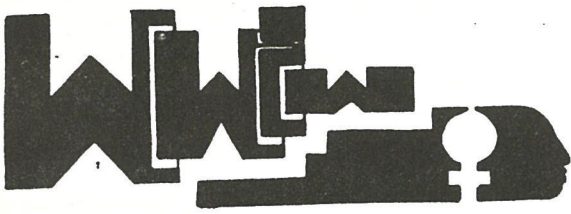


RECEIVED JUL 16 1987



# NEWSLETTER

**Women Working with Immigrant Women**

**SUMMER 1987**

CCLOW/CCPEF  
47 Main Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4E 2V6



## Refugees



## They all look alike...

By Judy Vashti Persad

The misrepresentation of the views of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women, is an issue that Women Working With Immigrant Women, struggles against for some time. There is often the assumption that Immigrant and Visible Minority Women compose a homogeneous group, and they are not viewed as having differing political perspectives. This generalization is similar to the old believe that women we are bonded together in the women's movement, just because of sisterhood. This can be very distracting because it does not allow us to deal with specific issues which do not affect equally all women.

In the June, 1987 issue of Brodside, a mainstream feminist paper in Toronto, there were two articles on the Annual General Meeting of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, which demonstrate this misrepresentation. The writers were inaccurate in their reporting of the perspectives of the Immigrant and Visible Minority Women. WWIW responded by sending a letter to the editor of Brodside for the July issue, in which we discussed the following points

a) Greta Hofmann Nemiroff in her article gave the impression that it was Women of Colour who moved a resolution that the name of the committee be changed to the committee of ethnocentrism and racism. In fact if our memory serves us correctly, it was Nemiroff herself who brought this up and a delegate sitting with her moved the motion. Nemiroff witnessed the strong opposition and referral of the motion to the committee, but did not have the gut or the respect to find out from the Immigrant and Visible Minority caucus members, what the collective decision was before writing an inaccurate report.

b) It was clear from her article,

that Nemiroff continues to ghettoize the concerns and issues of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women. She does not see the exclusion of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women from the functioning of the organization and mainstream feminism as an important enough issue to use NAC's limited resources on.

c) Nemiroff, in her article, praised Women of Colour for the manner in which we spoke. Nemiroff may be surprised at the 'eloquence with which Women of Colour spoke', but unfortunately, to her surprise we are not. This all common response and patronizing attitude shows the unwillingness to debate and address the issues.

Inaccurate reporting of our issues surfaced again in Margaret Buist's article. She claims that women of colour do not want our issues to be aligned with those of immigrant women, and that NAC executive was directed to change the name of the Immigrant and Visible Minority Women's committee. This was not the position taken by the caucus. This type of statement which disregards the wish of the caucus, could be taken as an example of the divisive tactics that are often used to separate us from those with whom we choose to allied.



## The Role of the Immigrant & Visible Min-Committee of NAC

On the Friday night of NAC's 1987 Annual general meeting, Glenda Sims President of the Congress of Black Women, in her keynote address spoke strongly of the need to integrate an anti-racist perspective throughout the policies and structures of the organization. She challenged the National Action Committee on the Status of Women to respond to the issues and concerns of all women, and she warned of the dangers of ghettoizing the concerns of Immigrant and Visible Minority women in one committee (the Immigrant and Visible Minority Women's committee) and assume that these issues and concerns are therefore being addressed.

On Saturday morning our trouble started. Two women who were not members of the NAC's Immigrant and Visible Minority committee, brought up for discussion and then moved a resolution that the name of the committee be changed to the committee on Ethnocentrism and Racism. Members of Women Working With Immigrant Women, which has been involved in establishing the Im. and V.M. committee, spoke against the resolution asking that it be referred back to the Immigrant and Women of Colour caucus.

This demonstrates the lack of respect for and understanding of our issues, concerns and autonomy. What we as a group want is presumed and stated without consulting us, not realizing that misrepresenting something as significant as the manner of our continuing role in NAC could be quite destructive to our ongoing involvement.

On behalf of the committee, WWIW called a meeting of all Immigrant and Women of Colour who were present at the AGM. The purpose of the meeting, was to clarify the role of the committee, to provide guid-

ance for its future work and activities and to deal with the question of the committee's existence as well as its name.

The committee will continue its work as long as is necessary and until Immigrant and Women of Colour member groups, collectively evaluate that a successful integration of issues of interest is achieved within NAC. It was clarified that the role of the committee will be:

- a) To provide NAC with the Immigrant and Women of Colour perspective on issues that NAC address.
- b) To promote the specific issues affecting Immigrant and Women of Colour.
- c) To help other NAC committees integrate these issues in their work.
- d) To recommend actions to be taken by NAC in order to deal with these issues.

During the caucus meeting we discussed the reluctance of some of the NAC's leadership to take part in Immigrant and Women's of Colour activities, claiming to feel uncomfortable. In order to combat these attitudes, but also to provide unity within NAC members, the committee recommended that:

NAC put priority for its membership, education on the issue of racism and that NAC develop an anti-racism policy. This can be done with the guidance and assistance of Immigrant and Women of Colour member groups.

NAC participate actively in the work of organizations dealing with issues affecting Immigrant and Women of Colour and that NAC initiate activities to support the work of these organizations.

## Coalition Against Racism

After a long process of meetings and demonstrations aimed at fighting racism, on April 12, 1987, the COALITION AGAINST RACISM was formed. The groundwork towards the formation of the coalition began on March 8th, 1986, by interested community groups and individuals concerned about discrimination. Involved in the coalition are the AD HOC COMMITTEE FOR WEI FU'S COMPLAINT, THE ONTARIO COALITION OF BLACK TRADE UNIONISTS, THE COALITION OF VISIBLE MINORITY WOMEN, THE CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION CENTRE, and other grassroots organizations.

The long term goal of the Coalition Against Racism is to fight racism. The coalition believes that the first step in achieving this goal, is to seek reforms to the ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION to make it work for the people it serves. As it is now, neither the Ontario Human Rights Code nor the Commission provide justice for victims of discrimination. In working to reform the O.H.R.C. the coalition will be working with handicap groups, women's groups, native groups, immigrant groups and others who face discrimination. It is the hope of the coalition that these groups will be able to work with or join the Coalition Against Racism.

The coalition plans a demonstration for SEPTEMBER 19TH, to be held at QUEEN'S PARK. The objective of the demonstration is to draw attention to the issue of discrimination and to demand change to the Human Rights Commission and Code. In preparation for the demonstration, the coalition will be meeting with community groups to discuss how the H.R. Commission have failed to meet the needs of victims of discrimination. The input of community groups will help formulate further demands for change based on the particular experience

of the community. The coalition will also be available for educational sessions.

If your organization is interested in participating please contact the coalition by writing to:

COALITION AGAINST RACISM  
1321-40 ASQUITH AVENUE  
TORONTO, ONTARIO M4W 1J6

or call Jane Allan at 531-4117





## Starting Anew

By Marina Pino

A lot of women have to leave their homelands, the majority leave because of political reasons. They have to start a new life in different countries such as Canada, countries with different cultures and a different language. I would like to mention some of the problems that refugee women have when arriving in Canada.

The language is one of the most important factors that affect refugee women. In general, it is the men who receive the English programs first. The women have to stay at home and take the responsibilities in their homes, like cooking, cleaning, taking care of their children etc. They cannot be part of this society if they can't communicate their feelings and their needs. Also, they can't show their abilities and knowledge to this society.

Employment opportunities are limited. It is very difficult for the refugee woman to find a good place to work, because she has to have Canadian experience and most of the time she has to speak English very well. If she doesn't have these abilities, she will have to work in factories with poor working conditions, cleaning and all kinds of under employment. The women are usually unable to get work that they like, or for which they have previously been trained.

Child care is another of the problems that the refugee women have because child care services as they are in Canada, is completely alien arrangement to their culture and this generates problems for the mother and the children. The mother cannot work without worrying and thinking all the time about her children, because she is not culturally prepared to leave them alone with a stranger from a different culture and language. For the re-

fugee children it is a big adjustment, because they are used to being with their mother or other relatives.

In addition to these specific problems which I hope will be considered for the future by groups that work with refugee women, to help them settle and adjust in Canada, I think it is very important to highlight in general the terrible situation that the women have to face in Canada. They are isolated due to the lack of opportunities for advancement because they have the domestic responsibilities. This situation affects the women in their lives because they think that they cannot do anything different outside of their homes. They are often preoccupied with memories of dead and disappeared members of their families. They are longing to be back home and they worry about loved ones left behind - often their own children.



Marina came to Canada from El Salvador, a year and a half ago. She is presently taking the NEW EXPERIENCE FOR REFUGEE WOMEN program, which is an Employment Training program designed to meet the needs of Central American Ref.women.



**REFUGEE**

...the face of  
despair



# Canada Slams Shut Its Doors to

On May 5th, 1987, the Canadian government introduced a new refugee determination policy. This policy betrays the humanism of Canadian people and disregards the views of those concerned for refugees. A Toronto Star poll on June 3rd, suggests that 83% of Canadians support this new policy. A more careful look of the findings however, reveals that Canadians support justice for genuine refugees. The public is misinformed and misled to believe that this new policy will control abuse of the system, while it will protect genuine refugees. This is far from reality and Bill C-55 must be stopped. In this effort, immigrant and refugee associations and service agencies, human rights, unions, solidarity and women's groups, religious organizations and lawyers joined together to form the COALITION FOR A JUST REFUGEE AND IMMIGRATION POLICY.

Many of us in the immigrant communities, were stunned by the government's claim that immigrants reject refugees. By characterizing refugees as queue jumpers, the government was playing on the frustration of immigrants who struggle unsuccessfully for years to reunite with their families. This divide and rule tactic may mislead some but not the majority. Immigrants know that what is needed are changes and improvements of the family reunification policy. Immigration policy criteria and programs are and should continue to be separated from refugee determination policy and programs. As we often point out the focus on immigration restrictions and the characterization of refugees as economic migrants, during hard economic times, only serves to fuel the hostility towards the ethnic communities. Since the general public cannot differentiate between immigrants, refugees,

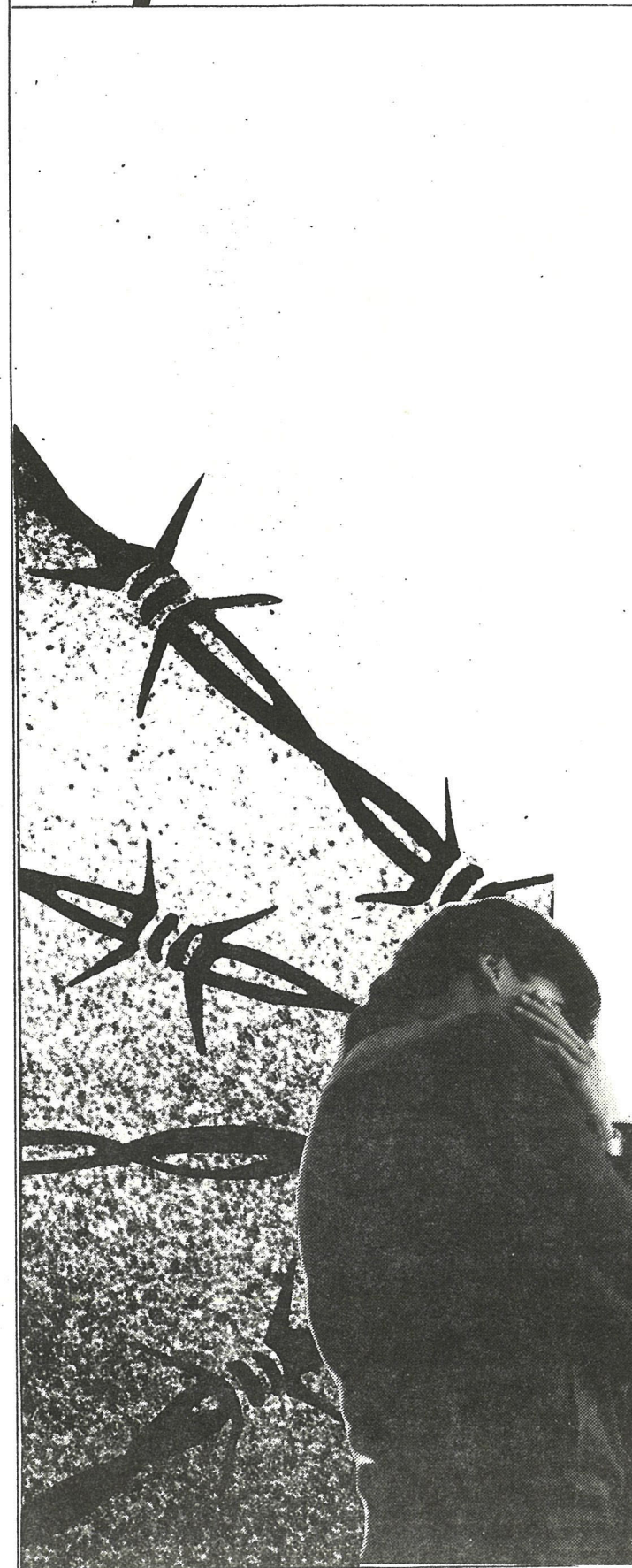
people of colour, whether new comers or those being some generations citizens of this country, the racial hostility is felt deeply by all minority people. This burden has been shouldered by our communities through out Canada's history.

According to the government, the reason for these control measures, is the increase of refugee claims at Canadian borders over the recent years. These claims are said to have been made by people who abuse the refugee determination process to avoid immigration selection abroad. While there is some truth to this, genuine refugees were not the abusers of the system and should not have to pay the price for the government's inaction. For years, interested groups had struggled to improve Canada's refugee determination system. The all Party Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration (Hawkes report) agreed with many of the groups' recommendations, in their report. In addition, while the government was aware of the problems that led to abuse, it responded with inaction.

The government's inaction which caused a backlog in refugee claims, leads us to conclude that the government was building a case which would provide support in closing Canada's borders to 'undesirable' asylum seekers. Canada's immigration history demonstrates that policies have been developed to meet the economic needs of the country as well as its demographic needs. This necessity permitted the entry of people who were otherwise 'unwanted'. As far back as 1860, this view was expressed by the Colony's Governor James Douglas concerning the Asian Immigrants saying that,

# Asylum Seekers...

By Salome Loucas



they are certainly not a desirable class of people but they are for present useful as labourers. In good company, Canada's first Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonland said that, a Mongolian or Chinese population in our country ... would not be a wholesome element for this country. At present it is simply a question of alternatives, either you have this labour or you cannot have the railway.\* Soon after the railway was built, the head tax provision for Chinese immigrants was introduced in the Immigration Act. Another provision which is similar to the new refugee discriminatory policy, was the straight journey from the country of origin in one continuous journey provision. The KOMAGATA MARU incident in 1914, illustrates the consequences of this provision. A ship with East Indian immigrants to Canada, when it arrived in Vancouver, was quarantined. The passengers were refused admission to Canada and were detained in the ship for two months without food or medical supplies. One person died. The ship was finally forced to leave under the guard of armed soldiers. The deportation of unemployed immigrants who applied for relief during the depression years is another example of action which demonstrates how immigrants are used and discriminated against. As many as 5,000 immigrants were deported in one single year, and under the War Measures Act immigrant labour leaders and socialists, became the scapegoats during the social unrest and intensive union organizing.

Under the point system, which is presently used to select immigrants to Canada, the occupations in demand indicate a need for technical skilled labour. The Nielsen report on reducing the deficit, stresses the need to restrict immigration



to those that could benefit Canada's economy. With such a criterion the arrival of unscreened refugees at Canada's borders becomes a threat.

This threat seems to hunt the interests of all industrialized countries. When the Canadian government says that this new refugee policy measures up internationally, he is correct only if he considers the developed countries and their interests to be the whole world. The European countries, the United States and now Canada, united their effort in order to find the solutions which would protect their interests. In explaining the more than 80 millions of people on the move worldwide, they refer to population pressures from the South, and civil wars. The solutions they propose to the forced migration and displacement of people, is control of their borders, and Aid to developing countries. Although one cannot deny a country the right to protect its interest and its borders, one can also demand that this right is granted to developing countries. The developed countries can and should do more in establishing an international economic order which will allow the development of the third world countries' economies. Aid should have no strings attached, imposing unfavourable conditions to the receiving country. The long term aim of Aid sending countries is the expansion of their economic markets. As numerous examples demonstrate, this Aid does not result in the development of self sufficient economies of developing countries. Furthermore this Aid is often provided to governments of refugee producing countries and supports the oppression of peoples and delays social change. Civil wars are not therefore an unexplained phenomenon, but are political conflicts as a result of accumulated debts, which

people are forced to shoulder by living under inhuman conditions and by being denied social programs.

New technology which is used for profit making rather than for the benefit of peoples, intensifies neocolonialism in the form of economic control. Through the activities of the multinational corporations and the international division of labour patterns that developed, unprofitable industries of the developed countries are exported to the developing countries. These investments are recovered in short periods of time and the profits are transferred. Cheap labour is made available through the establishment of oppressive regims and the oppression of peoples. The economies of the developing countries depend on these industries and serve as substitutes to the economies of the developed countries, which base their economic development on new technology. These international economic structures supported as well by continental trade controls, require also control on human resources. Unscreened labourers at the borders of developed countries becomes a threat to these orders. Although some may argue that refugees are selected on humanitarian grounds, in practice, requirements such as having to prove that one can establish successfully in Canada, shows that in fact refugees are part of the labour screening and selection process.

Under the United Nations definition, refugees are people who are forced to seek escape from their homeland, fearing persecution because of race, nationality, religion, social membership or political opinion. Under this definition asylum seekers need to prove their individual case. However, large numbers of people who are displaced and their means of livelihood have been destroyed

because of war, don't meet this definition. Examples of this are the Palestinian refugees who, having no state, cannot claim that they are outside of the country of origin and having no government cannot claim that they fear persecution from their government. The Lebanese people live in refugee like conditions and their lives are threatened by the war and not the state. Similar to this, is the Greek Cypriots who were displaced from the North part of the island to the South when Turkey invaded the island. Although the threat of Turkey's expansion to the South is real, Greek Cypriots cannot claim that they fear persecution from their government. Most refugees want and hope that one day they will return to their homeland. Unless political solutions are found, for many this will remain a lifelong hope.



Refugees who need to come to Canada can either come to the Canadian borders, or apply to a Canadian Immigration office abroad. These offices are not easily accessible and long line ups and lengthy delays endanger refugees' lives as these offices are closely watched by secret police. Applying from abroad is therefore not an option. On February 20th, 1987, before the new policy was introduced, the Canadian government imposed the visa requirement and canceled a list of countr-

ies to which Canada would not deport asylum seekers, because it recognized human rights violations in those countries. Refugee claimants, mainly Central Americans coming from the United States, were turned back to wait for hearings, despite the deportation threat from the U.S. immigration. The Canadian government proudly announced that these control measures had worked. Instead of exposing themselves to the threat of deportation and uncertainty, refugees went into hiding. A year after being awarded the Nansen Medal, Canada slams shut its doors to asylum seekers.

Under the proposed policy, Canada will be inaccessible to people seeking protection. People arriving from a safe country will be turned back to that country. What countries are safe will be decided by the cabinet and the list of safe countries can change from time to time creating so many confusions. What constitutes a safe country is its human rights record. Recently the Canadian government reassumed Aid to the El Salvador government. Did the human rights record of El Salvador improve? Will then El Salvador constitute a safe country? Is the United States a safe country for Central American refugees? U.S. deports 500 of Central American refugee claimants a month. Refugees coming from Sri Lanka, Iran, the Middle East or Africa, have first to go to Europe or another developing country as there are no direct flights to Canada from those areas. This racist and discriminatory policy makes sure that refugees from these areas never reach Canada. People with no credible basis for a claim will be sent back to their country of origin. There is again no definition what constitutes a credible basis. People coming from countries which have economic and political ties with Canada, will



be denied protection, before they have a chance to explain their case.

One cannot help it but think with terror that history is repeating itself. Whether escaping the horror of Auschwitz, the death squads of Chile and El Salvador, or a possible massacre of another Chatila and Sabra, the refugee's JOURNEY TO NO LAND continues navigated by our comfort and silence.

\* WHITE HOODS, The KKK in Canada



## BORDERS AND BARRIERS

AN EDUCATION KIT:  
CANADA'S POLICY ON REFUGEES/FAMILY  
REUNIFICATION.

Useful for teachers, communities, activists, union leaders, members of women's groups, youth groups, others who are concerned about justice for refugees and immigrants.

**User's Guide**  
**When Someone Asks**  
**History**  
**Root Causes**  
**The Global Refugee Problem**  
**Testimonies**  
**Family Reunification**  
**Act Now!**

### IN-DEPTH BACKGROUND ARTICLES

Canadian immigration policy global  
refugee crisis

### DISCUSSIONS

on refugee determination and family  
reunification

### RESOURCES

a guide to ACTION

### USERS GUIDE

creative suggestions for using the  
kit with your group

Produced by  
TORONTO COALITION FOR A JUST  
REFUGEE AND IMMIGRATION POLICY

Cost: \$6.00 each + \$1.50 for post-  
age and handling.

To order contact:  
THE CANADIAN JESUIT REFUGEE PROGRAM  
947 QUEEN STREET EAST  
TORONTO, ONTARIO  
M4M 1J9 PHONE (416) 469-1123

## News In Brief

On June 15th, the Community Coalition on the Canadian Job Strategy met with the Minister of Employment and Immigration Hon. B. Bouchard. Mr. Bouchard announced that the programs for the severely employment disadvantage are to be removed from the Job Development programs of the Canadian Job Strategy.

This means great relief for Refugee and Immigrant women, who now will qualify for training programs, without having to be unemployed for any specific length of time.

For more information contact Brian Conway at 657-8777.

\*\*\*\*\*

As part of an on going project and in response to requests from various organizations, the Cross Cultural Communication Centre has contacted a four hour information sharing session of Employment Equity, on June 16th. Representatives from community groups, unions and skills training organizations participated.

Some of the issues discussed, were how cut-backs in funding to skills training organizations affect Visible Minorities; the principal of seniority and its link with employment equity; and community action.

A highlight of the afternoon, was the presentation to and discussion with participants of the booklet developed by Jane Allan and resource committee of the Cross Cultural Communication Centre, EMPLOYMENT EQUITY, HOW WE CAN USE IT TO FIGHT WORK PLACE RACISM. Part of the discussion was devoted to how the booklet can be used as an information

resource and/or advocacy tool by community groups or other organizations.

Those interested in a copy can obtain one at the Cross Cultural Communication Centre, at a small cost.

For information call:530-4117

\*\*\*\*\*



---

---

## Objectives of WWIW

To provide a forum whereby women and agencies working with Immigrant women exchange ideas, share information, develop a support network and promote the development of new skills.

To collectively identify the needs of immigrant women and work towards the development of programs to respond to these needs.

To engage in social action related to the needs of immigrant women.

## Membership

Membership in WWIW is open to all individual women and non-governmental agencies that work with immigrant women and share in our organizational objectives.

The work and activities of WWIW are carried out by committees which focus on specific issues related to

Health  
Education  
Labour  
Outreach and advocacy

## On going activities

Advocacy on issues related to the Health, Education, Immigration and work place needs of immigrant women.

Research and presentation of briefs on immigrant women's issues.

Lobbying governmental organizations re policies affecting and funding for programs for immigrant women.

Development of strategies related to the Educational, Employment and Health needs of immigrant women.

Active participation in the organized labour movement, solidarity groups, women's organizations and other community groups.

Production and circulation of a quarterly Newsletter.



When the rotating Postal Strike hit Toronto, WWIW was contacted along with other community groups to form a community support committee for the letter carriers.

We responded to the call, because we are very concerned with the use of minority and new comers as strike breakers. These are not the jobs people would want, however the lack of jobs, along with racial discrimination in hiring, pushes people to desperation.

Please.....



Please clip and post on your mail box.

**I SUPPORT MY  
LETTER CARRIERS  
NO SCAB MAIL HERE**

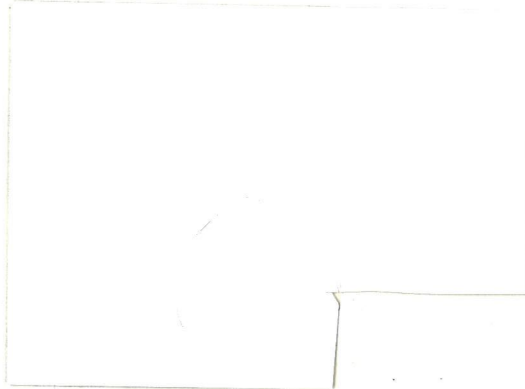
---





RECEIVED JUL 16 1987

Women Working With Immigrant Women  
555 Bloor Street West,  
Toronto, Ontario,  
M5S 1Y6  
Tel. 531-2059



Application for membership in Women Working with Immigrant Women

Name ..... Address .....

Organizational affiliation if any .....

Phone No. .... B ..... H

Membership Fees: Individual \$10.00  Enclosed   
Organizations \$15.00

Volunteer (for those who cannot afford membership fee but would like to give time)

I would like to participate in the:

- Health Cttee  Education Cttee  Labour Cttee
- Outreach and Advocacy Ctte  Newsletter Cttee