

CAM/022/0125/12
LABOUR RIGHTS FOR DOMESTIC SERVANTS

82 Warren Road, Apt. #704

Toronto, M4V 2R7

Tel. 961 - 0386

April 2, 1979.

African National Congress (ANC) Canadian Committee
Box 302, Adelaide Postal Station
Toronto, Ontario
M5C 2J4

To whom it may concern:

We are an organization, who are concerned with the status of domestic servants. We have seen domestic servants work long hours for little pay and no benefits--eighty hour work weeks for fifty dollars isn't uncommon. Physical and psychological abuse of domestics is not unusual either, especially when they are immigrants or new Canadians.

We at Labour Rights for Domestic Servants believe that the exploitation of domestics is due to their lack of protection by law. We are therefore seeking to gain domestics basic labour rights by a petition calling for their full coverage by the Employment Standards Act of Ontario.

We hope that the A.N.C. Canadian Committee will support our petition and organization by bringing the plight of the domestic servants to the attention of your executive and members.

We also ask that a representative from A.N.C. attend an organizing meeting for Labour Rights for Domestic Servants, which will be attended by many other progressive groups. This meeting will be held at 82 Warren Road (#704) on April 8, at 2 p.m.

Yours truly,



Mirjana Vukman - Tenebaum
President

LABOUR RIGHTS FOR DOMESTIC SERVANTS

enclosures

PHONE #

Toronto Star
Friday, March 30, 1979*
Section C, pages C1-C20

Family Classified

'Ripped-off' servants form maids' union

By Louise Brown Toronto Star

Appalled at what they call the "incredible ripoff of domestic workers," a cook-housekeeper and her student husband have formed Ontario's first rights group for domestic servants.

With 15 active members and 100 supporters so far, they are urging minimum wage protection for domestics. They hope the group, Labor Rights for Domestic Servants, will become Canada's first full-fledged domestics' union.

"We know of extremely well-off Rose-dale families with two Rolls-Royces who pay their servants only \$50 a week for 80 hours' work," said Alan Tenebaum, 21, who is spearheading the group with wife Mirjana, 26.

"We want domestics to be paid at least the \$3 Ontario minimum wage, work a 44-hour week and get overtime pay, vacation pay and public holiday pay." (Domestic workers are protected by minimum wage only in Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland.)

"We'll also push members to get written work agreements from their employers before they start, so they at least can collect severance pay when they're laid off."

The Tenebaums formed the group because Mirjana claims she was overworked and underpaid in previous jobs as a cook-housekeeper in Toronto.

Still a domestic in a private home, Mirjana, a Yugoslavian-born landed immigrant, and her Canadian husband

are working on a minimum-wage-for-domestics petition.

Already 1,000 copies are circulating among labor, women's and immigrants' groups, and have been signed by the Reform Metro caucus, an urban activist group, the Immigrant Women's Centre and some Metro NDP riding associations.

MPP Bob Mackenzie (NDP-Hamilton East), the provincial NDP's labor critic, told The Star he plans to lobby for domestics' rights to support the fledgling maids' association.

"I plan to introduce a minimum-wage-for-domestics package as a private member's bill during the next three weeks, and I'll be asking the labor minister why we don't already have it," he said.

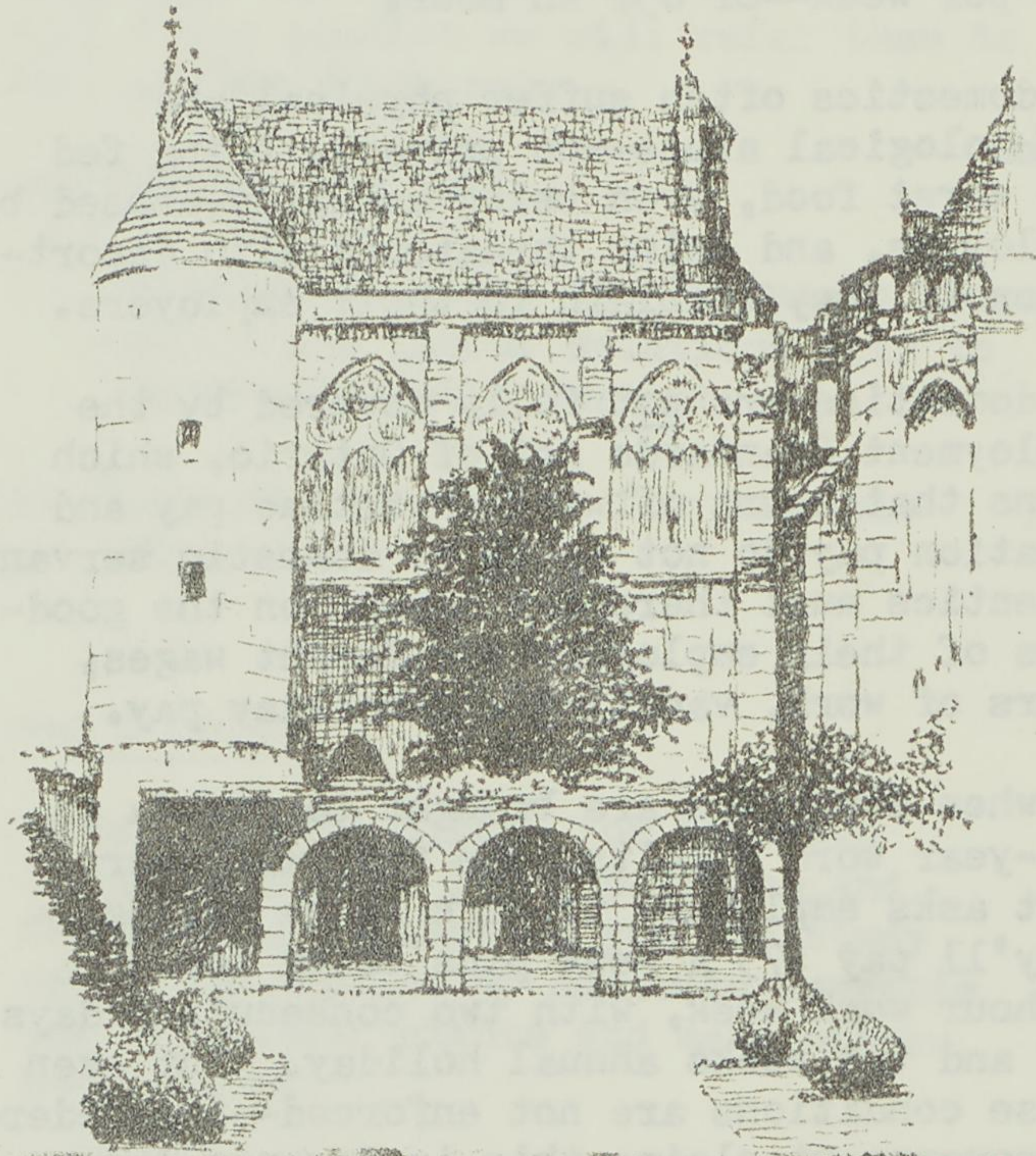
"Domestics who work here on temporary work visas are among the most exploited workers in Ontario because they're too afraid to complain about poor working conditions.

"There's not a reason on earth domestics shouldn't be covered by the same law that governs nearly every other worker in the province."

Still in its early organizing stage, Labor Rights for Domestic Servants invites domestics to call. It will investigate the "horror stories" it hears, with the help of a consulting lawyer.

"We're planning a large public rally soon for anyone interested in the cause. In the meantime, domestics-in-distress can call us at 961-0386, evenings," said Tenebaum.

Labour Rights for Domestic Servants



What are the conditions of domestic servants?

* domestic servants work long hours for little pay. Working eighty-hour weeks, from 7 in the morning until 11 at night, is not uncommon. For this, the average pay is \$50 per week--or 63¢ an hour.

* domestics often suffer physical and psychological abuse--no privacy, being fed the worst food, even being sexually abused by employers, and being threatened with deportation if they complain to their employers.

* domestics are not fully covered by the Employment Standards Act of Ontario, which means that hours of work, overtime pay and vacation pay do not apply to domestic servants. Domestics must therefore depend on the goodness of their employers for decent wages, hours of work, vacation and holiday pay.

* when domestics are brought to Canada on one-year work permits, the federal government asks employers to sign forms saying they'll pay \$75 a week plus board for a 45-hour work week, with two consecutive days off and two weeks annual holiday. But even these conditions are not enforced--the federal government claims this is because domestics aren't covered by provincial labour laws.

LABOUR RIGHTS FOR DOMESTIC SERVANTS was formed in order to fight to put an end to this exploitation of domestics.

What are L.R.D.S.'s aims?

1. In the short term, our major task is to distribute a petition entitled "Slavery Today?", which demands full coverage for domestic servants under the Employment Standards Act.

2. We make available information to domestic servants about their existing rights and try to suggest ways to improve their working conditions at their present jobs.
3. We offer immigrants information on immigration laws and a variety of other services. If L.R.D.S. can't assist them with their problem we will refer them to some agency which can.
4. Our future aims are:
 - i. Petition to amend the Workmen's Compensation and Labour Relations Acts to include Domestic Servants.
 - ii. Form an association for Domestic servants.

How can I help?

1. Contact Labour Rights for Domestic Servants and ask for a petition and further information so you can study up on the problem of domestic servants lack of labour rights and make others aware of it.
2. Send in letters of your support and general opinions to L.R.D.S.
3. Come to our meetings and fund raisings.
4. Join Labour Rights for Domestic Servants so you can play an active role in the fight for labour rights for domestic servants.
5. If you are a member of a trade union or community organization, get a resolution passed in your organization supporting the demands of domestic servants.

We at Labour Rights for Domestic Servants
DEMAND the following amendments to the
Employment Standards Act be made for domestic
servants employed by the householder;

- * Maximum of a 44 hour work week,
- * A minimum wage of \$3.00/hour,
- * Overtime pay,
- * Public holiday pay & vacation pay.

If you want to help fight for rights for
domestic servants;

If you need more information;

If you are a domestic servant requiring
help, or know someone who needs help;

Contact us at: 961-0386
82 Warren Road
Apt. 704
Toronto, Ont.
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LABOUR RIGHTS FOR DOMESTIC SERVANTS
(LRDS)