

# 10-hour day proposal unrealistic

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I REFER to the article which appeared in the *South China Morning Post* on September 6 and which mentioned that the Philippine Consulate plans to ask for a 10-hour working day for Philippine domestic helpers, and wants to redress other abuses of amahs in Hongkong.

I am a working woman, who like many or most people in Hongkong, am out of my home 12 to 13 hours per day. I spend 10 hours at work, 1½ hours commuting, and usually two nights per week attending dinners and other social functions related to my work.

Filipino amahs, most of whom are mothers themselves, cannot expect to come here, take up precious space as living quarters in their employer's home, and then spend the majority of their time resting while the Hongkong working mother is slaving away in the fast-paced and hectic working environment of Hongkong.

I don't understand how the Filipino amahs can realistically expect to leave the responsibility of rearing their own children with relatives in the Philippines, and then come here and make 20 times the wages as most Filipinos, receive free rent and food, and then work less hours than their employer.

Generally speaking, I believe that most Filipinos are treated decently in Hongkong. Of course there are abuses, but overall this is not the case. I believe that a better system should be devised to deal with the abuse cases, but I would not punish the Hongkong working woman who relies on the amah, for the relatively few abuse cases in Hongkong.

In Canada, amahs work less hours than in Hongkong. However they do not live in their employer's home. If the amahs want 14 hours free time per day, they had better live outside and pay for their transportation to work, rent, phone bills, and other utilities, like the rest of us.

If the Hongkong Government wants to allow this 10 hours per day proposal by the Philippine Consulate, it had better think again. In other Asian countries amahs are making one-fifth the amount as here in Hongkong. Also, it is the very nature of the work of the domestic helper who lives in the employer's home to help get the children off to school and to clean up the kitchen after dinner which requires at least 12 hours per day.

I, myself, would rather hire a Chinese maid to come into my home for eight to 10 hours per day and then leave after her work is done. If the Filipino amahs want this, fine, but they also better plan to seek housing on the outside.

Why should everyone in Hongkong work so hard, but not the Filipino domestic helpers, who if in the Philippines, would also be working long hours for a lot less pay?

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SUPPLIED