

## Conservatives carry out largest workplace raids in Canadian history

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Friday, 15 May 2009

The media love to portray Canada as a country that welcomes all immigrants and gives them an opportunity to succeed. The truth, however, is that as many as 500,000 live and work without "legal" status in Canada, meaning that they are subjected to even more abuse and exploitation than other workers. In addition to this, they are under constant threat of being arrested and deported, such as with the Conservatives' recent raids.

Toronto is called "the Global City" by some, and many would be hard pressed to argue against that title. Why, is it not true that a lot of different cultures are present in each corner of the city? Nearly half of all Toronto residents are born outside of Canada. Where else in the world would you find a "Little Malta" with its own cultural centres and restaurants?

This image of Toronto is usually used to present a picture of a Canada that accepts people from all over the world with open arms. What goes unmentioned, however, is that right in this "Global City" and all around this "immigrant-loving" country, thousands of workers are languishing in sweatshops. Currently, up to 500,000 live and work in Canada without status and this means that they are abused and exploited, even more than the rest of us. Some are not paid a wage but are only allowed to share tips between themselves; some are ripped off and not paid what they are owed; and some are threatened with being handed over to immigration enforcers if they complain about their labour rights. This is the hell that non-status workers must endure for years, in the hopes that they maybe can win a decent status and life for their children.

Even if they accept these horrible conditions, most non-status immigrants remain under the perennial threat of raids and deportations by the State, which on many occasions, means returning to life-threatening circumstances. The Conservative government of Stephen Harper and his Citizenship and Immigration minister, Jason Kenney, have recently initiated unprecedented attacks against migrants and non-status workers.

Last month, immigration enforcement teams from Canada Border Services, together with local police, carried out the largest series of workplace raids in Canadian history. These raids occurred on 2nd and 3rd April across southern Ontario (East York, Leamington, Windsor, etc.). About 100 workers were arrested. Live-in caregivers (mostly Filipinos), refugee claimants, and temporary workers were the main targets. Combined with other vicious measures like the adoption of Bill C-50, which would expand the program for hiring temporary foreign workers that can be sent back at any time, we are beginning to see the same sort of protests that we have seen in the United States. The adoption of these tactics in the United States by the previous Bush government led to huge waves of protest there, including record large protests to coincide with May Day.

The April raids were not met with indifference. On very short notice, more than 200 migrant and labour activists gathered outside the Rexdale Immigration Detention Centre in Toronto on 5th April to demand the release of those arrested. Besides No One is Illegal, the main organizers of the protest, there were many representatives from trade unions such as CUPE, CAW, UFCW, and OPSEU.

Marxists are well aware of the bosses' drive to divide the working class. Throughout Canada's history, the ruling class has tried to pit immigrant labour versus other workers, presenting immigrants as a threat to existing workers. However, we need to refuse to be divided. We are internationalists and all the workers of the world are our brothers and sisters. We reject the division of people based on citizenship papers and documents and fight against the inequalities that are prevalent among immigrant communities. Anybody who lives and works in Canada should be a respected, dignified citizen and member of our society.

For us, there are only two "divisions" that matter: those who work, and those who live off the labour of the working class. We will only be truly united when we, the working people, unite against our common enemy, the bosses. The New Democratic Party should also be brought about to realize this matter and be turned into a party fighting for all working people of Canada, irrespective of "status";.

With capitalism in its biggest crisis in decades, those who are in the most vulnerable positions will be hit hardest. We need to resist and fight back!

Scrap all racist immigration and asylum controls!

Workers' unity is the way to defeat the racists and the conditions that breed racism!