

# Race, Class, Gender and the Making of Difference: The Social Organization of "Migrant Workers"<sup>1</sup> in Canada

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## ABSTRACT

By investigating the effects of Canada's Non-Immigrant Employment Authorization Program on the "migrant workers" it recruits, this paper argues that concepts of "citizenship" and citizens rights organize social and legal practices that determine - and legitimize - who is entitled to certain "rights" and protections within the space controlled by national states and who is excluded.

## RÉSUMÉ

En faisant une enquête sur les effets que le Programme de permis de travail pour les non-migrants du Canada a sur les travailleurs qu'il recrute, cet article soutient que le concept de "citoyenneté" et les droits de citoyens organisent les pratiques sociales et légales qui déterminent, et légitiment, ceux qui ont droit à certains "droits" et à certaines protections dans les limites du territoire contrôlé par les états nationaux, et ceux qui sont exclus.

## INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades or so, as the current period of globalization has shifted social relations within the North and between the North and the South, renewed attention has been given to the fight for "citizens' rights" by feminists concerned about the dismantling of "their" Northern welfare states (Brodie 1996a; 1996b; Bakker 1996; Hagen and Jenson 1988). We need, however, to recognize and account for the fact that the establishment of welfare states was largely a Northern development, a feature of restructured global relations of the ongoing privileging of Northern peoples following World War Two. Yet since this time, and before, the establishment of citizens' rights and entitlements has resulted in simultaneous *dis*-entitlement for women and men identified as non-citizens. This development has been particularly harmful to women of colour attempting to enter and reside as permanent residents in Northern countries. In this paper, I investigate the contemporary meaning of Canadian citizenship and question the usefulness of using "citizenship rights" as the banner under which

feminists fight for women's equality.

A key part of my argument is that the exclusions organized by the concepts of "citizenship" and citizens' rights are not merely a coincidence, nor can they be remedied by trying to expand the groups of people recognized as citizens. Rather, the notion of "citizen" needs to be understood as the dominant, oppressive half of a binary code of negative dualities. The construction and reproduction of the category Canadian citizen thus activates the category of "non-citizen." The Self as the "insider" and the "foreigner" as Other/"outsider" that the nation-state system and nationalist practices organize brings about a particular material reality as well as a particular ideological understanding of our relationships with people. The existence of national borders, then, shapes both the organization of social relations and people's consciousness of our world.

In this accounting of the practices of citizenship, the citizen-Self has been intentionally created (and re-produced) in privileged relation to the Other. In Canada, it has been Indigenous women and women of colour who have been relegated as the archetypal Other through dominant

beliefs about the legitimacy of national borders and national state practices concerning citizenship. This understanding clarifies that notions of citizenship are not a philosophical absolute. They are the mark of a particular kind of unequal relationship. Borders define not only spatial but ideological ground. Nationalized boundaries affect people's legal, political and social position as well as the process of identity-formation.

I argue that instead of accepting the socially organized category of citizen, an examination of how "citizenship" helps to legitimize the domination of those who are socially, as well as legally (although the two do not always neatly coincide), classified as non-citizens is necessary. This project involves an account of the ways in which nationalist discourses work as ideological practices within processes of globalization to organize differences between citizens and non-citizens inside the boundaries organized by (and for) the Self. This exercise should lead to an uncovering of the ideological and material processes that make some people - and not Others - "Canadian."

During the last two decades, a growing number of people have crossed into Canadian territory, but most of them have been denied permanent resident status and been classified instead as temporary, migrant workers. Those so classified are, arguably, the quintessential non-citizens within Canadian society. Understanding the daily processes by which groups become racialized and gendered through placement in differential state categories can help us to identify the demarcation of social spaces that separate people in Canada into discrete, hierarchically-organized groups. For this reason, I place the Canadian state's category of "non-immigrants" (or the more popularly used term: "migrant workers") at the centre of my inquiry.

To date, scholars have focussed on select groups of people recruited as migrant workers (see Bakan and Stasiulis 1996 on women domestic workers; and Wall 1992 on farm workers). Here, I will focus on how the category itself has been socially organized. To understand the development

of the category of migrant workers, I examine the ways in which the ideological practices of citizenship organize government actions that many "Canadians" regard as perfectly legitimate. That is, instead of examining the daily lived experiences of groups of migrant workers in Canada, I examine how existing social relations in Canada help to organize the very normalcy of the category.

An investigation into ideological practices, it is argued, helps us to make good (as opposed to "common") sense of the contrast between the growing number of restrictions placed by the state upon people entering Canada in search of a livelihood and the greater mobility rights of "national treatment" (that is, citizenship) that the state has given to the capital of investors. I argue that these two developments are not at all contradictory but are integrally related. The existence of highly differentiated labour markets organized through the nation-state system continues to serve capitalists well in this period of restructuring.

#### **CITIZENSHIP AND (IM)MIGRATION IN CANADA: THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF MIGRANT WORKERS**

The discourse on citizenship and immigration policy refracts issues of racialized, gendered and nationalized inclusions / exclusions and their relationship to entitlements / dis-entitlements within Canadian society. This is because regulations governing the movement of people into Canada, as well as the legislation on citizenship, have historically shaped both the territorial boundaries of the Canadian nation and people's consciousness about "being Canadian." Consequently, the discourse on (im)migration has been one of the paramount arenas through which questions about the "nation" have continued to surface and be challenged.

A key part of the contemporary process of Canadian "nation"-building<sup>2</sup> is the state's active participation in this discourse and its espousing of the rhetoric of "protecting Our borders," especially from "Third World" women and men who, since

the late 1960s, have often been represented as a major threat to Canadians. The exclusionary discursive practices of "Canadian-ness" are of particular importance to the organization of the Canadian labour market, as is graphically displayed by the experiences of those categorized as migrant workers. They are made to work in unfree employment relationships as a condition of entering, residing and working in Canada.

People so categorized enter through Canada's Non-Immigrant Employment Authorization Program (NIEAP) established in 1973. The Canadian system for migrant workers reveals different elements of nationalist projects that render some people as non-citizens. Stipulations regarding the criteria for entering under the NIEAP include an identified employer, location of employment, type of employment, condition of employment and length of employment pre-arranged and stated on the person's temporary employment authorization prior to arrival in Canada. Once in the country, the affected person is bound to "work at a specific job for a specific period of time for a specific employer" (Citizenship and Immigration (CIC) 1994). Migrant workers cannot change any of their conditions of entry or employment without written permission from an immigration officer. If they leave the stipulated employer or change occupations without this approval they are subject to deportation.

The NIEAP operates as a forced *rotational* system of employment. People admitted through this program cannot exceed the length of time (maximum one year) stated in their temporary work visa. They are, however, able to renew their work visa if the *employer* agrees. Yet, even for those whose visas are renewed, a migrant worker's status in Canada is considered to be permanently "temporary." People so classified are not eligible to remain as permanent residents. Different people are brought in to work, removed and replaced by Others. In this sense, migrant workers are caught in a "revolving door of exploitation" (Ramirez 1982).

Importantly, the government's increasing use of the NIEAP has resulted in a substantial repositioning of the balance between immigrant and "non-immigrant" people recruited to work in

Canada. For instance, in 1973, 57 percent of all people classified as workers entering Canada arrived as "landed immigrants" with permanent resident status - the first necessary step in becoming a Canadian citizen (Sharma 1995). By 1993, however, of the total number of workers admitted to Canada, only 30 percent received this status while 70 percent came in under the NIEAP as migrant workers on temporary employment authorizations (Sharma 1995).

I maintain that it was not sheer coincidence that the NIEAP was introduced amidst a highly racialized discourse about the changing "character" of the Canadian "nation." Such a discourse was centred on the fact that since 1967, people of colour from the South were for the first time able to enter Canada as permanent residents. Nor was it a coincidence that the NIEAP was introduced at a time when major re-alignments were underway within global capitalism. Following the pattern of "guest worker" programs elsewhere, the Canadian government has successfully shifted its immigration policy away from one of permanent (im)migrant settlement towards a policy that increasingly relies on unfree, temporary labour.

The labour market into which migrant workers are inserted in Canada is highly racialized and gendered. The ideological processes of constructing "race" and gender within Canada are most evident in the types of work that differentiated groups of migrant workers perform in Canada. Approximately 75 percent of all people entering through the NIEAP are employed in non-professional employment, mostly in service sector jobs such as retail and clerical work and manufacturing (especially low skilled garment industry jobs), and primary sector jobs (especially farm workers). A comparatively small number of people employed in professional occupations are admitted under the NIEAP. Many of these professionals help to manage and administer the operations of corporations (CIC 1995).<sup>3</sup>

Significantly, almost 90 percent of professionals admitted under the NIEAP, especially managers and administrators, are from other capitalist countries in the North - mainly from the US or Japan - where the vast majority of

transnational corporations remain headquartered (CIC 1995). Overwhelmingly, most are men. On the other hand, 92 percent of all people coming from the less economically advanced capitalist countries in the South work within non-"professional" occupations.

Through the NIEAP, the Canadian state is also able to reproduce and further entrench a gendered division of labour in Canada. The majority of women entering through the NIEAP are employed within non-professional occupations. Women remain segregated in the service sector (where 89 percent of the workers are women), particularly in personal service jobs such as live-in domestic, child-care or elder-care work (95 percent), and clerical work (65 percent) (Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC) 1992). For those jobs that "Canadian" citizens find the least attractive, a racialized and gendered process articulates with notions of who "naturally" should carry out this work. Thus, we find that the vast majority (70 percent) of live-in domestic workers entering as migrant workers are women of colour from Asia and the Caribbean (Cornish 1992).

Migrant workers are expressly recruited to serve the Canadian labour market, but permanent resident and citizenship status is formally denied them. They comprise a significant part of Canadian society but are simultaneously constructed as being outside of that society. Governmental practices categorize them as being part of a *foreign* labour force. The dual construction of a "domestic" and a "foreign" labour market within the space occupied by "Canada" is accomplished through the category migrant worker. By controlling the scale, structure and course of labour migration into Canada, the Canadian government has helped to create a highly "flexible" (that is, precarious) labour force. What allows migrant workers to be used as a "cheap" and largely unprotected labour power are not any inherent qualities of the people so categorized but, rather, state regulations that render them powerless.

Because they have been categorized as "non-immigrants," people entering as migrant workers do not possess many of the social or political rights that come with Canadian citizenship.

For instance, migrant workers cannot stay in the country unless they work for a pre-specified employer, and they do not have access to the wide array of social programs and services associated with the "entitlements" of citizenship in the Northern welfare-states. In effect, they work as unfree labour in the Canadian labour market; they are denied access to the social welfare programs and services that would provide them with an alternative to selling their labour power. Migrant workers are thus unable to decommodify themselves. Furthermore, they are denied basic political rights (voting) and so cannot hope to make changes in Canada's political system. At the same time, these workers are placed in a highly vulnerable situation that makes it difficult for them to speak out for themselves. That the employer or state officials have the power to find the worker "unsuitable" and thereby subject to deportation severely limits what migrant workers are able or willing to say and do.

The NIEAP has allowed the government to continue to enjoy the support of employers demanding relatively unrestricted access to a supply of cheapened workers while also making migrant workers virtually invisible to those Canadians calling for the state to "protect Our borders" and decrease immigration, especially from the "Third World." The migrant worker category also operates so as to enhance the Canadian government's capacity to attract and/or retain capital investment in "its" territory by permitting employers in the country (whether "domestic" or "foreign" capitalists) to carry out a "cheap labour strategy" of global competition.

Indeed, during the current period of capitalist restructuring, the Canadian government has been deeply concerned with both material and ideological processes of "nation"-building. A major emphasis has been to enact policies to increase capital investment. Note, for instance, the following excerpt from the throne speech of Pierre Elliott Trudeau's Liberal government, delivered only a few days after the introduction of NIEAP. It laid down the following: "The Government will introduce legislation establishing a competition policy to preserve and strengthen the market system upon

which our economy is based. The new policy will be in harmony with industrial policies in general and foreign investment policy in particular" (Hansard January 4 1973, 5).

The migrant workers recruitment program reflects the government's stated desire to "strengthen the market system" in Canada and its willingness to (re)organize the labour market in Canada in order to attract "foreign" investment. By regulating the unfreedom of migrant workers categorized as "non-citizens" and even "non-immigrants," the government was able to offer employers the opportunity to enhance their profits by reducing labour costs, and at the same time reduce its own expenditure on social services and programs. The NIEAP also allowed investors and/or employers to tap into a world-wide labour market and seek out the cheapest and most vulnerable work force.

In response to the heightened mobility of capital, the Canadian government has fundamentally reshaped the working class in Canada through the migrant workers recruitment program. With the NIEAP, the Canadian government has produced a group of non-citizens who are largely exempted from laws that guarantee minimum employment standards, collective bargaining, and the provision of social services and programs such as unemployment insurance, social assistance, old-age pensions. This, in turn, cheapens and weakens the position of these workers. Citizenship, then, has become an important "tool" in re-organizing the labour market in Canada to the benefit of capital investors.

The exploitation of migrant workers is concealed and reproduced through the notion that citizens can expect certain rights and entitlements that non-citizens cannot and that this expectation is "normal." As a result, it appears perfectly ordinary, or "natural," that those categorized as non-citizens would be denied the same protections and rights to which "Canadian citizens" are "entitled." Why should migrant workers get the same rights as citizens? They are, after all, migrant workers. This circular argument ensnares migrant workers in a particularly vicious way. In a world where capital is increasingly being granted "national treatment"

(that is, citizenship) rights, the denial of exactly this status to people who are categorized as migrant workers suggests how modern notions of "citizenship" are derived from the ideological structure of a nation-state system in which ruling interests enjoy considerable power and influence.

### THE SOVEREIGNTY STORY: THE PROJECT OF CANADIAN "NATION"-BUILDING

There is little attention paid to questioning the social organization of national states or to concepts of citizenship and how these serve to facilitate the very inequalities which capital investors find so profitable in this latest period of globalization (Brodie 1996a; 1996b; Bakker 1996). By leaving the concept of citizenship unchallenged, we are left instead with the notion that citizens, *and not people*, are being threatened by the forces of globalization, and that in order to achieve social justice, we must fight for a re-invigorated citizenship (Brodie 1996a).

Such a view ignores the fact that "nations" and, therefore, its citizens, are very much configured through struggles over the means of production and reproduction over time (including, but not exclusively, competition over particular pieces of land) and shaped by the convergence of various historical realities. "Nations" are far from natural beings; they are materially and ideologically organized collectivities of people who exist in a particular time and space. They are very much "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991). The imagining of nations is understood to be a distinct and historically enduring "style" of community formation, closely associated with the rise and proliferation of white, patriarchal, capitalist social relations.

Indeed, the ideological practice of nationalism has operated as a "material force" in shaping the pattern of social relations inside (as well as outside) the nation. The relationship between a particular "imagining" of the nation and the establishment of certain unequal social relations is evident in some of the earliest European writings on nationalism (Mill 1995). Importantly, in the

process of making "nations," the construction of both a Self and an Other is accomplished. European dominance over various colonized people, including those now considered to be a part of "Western civilization" itself, has historically been secured, in part, through the legitimacy accomplished by nationalist notions of "sovereignty." Significantly, the rights of "sovereignty" have been reserved for those Self-defined as "civilized humans" over the "backward barbarians."

Notwithstanding the liberal rhetoric that claims equality between "sovereign nations," the organization of national boundaries, both literally and figuratively, has historically been part of the process of (re)producing asymmetrical global social relations of "race," gender and class. The coherence of the nation-state system has, in fact, relied greatly upon the "sovereignty story." This story is based on the notion that there exists within nation-states a coincidence of identity, territory and authority (Pettman 1997). In the crafting of this story, people working within the apparatus of the nation-state (in Canada: parliamentarians, immigration and customs officials and the security forces, for example) are seen to be legitimate in acting as gate-keepers to the entry of people into the state's territory as well as controlling membership criteria for belonging to the "Canadian nation."

The sovereignty story acts as an ideological practice that helps to "naturalize" this gate-keeping process, so the "nation-as-community" is concretized and rarely challenged through the construction of borders (both literally and figuratively) between Self and Other. It appears natural to most that certain people "belong" in Canada and Others do not. The legitimacy of the nation-state system has also been secured, in part, by recourse to liberal notions of individual rights. Such rights are said to be held by the citizens of the nation who rely upon their state to ensure their rights are realized. The activities of citizens fighting for their rights, then, is defined as progressive by many who uncritically accept either the natural-ness or the inevitability of the existence of the nation-state.

Significantly, the fight for citizens' rights

is also seen to be occurring within the supposedly Self-contained space of the nation-state rather than being part of a global system of inequalities. This allows for the notion that those people without much in the way of rights are victims of their own "weak" states, rather than a global system of asymmetrical social relations. There is little room left for the recognition that certain rights and entitlements have been gained by (some) people in the North *as a result of* global relations of power and dominance controlled by Northern states as well as the concerns for legitimacy by capitalists who largely remain headquartered there. Such notions operate as ideological practices for they conceal the global relations of white, capitalist patriarchy that organize North/South inequalities and that shape *who* has the ability to realize their rights and entitlements within the world (and within the North itself). It obscures from view the fact that contemporary notions, particularly of citizen and non-citizen, substantially reproduce the colonizer/colonized binary code.

The status of migrant workers is maintained, in part, through the practices shaped by the discourses on citizenship and the rights of citizens. Such notions have been codified within Canadian law, including in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms which explicitly excludes non-citizens from the rights of mobility enjoyed by citizens (for example, the right *not* to be told where and who to work for). Such legislation exploits the existence of massive inequalities within the world capitalist system while taking advantage of the fact that nation-states are still seen as legitimately controlling "their own" borders *vis à vis* "foreigners." This, in turn, positions migrant workers in particular ways within the social relations of production and reproduction in the country (and in the world market for labour power).

### "DIFFERENCE" AND THE MAKING OF CANADA

It is the social organization of "difference" in Canada and continued adherence to the notion that *only* citizens have any legitimate claims for entitlements within the nation-state system that has

helped to cheapen and weaken the labour power of those rendered non-citizen-Others. Throughout the initial project of Canadian "nation" building, the Other has existed not only outside the borders of the state (that is, in an Other nation). Rather, many people, including the original inhabitants, *within* Canada have been rendered as Other. The space that "Canada" has historically occupied is not only territorial but also ideological. As a result, part of the ongoing nation-building project of "Canada" has been the ideological construction of notions of Canadian-ness that rely on racist, sexist and nationalist ideological criteria of "belonging."

"Common-sensical" notions of Canadian-ness reveal much about the contemporary meaning of Canadian citizenship. By legislating inclusions and exclusions, the state has been a major organizer of the hierarchical "differences" embedded within "Canadian" identity. Being a "Canadian citizen" is integrally connected to the historically shaped identity of *which bodies* can be Canadian and to the differential rights and entitlements that are accrued to Canadians and those constructed as Other.

Through the continuing process of constructing differences between women and men who are white settlers, Aboriginal and people of colour, the racialized and gendered meanings of "being Canadian" has been concretized. Explicit reference to Aboriginal people and those from outside Northwestern Europe, especially people of colour from the "Third World," as the Other has secured the ideological construction of "Canada" as a "white settler colony" and an extension of the English and French nations (Abele and Stasiulis 1989).

Thus, "Canada" has come into existence in relation to the colonization of Indigenous peoples, the privileging of white settlers and the subordination of people immigrating from the colonized South. This has positioned Canada as a "First World" state within the system of global capitalism. The bodies that are categorized as either citizens or non-citizens in Canada depends very much upon the global inequalities organized by this system. Within this international configuration, Canadian identity has been created and reproduced

by the state through particular legislated inclusions and exclusions.

Because of the ways women have historically been construed as both embodying the nation as well as *belonging to* the nation, the project of Canadian nation-building is incomprehensible without understanding the gendered character of these processes of racialization and nationalization and the ways in which gender has simultaneously constructed these other imaginings (Miles 1993, 92). While nationalist discourses have generally positioned women to play a key maintenance role in the configuration of particular imaginings of national boundaries, notions of belonging for women, unlike men, carry with them the implications of women as the *property of* the men of the nation. Thus, even though the nation is often represented symbolically as a woman, it is gendered as masculine in its imagining.

The articulation of racism with the ideologies of sexism and nationalism has profoundly shaped the material realities of these women. Women rendered as the Other are seen as embodying the very differences between nations. Seen as belonging to Other nations, Indigenous women and other women of colour in Canada, for instance, have historically been portrayed as part of the process of establishing the permanent presence of the Other and therefore particularly disruptive of the "character" of the Canadian nation (Thobani 1998). Through the negative racializing of their gendered position, these women are made vulnerable to greater degrees of exploitation and they experience a consequent cheapening of their labour power and curtailment of any real alternatives to entering the waged labour market. Furthermore, difference has been sutured into the very (white) skin of the Canadian nation, but this "difference" has been anything but a "natural" process. Rather, differences have been explicitly organized and structured within Canadian society in order to privilege those recognized as Canadians within the relations shaped by global capitalism.

Those recognized as Canadians have been seen to be *entitled to* certain things ("good" jobs, political power, capital, etc.) that Others have not. This sense of special entitlement has been

"naturalized" through a harking back to the imagined community of the Canadian "nation," when, it is argued, "community" is responsible only for its own members - and not for Others who are expected to rely on "their own people" as ideologically embodied in their "weak" states. As a result, the ideological practices organized through binary concepts of gender, "race" and nation have become synonymous with "being Canadian" for many and a Canadian identity has been continuously (re)imagined in opposition to those racialized, gendered and classed as the Other (Miles 1993, 102).

The existence of racialized and gendered relations of production is not simply an aberration from the "normal" way of doing things in Canada. The introduction and increasing popularity of the NIEAP suggests otherwise. Employers benefit enormously from how this migrant workers' program organizes "difference" within the world and within Canadian labour markets. The NIEAP, and the exclusionary practices of citizenship that are operationalized through it are an integral connecting piece between the material reality of global capitalism and the ideological configuration of "Canadian-ness."

### CONCLUSION

By categorizing people as migrant workers, rather than citizens (or permanent residents), the Canadian government is able to force certain people to work within unfree employment relations as a condition of their entry, residence and work in Canada. People categorized as migrant workers are often cheaper for employers to hire and less able to resist employers' demands not because of any inherent characteristics they are said to possess, but because their very categorization as migrant workers by the Canadian state offers them little recourse to being heavily exploited. The creation and daily reproduction of inequalities within the global capitalist system ensures a continuous source of people who seek to work in Canada under such restrictive conditions. The social underpinning of this strategy to provide "cheap labour" to employers is greatly obscured,

however, because ideological concepts - those that work to conceal the *social* organization of our relationships, such as "race," gender or citizenship - are mystified through the ideological practices of racism, sexism and nationalism that help to naturalize structures of domination. The labour market in which migrant workers are inserted in Canada is highly racialized and gendered.

It is in the renewed attention to notions of "Canadian-ness" evident since the 1970s that I locate the legitimacy given to the introduction of a migrant workers' program. As in earlier periods of Canadian nation-state building, there has been a profound articulation between the (re)organization of capitalist social relations and the ideological imaginings of Canadian-ness. Yet, it is crucial that we recognize that the existence, indeed the growing pervasiveness, of a discourse of Canadian-ness, of "protecting Our borders," of "protecting Canadians," has *not* resulted in a lessened mobility of people or a lessening of (im)migration to Canada. Globally, the number of people migrating has doubled in the last decade (United Nations 1993). (Im)migration to Canada has actually increased during the last ten years. However, most people recruited to work in the country now enter as unfree, indentured "migrant labour" rather than as permanent residents.

Thus, the discourse on Canadian-ness has not served to curtail migration, but rather, it has operated as an *ideological practice of differentiation* that has served to legitimize the denial of citizenship status to people migrating in search of work. The result is a further cheapened and weakened labour force that capital investors in search of profits can exploit. In this way, citizenship can be said to function as an "architect of social inequality" (Fraser and Gordon 1992, 49).

How useful, then, is the concept of citizenship in feminist struggles for justice? Simply put, my answer is that it is not useful at all. Rather, it is extremely harmful to women in general and Indigenous women and women of colour in particular. The narrative of nation-as-community from which the concept of citizenship borrows hides from view the fact that the very construction of some people as citizens makes possible the

creation of Others as non-citizens who are excluded from the "imagined community" of the "nation." While this exclusion is not always a physical one, it nonetheless renders non-citizens highly vulnerable within the same society in which citizens enjoy certain rights. Indeed, my examination of the NIEAP shows that Canadian state practices have used their legitimized ability to construct differential categories of (im)migrants to socially organize "difference" within Canadian society and within the labour market in particular.

A continued struggle to defend the rights of citizens at a time when capital has become increasingly transnational in its operations will not lead to a profound transformation in the global capitalist system. Instead it will serve to heighten and intensify existing unequal social relations between and within people living in separated nation-states along global fissures of North and South. As long we continue to reproduce the social means by which to differentiate amongst groups of people, we will continue to create the conditions by which the vast majority of us will remain alienated from our means of both sustenance and joy.

We need to reckon with how racist, sexist and nationalist ideological practices have legitimized inequalities organized through the present system of global capitalism. In outlining criteria for community membership, what we women, Aboriginal people, people from the South and all oppressed and exploited people require is self-determination. No change is possible without this. What we need in order to achieve our self-determination is *power*. The rhetoric of "human rights," including the phrase "women's rights are human rights," does not give us this. Rather, the human rights framework (with its institutions, such as the United Nations) entrenches our dependence upon one very powerful mechanism of oppression - the nation-state.

## ENDNOTES

1. In this paper, readers should note that "migrant workers" is a value loaded term and readers should assume quotation marks around them.

2. An example of a recent call for the Canadian government to "protect Our border" can be found in a November, 1999 Angus Reid

An important challenge to this system is the demand for two related conditions of self-determination. First, people must have the power to "stay." That is, people must have the power to prevent their displacement. Currently, the overwhelming majority of those who are forced to become international (im)migrants have had to leave due to war, poverty, economic restructuring focussed on trade liberalization and world disparities in income, and various opportunities that make some places more "attractive" than others. But without the power to challenge such conditions, people's ability to "stay" is meaningless.

Secondly, people must have the power to ensure that they are able to "move." Free and autonomous movement is necessary to ensure that local sites do not become holding cells for people who can be exploited because they are denied the option of leaving. We must also challenge the power of extra-local sites which are able to discriminate against people who are denied membership in these communities. Citizenship rights do not allow for the free, autonomous and self-determinant movement of people. Instead, the current national state system is designed precisely to limit the mobility of people across nationalized borders. Finally, a call for *people's* sovereignty and not "national sovereignty" requires a complete questioning and reworking of existing ruling relations. To achieve the related demands of staying and moving we have to accept the possibility of radical transformation of our relationships to each other and the planet. We cannot timidly accept changes that only reform the game of domination.

Group survey which said that for 60 percent of those surveyed, the number one priority for Canadian immigration policy should be to stop "illegal immigrants" (*Globe and Mail* November 22, 1999:A5). It should be noted that such calls have been commonplace since the arrival of 599 refugee claimants from Fujian province in China. These refugees have often been labeled as "illegal" immigrants and held up as an example of the vulnerability of Canadian borders.

3. The bringing in of people to manage and administer the operations of corporations is one of the effects of the NIEAP. While this is a highly important aspect of the study of the NIEAP, I concentrate here on examining the effects of the NIEAP in producing a cheapened and weakened workforce within the Canadian labour market.

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