

The importance of migrant workers in 21st Century: if trade unions don't take them into account, then Mr. Trump will do it

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Migrant workers are one of the key points in many political and economic discussions today. In a context in which many Governments, and particularly the international financial institutions, insist on the need to continue removing the obstacles to the free movement of capital and goods at the global level, it is quite rare to find those who argue the same for the movement of people. In other words, the world keeps on removing the barriers for the capital flows, while is dedicated to build walls (or to enlarge the already existing ones) to stop the movement of persons.

Global responses have been unsuccessful to deal with this process. On the one hand, from a securitarian perspective, policies aimed to control and repress movements of persons have been strengthened throughout the world (building walls, greater presence of the security forces, bilateral agreements with border States); on the other hand, from a labor-oriented perspective, a new institutional framework is trying to be developed in order to promote orderly migration (mainly in the area of the ILO).

These attempts are doomed to failure. Policies focused on control and repression will only increase the cost of migrations, but in no case will stop them. Moreover, attempts to create a new institutional framework for orderly migration, usually do not consider the structural foundations that explain the mobility of people nowadays. So, they cannot elaborate an appropriate response to the scale of migrations and to the gaps existing in destination countries in order to receive the migratory flows from countries of origin.

This work describes how these proposals are being implemented nowadays, with particular emphasis on the mechanisms of migration control implemented in America and in Europe, and on the discussions that are currently taking place in the ILO. It also argues that trade unions should have a more comprehensive initiative of this topic, considering that the increase of inequity and poverty helps to explain the origin of migrations (working people, impoverished at origin countries, looking for better life opportunities at destination countries) as well as the relative success of nationalistic and xenophobic proposals in central countries, in which working class is also facing a process of relative impoverishment.

In conclusion, this article sustains that trade unions should take into account a structural framework of the global movements of people, in order to identify that the real reasons of this process are linked to historical tendencies of capitalism, strengthened by the growing integration of the world market. It will also help to offer an alternative to the growth of organizations that make of xenophobia, and hence of the confrontation between workers, its main tool of construction of political power.