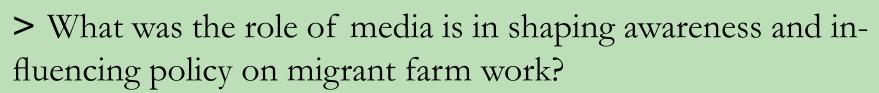
Past Due: Addressing Exploitative Migrant Farm Labour in a Post Pandemic Ontario

Brendan Petrasek BA Combind Honours Enviroment, Sustainability and Society and International Development Studies Supervised by Dr. Matthew Schnurr Department of International Development

Planting the Seeds

Covid-19 has heightened public attention to the plight of migrant farm laborers. Three Mexican workers, Bonifacio Eugenio Romero, Rogelio Muñoz Santos and, Juan López Chaparro, died on Ontario farms from complications of the novel Corona virus. This is far from the first time a foreign worker has died while being employed on an Ontario farm. The problem is not the pandemic. The structural and endemic complacency of the both the Canadian government and Ontario farmers to not address how we protect temporary farm workers in this country, laid the foundation for the avoidable deaths and illnesses experienced throughout Ontario farms this past summer. Questions



> What does the advocacy literature have to say on these topics?

> Can COVID-19 act as a shock of sorts to bring these recommendations into policy reality.

<u>What will the Study Reap?</u>

The objective of this study is to add to the prevailing literature on Ontario migrant farm workers rights. I hope to reorient our discourse away from Covid-19 toward more substantive change that can make the material conditions of workers better when the next crisis hits. I argue that the example set by COVID-19 has been largely reactionary and we need to move toward a preventative framework.

Quick Facts

> In 2015, 40,497 temporary foreign workers filled 45,005 jobs for agricultural operations.

> 21,975 TFW worked in Ontario

- > Despite the persistent need for farm labour and the longterm attachment of the workers, workers under the SAWP do not acquire any right to apply for permanent resident status
- > Dispraprotioantly affected by Covid-19 this summer
- >Food System would crumble without migrant workers





Literature Review

Labour History 1. The media covered migrant work under the backdrop of >"Treating labor as a disposable and/or easily replaceable part of Some groundwork for our current situation COVID-19 the production process promotes capitalism's central driving force-Harvey and Faraday essential here. Labour action has been 2. Not a lot of discussion on actual systems that engender the never-ending drive to accumulate wealth." hollowed out in Canada and globally. Global Reserve Army exploitation Labour Arbitrage: "taking advantage of lower wages abroad, espeof Labour and primitive accumulation discussed in depth. 3. No path to permanent residency upholds a reserve army of cially in poor countries" Migrant Farm work in Ontario labour Advocate Recommendations Detailed literature about the Seasonal Agricultural Workers **Two Central Themes** 1. Permanent Residnce Status on Arrival Program and how it works. Clearly shows power imbalance Health and Safety of TFW Housing of TFW 2. Protect Health and Safety and how necessary these workers are. Labour trends inves-3. Suspend work at Covid-19 Farms > 32% of documents mentioned the housing of migrant Ontario farm workers > 6.1% of the documents tigated with advocates and industry literature alike showing reviewed in this study mention the health and safety of migrant farm workers 4. Ensure Income for all need for migrant work 5. Make Quarantine Work for Workers Migrant Farm Work and COVID-19 6. Create Dignified LIving Conditions >Some of the worst > Only 7% of house inspections failed in 2020 7. Ensure Decent Work Lots of grey literature which is seen in my document anal-COVID outbreaks on farms 8. Public Health Not Policing ysis. Dominated the conversation on migrant labour, ob-> Living on farm gives > Many deaths span over fuscating other issues. Specific attention paid to housing signifigant powert o the decades from lack of and health and safety. employer over work space protection Key Takeaway and life

There are substantiative and real ways to change this system the data is out there; the advocacy is happening. Change blocked as capital accumulation necessitated on exploited labour

MIGRANT WORKERS Alliance for Change

Qualatative Methods

"An interpretive, naturalistic approach to a subject matter giving priority to what the data contributes to important research questions or existing information"

> Critical Theory

"the goals of critical theory are derived from historical analysis and immanent in human work. Its end is the rational state of society forced by present (& not merely a means of relief of particular) distress."

> Document Anaylsis

I compiled 50 documents from 2020/21 using a broad search relating to Ontario agriculture and migrant work using deductive coding. Looked at them critically through lens of advocate research

> Limitation

Lack of worker input Results Own perosnal experience produces inherent bias

Results

> Reports from 2010, 2006 and 2002 all make reference of poor hosuing, Not new 1ssue.

> COVID-19 not the problem but made it worse

> Simialr language from advocay reports and documents related to COVID

> COVID-19 not the problem but brought attention > Avoidable death





Discussion

> "Modern capitalist agriculture—encompassing both rich, largescale family farming and agribusiness corporations—is now engaged in a massive attack on third world peasant production"

