

# John Robson: Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program Amounts to Slave Labour

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A server brings food to a table as people dine at a restaurant in Vancouver on Sept. 21, 2021. The Canadian Press/Darryl Dyck



By John Robson

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## Commentary

Politics famously make for strange bedfellows. But what's with the federal government and the temporary foreign worker program? How are these committed progressives working hand-in-glove with big business to exploit foreigners? And why aren't we upset?

Arguably I don't get out much. But lately when I do travel, short distances or long, I notice that nearly everyone I deal with in hotels, restaurants, etc., and half at the supermarket checkout, are here as slave labour. How's that woke? Or tolerable?

I'm not against people aspiring to a better life, including immigrating to Canada, working hard, and making good. My forebears did. But temporary foreign workers aren't in that category, through no fault of their own.

They're here, toiling, and maybe even saving despite the grisly state of our economy. But they can't stay. The whole plan is to sweat them harder than locals for less money, then kick them out. Is it just me, or does that arrangement sound exploitative?

To some extent, by design, ineptitude, or designed ineptitude, it might be a back-door way to raise immigration still further by people who despise our traditions. Who really believed Canada could absorb a million people a year, 2.5 percent of our population, year after year, many bringing old-country hatreds?

Well, the federal government, apparently. Not voters, but they weren't asked. And while giant corporations may not be Hamasniks, they're in it for the money. But what about left-wing politicians? Doesn't it sound like exactly the kind of thing they'd hate?

Part of the deal is that they can foul up productivity, tax policy, inflation, etc., without a big-business revolt because the latter stay afloat with cheap labour. It also sticks a finger in the eye of tradition. And it juices GDP numbers because of flaws in that alleged measure of prosperity, which helps them at the polls, a bit.

There's also the problem of "regulatory capture," a boring name for an alarming process. G.K. Chesterton, who I greatly admire despite his economics, did have a point about [Hudge and Gudge](#), this unappealing alliance between big government and big business to exchange backroom favours. And leftists since at least the push to clean up meat packing in the Gilded Age United States have been repeatedly astounded that if you give the state the power to hurt special interests badly, or help them a lot, those interests move heaven, earth, and money to ensure that it's "help."

Real economists aren't puzzled that a small number of, say, Quebec dairy farmers work far harder to extract tens of thousands of dollars each from the treasury than ordinary people work not to wince at the high price of mediocre butter in the supermarket. Or that it's sold to us by a temporary foreign worker because likewise, a relatively small

number of huge companies deploy the best lobbyists and campaign contributions money can buy to lower their salary costs massively.

Also, most Canadians don't seem to be very directly affected, or entirely negatively, since grocery and fast-food prices rise more slowly. But [a National Post story](#) by Tristin Hopper about the vanishing summer job market warns, "Youth unemployment has been pitched sky-high, in part due to temporary foreign worker program." Worried yet?

Maybe some without kids, grandkids, or compassion don't care. They want their lukewarm sandwich cheap and they want it now, and figure they'll contrive to expire before social cohesion disintegrates sufficiently to impair their "quality of life." But I assume most of my readers already care, or are starting to make the connection and care.

Even when I was young, pre-internet, summer-job hunting stank. Those government job centres radiated futility. But somehow I found work. Kids today? Not so much.

As Hopper observes, summer job listings are down nearly a quarter just since last year, when the unemployment rate for 15–24s was already double the national average. And the adult number is deceptive, driven by feckless, deeply unsustainable public service expansion while the private sector atrophies.

Also, Hopper confirms that I'm not imagining things at the coffee counter. "Between 2016 and 2023, the rate of TFWs working in restaurants increased by 634 per cent" and 456 in retail. So it's unfair to them and hurts us, especially youth.

Including in the housing market. The government does its usual job of messing up the supply side, but that flood of cheap-labour foreigners must live somewhere until we boot them out for fresh meat, so demand has gone crazy, and even if young people somehow find work, they can't afford a house. I wonder if they'll become disillusioned, even radicalized?

With hard times upon us and our governments, what to do? What to do? Call me crazy, but I suggest we abolish ill-disguised slavery and build community instead.

*Views expressed in this article are opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.*

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