IS WORK A NECESSARY EVIL - OUR BURDEN AND OUR BIRTHRIGHT?
WITHOUT LABOUR STANDARDS AND HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTIONS, ANY FORM OF WORK CAN FEEL LIKE A CURSE. SOME JOBS, LIKE NURSING AIDES AND SANITATION WORKERS, ARE PARTICULARLY STIGMATIZED, DESPITE PROVIDING ESSENTIAL SERVICES THAT ARE BENEFICIAL TO SOCIETY.

1 in 3 Canadians experience income insecurity and live paycheque to paycheque.

1.2 x higher proportion of working poor than non-Indigenous people.

2.0 x higher among those who are recent immigrants than those who are non-immigrants.

1.5 x higher among East Asian and Southeast Asian Canadians.

1.5 x higher among Arab, South Asian, and West Asian Canadians.

2.2 x higher among Black Canadians.

2.1 x higher proportion of working poor than non-Indigenous people.

The working poor proportion:

7.6% of Canadians between 18 and 64 years of age are classified as "working poor" - employed but still struggling to make ends meet.

The three main categories are:

1. Forced labour exploitation
2. Forced sexual exploitation
3. State-imposed forced labour

"And this life activity [the worker] sells to another person in order to secure the necessary means of life.... he works that he may keep alive.”

Karl Marx, Wage Labour and Capital (1847)

The gig economy’s promise of flexible hours and “being your own boss” is not the reality for many workers who take on short-term jobs and contracts, and freelancing work. Traditional employment laws do not apply, so workers are not protected if they get fired and may never receive health/dental benefits, pensions, or a stable wage.

Forced labour arises when an employer takes advantage of a worker’s vulnerable position by way of coercion, the imposition of dangerous working conditions, and/or the denial of their freedom.

Deliveroo cyclist, Glasgow, UK.

Photo by Ross Sneddon

Construction site employing internal migrant workers from the countryside. Most workers eat and sleep on site.

Beijing, China.

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The Working Poor Proportion:

Compared to White Canadians:

2.0 x higher among those who are recent immigrants than those who are non-immigrants.

1.5 x higher among East Asian and Southeast Asian Canadians.

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