

10 thesis on migrant labour

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1. In Italy and in Europe migrants are not only a growingly important part of labour force, both numerically and considering production. Migrants shared, with all the workers, the struggles and the strikes in defense of labour rights. Today, no labour struggle can avoid to take into account the centrality of migrant labour.
2. The legislation on migration is a crucial part of labour legislation. Prepared by the Turco-Napolitano one, the Bossi-Fini Law linked the residence permit with the labour contract thus creating – besides many forms of contractual precarity – workers that can be blackmailed because even their right to stay is precarious: those who are fired lose also their residence permit. In this way, the Bossi-Fini Law weakened labour as a whole.
3. Through the so called “pacchetto sicurezza” (security law), added to the Bossi-Fini law, the government is forcing workers to pay for the crisis. The institutional racism of which it is expression and the illegality which it creates makes migrants much more exposed to every kind of blackmail.
4. The crisis is general and it does not make distinctions according to the color of the skin. Both migrants and native workers are paying for its price. However, migrants are not only excluded from every kind of social security, they can also be expelled, while institutional racism divides workers convincing some that they are protected insofar as others are expelled both from labour and from the country (in the meanwhile, masters export their capital in order to exploit elsewhere migrant labour).
5. Identification and detention centers are a “safety valve” for the labour market. When the demand is lower, the exceeding migrant labour force is illegalized (because being fired means to become illegal) and expelled. The increase of the duration of detention could be explained by the crisis: migrants are “expelled” even for 6 months *within* the country, before being deported beyond the borders.
6. These laws do not fight against illegality, they produce it. Those who lose their job lose their residence permit. Even the migrants who have a right in it are in a condition between legality and illegality because of the long times necessary to renew their documents. In this way, it increases the condition of informal work, deprived of every contractual or legal guarantee. Informal labour of migrants is the pattern of a growing informalization of labour as such, because everyday more labour is regulated only by the power relationship between masters and workers. That is why the most of expulsions is not enacted, but expulsions are an instrument to blackmail migrants.
7. Domestic and care work of migrant women is the most evident moment of this process. It shows that the system of social reproduction needs migrant labour; that the sexual division of labour which pretends that women do the domestic and care work is institutionalized and waged; that the defense of the national labour contract is not enough: it is necessary to find out ways of struggle which are up to the challenge of the process of informalization of work.
8. Given the hardening of the requisites requested to obtain family reunion and citizenship, the migrants who are authorized to stay in Italy are the more isolated, obliged to a temporary residence. Those who stay must know that the future is already given: their children have to accept racist limitations to school access, and these limitations impede to avoid the working condition. Old workers, on their side, will never have their pensions. In front of the crisis, the strategy of the government is to make the social costs of labour as lower as possible. And this strategy explains why, when they decide to leave the country, migrants cannot take back the social contributions they paid during years. Migrants anticipate a general attack to the welfare system which regards all workers.
9. In front of all these things, it is necessary not only to struggle against firings or in defense of the labour contracts, but also to include in the next labour struggles the call for the abolition of the Bossi-Fini law and the legalization of all migrants. Migrants’ struggles must enter the working places, being part of the common struggle of all the workers.
10. The crisis is preparing a general reorganization of labour relationships. The price of the crisis is not only the one for which workers are paying with dismissals and being made redundant, but also a further attack to their capacity of organization and to their power. A great part of this game is played, today, upon migrants’ skin. That is why a strong answer is needed: a strike of migrant labour conceived as a strike of all workers, migrants and Italian, against racism and the Bossi-Fini law.