

COMMENT

'Immigration Movement'

THERE IS A GREAT DISORDER under the Sun. It's happening in America. A mass upsurge! For the last three months hundreds of thousands of immigrants have been protesting against the notorious immigration bill, also known as Sensen-brenner bill (or House Resolution 4437). The bill calls for a brutal crackdown on immigrants. Now the undocumented immigrants would be aliens without any legal status. The House bill also includes the building of a 700-mile wall along the US-Mexico border, a measure that will undoubtedly lead to more deaths among people driven to cross.

The final shape of the Bill is still uncertain as Bush has some differences with the Bill. He would like to include some kind of provisions for "guest workers". Another Senate Bill proposed by Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy and Republican John McCain doesn't contain the most draconian aspects of the Sensen-brenner. In any case immigrants have no option but to face uncertainty in the coming days.

With or without a comprehensive bill, what may matter most is that progressives throughout the world are observing with eagerness the emergence of a new force that may be able to stop and reverse the decade-long trend of xenophobia. Many think the present movement may lead to long-term results for both immigrants and the enormous number of people around the world who are affected by the policies of the American administration. Movements have never been built in a day. And the current agitation that has caught the imagination of a wide spectrum of immigrant population in America is the culmination of a sustained campaign carried out by different groups over the years.

If immigrants in America are mainly from Mexico, it is because of NAFTA—North American Free Trade Agreement. NAFTA has virtually ruined Mexican agriculture, making thousands of Mexican peasants destitute. And these people are crossing the border with great risk to earn pittance for sheer survival. But the American government is hell-bent to deport the unwanted 'aliens'. America is trying to impose NAFTA-like agreements on a number of countries. The people in the third world will have to face the Mexican agony, if they allow their governments to enter into free trade agreements with America. The trade policies of the IMF and other purveyors of the Washington Consensus have helped cause the economic distress that triggered immigration to the United States in the first place.

In a way the new Latino-led immigration movement in America may create the ground for a broad-based united front against the IMF. Already, Latin American nations are increasingly demanding economic arrangements other than those prescribed by the IMF, that may offer sustainable solutions. ~~del del del~~