



A Fight for Justice: The Compelling Story of Temporary Foreign Workers & Human Rights

Joe Barrett

Ronsdale Press (May 5, 2026)

Softcover \$26.95 (320pp)

978-1-55380-739-1

An intimate, human-scaled history of a landmark Canadian labor rights campaign, Joe Barrett's book *A Fight for Justice* offers a prescient perspective on the turbulent overlap between immigration and labor rights.

Barrett, a labor organizer, translator, and key witness, herein spotlights the stories of the migrant workers tasked with building the Canada Line SkyTrain in 2006. The construction project involved life-threatening and technical maneuvers in dangerous pressurized environments. It attracted temporary foreign workers from Costa Rica, Colombia, and Ecuador.

Upon their arrival, the workers realized that their promised pay was far below that of their Canadian and European counterparts. Frustrated with the disparity, and aided by organizers including Barrett, the workers led a successful, if fraught, unionization effort. They advocated for equitable pay rates and other standard compensations. Managers from the employer overseeing the SkyTrain project raised a bitter fight against unionization, engaging in intimidation and “sweeteners” to sabotage the workers’ efforts.

The book recounts the union’s persistent legal battles for justice, culminating in a ruling by the British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal that confirmed that the migrant workers were illegally underpaid. This victory, the book asserts, paved the way for future protections for all foreign temporary workers in Canada.

The book excels in humanizing the string of legal back-and-forths it covers, which involved multiple overlapping panels and committees. Micro-portraits of the workers result in a balanced and personal tone. The lengthy blow-by-blow of each of the union’s confrontations with management sometimes dampen the story’s dramatic thrust, but the book still conveys the trial’s broader significance in the modern labor rights movement well.

A Fight for Justice is a clear, potent work of modern labor history.

ISAAC RANDEL (May / June 2026)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission’s 16 CFR, Part 255.