

MIAMI VS. THE FTAA: ANOTHER AMERICAS IS POSSIBLE!

Western Hemisphere trade ministers will meet November 20-21, 2003 in Miami to advance negotiations on a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) – a regional free trade deal based on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). FTAA will drive down wages, promote environmental devastation, attack national and state sovereignty, decimate family farming, facilitate Enron-style deregulation and privatization and force thousands of people to migrate to the U.S. as economic refugees fleeing the destruction of their local economies. That is why folks from Miami and around the state and country will be joined by international allies linking local issues to global struggles and building alternatives to the “free” trade model. There are already plans for teach-ins and seminars, reality tours, concerts and forums, rallies and marches for fair trade.

But, what does all of this have to do with Miami? Miami highlights some of painful ironies of the global economy: The growing gap between rich and poor is nowhere more evident than between ritzy Fisher Island and Miami City, rated the poorest city in the United States according to the 2002 Census (*see box*). The detention of hundreds of Haitian immigrants is a constant reminder that while capital has the right to flow freely over borders, people do not. In addition, the Miami area (including surrounding counties such as Miami-Dade and Broward) has several laws and local economic development initiatives that could be impacted by the FTAA.

MIAMI JOB LOSS: The Miami area has seen eight local factories shut down operations and move to Mexico, including the Levi Strauss Company. Levi Strauss is one of the corporations that serves as an “advisor” to U.S. trade negotiators and therefore is given preferential access to FTAA documents.

A MICROCOSIM OF GLOBAL INEQUALITY	
MIAMI	FISHER ISLAND*
Poorest community in the U.S. (poverty rate of 29%)	Richest community in the U.S.
Per Capita Income: \$15,128	Per Capita Income: \$236,238
Population: 362,470	Population: 467
79% people of color	92.08% white

** Fisher Island is 3 miles offshore of Miami with no road or causeway to connect it to the city (only a private ferry)*

All data from the 2002 U.S. Census

BROWARD COUNTY LIVING WAGE & MIAMI MINORITY & WOMEN-OWNED SET ASIDES

What? Broward County’s living wage law and Miami’s set-aside program for minority and/or women-owned businesses could face FTAA attacks.

Why? The FTAA would prohibit governments from setting conditions for government contracts other than to “ensure product quality or supplier capability.” Wage-related, worker safety or environmental regulations must be the “least trade restrictive” possible. Also, FTAA “national treatment” rules mean governments must treat local companies and foreign corporations the same.

How? Living wage could be challenged as “more burdensome than necessary” and/or “not necessary to ensure the quality of a service.” Foreign corporations that feel “discriminated against” vis-à-vis local companies by minority and/or women-owned set asides could sue for violations of “national treatment” rules in secret tribunals.

FORGET SOVEREIGNTY – FTAA

TRUMPS LOCAL LAWS: As in NAFTA, the FTAA would set up a supra-national judicial system where corporations would have the right to sue governments for almost anything considered either a “barrier to trade” or an act “tantamount to expropriation.” In plain English, this means just about anything could cut into corporate profit, whether that is a ban on a toxic substance, living wage laws, municipal zoning requirements or safety and pollution standards for pollution sources such as cruise ships and cargo ships entering the port of Miami. FTAA’s closed door tribunals would be above any national court. The public would have no access to documents and decisions would be made by a panel of trade lawyers mandated to consider only trade law (not public health

