Statement by AFL-CIO President John Sweeney
On Chile and Singapore Trade Agreements
July 16, 2003

The Chile and Singapore agreements-the first agreements negotiated by the Bush Administration under Fast Track trade authority passed by Congress in 2002-are the blueprint for a global economy without meaningful workers' rights, job and wage security, and balanced international trade. We call on the House and Senate to consider them carefully and reject them in their current form.

The agreements are weaker than existing trade policies and a step back from the US-Jordan Free Trade Agreement, which has enforceable provisions to protect the core rights of workers. The weak workers' rights provisions in the Chile and Singapore agreements are deeply troubling, and will be disastrous if applied to future free trade agreements with countries and regions where labor laws are much weaker to begin with, and where abuse of workers' rights has been egregious.

The other flaws of failed trade policies also have not been corrected - in fact, they have been compounded. The agreements contain provisions on investment, services, government procurement, intellectual property rights, and immigration that will undermine the ability of governments to regulate public health, the environment, and domestic labor markets. Meanwhile, manufacturing job losses grow every day. The trade deficit continues to expand to record levels as a result of harmful trade policies. The Administration and Republican leadership are attacking the rights of workers here and abroad at every turn. Members of Congress should be challenging the Administration on these issues instead of seeking to rush through agreements that will only exacerbate these problems. It makes no sense to support flawed trade deals-regardless of their size-at this or any other time.

Working families welcome trade agreements that will raise the standards of living for workers - - not undermine them - - and that will protect their rights, not relegate them to second-class status.
###