

Teamsters Challenge Bush on Free Trade Arguments

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Hoffa Responds to Bush Speech in Miami

WASHINGTON - Teamsters President Jim Hoffa on Friday refuted President Bush's claims that free trade is good for the American economy.

"When President Bush says the economy benefits from trade deals, he must mean the part of the economy he cares about -- the top one percent," Hoffa said. "It's not competition we're afraid of, but the global capitalists who rig the system against the American worker."

In a speech before a Miami audience, Bush called on Congress to pass free trade agreements in Latin America with Peru, Colombia and Panama, and also work toward passing an agreement with South Korea.

"The purpose of trade deals is to make Wall Street richer and to make the average working man and woman poorer. It's no accident that average income actually fell between 2000 and 2005," Hoffa said.

Hoffa was referring to new IRS data that shows the rich in 2005 had the biggest share of U.S. income since the 1920s.

"It's especially outrageous that President Bush would urge the passage of a treaty with Panama when the president of the country's national assembly, Pedro Miguel Gonzalez, killed a U.S. soldier near the Panama Canal in 1992," Hoffa said.

"We need to re-evaluate existing trade deals and put a stop to the ones we're considering - not just Panama, but Peru, Colombia and South Korea."

Congress is expected to vote on the Peru and Panama trade agreements in the coming weeks.

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters represents more than 1.4 million hard-working men and women in Canada and the United States.

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