

Teamsters: Peru Trade Bill Bad for Workers in Both Countries

Union Urges Defeat of Bill to Extend NAFTA to Peru

PRNewswire-USNewswire
October 31, 2007

WASHINGTON -- Workers were undermined today when the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee members approved the Peru Free Trade Agreement.

"While the Peru Free Trade Agreement contains important improvements, it is still nothing more than an expansion of the job-killing NAFTA model," said Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa. "I'm astounded that members of Congress would even consider passing more of these free trade agreements that workers hate.

"Don't they understand that average wages are falling largely in part because of these unfair trade agreements?"

No labor unions support the agreement. Corporate interests wrote all of the pending free trade agreements with Peru, Panama, Colombia and South Korea to ensure they benefit while workers don't.

If this agreement passes:

-- Foreign investors based in Peru will have the right to question our domestic laws and receive compensation if such laws if they undermine corporate profits.

--Incentives are provided for U.S. companies to leave the U.S. under the investment chapter of the agreement.

-- The sovereignty of local, state and federal U.S. government bodies will be undermined. Foreign companies will be able to bypass "Buy America" laws.

Nor does the bill protect workers in Peru. If it passes,

-- Nothing will change for the 33,000 slave-laborers cutting down the Amazonian rainforest.

-- Subsistence farmers will be forced off their land because cheap U.S. food produced by agribusiness will undercut their prices. The same thing happened with NAFTA, which resulted in millions of poor Mexicans leaving their farms.

-- According to some interpretations, Citibank will have the right to sue the Peruvian government if the country tries to reverse its disastrous system of privatized Social

Security -- thus allowing a powerful multinational to profit at the expense of the elderly, the sick and the poor.

Teamsters Pleased With TAA Bill

On a related issue, the Teamsters are pleased with the much-needed trade Adjustment Assistance reform bill, HR. 3920, the Trade and Globalization Assistance Act of 2007. The bill expands benefits for workers, including transportation workers, who have been harmed by international trade. It is expected to pass the House Wednesday afternoon.

"We look forward to working with the Senate to pass good TAA reform in the Senate," Hoffa said.

"However, the Teamsters want to see a real change in our globalization policies, not just more of the same with a few improvements," Hoffa said. "American workers and our brothers and sisters all over the world have had enough of these agreements that destroy jobs and devastate communities."

Founded in 1903, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters represents 1.4 million hardworking men and women in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico.