

## **KOREA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT**

### **FAILS TO PROTECT WORKER RIGHTS**

The worker rights provisions in the Korea free trade agreement simply continue the approach adopted by the Bush administration in past trade deals. That is, the agreement merely requires Korea to enforce its own laws dealing with worker rights and protections.

- The agreement does not require Korea to abide by the internationally recognized ILO set of core labor rights, including freedom of association, and prohibitions against child and forced labor.
- The agreement does not prevent Korea from weakening its existing laws on worker rights and protections.
- The agreement does not provide parity of enforcement between labor and commercial provisions.
- The agreement does not meet the standards set forth in the proposal put forward by Representatives Rangel, Levin and others for dealing with worker rights in trade agreements.

Contrary to the rosy picture painted by the Bush administration, Korean workers routinely have their basic rights thwarted by the government and employers.

- The U.S. Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2005 identified numerous areas of worker rights violations in Korea.
- Hundreds of Korean union leaders and members are arrested and jailed each year for exercising fundamental worker rights, such as demonstrating and striking.
- The International Labor Organization (ILO) has found that Korea violates the right of workers to freedom of association, especially for public sector workers. Auto workers in Korea have also faced serious barriers to exercising the right to organize unions and bargain with employers without government interference.
- Korea has changed its labor laws to allow employers to expand their use of temporary, contract and other forms of non-traditional labor, in order to prevent workers from organizing and bargaining collectively. Such non-traditional workers now make up more than half of the workforce at many industrial firms. The president of the Korean Metal Workers' Federation (KMWF) was arrested last year for his participation in a protest against this change in Korean labor laws.
- Korean trade unions oppose the U.S.-Korea trade deal

For all these reasons, the UAW believes the worker rights provisions in the Korea trade deal are completely unacceptable. They will simply help to foster a race to the bottom that undermines the rights and standard of living of workers in both Korea and the U.S.

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