

Thailand

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL



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updates

June 14, 1995

Mr. H. John Rosenbaum, Ph.D.
GSP Subcommittee
Office of the U.S. Trade Representative
600 17th Street, N.W.
Room 518
Washington, D.C. 20506

Dear John:

The AFL-CIO hereby submits a petition to the USTR on the basis of worker rights violations in accordance with the Trade Act of 1974, as amended. This petition is submitted as required by the notice printed in the Federal Register.

Sincerely,
Rudy Oswald
Rudy Oswald, Director
Economic Research Department

THAILAND

In July 1994, as part of the fifth determination of the GSP Subcommittee to continue the review of the AFL-CIO's case to seeking to suspend Thailand from the GSP program, Ambassador Kantor clearly pegged resolution of the GSP case to passage by the Thai Parliament of legislation to reform the State Enterprise Labor Relations Act (SELRA) to reinstate the fundamental right of freedom of association for state enterprise workers. In his announcement, Ambassador Kantor said:

"We made it clear previously that the review of Thailand could be satisfactorily completed once proposed legislation that would restore worker rights lost in 1991 was enacted. Such legislation has been introduced by the Thai government before the legislature. As we noted previously, our expectation is that labor legislation will be enacted in the legislative session in which it has been introduced. We still look for a speedy completion of these actions. "

During the Parliamentary session in September 1994, a SELRA reform bill was introduced and passed the first reading. No further action was taken, despite commitments by the Royal Thai Government made to the U.S. and other international observers that SELRA reform would be completed by the end of 1994. Continual delays, reflecting the low priority that the Thai Government has given this issue, plagued the work of the drafting committee revising the bill for mandated second and third readings in the Parliament. Again, Thai government officials reassured international observers that SELRA would pass during the next Parliamentary session in May 1995, fully four years after this right was first stripped from Thai workers.

On May 19, 1995, before any action was taken on the SELRA reform issue, the coalition government of Prime Minister Chuan Leekphai fell. A new election is scheduled for July 2, 1995 but there are no guarantees that the new Thai Government that is formed will feel obliged in any way to honor the commitment of the outgoing Chuan Administration. The fall of the Chuan Government -- elected on a policy platform that promised a return of Thailand to democratic rule and the scrapping of non-democratic initiatives (including SELRA) implemented by the military-dominated National Peacekeeping Council (NPKC) government -- is the final step in the clear non-fulfillment of the public promise to reform SELRA to guarantee freedom of association for state enterprise workers.