

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations



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June 16, 1998

Mr. H. Jon Rosenbaum, Ph.D.
Assistant U.S. Trade Representative
GSP Subcommittee
Office of the U.S. Trade Representative
600 17th Street, N.W. Suite 518
Washington, DC 20506

Dear Jon:

The AFL-CIO hereby submits petitions to the USTR on the basis of worker rights violations in accordance with Section 502(b)(7) the Trade Act of 1974, as amended. The petitions include information on worker rights violations in Cambodia and Guatemala, and updates on the existing cases on Belarus, Indonesia, Swaziland and Thailand. This petition is submitted as required by the notice printed in the Federal Register.

Sincerely,

Barbara Shailor, Director
International Affairs Department

BS/AK:dl
opeiu #2 afl-cio



**WORKER RIGHTS
AND THE
GENERALIZED SYSTEM OF
PREFERENCES**

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THAILAND

**The AFL-CIO Petition to the
Office of the United States Trade
Representative**

June 16, 1998

UPDATE FOR THAILAND PETITION

It has been six years since the AFL-CIO first filed a worker rights petition against Thailand, in reaction to the passage of the State Enterprise Labor Relations Act (SELRA) which stripped freedom of association rights from Thailand's state enterprise workers' unions. The ILO's Committee on Freedom of Association has declared this law to be in contravention of the principles of freedom of association. Despite thousands of rallies and meetings, innumerable demarches, and countless hours of deliberation by the GSP committee, the original SELRA law is still the law of the land. The SELRA law is part of the continuing legacy of the discredited military National Peacekeeping Council (NPKC) regime of General Suchinda Kraprayoon which ended in May 1992. FOA

The current Royal Thai Government, led by Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai, has the opportunity to break with the past on July 8, 1998. On that day, a 180-day waiting period is due to expire before the reintroduction of a new SELRA bill in the Parliament can occur. At that time, the Chuan Government can then officially move to pass a House bill amending the SELRA and bringing it into line with international labor standards. The Chuan government should stand with the people of Thailand and act expeditiously on July 8, 1998 to remove the NPKC's final blemish on Thai democracy. The AFL-CIO urges the U.S. Government press the Royal Thai Government to see the House version of the bill passed into law as soon as possible.

The AFL-CIO strongly believes that any delay by the Thai Government in passing this bill to amend SELRA should be viewed as tantamount of seeking to kill the bill. There are growing pressures in Thai politics to dissolve the Parliament and seek new elections. If the Parliament is dissolved before the bill has passed, the SELRA amendment process must begin again from scratch. Far too much work over many years has been put into this bill to let it fail now. With restoration of freedom of association so close at hand for Thailand's state enterprise workers, and successful closure to this issue finally possible, there should be no hesitation in mounting a final push for passage of the House version of the SELRA amendment bill. The state enterprise workers of Thailand have waited too long already to have their basic rights returned to them. The AFL-CIO remains firmly committed to seeing those rights restored in early July.

Thailand remains the largest recipient of benefits under the GSP program. In 1994, USTR Mickey Kantor said of this case: "We made it clear previously that the review of Thailand could be satisfactorily completed once the proposed legislation that would restore worker rights lost in 1991 was enacted." The AFL-CIO calls on the U.S. Government to tell the Royal Thai Government unequivocally that if they fail again to amend the SELRA law, the U.S. will immediately revoke Thailand's GSP eligibility. The AFL-CIO believes that the reputation of the GSP system as a serious instrument for promoting respect for international labor rights worldwide depends on satisfactory resolution of this clear-cut and pressing case.

wanting for bill to pass after reestablishment of democratic rule
and subsequent (1991) dissolution of it parliament

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