

What Does **CAFTA** Mean for **Workers**?

The Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) is a new trade deal that would cover the United States, the Dominican Republic and five countries in Central America. President Bush is working hard to bring CAFTA to a vote in Congress this year.

CAFTA is based on the failed North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and it will expand NAFTA's legacy of lost jobs, low wages and trampled workers' rights to six more countries.

- ▶ Under NAFTA, the U.S. trade deficit with Canada and Mexico exploded as American companies relocated to take advantage of lower wages, weaker worker and environmental protections and improved access to the U.S. market. Even companies that didn't destroy jobs used the threat of leaving the United States to break union organizing drives and get concessions at bargaining tables.
- ▶ The booming NAFTA trade deficit cost U.S. workers nearly 900,000 net jobs through 2002. A 1999 study found 47 percent of the workers qualifying for NAFTA trade adjustment assistance were Latinos and 66 percent were women.
- ▶ Mexican workers also suffered under NAFTA. Today, real wages in Mexico are lower and poverty levels are higher. More than 1 million small farmers lost their land. Many of them were forced to seek jobs in assembly plants along the border or in the United States, where their rights are not protected fully.

Like NAFTA before it, CAFTA would speed up the race to the bottom for workers in the United States and abroad. CAFTA gives companies powerful new rights to trade and invest overseas and to challenge government regulations on the environment and public health and safety. But CAFTA provides no comparable protections for workers' rights.

In Central America, labor laws fall far short of minimum international standards and workers are routinely intimidated, fired and threatened for trying to exercise their most basic rights on the job. Women workers labor for long hours and low wages in sweatshops, where union organizing can cost them their jobs. CAFTA would do nothing to remedy these abuses. In fact, CAFTA's weak rules on workers' rights are a step backward from the minimal labor conditions in our current trade programs with Central America.

Here at home, employers would use CAFTA to destroy jobs, drive down wages and increase threats to move overseas to squelch union organizing. In Central America, economic development will remain out of reach when workers are systematically denied the right to win a voice at work and bargain for a fair share of the wealth they create.

U.S. and Central American workers are united in our fight to stop CAFTA. We are demanding a better way to trade that creates good jobs and protects workers' rights.

**Find out what you can do
to stop CAFTA at
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