

ainst China'

- China is notorious for **brutal violation of human and workers' rights**, and
- China can flood the United States with cheap imports made by forced labor and grossly underpaid workers. **The growing U.S. trade deficit** with China already has cost hundreds of thousands of U.S. jobs and lowers wage and working standards for working people in the United States and around the world.

"Until there is freedom of speech and freedom of association in China, until there is freedom of religion and freedom to join unions in China, there can be no permanent free trade agreement with China," AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney told the cheering rally crowd.

"Because of China's oppression of workers," AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka told the rally, "multinational corporations can operate there in an environment of prison labor and sweatshop wages as low as 13 cents an hour—standards that are dragging working families down and killing jobs here in the United States and around the world."

The U.S. State Department recently reported that China's "poor human rights record deteriorated markedly throughout the year as the Government intensified efforts to suppress dissent." Even during a time when China has been in the international spotlight because of its efforts to join the World Trade Organization, that country escalated violations of human rights.

"Our growing trade relationship with China has not led to reform, despite what backers of permanent normal trade



Union members from across the United States rally 15,000 strong to tell Congress "No Blank Check for China!"

status claim," Sweeney said. "China continues to brutally suppress [workers] ...and the price of free speech and freedom of religion in China is extremely high: imprisonment, 're-education' in forced labor camps and even death."

U.S. trade has been in deficit for many years, and the growth in imports continues to outstrip the growth in exports. The 1999 U.S. trade deficit was \$304 billion, and the Institute for Policy Studies reports that "Using the U.S. Department of Commerce's own formula, this deficit translates into a loss of over 3 million jobs."

Americans are aware of that exploitation of the U.S. market. A national poll conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates found that a vast majority of U.S. voters oppose "granting China permanent trade access to the U.S. market, with no more annual review of China's human rights and trade record."

AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson asked the crowd: "Who will make sure the workers of America know who voted to ship our jobs to China and ship our morals to the moon? Who will tell the public about the factories in China that work young girls 12 hours a day, seven days a week for

13 cents an hour, the governments that put union organizers in prison, and the authorities who torture and execute champions of religious freedom and democracy?" Rally participants roared back: "We Will!"

Multiyear AFL-CIO Campaign for Global Fairness

The AFL-CIO Executive Council at its February meeting announced a multiyear Campaign for Global Fairness "aimed at involving our members even as they struggle personally to make their way in the new global economy." Campaign objectives are: 1) Global growth and development that works for everyone; 2) Enforceable rules to regulate global competition in a way that values people, not just corporate profits; and 3) Reform of the international financial institutions to support progressive growth.

"We cannot let corporations drive artificial wedges between working families [around the world]" the Council said, urging "high-road development strategies" that enable foreign workers to advance their own well-being and have enough buying power to provide real markets for international trade. ■