

AFL-CIO's Shameless Deceptions

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The battle over free trade has taken a crass -- and dishonest -- turn thanks to an ad campaign run by the AFL-CIO which suggests a free trade agreement between the United States and Colombia is "about murder" of Colombian labor organizers. [The ad](#), which features a coffin, applauds the "brave union leaders" of Colombia who are lobbying Congress to reject the proposed agreement. The AFL-CIO claims that to approve the FTA would be to condone the murders of union leaders in Colombia.

What's the ads don't mention is that the Colombian union leaders visiting Washington this week are in more danger here than in their home country. In fact, [according to statistics cited by the Heritage Foundation](#), the murder rate in Washington is 33.4 per 100,000 inhabitants, compared to the 5.3 for Colombian unionists.

The AFL-CIO is also using old data, going back over 25 years of drug war violence, to exaggerate the situation in Colombia, which has seen marked improvement in recent years. [According to research conducted by the Cato Institute](#), assassination of union leaders in Colombia peaked in 2001, and has dropped 77 percent since then, far outpacing the decline in the overall murder rate.

Senior Democrats have said that the Colombia trade agreement is in the national interest. President Obama has pushed for passage in his last two State of the Union addresses. Secretary of State [Hillary Clinton has praised](#) Colombia's efforts to end violence. Incoming Secretary of Defense [Leon Panetta said recently](#) that ratification of the Colombia free trade agreement would improve national security because developing trade with the United States "creates greater stability within those countries."

The union opposition to a U.S.-Colombia free trade agreement is mystifying. Low tariffs on imports from Colombia and higher tariffs on our exports already benefit Colombian manufacturers. The lower trade barriers would level the playing field and increase U.S. exports by \$1.1 billion, [according to the U.S. International Trade Commission](#). That is good news for workers who produce goods in the United States for export. The FTA helps U.S. businesses sell more products internationally and create more jobs domestically.

But deception is becoming common-place for the AFL-CIO. On its official blog Thursday, the union defended the National Labor Relations Board's campaign against Boeing. The union is trying to block the airplane manufacturer from opening a Dreamliner production line this summer, which would employ 1,000 South Carolina workers. The blog post stated that "Boeing executives decided to move production of the 787 Dreamliner to South Carolina." However, the South Carolina line is a supplement to the existing Seattle line, not a replacement.

The AFL-CIO stated, "If Boeing moved the work to Oregon or California, the same issue would still exist." What the AFL-CIO did not say is that if the AFL-CIO built the factory in China or Iran or Korea the federal government could not have blocked it.

To summarize, a new production line in South Carolina would employ 1,000 people, enhance exports, diversify Boeing's geographic presence and not cost any union jobs -- yet its proponents of the new South Carolina production line are characterized as selfish?

Ethics come from the top. In violation of its own policy, the AFL-CIO made Richard Trumka its president despite the fact that Mr. Trumka had used the Fifth Amendment to avoid giving testimony which could have incriminated him in a criminal investigation. Under Trumka's leadership, the AFL-CIO has decided to oppose free trade and free enterprise regardless of the facts, using misleading if not outright deceptive tactics and information to achieve their end.

My father was a union organizer and a good, honest and ethical person. He would be ashamed of the AFL-CIO's tactics. He would have understood, though, that it's up to the AFL-CIO membership -- the hard-working Americans who are funding the deceptive, misguided and destructive political activities of their leadership -- to demand change. AFL-CIO members can and should insist that their leaders support policies and agreements that will be good for union workers and indeed the American economy as a whole.

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