



# United Steelworkers of America

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AFL-CIO-CLC

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**Leo W. Gerard**  
*International President*

November 24, 2003

Honorable Bill Frist  
Senate Republican Leader  
S-230 Capitol Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable J. Dennis Hastert  
Speaker of the House  
R-14-IL Rayburn House Office Bldg  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Tom Daschle  
Senate Democratic Leader  
S-221 Capitol Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
House Democratic Leader  
H-204 Capitol Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Tom DeLay  
House Republican Leader  
H-107 Capitol Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Greetings:

Last week, the fundamental rights of thousands of Americans — including our Union's active members and retirees, members of other AFL-CIO unions, our allies in the Citizens Trade Campaign and Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch, as well as members of United Students Against Sweatshops — who had gathered in Miami to peacefully protest the creation of a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) were blatantly violated, sometimes violently, by the Miami police, who systematically repressed our Constitutional right to free assembly with massive force, riot gear and armaments, including combat vehicles.

It is condemnable enough that a massive police state was created to prevent American citizens from directly petitioning FTAA negotiators for redress of their grievances, for there can be no doubt that using massive armed force to deny us the right to publicly and peacefully confront them put the full powers of the state in the service of the multinational corporations and financiers who singularly benefit from the expansion of so-called "free trade."

It is doubly condemnable that \$9 million of federal funds designated for the reconstruction of Iraq were used toward this despicable purpose. How can we hope to build democracy in Iraq while using massive force to dismantle it here at home?

The obvious purpose of the repressive police presence in Miami was, at a minimum, to intimidate us and limit the exercise of our rights. Phalanxes of police in riot gear stretched for blocks, as did police cars buttressed bumper to bumper. These heavily armed forces gratuitously instigated tensions by forcing demonstrators to pass through narrow gauntlets merely to enter sites for which the AFL-CIO had secured permits for rallies and parades. Indeed, a manned, armored personnel carrier sat poised within a few yards from the entrance to the venue.

The specter of thousands of union members, many of whom have served the nation with great honor in combat, being forced to walk such a gauntlet, as if they were a common enemy rather than law abiding citizens united in common cause, was truly appalling.

Unfortunately, the exercise of unwarranted force was even worse, in many instances, than the affront created by its threat.

- When the wife of a retired Steelworker from Grantsville, Utah, verbally protested what she considered the abusive treatment of a student activist at the entrance of the AFL-CIO rally on Friday, November 21, she was slammed to the ground face down by police and a gun was aimed point blank at the back of her head. A Steelworker who witnessed the violent repression reported that she was so terrified that her entire body was literally vibrating.
- In a case of blatant entrapment, a secretary in our International Headquarters in Pittsburgh, and a local Steelworker activist from Wisconsin who had worked all day as a parade marshal and was wearing a bright orange marshal's vest emblazoned with the words "AFL-CIO Peace Keeper," were returning to their hotel, when they were directed by armed police to abandon the sidewalk and to proceed down a set of trolley tracks. Once on the tracks, they were immediately pounced upon by armed riot police, handcuffed and arrested. They were forced to remain in cuffs for hours on end, even when visiting the washroom.
- The Co-Director of Citizens' Trade Campaign was forced to the ground and had a gun put to the back of her head while peacefully attempting to enter the AFL-CIO rally at the Bayfront Amphitheater. Furthermore, the headquarters of Citizens' Trade and Global Trade Watch were surrounded and under constant surveillance by armed riot police.

These were just some among countless instances of humiliating repression in which the Miami police force disgraced itself.

Based on these disgraceful circumstances, we believe several actions should immediately be taken.

First, Miami Police Chief John Timoney should be fired.

Second, all charges against peaceful demonstrators should be dropped.

Finally, since federal funds helped finance the violation of our members' constitutional right of free assembly, a Congressional investigation into the Miami Police Department's systematic repression should immediately be launched.

To do less would be to endorse homeland repression in the guise of homeland security.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leo W. Gerard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Leo W. Gerard  
International President

LWG/kir

c: USWA International Executive Board  
Manuel A. Diaz, Mayor, City of Miami  
Alex Penelas, Mayor, Miami-Dade County  
Katherine Fernandez Rundle, State Attorney  
Alejandro Vilarello, City Attorney  
Jeb Bush, Governor