

China Dolls

The Spring 2005 issue of the *IAM Journal* features a trio of alluring models sweeping down a fashion runway somewhere in China. In the pages that follow, the Machinists Union magazine takes a hard look behind the glamorous image at the rampant exploitation that is part of daily life for 337 million women working in China.

The cover story examines the grim working conditions for women who represent 48.5 percent of the total Chinese population and 45 percent of the nation's workforce. Forced to live away from their families in company dormitories, many women regularly toil fourteen hours a day, six days a week, earning less than sixty dollars a month.

“Billions of exported products – toys to textiles, computers to cars, air conditioners to airplanes – depend on 337 million working women whose lives are far different than the *China Dolls* on this magazine's cover,” said IAM President Tom Buffenbarger.

The impact of this exploitation does not stop at China's borders. According to the Economic Policy Institute, imports from China displaced 1.6 million U.S. jobs between 1989 and 2003. The growing exodus of high-tech jobs once thought to be reserved for highly industrialized nations now compounds the loss of traditional manufacturing jobs.

“Let's understand that free trade with Communist China is not free,” said IAM President Buffenbarger in his introduction to the *IAM Journal*. “It comes at a very high price – a lower life expectancy for millions of Chinese workers and much lower lifetime earnings for millions of North Americans.”

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