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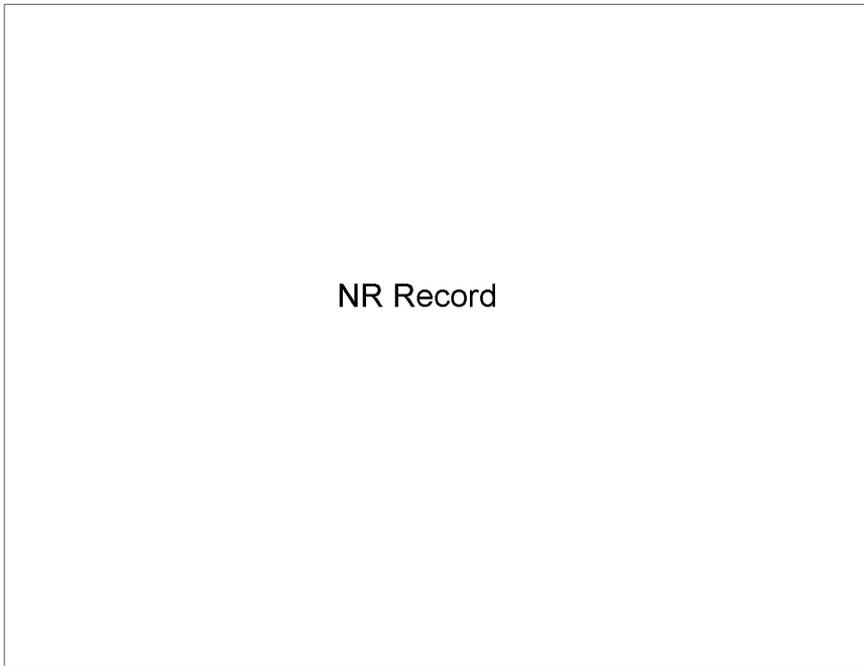
HUNGARY: Workers Granted Right To Strike

After extensive public debate, Hungary's National Assembly yesterday passed legislation giving workers the right to strike, a law more liberal than the regime wanted. The new law allows either unions or workers acting without union sanction to strike. It also legalizes sympathy strikes, protects strikers from disciplinary action, and exempts strike funds from taxation or public disclosure. Both the official union and independent political groups, including alternative unions, opposed the regime's initial, more restrictive draft.

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Comment: The legislation exemplifies the regime's weakness in the face of growing demands for liberalization. It no longer can count on the support of even official organizations that, because of competing groups like the alternative unions, are under pressure to represent their constituents' interests better. The regime will continue to view strikes as challenges to its authority and will intercede to deter them, but the new law is bound to encourage workers to act more forcefully. For the regime, there is an added risk that more strikes might become violent or frighten away the foreign investors Budapest wants to help modernize its economy.

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