

SWEATSHOP ALERT

April 2002

Photo: International Labour Office

JOB DESCRIPTION :

Seeking young women willing to work long hours, for low pay, without protective gear, seven days a week, sometimes 24 hours in a row. Ability to deal with stress a plus. Union activists need not apply.

JOB: Sewing jeans and other clothes for Pepe, Guess, Wrangler, Tommy, the Gap and Burton. You and your 700 colleagues will sew 500,000 pieces a month for customers in the UK, Ireland, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, the USA and Canada. **EQUIPMENT:** Sewing machines and stools made in China. **PLACE OF WORK:** Hong Kong-owned factory in Mauritius. View of busy industrial estate from windows that don't open. **HOURS OF WORK:** Seven days a week. Average of 10-15 hrs/day **HOUSING:** Nearby or inside the factory. **BENEFITS:** A multicultural experience: You'll meet other workers, some who have travelled all the way from China!

CONTACT US NOW.

Source: Clean clothes campaign



Canadian Labour Congress

Congrès du travail du Canada

Union-made uniforms: A Priority for the CLC

Unions in Canada are stepping up to make sure that their uniforms and work clothing are union-made, and UNITE is eager to assist these unions in their pursuit of sweat-free uniforms. Some unions have already picked up the fight and are taking steps to put union-made uniforms on their backs. Others are just about to get involved too!

CLC: The Canadian Labour Congress

is pushing the issue with its affiliates by promoting and distributing a Workplace "No Sweat" Procurement Policy. The CLC strategy includes a survey and model contract language for uniformed unions such as: UFCW, CAW, CUPW, USWA, HERE, PSAC, CUPE, SEIU, NUPGE, IAFF, UNITE and many others.

UNITE: Union of Needletrades, Industrial & Textile Employees

has already taken a step in the right direction. UNITE Canadian Director John Alleruzo sent a letter to presidents of national unions encouraging them to negotiate clauses for union-made uniforms in their collective agreements.

CAW: The Canadian Auto Workers

are surveying their locals to find out where their members' uniforms and work clothing are currently made, so that they can work with UNITE to ensure that they are not wearing goods made in sweatshops. CAW President Buzz Hargrove also sent a letter to all CAW directors to encourage them to push for No Sweat clauses in bargaining this year.

CUPW: The Canadian Union of Postal Workers

is gearing up to let its employer know that union-made matters. The CUPW National Uniform Committee resolved that the union should "promote for future rounds of negotiations a demand that will force the Canada Post Corp. to contract a unionized company to supply our members' clothing entitlements."

WHAT IS YOUR UNION DOING ?

The CLC has set up a Sweatshop Working Group to discuss the "No Sweat" initiative and how it could be best implemented by its affiliates. Any union having an interest in fighting sweatshops is welcomed to participate in the meetings. Among other topics, union-made uniforms is at the top of the priority list and a strategy as been developed to ensure that most unions in Canada make sure that their members do not wear work clothing and uniforms made in sweatshop

CONTACT US

Contact the CLC or UNITE for more information on union-made and sweat-free uniforms in the workplace. A list of companies making union-made uniforms is available on request:

CLC: sweatshop@clc-ctc.ca
www.clc-ctc.ca
telephone: (613) 526-7415

UNITE: jonathan@unite-svti.org
www.uniteunion.org
Telephone: (416) 441-1806 #246

Don't Buy Horace Small

There are uniform manufacturers that do not deserve support from unions because they have been caught using sweatshops. Companies such as Horace Small are undercutting responsible shops by exploiting their own workers.

HORACE SMALL SWEATSHOPS :

Horace Small Apparel, a division of VF Workwear, makes uniform shirts, pants, jackets and vests for municipal and postal workers.

At U.S. factories making Horace Small products, workers complained of wages so low that they live in poverty, and (at one plant) have to rely on food stamps.

Horace Small has closed most of its higher-wage domestic plants and moved work to poverty-wage sweatshops on both sides of the Mexican border.

UNITE investigators found horrifying conditions at a factory in Mexico making Horace Small shirts. Workers there said that they frequently faint on the job because they are overworked and the heat and ventilation in the plant are so bad.

MAKE SURE THAT :

- Your employer does not provide workers with uniforms bought from Horace Small. Your union must ensure that all workers wear sweat-free uniforms.
- Always demand the union label.
- Negotiate clauses in your collective agreements demanding that employers supply employees with union-made uniforms and work clothing.
- Boycott clothes and uniforms made in sweat shops.



Most frequent questions on SWEATSHOPS

In this page, we will try to answer some of the most frequent questions people ask about sweatshop practices in the garment industry worldwide.

What is a sweatshop ?

There is no legal definition for a sweatshop, but a common definition is that a sweatshop is a workplace where workers are subject to extreme exploitation, including the absence of a living wage or benefits, poor working conditions and arbitrary discipline, such as verbal and physical abuse. Sweatshops are often lawless operations evading not only wage and hour laws, but also paying no taxes, violating fire and building codes, seeking out and exploiting undocumented immigrants and operating in the underground economy, hidden from public view. Sweatshops are continuously being discovered all over the world. In the U.S. and Canada, these conditions exist in many low-wage industries that employ immigrants, such as the garment industry. For instance, the U.S. Department of Labour found that 98% of Los Angeles garment factories have workplace health and safety problems serious enough to lead to severe injuries or death.

Where can I get a list of companies that don't use sweatshops ?

Given the nature of the garment industry, it is difficult to come up with a definitive list of companies that do or do not use sweatshop labour. Thousands of garment shops exist worldwide and assessing the working conditions of each one would be close to impossible. While the exploitative conditions of some well-known manufacturers and retailers have been exposed, many others lesser known clothing labels remain questionable in terms of their labour practices.

Situation in Canada:

The Canadian Labour Congress, together with other church, labour and non-governmental organizations, is campaigning to convince the Industry Minister to bring changes to the Regulations under the "Textile Labelling Act", in order to make it mandatory for companies to disclose their manufacturing sites to Canadian consumers. The proposed changes would definitely increase consumers' confidence that the clothing they purchase is made under ethical conditions. For more information on some of the companies having a reputation of using sweatshop workers, visit the Clean Clothes Campaign Web site at: www.cleanclothes.org/companies.

Are there any shoe brands that are "less" exploitative ?

Several problems exist when labelling shoes or other products are "less" exploitative. Many people are concerned about the conditions under which their shoes were made and feel frustrated to learn that most footwear production takes place in countries well-known for labour rights abuses, such as China, Indonesia, Vietnam or countries in Central America. Since shopping for "less" exploitative footwear may be difficult, consumers are encouraged to shop with a conscience. Various anti-sweatshop organizations conduct campaigns in support of workers sewing for Nike and other brand-name companies.

Take the time to visit their Web-sites:

THE CLEAN CLOTHES CAMPAIGN (EUROPE):
www.cleanclothes.org

GLOBAL EXCHANGE:
www.globalexchange.org

NATIONAL LABOR COMMITTEE:
www.nlcnet.org

PRESS FOR CHANGE:
www.nikeworkers.org

MAQUILA SOLIDARITY NETWORK:
www.maquilasolidarity.org

HOW MUCH OF THE PRICE TAG DOLLAR GOES TO THE WORKERS VS TO A CEO ?

In the pricing and profit hierarchy, retailers (those who sell the clothing) are at the top while workers trail behind at the very bottom. Here is a rough example of where the dollars go when a piece of clothing is sold:

Retail Price: \$100

Retailer: \$50

Manufacturer: \$50

= \$12.50 to cover expenses & profit

= Spends \$22.50 on textiles

= Pays \$15 to the contractor

= keeps \$9 to cover expenses & profit
= pays \$6 to the workers

Average Apparel Hourly Wages, 1998 (US\$)

Country	Wage	Living Wage
El Salvador	\$0.59	\$1.18
Honduras	\$0.43	\$0.79
Nicaragua	\$0.23	\$0.80
Haiti	\$0.30	\$0.58
China	\$0.23	\$0.87

Data: National Labor Committee

Apparel CEO Annual Earnings, 1999 (US\$)

CEO	Company	Earning/ann.
R. Ulrich	Target	\$9,800,202
M. Drexler	Gap	\$7,824,696
David Glass	Wal-Mart	\$4,512,873
M. Jeffries	Abercrombie & Fitch	\$4,040,085

Data: Women's Wear Daily, July 24, 2000

* The disparities in wages between apparel workers and CEOs helps to show the need for corporate accountability in getting manufacturers and retailers to pay their workers a decent and living wage.

Child Labour News

McDonald's grilled over child labour

Campaigners opposed to the exploitation of schoolchildren welcomed the imposition of a heavy fine on the operators of two McDonald's fast food restaurants for illegal use of child labour. Local authority investigators discovered that 10 children were working late into the night on school days at two outlets in Britain. The court was told a 15 year-old girl had worked for 16 hours on a Saturday and another child had worked from 5pm - 2am on a school day. The TUC (Trade Union Council) estimates that as many as 500,000 school children could be illegally employed in the UK.

(Source: Child Labour News Service)

Disney: sweatshop abusers!

"Disney tries to project this image of children's dreams but in fact they are one of the worst sweatshop abusers in the world," said Charles Kernaghan of the New York-based National Labour Committee, which investigated Disney contractors in China and Haiti. Disney is accused of not paying minimum wage and overtime, as well as using child labour at KTBA Inc., which hires local women to work at home making girls' playthings.

(Source: Child Labour News Service)

Theme Park fined over child workers

The Tussaud's Group, which owns Thorpe Park, admitted to more than 40 breaches of the regulations governing the employment of young people when it was prosecuted before magistrates at Woking (Britain). Eight children were found to be working illegally at the park, with some of them putting in an eight-hour day during the school week. One child clocked up a 36-hour week, followed by 50 hours the next week. So if you think that child labour is mainly a developing countries issue, we have news for you!

(Source: The Evening Standard - London)

Ghanaian slave girls found

Seven Ghanaian girls aged between 15 and 17 years, who were made to work in slave-like conditions, have been freed by the Ivorian police. A police source in Abidjan said that persons who had enslaved the girls have been arrested and both pleaded guilty. They had no authorization from parents of the girls to take them to Cote d'Ivoire. Each girl was working for a daily wage of CFA 200 (\$1 - CFA 750) as domestic servants in different homes, but the enslaving couple earned 1,000 francs in return. The seven girls have been handed over to Ghanaian authorities in Abidjan.

(Source: Panafrikan News Agency)

Kids battle child labour

Brooke Greenwood, 13, is certain of one thing, "no matter how small, everyone can make a difference". The Mosman teenager got together a group of former friends from Currumbena School, Lane Cove, to pursue one of her passions, getting rid of child labour. Together, they have already held a display at Lane Cove Plaza and at their school fair, raising \$400 for World Vision. Now they hope their display will be accepted at lower north shore markets. Brooke was inspired by Free The Children, a child-run organization operating in 20 countries and specifically targeting child labour.

www.freethechildren.org

(Source: Mosman Daily)

Anti-child labour activist killed in Brazil

On September 23, 2002, Carlos "Gato" Alberto Santos de Olivera was murdered because of his ongoing political battles to fight child labour and his tireless advocacy for rural workers' rights. Throughout Brazil, farms regularly employ children during peak harvest seasons. The children usually pick oranges from trees or off the ground and box them for shipment. They are paid merely \$3.00 US for working a 14-hour day. Carlos Gato was brutally killed as he left a bar with 6 other rural workers in the north-eastern town of Pedrinhas, Sergipe. The ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) called on the Brazilian authorities to fully investigate his assassination.

(Source: ICFTU)

Child Labour and the FIFA World Cup

Recently, a team from the Global March Against Child Labour left for Jalandhar, in the Indian State of Punjab, and captured pictures of children as young as 10 years old stitching footballs. India and Pakistan are the largest football producers for the world football championship.

"I have been stitching footballs for as long as I can remember", confided Geeta, a young girl from Jalandhar who estimated her age to be between 10 and 12 years old. "My hands are constantly in pain. It feels like they are burning. There is nothing I can do, I have to help my older sister complete the order".

"A game that is supposed to inspire youth and entertain the world must not be played with footballs sewn with the sweat of children. Children must be given pens to study and toys to play," said Kailash Satyarti, Chairperson of the Global March.

(Source: Global March Against Child Labour)

Visit their web site at www.globalmarch.org

Photo: International Labour Organization

Photo: G. Palazzo

Child Abuses

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), some 250 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 work for a living, worldwide. Almost half – 120 million, more or less – work full time every day, all year round. 70% toil in dangerous environments. Some 50-60 million are between 5 and 11 years old and work in hazardous circumstances, considering their age and vulnerability. But many more are hidden from view, exploited in virtual slavery. Here are the most frequent abuses, grouped by occupations based on common features in the nature of the work, and its degree of risk:

Children in slavery

This includes bonded labour, alone or as part of a family unit – indentured, trafficked, work in slave-like conditions, and children who have been kidnapped by militias or forcibly recruited by military units to fight or serve the soldiers. The work is typified by the child having no choice and no chance to escape. The situation is sometimes temporary and sometimes for a lifetime.

Children who are being sexually exploited

Child prostitution and child pornography. Work is typified as lucrative and illegal, with extreme risk to health.

Children in crime

In this group we have drug trafficking, smuggling and stealing. This type of work is illegal, with great risk to morals and safety. This illegality presents particular problems in identifying the children and involving them in rehabilitation programmes.

Children in factory-based work

This category includes manufacturing of all kinds: dyeing, leather-work, weaving, brick-making, jewellery, stone-carving, assembly-line manufacturing of everything from fireworks and matches to clothing and furniture. Conditions of employment require the child to work away from home, using sharp, often dangerous tools, for long hours, in fast repetitive motions. Beatings and scolding are common.

Children doing outside physical labour

Commercial agriculture and commercial fishing, scavenging, construction and mining. Work is typically hard physical labour, often involving hazardous exposure to the elements, chemicals and power equipment and thus considerable risk of accident.

Children in family – and home-based work

Domestic service, child care, subcontracted piecework and family business are the most frequent work involving children in this category. There are serious risks of abuse due to isolation from public view, and risk of developmental stunting due to isolation from stimulation and peers.

Children in legal street-trades

In this section we include selling, car-washing, begging, delivery, shoe-shining, service at roadside eating places. The work is characterised by self-employment and high risk of financial and physical abuses.

Children in subsistence production

Livestock herding, gardening, family fishing, water and wood procurement, etc. A lot of children are involved in this type of work, toiling with their family or peers. Accidents and environment hazards are frequent.

Source: Social & labour issues in small-scales mines, ILO Report for discussion at the Tripartite Meeting, Geneva, 17-21 May 1999.



Children weaving carpet in factory in Nepal
Photo : ILO

In many countries,

children as young as 6 or 7 years of age can be seen breaking rocks with hammers, washing ore, sieving it and transporting it. Children as young as 9 have been observed working underground, setting explosives and fetching and carrying for adult workers. At age 12 or so, their presence underground is more widespread and they start to perform the same work as adults – filling sacks with ore, transporting them on their backs or loading them into carts.

Sweatshop News

STOP GAP SWEATSHOPS!

In Fresno, California, everybody knows that the Gap is connected to sweatshops. This is the result of a 2-year campaign by a coalition of student, community and labour activists. They have been demonstrating against The Gap's use of sweatshop labour on the first Saturday of every month for the last 2 years. A couple of months ago, protesters started distributing helium balloons inside the shopping mall that said "Stop Gap Sweatshops". The Gap can afford to pay a living wage. The mall security first threatened to have balloon-holding protesters arrested and took the balloons out of the hands of children as they entered the mall. But persistence paid off and now, balloons can be seen everywhere at the monthly demonstrations outside and inside the mall.
(Labor/Community Alliance magazine)

Tiger Woods targeted... 09 January 2002

A demonstration against golfer Tiger Woods' endorsement of Nike products was held in Wellington, New Zealand. Woods was on his way to a gala charity, where about 1400 people were expected to pay \$5000 for a table of ten. Protestors wanted to highlight what they saw as the poor working conditions that Nike gave to its Third World workers in countries like Indonesia and Bangladesh. Woods was asked by protest spokesman Rob McEwan: "How does it feel to get paid \$130,000 a day to wear a Nike cap, while the person who made it was paid \$2 a day?" While looking slightly curious and apprehensive, Woods attempted to avoid direct eye contact with the protestors.
(Clean Clothes Campaign)

Class Action Against Saipan Garment Factories

"We won another important round today," said Al Meyerhoff, a lead attorney for the plaintiffs, "the Saipan sweatshop workers are going to get their day in court. This case is going to trial." According to the plaintiffs, more than 13,000 garment workers on the Western Pacific Island of Saipan often work 12-hour days, seven days a week, in unsafe, unclean conditions that violate U.S. laws. Addressing the plaintiffs' claim that the Saipan sweatshop industry is dependent on indentured foreign labour, the court stated: "When the labour is tied to a debt owed to the employer and the employer physically coerces the worker to labour until the debt is paid or the consequences of failing to work to pay off the debt are so severe and outside the customary legal remedy that the worker is compelled to labour, a condition of peonage results, and this is the essence of plaintiffs' allegations." New positive developments are expected in this court case.
(Sweatshop Watch Newsletter)

Lives held cheap in BANGLADESH SWEATSHOPS

The New York Times INTERNATIONAL
Sunday, April 15, 2001

Narsingdi, Bangladesh – The fire in the garment factory began on the fourth floor, where polo shirts, neatly folded in boxes, made a feast for the hungry flames. The 1250 workers scampered for their lives, most of them hurrying to the stairway that led to the main exit. There, at the bottom, was a folding gate. It was locked. In panic, the trapped people spun around, rushing back up the steps, colliding with those coming down. It was night and the lights had gone out. Some workers squeezed through windows, shimmying down an outside pipe or chancing a desperate leap. The rest were caught in a human knot on the dark stairs, arms

pushing, mouths screaming, hearts pounding. Some people fell and were trampled. That is how nearly all of the fire's 52 victims died, their final breaths stomped out of them on the hard concrete of the teeming steps. **Most were young women. Ten were children.**

What Bangladesh has to offer the global economy is some of the world's cheapest labour and what this impoverished nation has received in return is the economic boost of a \$4.3 billion apparel industry, the fuller pockets that come with 1.5 million jobs and the horror that arises from 3,300 inadequately regulated garment factories, some of which are among the worst sweatshops ever to taunt the human conscience. "We still suffer from the legacy of the colonial days," said one factory owner, Muhamad Saidur Rehman. "We consider

the workers to be our slaves, and this belief is made all the easier by a supply of labour that is endlessly abundant." For the most part, it is the wretched of the earth who do the world's tailoring. "Made in Bangladesh" competes with "Made in Honduras," "Made in the Philippines," "Made in Macao," "Made in Any Steamy Reservoir of Third World Unemployment" – those places where plentiful labour lacks the leverage to command high pay, and the most pitiful thing about the jobs is how hard it is to get them.

(Source: This is an extract of an article published in the New York Times International in April 2001. If you are interested in reading the full newspaper article, you can contact me at: sweatshop@clc-ctc.ca or by phone at (613) 526-7415.)

Interesting Web Sites on Sweatshops:

- www.sweatshopwatch.org
- www.globalmarch.org/index.html
- www.pcun.org
- www.uniteunion.org/unionlabel/uniforms.html
- www.BehindTheLabel.org
- www.igc.org/trac/feature/sweatshops
- www.maquilasolidarity.org
- www.ufcw.ca/pubs/clabour/index

CEO vs. Worker Wages

CEO 1998 COMPENSATION:

(includes salaries, stock options, bonuses)

Michael Eisner, DISNEY	\$177 million
Phil Knight, NIKE	\$3 million
Paul Charron, Liz Claiborne	\$7 million
David Glass, WAL MART	\$40 million
Wal-Mart Walton Family	
is now worth	\$67.5 billion
Nike's Phil Knight is worth	\$5.8 billion

SAMPLE OF STARVATION WAGES AROUND THE WORLD

Hourly take home pay :

Guatemala:	\$0.37
El Salvador:	\$0.60
Nicaragua:	\$0.23
Haiti:	\$0.30
China:	\$0.28
Indonesia:	\$0.20
Burma:	\$0.04
Bangladesh:	\$0.13 – \$0.20
Romania:	\$0.17 – \$0.37
Russia:	\$0.11 – \$0.56
U.S. sweatshops	\$3.00 – \$4.00
U.S. territory (Saipan)	\$3.00

Note: These figures may have changed slightly since their publication in the National Labor Committee Bulletin.

Toys made in sweatshops...

If any toy you bought your children for Christmas has a "made in China" label, or a label from any other country in Asia, chances are it came from a sweatshop specializing in child labour. Here are facts about the toy factories in Asian countries:

- Each year, Canadians spend more than \$1.5 billion on toys.
- Over 60% of all toys sold in Canada are made in China.
- The average age of a worker in a typical Asian factory is between 12 and 15.
- Chances that toys sold for Christmas are made in factories that exploit and abuse workers are better than 50/50!
- Typical wage of workers in Asian toy factories: from as little as 6 cents an hour up to \$2.40 (US) a day.
- During busy periods, these workers have to work up to 19 hours/day, 6 days a week.

Toy companies linked by human rights groups to sweatshops in Asia are: MATTEL, DISNEY, HASBRO AND IRWIN.

The human rights groups have uncovered that toy factory workers suffer long-term and potentially fatal health problems from exposure to toxic chemicals. Workers aren't compensated for serious injuries sustained on the job and are docked pay for minor transgressions like going to the bathroom without permission. Factory owners are willing to do almost anything to undercut their competition, including exploiting their workers in order to win lucrative contracts from toy companies in North America. Trade unions and collective bargaining are illegal in China and frowned upon in most other Asian countries.

Codes of conduct

In an attempt to respond to the criticism from human rights groups and consumer organizations, toy companies adopted codes of conduct that prohibit the use of child labour in factories with which they sign agreements to make their toys. **But this is not good enough!** Reviews of factory conditions are not conducted by third-party monitors. Factories are warned beforehand about reviews. Workers in monitored plants are generally reluctant to speak out about abuses for fear of losing their jobs.

(Source: NOW News)

More than 30,000

toy workers have lost their jobs in the past 25 years as manufacturing has shifted from North America to Third World countries like china and indonesia. Cheap labour and anti-union legislation are the main reasons for moving production to that part of the world.

Corporate Disclosure Campaign



The faces have changed, but the campaign continues !

Allan Rock has now taken over the job of Industry Minister but it hasn't slowed down the campaign or changed our objective – increased corporate disclosure of where our clothes are made so that we can verify whether they are made in sweatshops or under humane working conditions. One persistent problem facing people concerned about sweatshop labour abuses is the inability to confirm where our clothes are manufactured. The garment industry works hard to keep this information out of the hands of consumers because they don't want to be held responsible for the conditions under which their goods are made.

In January 2002, a joint letter signed by eight national leaders of church, labour, and non- governmental organizations that make up ETAG (Ethical Trading Action Group) was sent to Industry Minister Rock, demanding a meeting to discuss ETAG's proposal. Whether or not Rock agrees to meet with ETAG, we anticipate that we'll have to turn up the heat to convince the minister and his government to do the right thing and change the regulations.

Municipal No Sweat Procurement Policy

An important component of the "Corporate Disclosure" campaign is to have municipalities adopt a No Sweat Procurement Policy. The CLC, along with Federations of Labour, Labour Councils, affiliate activists and municipal workers' unions are working together with Oxfam-Canada towards lobbying City Councillors to encourage them to support this initiative. The labour movement has a key role to play in ensuring that a "No Sweat" resolution is introduced, debated and adopted in as many City Council meetings as possible. The No Sweat resolution that we have prepared demands a full public disclosure of manufacturing facilities used in the production of goods or the rendering of services to the City and its Agencies, Boards, Commissions or Authorities. The resolution also demands that the City Council and the City commit to the adoption of a "No Sweat" Procurement Policy within the next year.

"WE ARE NOT MACHINES"

Wages for Nike and Adidas workers in Indonesia are so low that women workers are forced to send their children to live with relatives, according to a new report titled "We are not machines". The report was released in March 2002 by workers rights groups in Australia, Europe, the US, and in Canada. The report reveals that women and men are living in extreme poverty, with full-time wages as low as \$US2 a day.

The report also says that workers involved in union activity continue to be dismissed, jailed or physically assaulted. Women who ask for unpaid menstrual leave are subject to humiliating examinations by factory doctors. The majority of workers continue to suffer from respiratory illnesses due to vapours from toxic chemicals at up to 177 times the legal limits for exposure.

Profit sharing !

Nike Shox R4 (+):	retail price:	\$ 200 **	manufacture costs:	\$ 7.20
	retail store	\$ 100	material:	\$ 16
	Nike:	\$ 66	wages:	\$ 0.80
	transport/taxes	\$ 10		

** Canadian dollars

What about your jeans?



Most jeans are navy blue, some are black, espresso, khaki, off-white, or simply white. They are all more or less alike but for many people the brand name is the important thing. You wouldn't want to be seen in a brandless pair when Chipie or G-Star is the fashionable thing. Can one still wear Levi's? Or do you prefer Calvin Klein or some other designer brand of jeans? Or perhaps you don't care about labels and you buy jeans that are on sale, whatever the name? Whatever you choose, there are more similarities between all these different pairs of jeans than you might think! This has to do with the way they are produced. Do you know how your jeans were made? And where? And by whom? Unfortunately, few people take the time to think about it when they go shopping for a new pair of jeans.

MY NAME IS AMANDA,

"I am 20 years old. I work in a garment factory in Djakarta, Indonesia. I sew Levi's jeans. Though I have to work 75 hours a week, I am making less than minimum wage. Even the minimum wage would not be enough to live on. I can barely buy food with what I make. We cannot refuse to do overtime, they fire you. One time we went on strike to demand better wages and a transportation and food allowance. The management refused to give in to our demands and the people who were suspected to have organized the strike were fired..."

Amanda's story is not unusual. Within the global garment industry, it is not uncommon to find female workers working long hours for low pay. People who stitch the jeans we wear are often forced to work overtime, sometimes working weeks without even a day off. Worst of all, garment workers are regularly denied the right to organize. Armed guards and repressive management techniques (yelling, hitting, sexual intimidation, etc.) are used to stop workers from getting together to discuss improving their workplace.

Most jeans are now stitched in countries where wages are lower and conditions more favourable to companies. The jeans in your closet might be produced in China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Poland, Romania or France. Often the factories are not owned by the jeans companies. The jeans companies that placed the order might not even be aware of who actually makes their jeans! As you can see, labour conditions in the international jeans industry are among the worst.

Read the CCC "Mean jeans" publication:
www.cleanclothes.org/publications/jeans

Sweatshop conditions for Canadian Homeworkers



Gloria Chan, coordinator, UNITE HOMEWORKER'S ASSOCIATION (right)

Homeworkers are often new immigrant women who have to work under conditions that leave them socially isolated from co-workers and cut off from routine channels of communication and support. Most of the time, homeworkers are forced to work long hours under substandard conditions to earn a living wage.

In her report on the situation of homeworkers in Toronto's Garment Industry, Dr. Roxana Ng (University of Toronto) revealed that the wages of sewing machine operators have not increased since 1980. Rather than paying hourly or monthly salaries, most factories try to lower their direct labour costs by paying their workers piece rate. The rates vary from batch to batch and from one type of garment to another and, to add to this inequity, the factories do not provide information on piece rate until the garments are completed. As a result of this arbitrary policy, workers are often getting less than expected and payment is very often late.

Homeworkers are not paid for vacation, public holidays or overtime. They do not have the advantage of benefits or protection and are treated as self-employed, even though the current legislation states that homeworkers are employees. EI and CPP benefits are not extended to homeworkers. Obviously, sweatshop conditions also exist in Canada.

SWEATSHOPS IN THE FIELDS

GREAT VICTORY BY OREGON FARMWORKERS' UNION (PCUN)

After ten years of boycotting NORPAC, the Oregon farmworkers' union (PCUN) has suspended their campaign against the company. On Thursday, February 14, 2002, the union and the company reached an agreement to "create a framework for managing farm labour relations". NORPAC, a cooperative of 240 Willamette Valley growers of fruits and vegetables had always refused to negotiate basic improvements for farm workers and has responded to workers' demands with firings, housing evictions, physical violence and the hiring of union-busting consultants. NORPAC had even refused to adopt a policy which would have prohibited member-growers from firing workers who speak out about living and working conditions. "This is a historic accomplishment for farm workers, who will now have clear and enforceable guidelines that provide them with an opportunity to elect PCUN to represent them," said PCUN's President, Ramon Ramirez. "If they do decide to join PCUN, it also establishes a framework for contract negotiations with the participating NORPAC member-growers." added Ramirez. In Canada, the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) has been the spearhead of the boycott and our joint postcard initiative has forced Smitty's to stop purchasing frozen soups from NORPAC. **No more sweatshops in the fields!**

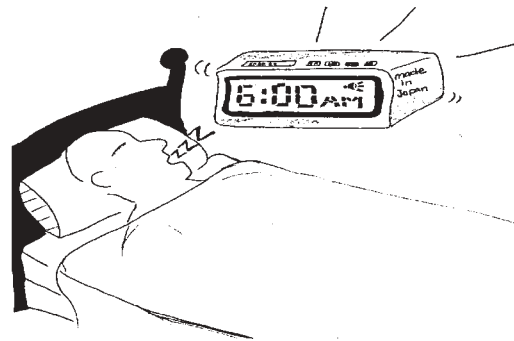
Mexican Nike Workers Win Independent Union



ON SEPTEMBER 21, 2001, workers at Mexmode, a Nike supply factory in Atlixco, Mexico finally had something to celebrate. After a nine-month-long struggle, they became the first independent union to sign a collective agreement with one of the maquiladora factories, one of over 3,500 such factories in Mexico. International solidarity was a crucial element in this campaign. On August 17, 2001, representatives of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and the Social Affairs Office of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) met with the Mexican ambassador in Ottawa. They presented him with a letter signed by the leaders of 19 Canadian labour, religious, women's and non-governmental organizations, calling on the Mexican government to ensure workers' rights were respected at the Nike factory.

The struggle was also an important test of the effectiveness of No Sweat licensing and purchasing policies that have been adopted by over 200 U.S. and Canadian universities. In the case of Mexmode, which produces sweatshirts for a number of U.S. universities, students were able to use the economic power of their universities to press for the reinstatement of hundreds of workers fired for participating in a job action. Ultimately, however, it was the courage and determination of the Mexmode workers that made this yes 40precedent-setting victory possible. For more information, visit: www.maquilasolidarity.org

A Wake Up Call to Action



Joe Smith started the day early, having set his alarm clock (made in Japan) for 6 a.m. While his coffeepot (made in China) was perking, he shaved with his electric razor (made in Hong Kong).

He put on a dress shirt (made in Sri Lanka), designer jeans (made in Singapore) and tennis shoes (made in Korea).

After cooking his breakfast in his new electric skillet (made in India) he sat down with his calculator (made in Mexico) to see how much he could spend today. After setting his watch (made in Taiwan) to the radio (made in Thailand) he got in his car (made in Germany) and continued his search for a good paying Canadian job.

At the end of yet another discouraging and fruitless day, Joe decided to relax for a while. He put on his sandals (made in Brazil), poured himself a glass of wine (made in Chile) and turned on his TV (made in Indonesia), and then wondered why he can't find a good paying job in Canada...

**OUR BAD CONSUMER HABITS ARE KILLING OUR JOBS!
LET'S WAKE UP AND SHOP SMARTER!**

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Canadian Labour Congress

Congrès du travail du Canada