

maquila network update

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Stop Sweats Campaign Heats Up Holidays

Stop sweats activists are gearing up for holiday season campaigns.

The Maquila Solidarity Network (MSN) and the Labour Behind the Label Coalition are targeting sweatshop practices of the Woolworth Northern Group and Nike, and calling on the federal government to create a taskforce to find solutions to sweatshop abuses.

The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) has declared December 1 - 6 a Week of Action Against Sweatshop Abuses and Child Labour. The CLC has produced anti-sweats posters and cards.

Just Doing It to Nike

October 18 was a truly International Day of Action in Solidarity with Nike Production Workers. Groups staged protests at Nike outlets and on university campuses in Europe, Australia, the US and Canada.

In Canada, solidarity actions - store rallies, street theatre, letter-writing, information tables, and campus protests of Nike sponsorships - were organized in at least ten cities.

Nike on the Defensive

Nike was well prepared for October 18. A leaked memo from Nike's Oregon headquarters reveals that Nike sent out a "special newspaper" defending its labour practices to all Nike employees, college campuses, and key retailers "to help them deal with possible protests and resulting media coverage."

On October 16, Nike CEO Phil Knight hosted an on-line internet forum on Nike labour practices and announced the creation of a special labour practices web site.

However, Nike was not prepared for the release of a new report documenting serious labour rights violations in factories producing for Nike and Reebok in southern China.

The report, released just prior to October 18 by the Asia Monitor Resource Centre and the Hong Kong Christian Industrial

Committee, shows that young women are forced to work 10 to 12 hours a day, and often an additional 2 to 4 hours overtime, for less than the local minimum wage of 25 cents an hour.

Protest Across Canada

In Vancouver, the Justice Do It Nike! Coalition held October 18 protests at two downtown outlets. At the first store,

about 30 people leafleted customers, scrawled chalk slogans on the sidewalk, sang songs and performed skits.

In one skit, a Nike protester displayed a Nike shoe through the

store window to the crowd outside, while a protester on the street performed a mock sales pitch for Nike "Air Genocides," linking repression in East Timor to Nike's operations in Indonesia.



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Later that afternoon, activists leafleted customers inside a Nike outlet in the Pacific Centre Mall. A security guard put one of the leafleters in a choke hold when the leafleter refused to leave the mall until the police arrived.

The protester, not the security guard, spent the night in jail and was released without charges the next day.

On Friday October 17, Interfaith Praxis at the University of Victoria sponsored an anti-Nike run. Runners paid \$2.08 (the average daily wage of a Vietnamese Nike worker) to enter the race. The three winners received a grand prize of \$3.20 (the average daily wage of an Indonesian Nike worker).

Despite bad weather, 19 members of Development and Peace (D&P) in Winnipeg distributed 1,500 leaflets at a Nike outlet. Over 300 shoppers signed the Citizen's Petition calling on the federal government to establish a taskforce on sweatshop abuses.

In Toronto, sunny weather boosted spirits at the Labour Behind the Label Coalition's Nike: Do It Just Rally outside Sporting Life on Yonge Street. Activists leafleted customers, gave away balloons, sold buttons, and collected signatures to the stop sweatshops petition. Strollers carrying "Stop Nike Sweatshops" balloons paraded down Yonge Street long after the rally.

Accompanied by a TV camera crew, protesters entered Sporting Life to ask the manager to sign the petition. He declined, as did a Nike PR representative who also attended the rally.

On October 15 and 16, students at the University of Toronto and York University leafleted their athletic centres to draw attention to Nike sponsorship of sports programs.



In Cambridge, Ontario, delegates to a D&P conference descended on a Nike outlet in a local mall. They distributed leaflets until they were escorted out by mall security.

In London, 30 protesters leafleted customers at the Galleria Mall. According to the Labour Links Solidarity Committee, more than half of the protesters were high school students.

Brock University students organized an information table and leafleted Nike outlets in St. Catharines and Niagara Falls. Passing motorists honked in support of students' anti-Nike placards.

In Kingston, anti-sweats activists leafleted sportswear stores in two malls until they were escorted out by security. Undeterred, they distributed the remaining leaflets on Kingston's main street.

In Montreal, university students and D&P members distributed 1,300 leaflets in

the downtown shopping area. Chanting protesters were led from store to store along rue Ste. Catherine by a student wearing a giant paper maché Nike runner.

Challenging Sponsorships

Since October 18, several student groups concerned about Nike sponsorships at universities have contacted the MSN. In Canada, the largest recent grant is \$600,000 to University of Ottawa's School of Human Kinetics to design a better skate.

Also in October, Nike announced a five-year sponsorship program with the Canadian Hockey Association to "promote the country's national game and develop the hockey skills of youth across Canada."



Nike's decision to promote Canadian hockey comes just as the company is preparing to shut down its Cambridge, Ontario, Bauer skate factory, leaving 400 Canadian workers out of a job. ♦

Maquila Network Notes

Canadians Protest Death Threats Against Family of Salvador Bravo

When Salvador Bravo returned to Valle Hermoso, Mexico, in early September after a solidarity tour to Ontario sponsored by the United Steelworkers of America (USWA), he was summoned to the Mayor's office and grilled about why he had gone to Canada, whom he had spoken to and what he had said.

While in Ontario, the former employee of the Valle Hermoso Custom Trim auto accessories plant had met with Custom Trim employees in Waterloo to discuss problems Mexican and Canadian workers are having with their Canadian-based employer, including job insecurity and inadequate health and safety protection.

The solidarity tour brought media attention to the June 2 firing of Salvador and 27 other workers for participating in a strike for better wages and working conditions.

Following the meeting in the mayor's office, two unknown men showed up at Salvador's home on three occasions looking for him. On the third visit, on September 8, the men told Salvador's 18-year old wife San Juana Lopez

that Salvador had better shut his mouth or she and their two-year old daughter would pay the consequences.

On September 9, Salvador tried to file a criminal complaint in the local Magistrate's office, calling for an investigation of the threats. The authorities refused to accept his complaint. Salvador and his family went into hiding.

Alarmed by the threats against Salvador and his family, the USWA called on the Canadian Embassy to intervene. The Embassy agreed to investigate.

In response to urgent action alerts from the MSN and the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, protest letters from labour and religious groups in Canada and the US flooded into Custom Trim and the Governor of the Mexican State of Tamaulipas. The story received extensive media coverage in Canada.

Later in September, Salvador, accompanied by a CBC reporter and camera crew, again entered the Public Magistrate's office. This time his complaint was accepted. ♦

Hyundai Workers Fired After Voting for Independent Union

Hyundai workers in Tijuana, Mexico are in a major battle to win an independent union.

On October 6, employees of the Hyundai subcontractor, Han Young, voted to affiliate with the Authentic Labour Front (FAT).

Despite the fact that the Conciliation and Arbitration Board allowed illegal voting by management personnel, recently hired employees and people who apparently had never worked in the factory, the vote for an independent union was 55-32.

The vote was observed by members of MSN's partner group in Tijuana, Factor X-Casa de la Mujer (Women's House), and by US labour and community groups led by the San Diego-based Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers.

Ignoring the workers' decisive vote, the

Conciliation and Arbitration Board has repeatedly postponed hearings required to certify the results. In the meantime, Han Young continues to fire union supporters.

The battle at Han Young is being watched closely by workers at two other Hyundai contractors in Tijuana, Ley Mex and Dae Won. In 1996, workers at both factories applied for certification for an independent union. As at Han Young, a number of union leaders were fired during the organizing drive. Ley Mex and Dae Won workers are still awaiting the opportunity to vote for a union of their choice.

Workers at Han Young, Ley Mex and Dae Won produce truck tractor trailers exclusively for Hyundai, which are sold in the United States. ♦

new resources

Nike Just Will Not Do it Just

- *Working Conditions in Sports Shoe Industry in China*, Asia Monitor Resource Center and Hong Kong Christian Industrial Committee, 21 pages, October 1997.
- "Just Buy It," Sarah Cox, *The Georgia Straight*, October 16-23, 1997.

Stop Sweatshops

- *No Sweat: Fashion, Free Trade and the Rights of Garment Workers*, Andrew Ross, editor, Verso, 1997. First US anthology on the battle against contemporary sweatshops.
- *Threads of Justice*, United Church of Canada, October 1997. Half hour video on Canadian garment industry and stop sweatshop campaigning, \$17.95 plus tax. United Church Bookroom, 3250 Bloor St W, Etobicoke, ON, M8X 2Y4.

More About Monitoring....

- *Codes of Conduct in the Garment and Sportswear Industries: An Information Pack for Activists*, Women Working Worldwide, October 1997.
- "More About Monitoring," *Clean Clothes Newsletter*, Number 8, September 1997.
- "Corporate Codes of Conduct," *Interhemispheric Resource Center Bulletin*, Number 47-48, October 1997.
- *First Public Report of the Independent Monitoring Group of El Salvador*, April 1997, and "Monitoring the Maquilas," translated from *La Prensa Gráfica*, October 10, 1997.
- *Peace, what peace?*, Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America, October 1997. Half hour video and study guide, \$19.99. ICCHRLA, 129 St. Clair Ave W, Toronto, ON, M4V 1N5.


Maquilas

- "From Border City to Boom Town (No Not Tijuana)," Chris Kraul, *Los Angeles Times*, October 5, 1997.
- "Maquila: The Swallow That Lays Golden Eggs," Reflection, Research and Communication Team of the Jesuits of Honduras, *Envio*, September 1997.
- "Tijuana Union Fight Highlights NAFTA Fears," Anne-Marie O'Connor, *Los Angeles Times*, November 7, 1997.

Child Labour

- *Listen to Us! The World's Working Children*, Jane Springer, Groundwood Books, 96 pages, November 1997. Written for young people ages 12 - 15.

**** Please contact MSN if you are having trouble locating any of these resources****



ANNOUNCING

WEAR FAIR
action kit

A 45-page education/action kit for individuals and groups interested in getting involved in Campaigns to Stop Sweatshops. Includes Issue Sheets, Action Tools, and Corporate Profiles. In Canada, send \$6.50 (includes postage). Bulk rates available.

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The **Maquila Network Update** is published bi-monthly in English and Spanish by the Maquila Solidarity Network. The Network includes over 400 organizations and individuals across Canada. The MSN promotes solidarity between Canadian labour, women's and social movement groups and Mexican, Central American and Asian counterparts organizing to raise standards and improve conditions in maquiladora and export processing zones.

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MSN's new web page at <http://www.web.net/~msn> (Dec 97)

