

maquila network update

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"Sold to the lowest bidder!" Toronto's 'Nike Worker Auction,' in front of the Eaton Centre April 18th 1998 Photo by Blayne Haggart, *Catholic New Times*

NIKE actions from coast to coast

The "cardboard guests" were not amused. Standing cutouts of Nike CEO Phil Knight, Disney CEO Mike Eisner and Canadian Trade Minister Sergio Marchi looked on as protesters mounted a "No to Free Trade Carnival" outside a downtown shopping mall in Regina.

The carnival – featuring a Sweatshop Fashion Show, swoosh-defacing, up-side-down swoosh face painting, and a sidewalk chalk world with hands crossing borders – was only one of at least 12 actions carried out by anti-sweatshop campaigners in Canada to commemorate the international day of action against Nike on April 18th.

Demonstrations in Vancouver, Edmonton, Regina, Winnipeg, London,

Hamilton, Niagara Falls, Toronto, Montreal, Halifax, Charlottetown and St. John's helped highlight the sweatshop labour practices of both Nike and Woolworth (owner of Footlocker and Northern Reflections stores). They were joined by protests in over 50 cities in the United States and actions in Latin America, Europe and Australia.

Creative actions

Complementing the leaflets and pickets in some cities

were creative actions dramatizing Nike's labour record. In Toronto, about 100 protesters were joined by the "Nike Sweatshop Players," who performed a "Nike Worker Auction" (jobs going to the lowest bidder) and a mock shoe sale for shoppers entering the mall.

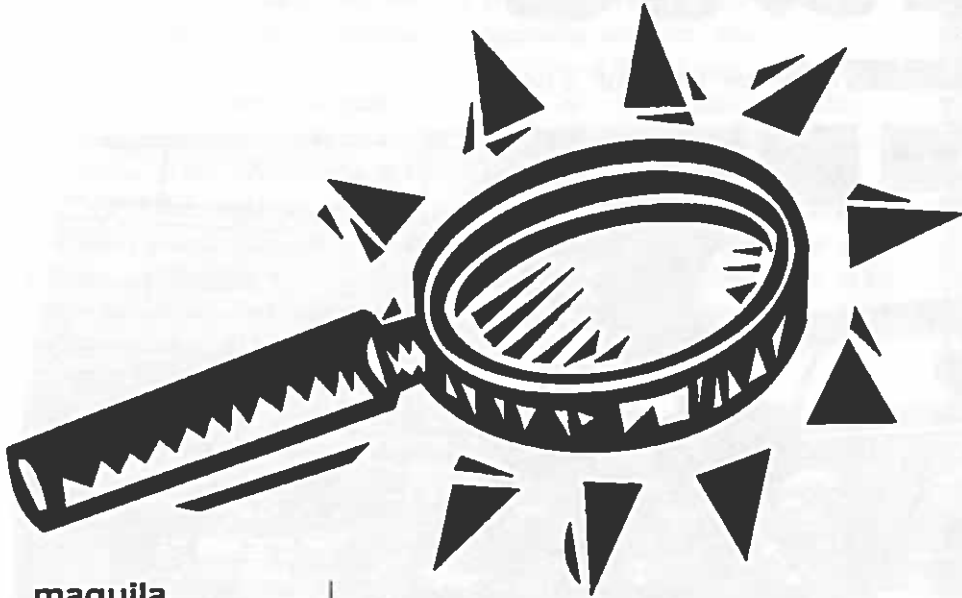
Activists in Hamilton, Ontario attracted attention to their two leafleting actions by unfurling a huge banner reading "Nike: Stomping the

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Support Builds for Federal Task Force



Support is growing for a federal task force on sweatshop abuses in the apparel and footwear industries. To date, approximately 15,000 Canadians and over 200 organizations have endorsed the call for a task force.

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is published quarterly in English and Spanish by the Maquila Solidarity Network (MSN). The MSN 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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On March 5, leaders of eight prominent Canadian organizations joined the Labour Behind the Label Coalition in requesting a meeting with Foreign Affairs Minister Axworthy and Labour Minister MacAulay to discuss the proposal for a federal task force and to present the ministers with hundreds of signed petitions.

Signatories to the letter to Axworthy and MacAulay include the Canadian Labour Congress; the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees; the Council of Canadians; the Episcopal Commission for Social Affairs of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops; the Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice; the Canadian Catholic

Organization for Development and Peace, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women; Free the Children; and the Labour Behind the Label Coalition.

On April 20, the B.C. Federation of Labour held a press conference to announce that four major Canadian retailers -- Hudson Bay, Sears, Dylex and Mark's Work Warehouse -- have agreed to support the call for a task force. The retailers were responding to shareholder actions lead by the B.C. Federation.

Despite the growing support for a task force, the federal government has so far failed to respond to the request for a meeting to discuss the proposal. In separate letters to the Labour Behind the Label Coalition,

Axworthy and MacAulay expressed their general support for voluntary corporate codes of conduct and for the work of the International Labour Organization (ILO). Neither letter mentioned the proposal for a task force.

The Canadian campaign for an end to sweatshop abuses is taking place at the same time as negotiations are under way in the United Kingdom, the US, the Netherlands and the European Union around industry-wide codes of conduct and monitoring systems. A stumbling block in all these negotiations has been the question of independent monitoring and transparency of the process (who has access to the monitors' reports).

In Australia, the Fair Wear Campaign has succeeded in

persuading and pressuring a significant number of major retailers to sign on to the Homeworkers Code of Practice. The Code requires retailers to only use accredited suppliers, to provide the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union with lists of all their suppliers, and to provide the Code Committee with documentation verifying that suppliers are paying homeworkers what they are entitled to.

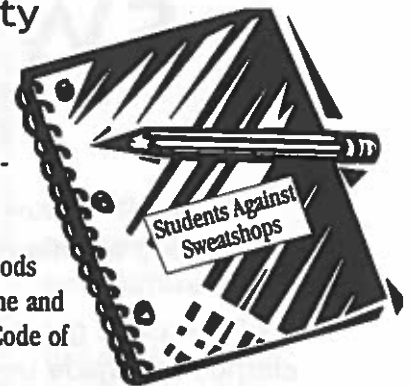
Although the Code of Practice and accreditation system currently applies only

to homeworkers in Australia, the Fair Wear Campaign hopes to further develop the code to cover offshore production.

In Canada, the Labour Behind the Label Coalition is proposing that a federal task force not only look at a possible industry-wide code of conduct and independent monitoring system, but also at strengthening corporate disclosure requirements and enforcement of domestic labour legislation. ♦

Sweatshops are losers at Duke University

Duke Students Against Sweatshops have achieved a historic agreement with the administration of Duke University requiring all companies licensed to manufacture goods bearing the university's name and logo to abide by the Duke Code of Conduct.



Under the agreement, Duke licensees must provide the university with a list of all factories, contractors and subcontractors producing Duke merchandise. It gives the university the right to send independent monitors to investigate labour practices.

Students Against Sweatshops hopes the agreement will become a model for other universities. For more information, contact Jessica Salisbury, Duke Students Against Nike at: jms18@acpub.duke.edu. ♦

International Forum on Clean Clothes, May 2 and 3 in Netherlands

Sponsored by the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC), the forum brought together trade unions, consumer organizations and NGOs from Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, North America, and Eastern and Western Europe. An opening tribunal included testimony from witnesses from 10 countries documenting their experiences with Nike, Levi's, Adidas, Disney and others. Recommendations to the CCC include the importance of continuing to demand information from companies through legal procedures and to sue companies that are violating laws and codes of conduct. As part of the campaign's efforts to mobilize public opinion to pressure companies to accept responsibility for the violations of workers rights in the production of their products, the CCC will target the upcoming World Cup in Paris. Adidas is the sponsor for the World Cup.

For copies of the testimonies and recommendations see: <http://www.cleanclothes.org/1/forum1.htm> ♦

Key Issues for a Task Force

- **Access to information:** Citizens/consumers have the right to know where our clothes are made and under what conditions.
- **Corporate accountability:** Retailers and manufacturers should be held accountable for the labour practices of their contractors and sub-contractors.
- **Independent monitoring:** Codes of conduct are meaningless without independent and effective monitoring systems.
- **Enforcement of legislation:** Governments and apparel companies must take concrete action to ensure that labour legislation is enforced.

What can consumers do to challenge sweatshop abuses?

"How do I know whether the runners I buy are made in a sweatshop?"

"Where can I get a list of companies whose clothes are made under humane conditions?"

"What can we do to ensure our school uniforms are produced in an ethical manner?"

The above questions are some of the most common we are asked. They show that citizens and consumers do care about the conditions under which their clothes and footwear are made.

Unfortunately, answers to these questions aren't easy to come by. Few if any major retailers today can guarantee that all the clothes they sell are made under just working conditions, or even under the minimum standards required by law. Despite growing public awareness of and mounting protests against sweatshop abuses, no major retailer or "super label" has so far staked a claim to the ethical niche by marketing

their products under a "Wear Fair" label.

Even the old slogan "Buy Canadian" is no longer a reliable guide. While some Canadian-made apparel is still produced in unionized factories paying more than the minimum wage and providing relatively decent working conditions, a growing percentage of apparel production in Canada is being contracted out to a maze of small sewing factories and to homeworkers.

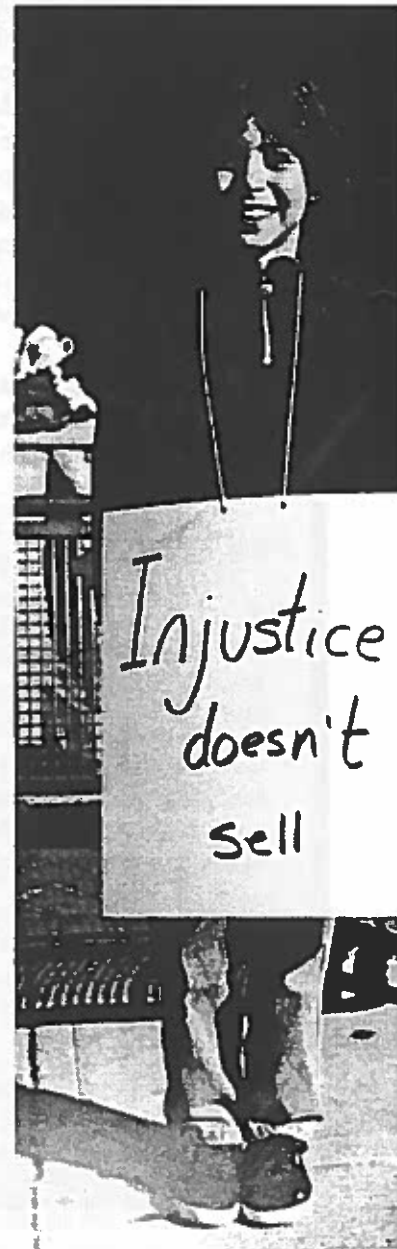
As a result, many Canadian garment workers are being paid much less than the minimum wage. They are denied statutory benefits. They are forced to work

excessively long hours with no overtime pay.

One possible answer is to look for the union label. However, "Buying Union," is more complicated than it seems. A retailer that has a t-shirt made by unionized workers in Montreal, may also have the same shirt made by a subcontractor that exploits homeworkers in Toronto, or by export processing zone workers in Indonesia.

Even companies like the GAP that "do the right thing" in one country can't be given a blanket endorsement. In 1995, the GAP responded to public pressure and allowed independent monitoring and the return to work of fired union members at a maquila factory in El Salvador, but it hasn't allowed independent monitoring in any of its other contract factory in 50 countries around the world.

On March 8, 1997, International Women's Day, Carmelita Alonzo died of exhaustion from overwork at a factory in the Philippines producing for the GAP and other brand-name retailers.



If I can't shop ethically, what can I do?

Don't despair, there are lots of things you can do to help eliminate sweatshop abuses.

1 Ask the right questions when you shop

Ask the store clerk or store manager the following questions:

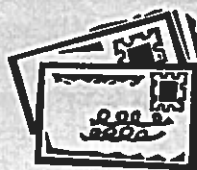
- How does your company guarantee that the clothes and sportswear you sell are not produced under sweatshop conditions?
- Can I get a list of the names and addresses of the contractors and subcontractors that produce your products?
- Does your company have a code of conduct for its suppliers? Can I have a copy?
- How does your company monitor whether your contractors adhere to your code of conduct?



In Truro, Nova Scotia, a group of women affiliated with Ten Days for Global Justice visited the store manager of the local Northern Reflections store. All of them wore clothes they had purchased from a Northern Reflections store. They told the manager how much they liked his product, but that they couldn't in conscience continue to buy from his store as long as his company was selling clothes made under sweatshop conditions.

The Canadian Labour Congress can provide you with "Break the Sweat" cards, which you can give to store clerks and managers to express your concern about sweatshop abuses.

2 Write letters & organize letter-writing bees

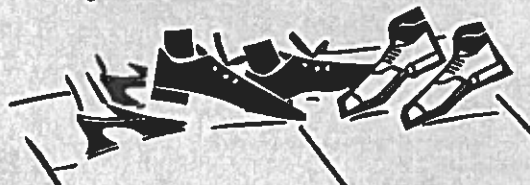


Grade 6 students in Surrey, B.C. have written letters to CEO's of a number of major retailers associated with sweatshop practices, including Nike, Mattel, Woolworth, Disney, etc. When they receive a form-letter reply, they write back demanding answers to specific questions.

3 Demand ethical purchasing policies

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New Jersey has adopted a policy that none of their school uniforms will be made under sweatshop conditions. Duke University is requiring its licensees to provide information on all contractors and subcontractors, and to allow independent monitoring of working conditions. In Victoria, Shopping for Justice has collected over 5,000 signatures to a petition calling on City Council to oppose the sale of clothes in their community made under sweatshop conditions.

4 Organize store rallies, store leafleting and street theatre



Creative store actions can be fun and effective. Groups in cities and towns across Canada have organized sweatshop fashion shows, mall carnivals, parades, Nike worker auctions, anti-sweatshop Christmas carolling, mall leafleting, sweatshop mall tours, mock shoe sales, etc., etc. There's no end to the possible ways to get the message across to retailers, shoppers and the media.

But do our actions make any difference?

They already have. Until recently, major retailers refused to take any responsibility for the sweatshop practices of their contractors. Now, as a result of public campaigns, most major retailers acknowledge their responsibility to the workers who produce their products. Many have adopted codes of conduct for their suppliers, and some have instituted "external" monitoring, although few have accepted truly independent monitoring.

Now pressure is on the retailers and manufacturers to negotiate industry-wide codes of conduct and independent monitoring systems, and on governments to improve and enforce legislation. The ultimate goal is for garment workers to have the right to negotiate just wages and working conditions, without facing the threat of plant closures and job loss, and for consumers to have the opportunity to purchase clothes made under humane conditions. ♦

Lubicon Lake Indian Nation in northern Alberta. The Lubicon have been fighting for a land rights settlement for almost sixty years. The Daishowa boycott has successfully stopped the company from logging for over six years. The company says the boycott, run by a handful of volunteers, has cost them over \$14 million in lost sales.

Other consumer organizations are breathing a sigh of relief in the wake of the judgement. The legal action has sent a chill effect through Canadian organizations concerned that their right to picket consumer outlets—like Footlocker stores—might also be curtailed by the courts. Daishowa plans to appeal the decision. ♦

Pressure Mounts for ILO Convention on Child Labour

Child labour activists across Canada participated in actions through May as part of a Global March Against Child Labour aimed at highlighting the plight of working children and building momentum for a new Convention Against Child Labour. The Convention will be discussed and drafted at the International Labour Organization (ILO) Conference in June, and then ratified the following year. It will focus on "the most intolerable forms of child labour." Debates are expected on the definition of the "intolerable" and whether the Convention should address the links between child labour and trade for profit. The Canadian government's unwillingness to link trade and human rights worries many Canadian child labour activists. To date, the Canadian government has focused its attention on Child Soldiers and Child in the Sex Trade. ♦



Cicih Sukaesih

Fired Nike Workers Ordered Reinstated

The Indonesian Supreme Court has ruled that a major Nike contractor, PT Eltri Indo Footwear, must reinstate and pay lost wages to Cicih Sukaesih and 23 other Nike production workers who were fired in 1993 for organizing a strike. The ruling reaffirms a decision by the country's highest labour court made five years ago. Cicih is known to many Nike campaign activists across Canada for her participation in a solidarity tour in the spring of 1997.

Despite the positive ruling, Jeff Ballinger of Press for Change who accompanied Cicih on her Canadian tour is skeptical about whether the order will ever be enforced. Ballinger notes that the Eltri factory is part of the Astra conglomerate, the fourth largest maker of Nike shoes in the world, which is run by President Suharto's number one golfing buddy, Bob Hassan. "Would the Manpower Ministry officials in Indonesia really enforce a back-to-work and wage-settlement decree against a Suharto crony?" Ballinger asks.

Meanwhile, Amnesty International is campaigning for the release of Dita Indah Sari who was arrested in 1996 for participating in a demonstration for an increase in the minimum wage. Two years ago, she was detained for leading Reebok production workers on a march to and sit-in at the National Assembly. For further information, see Amnesty's website: www.amnesty.ca. ♦

Child Labour
Challenging Child Labour by the Canadian Labour Congress, 1998. 31 page accessible introduction to the problem and issues. Contact: CLC International Department, tel: (613) 521-3400

"Child Labour, Not as Simple as it Seems" by Lynda Yanz and Bob Jeffcott in *Briarpatch*, June 1998.

Monitoring
"Reflections on the Issue of Independent Monitoring" by Steve Coates, U.S./Guatemala Labor Education Project, April 1998. 5 pages. usglep@igc.org

Asian Labour Update, Excellent special issue on "Codes of Conduct" by Asia Monitor Resource Centre, October 1997-January 1998. Contact: amrc@hk.super.net

Campaigns
"Jeans," a special issue of the *New Internationalist*, June 1998. <http://www.newint.org/>

Made in China: Behind the Label by Charles Kernaghan. A special report prepared for the National Labor Committee, March 1998. 85 pages. www.nlcnet.org

Tracking Transnationals, A Resource Pack for Activists by the International Labour Resource and Information Group, 1997. Contact: ilrig@wn.apc.org

Maquilas
In Paradise, English Translation of a kit on free trade zones in the Dominican Republic produced by CIPAF, a women's research centre. Available at: <http://www.oneworld.oxfam/campaign/clothes/>

Coast to coast action

— continued from page 1 —

Life out of its Workers.” Student activists led by a drummer and a protester wearing a giant paper maché Nike shoe marched through downtown Montreal.

A rally in Nike’s hometown of Portland, Oregon featured two giant handmade puppets — a two-faced puppet with Clinton on one side, Suharto on the other, and a Phil Knight puppet — who blew kisses to each other. And protesters in Baltimore, Maryland, wore identical “Ask me why Nike sucks” T-shirts while leafleting a local mall.

Some activists took it beyond the malls. Skateboarders in Edmonton are reportedly distributing “Just don’t do it” stickers far and wide and University of Toronto students passed out flyers to riders on local subways. Other cities complemented storefront actions with educational forums and gathered signatures for the petition for a federal task force on sweatshops.

Air to Earth

Nike’s response to this flurry of public criticism is more of the predictable PR that they’ve become known for. But the latest addition to Nike’s PR arsenal is sending chills down the backs of US educators. Nike has started dishing out advertising to elementary school kids in the form of “environmental lessons.”

The Nike “Air-to-Earth lesson kit” is a swoosh-filled classroom exercise that uses the Nike shoe-manufacturing process to teach kids about “environmentally-friendly” manufacturing. It even has students building a giant Nike shoe — swoosh and all.

Nike says that 800 classes in ten US cities have used the kit. The company has devoted three staff people to promote the program and it is quickly expanding into other cities.

Critics of the program — including the Center for a Commercial-Free Public Education and the National Education Association — suggest that Nike’s real goal is not environmental education but developing brand loyalty amongst a captive audience. Kathleen Lyons, of the National Education Association calls it “a despicable use of classroom time.”

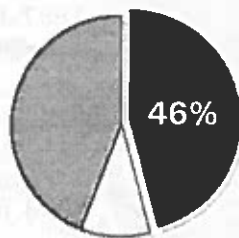
Earth to Nike

Nike’s PR has hit a snag, however. The company is currently being sued under California’s false advertising laws over its public reassurances that Nike contract workers are well treated. The suit charges that contract workers are regularly subjected to physical punishment, exposed to dangerous chemicals, forced to work unpaid overtime and are unable to earn a living wage despite long hours.

And in Canada, a recent poll by Vector Research & Development Inc. found that 46% of people surveyed connected Nike to Third World sweatshops, while only 10% felt Nike was a good Third World employer. That informed public is having an effect on sales, too. The national sports retail chain Mountain Equipment Co-op has just decided not to stock Nike products once their current inventory runs out. A spokes-

person told MSN it was a “political decision, because of the way Nike treats its workers.”

Apparently, Nike, you can’t fool all of the people all of the time. ♦



A December 1997 Vector Research poll found that 46% of Canadians surveyed connected Nike to Third World sweatshops.



Photo: Peter Patrasek

The following is excerpted from a statement made on the national CBC radio show Commentary

So why is a 15-year-old high school student like me choosing not to wear clothes with the Nike swoosh? It’s not because I’m against their marketing tactics. Although it’s hard not to be. So many companies target people my age. They believe we’ll buy anything if it’s packaged and marketed attractively.

But I worry about how these products are made. The shoe and clothing factories which produce most of these products are in countries such as China, Indonesia and Vietnam. Factory workers can earn less than two dollars a day for ten hours work. Some employees have complained of mental and physical abuse by supervisors. This means that those \$120 sneakers my fellow students love to buy actually cost about two dollars to make.

It’s not enough just to complain. Or even to boycott these products. Those of us who think this way of doing business is wrong are campaigning against it.

Not all of us want high-price fashion whatever the cost. We want ethical working conditions and a living wage for the people who make these shoes and clothes. And that’s our fashion statement.

—Fraser Thomson, Toronto