



Sent March 12 2009

To: Dalhousie, Laurentian, McMaster, Memorial, Queen's, Trent, U of Alberta, U of Guelph, U of Waterloo, U of Western Ontario, Brock, UBC, Concordia, Ryerson, Simon Fraser, Wilfrid Laurier

Dear [Administrator];

You may have heard that university licensee Russell Athletic is facing growing pressure from students and other anti-sweatshop activists at US and Canadian universities over well-documented violations of workers' rights at its recently closed Jerzees de Honduras (JDH) factory in Choloma, Honduras.

As a signatory to licensing agreements with most Canadian universities, Russell Athletic pledged to uphold the labour rights conditions set out in those agreements. When they violate those conditions, they must be required to remediate the situation or lose the right to produce university-licensed products for those Canadian schools.

That's been the conclusion of 18 US universities to date. In response to reports from separate investigations carried out by the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) and the Fair Labor Association (FLA) indicating that Russell's decision to close the Jerzees de Honduras factory was motivated to a significant extent by anti-union animus, those 18 US universities have announced plans to end their licensing agreements with the company.

Both the FLA and the WRC have documented numerous violations of workers' associational rights by JDH factory management, including:

- repeatedly threatening workers that the factory would be closed because of the existence and activities of the union;
- encouraging employees to collect names on an anti-union petition during working hours; and
- discriminating against union supporters in job assignments.

Russell closed the factory on January 30 of this year.

Recognizing that a corrective action plan agreed to by the company shortly before it closed the factory did not adequately address the situation, on February 12, the FLA

Board of Directors issued a resolution calling on Russell to take additional corrective action, including:

- offering first hire opportunities to all JDH workers at all Fruit of the Loom factories in the area, regardless of their union activities; and
- providing appropriate compensation beyond legal entitlements to all JDH workers, with the amount of compensation to be determined in conversations with the CGT, worker representatives and others.

The FLA resolution also urges Russell to meet directly with other key stakeholders, such as member universities, the CGT union, and the WRC “in good faith to determine what additional corrective action is needed to address these concerns.”

Although Russell has since released a statement to universities expressing its willingness to take corrective action, that statement ignores these and other key recommendations in the FLA Board resolution. Nor does it address the demands of the CGT or the recommendations of the WRC.

If Canadian universities are to fully implement the terms of their ethical licensing policies, Russell Athletic must be put on notice that remediation based on the recommendations of the FLA and the WRC must be undertaken. The company should be notified that failure by the company to adequately address the demands of the CGT and the recommendations for corrective action put forward by the FLA and the WRC will result in termination of their licensing agreements with Canadian universities.

Please send a letter to that effect to the company, with a copy to the Maquila Solidarity Network, at your earliest convenience.

If you would like more information on the situation, all reports, updates, and the company’s own responses are accessible from our website at:

www.maquilasolidarity.org/jerzees

Sincerely,

Kevin Thomas
Director of Advocacy
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