

Join the Campaign to Stop Sweatshop Abuses

The work being done in the North to pressure Nike to treat us fairly might not benefit us tomorrow, but slowly there will be changes. This struggle is not only taking place in Indonesia... I want Canadian workers to know that I support them.

Cicli Sukaesih, Indonesian former Nike worker fired for union organizing



The Return of the Sweatshop

The women who make our clothes and toys in Canada and around the world are often forced to work excessively long hours in unhealthy and abusive working conditions for much less than they need to support themselves and their families.

Globalization and free trade policies are forcing workers and countries to compete for jobs based on who will accept the lowest wages, the poorest working conditions and the weakest environmental standards. The impact in Canada is not only the loss of jobs to poorer countries, but also the return of sweatshop abuses in our own country.

To resist deteriorating standards, garment and toy workers are building international alliances. Consumer campaigns led by labour, religious and human rights groups, including the Canadian Labour Congress, the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees, the Labour Behind the Label Coalition, Ten Days for Global Justice, and the Maquila Solidarity Network are part of this effort to stop sweatshop abuses and win employment with dignity.

Nike Campaign

In response to an international campaign to stop sweatshop abuses against Nike production workers in Indonesia, China and Vietnam, the US sportswear giant has recently made some concessions.

Nike has promised to adopt US Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) air quality standards for all footwear factories, to include NGOs in monitoring of factory conditions, to make summaries of findings public, and to increase the salaries of its Indonesian minimum wage workers by 25 percent.

Some Nike promises are small steps forward; others are just PR smoke:

- Even though US health and safety standards are not always the best, enforcement of them would be a major step forward.

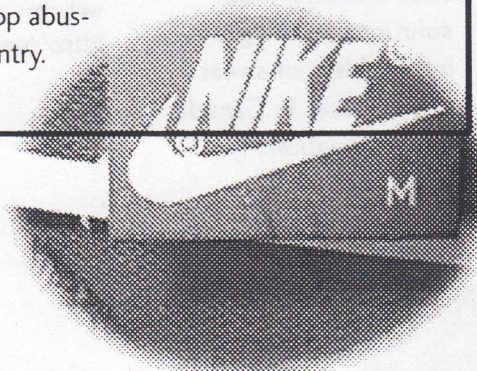
- Involvement of NGOs in monitoring of factory conditions would be a positive step, but it's not yet clear which NGOs will be chosen, how they will be involved, or who will write the report summaries.

- Nike's 25 percent wage increase is a nice gesture, but it doesn't begin to make up for the loss in real wages Nike workers have suffered because of the financial crisis.

Base wages have dropped from \$3.80 a day to less than \$1.00.

Nike's 25 percent increase raises base wages to 250,000 rupiah a month. A subsistence wage is 350,000.

The Maquila Solidarity Network is continuing to demand that Nike pay a living wage by local standards, and mandate respected local human rights groups to monitor factory conditions.



Woolworth Campaign

In 1996, the Homeworkers' Association and the Labour Behind the Label Coalition brought to the attention of Woolworth Canada complaints of sweatshop abuses against Metro Toronto homeworkers and contract shop employees sewing for the Woolworth Northern Reflections, Northern Traditions and Northern Getaway labels. Sewers were being paid \$4.50 and hour, 65% of the minimum wage. Woolworth promised to carry out an investigation.

Two and a half years later, Woolworth — now known as the Venator Group — has not released any information on the results of the investigation. Nor has it offered any compensation to the workers whose rights were violated. Against the advice of the Homeworkers' Association, Woolworth cut off future orders to one of its contractors, rather than working with

the contractor to improve its practices, thus threatening the employment of the workers whose rights had been violated.

Venator's policy of cutting off contractors when violations are uncovered has discouraged workers from making complaints. Venator is burying the problem rather than solving it.

The Labour Behind the Label Coalition is demanding that Venator:

- Make public the results of their investigation and fully compensate the workers whose rights were violated.
- Join with the Homeworkers Association in requesting that the Ministry of Labour carry out an audit of the labour practices of Venator's Metro Toronto contractors.
- Work with contractors to bring their labour practices in compliance with the Ontario Employment Standards Act.



Federal Task Force on Sweatshops

Thirty thousand Canadians and over 200 organizations have joined the call for a federal task force on sweatshop abuses in the garment and footwear industries. Thousands more are mailing in Ten Days for Global Justice postcards calling on Foreign Affairs Minister Axworthy to convene the task force.

The task force would bring together representatives of industry, labour, non-governmental and religious organizations to negotiate industry-wide solutions to the growing problem of sweatshop abuses in Canada and internationally.

For more information

on what you can do to support the above campaigns, contact:
Labour Behind the Label Coalition c/o the Maquila Solidarity Network
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For Task Force campaign postcards and other Ten Days campaign materials, contact:
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For additional Stop Sweatshops campaign materials, contact:
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