

For immediate release: March 15, 2000

# **University of Toronto students occupy President's office**

## **-Students demand anti-sweatshop policy-**

(TORONTO) University of Toronto students today occupied university-President Robert Prichard's office to press their demands for a code of conduct governing the school's licensing policy.

Members of the Students Against Sweatshops plan to stay in the President's office until the school agrees to meet their demands, specifically that:

1. the President immediately pass the Code of Conduct including the requirement that workers producing University of Toronto merchandise receive a living wage;
2. Governing Council ratify the new policy on licensing at their April 6 meeting.

### **Background:**

In order to ensure that clothing bearing the University of Toronto name is not made under "sweatshop" conditions - low pay, excessive hours, forced overtime, harassment, abuse, and no freedom of association - students at the school have been asking U of T since September 1998 to pass a "**code of conduct**" requiring university licensees to live up to a set of basic labour standards.

In a joint task force convened over a year ago, students, faculty and administration have repeatedly drafted a Code for the university and have repeatedly had it sent back or stalled by the President. The students fear that the President is putting the issue off yet again in order to pass a substantially weakened code - one which doesn't require that workers receive a **living wage** - when students are gone for the summer.

Sit-ins have been used successfully at campuses across the United States to press American universities to pass anti-sweatshop codes at their schools. Through increasing student pressure, some apparel companies like **Nike, Russell Athletic** and **Jansport** have already been forced to make changes in their operations including disclosing factory locations to students - something they had previously refused to do.

Two weeks ago, students from across Canada met in Waterloo to coordinate anti-sweatshop actions at Canadian schools through a Students Against Sweatshops network.

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