

maquila network update

April 1996 Vol. 1 / No. 2

Mexico

FAVESA Workers Win Severance

On January 26, Mexican workers protesting outside the Favesa maquiladora in Ciudad Juarez were violently attacked by city police. Several required treatment in hospital.

The workers were protesting illegal dismissals for attempting to form a union. Favesa workers and their supporters in Juarez asked for support from organizations in Mexico, the U.S. and Canada.

Favesa produces seat covers for Ford, General Motors and Chrysler and is owned by the Lear Corporation in South Field, Michigan.

In response to an urgent action alert from the Maquila Solidarity Network, over 50 Canadian groups sent protest letters to Ford and Lear.

The company had initially refused to even meet with workers but an abrupt "about face" when the attack on Favesa workers began gaining international attention.

In mid-February, the company agreed to a severance package of 60 days pay, plus 12 days pay for each year of

seniority, vacation pay and other lost wages.

Despite the settlement Lear continues to refuse to accept responsibility for the police assault against workers at Favesa. Lear responded to letters of protest by stating that

"our investigation is not exactly as stated in your letter. The appropriate legal and statutory processes were followed from the outset. . . ."

Wonder what the Favesa workers who were beaten and hospitalized think of that!

Canada/US

UNITE Against Sweatshops

Building on the momentum of the GAP Campaign, representatives from UNITE (the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees), community and religious groups, and solidarity networks are joining forces in campaigns to improve working conditions in the garment industry both locally and internationally.

They are pressuring retailers to take responsibility for conditions of homeworkers and workers in sweatshops and maquiladora factories.

Coalitions have recently formed in New York, Los Angeles and also in Toronto, where preliminary research is

being done into which retailers currently have codes of conduct and where their garments are produced.

The next Maquila Network Update will report on the research and suggest ways for your group to get involved. In the meantime, start noting labels in your shopping haunts. Record the store name, CA #, and production location.

To order a new US resource produced by UNITE: Stop Sweatshops, A Partnership for Responsibility Campaign, an eight minute video about garment sweatshops in the U.S., available for \$10US. Fax (212) 819-0885.

Mexico

Women Fight for Health and a Living Wage

Carmen Valadez, coordinator of the Casa de la Mujer in Tijuana, Mexico and a member of the coordinating committee of the Mexico Women's Maquila Network, was in Toronto in March meeting with representatives of labour and women's organizations.

Carmen was invited by the Humanity Fund of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union (CEP), which supports the Casa's Labour and

Gender Defenders training program for maquila workers.

Carmen also spoke at the Women, Health and the Environment conference, where she described the increasingly dangerous health and repro-

ductive conditions women face in the maquilas.

Tijuana is home to 3,000 maquilas -- an increase of 1,000 since NAFTA was implemented. Also since 1994,

tended by over 60 women maquila activists from along the U.S. Mexico border and from Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala.

The conference set priorities for the coming months, including increasing organizing and education efforts under the theme "Health, Dignity and Living Wages" and expanding the network.

The network is requesting donations to support

communication among members and with supporters. Donations will help purchase used faxes, computers and modems. To make a contribution to the Mexico Women's Maquila Network, contact us!



work related accidents have increased by 20 per cent (the government's own statistics!).

In June, the Casa and Tijuana were host to the Fourth regional conference for women in the maquila, which was at-

The Maquila Network Update is published five times a year by the Maquila Solidarity Network.. The Network was founded by Mujer a Mujer (Women to Women) and SolidarityWorks, and includes organizations and individuals across Canada.. The Network promotes solidarity between Canadian labour, women's and social movement groups and Mexican and Central American counterparts organizing to raise standards and improve conditions in maquiladora zones. If you would like to contribute information or an article for a future Update or if you would like to become a member of the network, please contact us at:

Maquila Solidarity Network

606 Shaw Street Toronto, Ontario M6G 3L6

Phone: 416-532-8684 Fax: 416-532-7888 Email: perg@web.apc.org

Guatemala

Unionist Threatened at Hiding Place

Debora Guzman went into hiding in early March 1996 when she started receiving frequent threats on her life and that of her infant son.

Threatening phone calls demanded that her husband Felix Gonzalez give up his work as a union leader with workers from the Lunafil factory in Guatemala or else.

On March 21, Peace Brigades International, who have been monitoring the case, reported that Guzman had just received another threat, at her hiding place!

For close to two years, Debora and Felix have lived under constant threat of harassment and death.

In May 1994, when the owners of Lunafil closed their factory and fired 215 workers, Gonzalez and other workers, represented by the Guatemalan Workers' Labour Union (UNSI TRAGUA), started fighting for the reinstatement of the fired workers and payment of outstanding compensation.

Gonzalez's actions were countered by threats on his life and the lives of family members.

Debora is also a union leader at a maquila factory.

In October 1994, Debora was violently attacked by heavily armed men. She was warned that the same would happen to Felix if he didn't stop his fight against Lunafil.

In February 1995, Debora

was kidnapped while shopping at the market and detained for thirty-one hours.

Debora and Felix continued

to receive death threats through all of 1995 and after the birth of their son, the threats also named him.

Urgent Action

Debora Guzman, Felix Gonzalez and their son need international support!

Write/fax the Guatemalan authorities immediately to express your alarm at the continued death threats that Debora and Felix are being subjected to. Ask the authorities to:

- * *investigate events and bring those responsible to justice for human rights violations;*
- * *ensure the safety of Debora Guzman, Jonatan Emanuel Gonzalez Guzman and Felix Gonzalez;*
- * *fulfil their obligation to guarantee human rights for all, as specified in the Constitution of the Republic of Guatemala.*

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Ministro de Trabajo y Prevision Social
Palacio Nacional
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Fax 502-2-51-35-59

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Please forward the MSN
a copy of your letters!



new resources

Counting our Victories: Popular Education and Organizing. Training kit combines 29 minute video (\$26.95 for individuals, \$50 for organizations) with modular training guide (\$15.95 for individuals, \$35 for organizations) illustrating how popular education can be used for organizing. Both give examples of methods and tools to be used within the context of local and global restructuring. Cost for full kit (Video and Training Guide) is \$39.95 for individuals and \$80 for organizations. For ordering details contact *Repeal the Deal Productions* 707 12th Street, New Westminster, BC, V3M 4J7. Fax (604) 522-8875.

The U.S. in Haiti: How to Get Rich on 11¢ an Hour. An expose of conditions in Haiti's free trade zones from the National Labor Committee (NLC). Includes example pledges to send to J.C. Penney and the Walt Disney company to comply with Haitian labour and minimum wage laws. 73 pages; \$5 US. The National Labor Committee, 15 Union Square, New York, NY 10003. Phone (212) 242-0700; Fax (212) 255-7240.

Zoned for Slavery; the Child Behind the Label. Educational Video on Central America's maquiladora export assembly industry. 23 minutes; \$12 US. Contact the National Labor Committee. See above.

The Best of Intentions. Educational video exposing Liz Claiborne's connection to poor working conditions in El Salvadoran and Honduran maquilas produced for CBC's *Fifth Estate*. 22 minutes; \$70. Fax requests attention: Anita Turcotte, *Fifth Estate* (416) 205-6668.

Tri-national monitoring reports on NAFTA's first two years prepared by U.S., Mexican and Canadian groups. From Canada: ***Challenging Free Trade in Canada, the Real Story;*** from the U.S: ***NAFTA's First Two Years, The Myths and Realities;*** from Mexico: ***NAFTA, At the Centre of the Crisis.*** To order, contact the Nafta Desk, CLC, 2841 Riverside Drive, Ottawa, K1V 8X7. The CLC Nafta Desk also publishes an excellent bulletin: ***The morningNAFTA, Labour's Voice on Economic Integration.***

Together for Human Rights newsletter reporting on the link between trade and human rights issues. Its purpose is to increase human rights advocacy and human solidarity. Published ten times a year. Write Kathleen Ruff, RR2, Burns Lake, BC, V0J 1E0.