

maquila network update

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Holiday Campaigns Target Sweatshops

Groups across Canada made this year's holiday season a time to protest sweatshop conditions in the garment and toy industries. Described below are some of the activities that took place. Let us know of activities that have been missed.

Disney

In St. John's, Newfoundland, the Coalition for Equality demonstrated in front of ToysRUs protesting Disney's and Mattel's use of sweatshop labour. In Victoria, BC, Shopping for Justice and the Central America Support Committee launched their Clean Clothes Campaign, focussing on Disney products.

Mattel/Barbie

Women's and labour activists leafleted stores selling Barbie dolls and other Mattel toys in Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver, and other Canadian towns.

Distribution of "Barbie post cards" was organized by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) and the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). NAC and the CLC are calling for an independent monitoring system, recognition

of workers' right to organize and bargain collectively, and compensation for toy factory victims and their families.

Many groups responded to a MSN Action Alert in support of Mattel workers in Mexico, who were detained, interrogated and pressured to sign resignation letters.

Phillips-Van Heusen

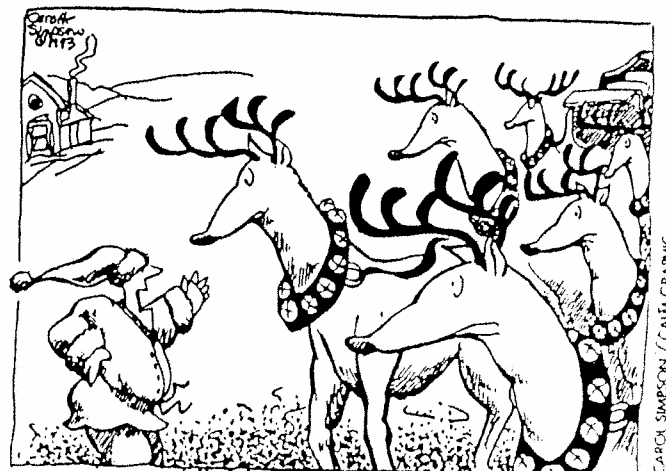
CUSO staff in Kingston, Ontario organized letter-writing activities at an Amnesty International event, focussing on Phillips-Van Heusen's (P-VH) refusal to negotiate with maquiladora workers in Guatemala.

A number of groups responded to an MSN Action Alert in support of P-VH workers and requested copies of the P-VH flyer for leafletting.

Nike

Development and Peace (D&P) organized leafletting of stores selling Nike products in Toronto and Kitchener. In two other Ontario towns, Welland and St. Catharines, D&P purchased space in local newspapers to publish signed petitions calling on Nike to accept independent monitoring.

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"It's going to be a light load...
He's boycotting all toys made by third world slave labour."

MSN Reports From Guatemala

During a December visit to Guatemala, I had the opportunity to talk with the heroic union activists at Phillips-Van Heusen (P-VH) who are fighting for a first collective agreement. As they leafletted their fellow workers, union executive members told me of increasingly difficult working conditions, speed-ups and long hours.

They said they were dismayed, but not surprised, that the Minister of Labour had avoided ruling on the union's application to negotiate with the company. (In Guatemala, a union can apply to negotiate when it has 25 percent employee support.)

The P-VH workers were eagerly awaiting the visit of independent investigators from Human Rights Watch, who finally arrived and carried out their investigation in early January. A positive ruling by Human Rights Watch on the 25 percent issue would be particularly significant, since P-VH CEO Bruce Klatsky sits on its board.

Since my visit, P-VH workers have won two small, but important victories. In response to international pressure, armed guards hired shortly after the membership drive began, who have been an intimidating presence at the factory gates, have recently been removed.

As well, when workers were told in December that their year-end bonus would be much less this year, they staged a work stoppage and were successful in getting their full bonuses.

Despite all the difficulties, P-VH workers are convinced that the only way they'll get the respect they deserve is through a union contract.

Back in Canada, over the holidays MSN was active in campaigns to pressure Mattel, Disney, Nike and P-VH to respect the rights and improve conditions of workers producing their products.

We are dismayed that Mattel has not yet responded to any of the many letters from groups across Canada asking that Mattel investigate human rights violations in a Tijuana subsidiary. In September, four women Mattel employees were

detailed and interrogated by company officials for over ten hours for carrying literature from *Alianza Civica* (the Mexican Civic Alliance) that was critical of the Mexican government's economic policies. Three of the women were pressured into signing resignation letters.

While the issue of the forced resignations has since been resolved, criminal charges filed by the women against Mattel for denial of personal liberty are yet to be heard.

Factor X, who initiated the campaign in Tijuana, charges that the harassment of the four workers is part of a com-

pany attempt to get rid of employees who are demanding seniority rights. Factor X has asked us to keep the pressure on.

In December, there were also new developments in the Labour Behind the Label Coalition's campaign to pressure the Woolworth Northern Group to clean up sweatshop conditions in Metro Toronto. (See *Wear Fair Update*.)

Support for these and other campaigns is growing across Canada as a result of the actions of many of you. But there is still a lot to be done. Join us. ♦

Lynda Yanz, MSN Coordinator

P-VH Solidarity Actions

- Send letters of solidarity to the P-VH workers. Letters can be sent through MSN.
- Write letters to P-VH CEO Bruce Klatsky, urging his company to respect its Guatemalan employees' right to negotiate in good faith for fairer wages, improved working conditions and dignity. Please send a copy of your letter to MSN.

Phillips-Van Heusen Corp., 1290 Avenue of the Americas, NYC, NY 10104, fax: 212-247-5309

- Organize information leafleting of stores that sell P-VH products. In Canada, P-VH shirts are sold at many Eaton's stores. Let us know if you find other outlets selling P-VH products.

Mattel Solidarity Actions

- Write Mattel CEO Jill Barad asking Mattel to investigate the charges of harassment, respect seniority rights and ensure that violations of workers' rights don't occur in the future.

Mattel Inc., 333 Continental Boul, El Segundo, California, 90245. fax: 310-252-2352.

- Leaflet stores selling Mattel Toys. (MSN can provide you with a camera-ready leaflet.)

Holiday

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Letter-writing to Nike and Michael Jordan was organized in towns across Canada.

In Edmonton, Citizens Concerned About Nike lobbied the Public School Board to hold public hearings on Nike's sponsorship of a local hockey program and human rights abuses in factories producing for Nike.

Sweatshops

In Toronto, the Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice and the Labour Behind the Label Coalition sponsored a workshop and public forum on "The Return of Sweatshops: How Our Clothes Are Made and What We Can Do About It."

Members of the coalition and Charles Kernaghan of the US National Labor Committee led reporters on a "Shopping Trip" through the Eaton's Centre, stopping for three-minute educationals at the Disney store, the GAP, and a sporting goods store selling Nike products, before they were expelled from the mall.

Outside, coalition members completed the shopping trip with descriptions of sweatshop conditions of workers producing for the Woolworth Northern Group and P-VH.

Over 1,000 residents of Victoria, BC signed a petition affirming that they didn't want their clothes produced under exploitive conditions. Shopping for Justice is pressuring City Council to declare opposition to sweatshop conditions and support for independent monitoring. ♦

Maquila Network Notes

Mexican Greetings to Korean Workers

Hyundai workers in Tijuana, Mexico sent a message of solidarity to striking Korean Hyundai workers who are resisting their government's attempt to gut trade union legislation. With the support of the Maquila Solidarity Network, Factor X in Tijuana, the Korean People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy and the Asia Monitor Resource Centre, Hyundai workers in the two countries are exchanging information on labour rights violations and possible ways Korean workers can assist worker organizing in Mexico. ♦

Customtrim Workers Share Experiences

Two employees of the Customtrim autoparts plant in Guelph, Ontario spent the week of December 9 visiting with and learning from their Mexican counterparts in the border cities of Matamoros and Valle Hermoso. USWA Local 1090 President Ravinder Singh Grewal and Vice-President Ali Shah learned first-hand about the living conditions and health and safety problems of Mexican Customtrim employees. The exchange was sponsored by the USWA Humanity Fund and the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras. ♦

Central American Women Meet

On December 8 - 10, delegates from women's groups in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala met in Guatemala City to develop strategies to support women's training and organizing in Central America's maquila zones. Also participating in the second meeting of the Central American Women's Network in Solidarity with Maquila Workers were representatives of the Vancouver-based Co-Development Canada (Co-Dev) and the BC Trade Union Group (TUG). Co-Dev and TUG are sponsoring a project linking Central American women working in the maquila sector with counterparts in Asia. ♦

Union Leaders Threatened

In a December 4 televised press statement, Salvadoran President Calderon Sol denounced Ana Maria Romero of the Union of Gabo Workers and Wilmer Erroa Arguesta of the Telecommunications Workers Union (ASTTEL) as "traitors ... attacking the Salvadoran family." While on a speaking tour of the US, Romero and Arguesta had criticized labour rights abuses in El Salvador's maquila sector. ♦

new resources

Disney Campaign Materials by the National Labor Committee including buttons and video "Mickey Mouse Goes to Haiti" available from MSN.

Toy Campaign: April-July 1996 special issue of the *Asian Labour Update*. Articles analyse child labour, codes of conduct, health and safety, and Asian and international campaigns. Contact: Asia Monitor Resource Center, 444 Nathan Rd, 8B, Kowloon, Hong Kong, e-mail: AMRC@HK.Super.Net.

Aquelarre: bilingual (English/Spanish) quarterly magazine by the Latin American Women's Cultural Society. Spring 96 issue highlights globalization, the garment industry and child labour in the Americas. Year subscription: \$15 (\$17 US). Write: PO Box 21508, Vancouver, BC V5N 4A0.

Dirty Clothes-Dirty System: How Burma's Military Dictatorship Uses Profits from the Garment Industry to Bankroll Oppression. Report on Burma's garment industry. Contact: Canadian Friends of Burma, 206-145 Spruce St, Ottawa, ON K1R 6P1, e-mail: cfob@web.apc.org.

Export Processing Zones: Solving the Problems of Southern Africa? A Booklet for Trade Unions and Community Activists, October 1996. Contact: International Labour Resource and Information Group, Box 213, Salt River 7924, South Africa, e-mail: ilrig@worknet.apc.org.

E-mail Directory of Labor Organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean, October 1996. E-mail and web site addresses of unions, federations, and labour and political organizations. Updated every 6 months by Instituto Laboral de Educacion Sindical of Puerto Rico. E-mail: cquiros@igc.apc.org.

Web Sites To Watch

Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees home page with great link to Stop Sweatshops Campaign. Visit: <http://www.uniteunion.org>

Christian Task Force on Central America home page with links to Central American urgent action requests. Visit: <http://helix.net/grannyg/CTFCA>

Citizens Concerned About Nike web site has information on Edmonton's activities and links to Campaign for Labor Rights. Visit: <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/5232>

The **Maquila Network Update** is published bi-monthly in English and Spanish by the Maquila Solidarity Network. The Network includes over 200 organizations and individuals across Canada. The MSN 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.

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