

Maquila Network Update

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GAP Campaign Victory

The GAP Agrees to Independent Monitoring

Consumer protests, negative media coverage and the courageous stand of Salvadorean labour, church, women's and human rights groups has forced the GAP to sign a historic agreement accepting independent monitoring of its contractors' compliance with its code of conduct in Central America, and agreeing to reinvest in El Salvador if conditions are met by its contractor Mandarin International and the Salvadorean government.

The agreement was signed by the GAP and the National Labor Committee on December 15 in New York. It came at the height of the Christmas shopping season after a six month campaign in the US and Canada, which included letter writing and phoning, rallies and leafleting at GAP stores.

In the agreement, the GAP and the NLC express their "fervent hope" that a face-to-face meeting between Mandarin and the locked-out union executive "will result in the offer of reinstatement to the seven non-working union leaders and other members."

Workers Accept Severance

The meeting took place in El Salvador right before Christmas in the presence of observers from the Human Rights Procuradora's office. It resulted in Mandarin agreeing to provide the union executive their legal severance pay.

Although this settlement must be seen as a defeat for the workers at Mandarin, their organizing drive has put issue of human rights in the maquilas on the political agenda in El Salvador.

The National Labor Committee will be carrying out an investigation of Mandarin's operations world-wide, and will bring pressure on the company to change its practices.

Major Precedent Set

According to Kernaghan, the GAP is the first major apparel company to agree to third party monitoring of its code of conduct. The agreement applies to all of Central America. In addition, the GAP is translating its code of conduct into Spanish and will have it posted in plants it sources from in Central America.

1995 TOUR
Women Maquiladora Workers
from
Central America & the Caribbean

The National Labor Committee
13 Union Square, New York, NY 10003

El Salvador

Maquila Critics Threatened with Death Penalty

Salvadorean Minister of the Interior Mario Acosta has threatened the death penalty and deportation for national and international signers of a letter to the GAP requesting an independent investigation of conditions at the Mandarin International maquiladora plant. The following day, President Calderon Sol called the signers "traitors who were born evil."

The threats came after the GAP had announced that it was temporarily suspending its contracts in El Salvador until it Salvadorean government could "demonstrate an ability to effectively investigate and resolve labor disputes fairly, justly and promptly."

The signers of the letter to the GAP included four Deputies from the Legislative Assembly, leading unions, women's groups, human rights organizations, church groups and internationals working in El Salvador. (See letter in last MSN mail-out.)

The three internationals who signed the letter were also attacked by ARENA party deputies in the legislative assembly who threatened them with deportation. They include

Father Dean Brackley of the Romero Centre, Mark Anner of the International Union of Food Workers, and Leslie Schuld of the International Solidarity Centre.

Ironically, the signers accused of being traitors have been calling on the GAP to stay in El Salvador and to see that workers' rights are

respected at the Mandarin International plant. In a paid ad which appeared in the Salvadorean newspaper *Diario Latino*, they called on the GAP to "maintain their contracts (in El Salvador) with the condition that labour rights and union freedoms are respected...."

More tips for Smart Shoppers

- 1. Talk to the Manager:** To reinforce the GAP's decision agreeing to treat its code of conduct seriously, when you're shopping at the GAP, talk to the manager; tell him/her you'll keep shopping at the GAP as long as they live up to their code of conduct.
- 2. Write a Thank-You Letter:** Tell the GAP you support their decision to reinvest in El Salvador if workers' rights are respected, and their agreement to accept independent monitoring of compliance with their code of conduct. Tell them you'll be watching how they live up to their agreement. Write to: Jane Wicks, Canadian Vice-President, The GAP, #804 - 170 Bloor St. W., Toronto, Ont., M5S 1T9, fax: (416) 921-2966.
- 3. Ask Your Organization to Write:** If your organization works in Central America, write a letter expressing your support for the GAP's decision. Inform them that as an organization with a presence in Central America, you will be monitoring how they implement the terms of the agreement. Write to GAP address above.