

Hello:

My name is Lorraine Bolek - I'm here today in support of the Ethical Purchasing Ordinance.

The ordinance asks the City of Milwaukee to purchase city uniforms from only Responsible Manufacturers.

I am a retired garment worker having worked in the Milwaukee garment industry for over 51 years.

I worked as a special machine operator in the finishing dept. - marking, hemming - buttonholes, buttons, etc.- at Rhea Mfg. - sold to Glen Mfg. sold to Jack Winter and finally Jr. HOuse in 1960, who changed their name to J.J.Collectibles. I started in 1943 and retired in 1995. A year later they went out of business.

I was a 50+ year member of the International Ladies Garment Workers - now known as Unite.- Union of Needletrades, Industrial & Textile Employee.

From 1940s to the 70s, Milwaukee had a thriving clothing industry.

I'm sure many Milwaukeeans remember names such as Florence Eiseman, Jack Winter, J.H.Collectibles and many smaller ones such as Dorothy Dean, Hecht Mfg. - that was a contractor for J.H.Collectibles, Vil;ager, Robel and a lot of other smaller ones. Reliable Knitting is left - but with only about 20 employees on a good day - make products out of fake fur such as paint rollers. Their downfall is imports.

At <sup>the</sup> our time, Milwaukee had approximately 10,000 garment workers. We had a staff union manager just for the Milwaukee area. Now one covers several states.

The ILG alone at one time had about 450,000 workers in the USA - that did not include textile workers or United Garment Workers. We are now down to well under 100,000.

Humane working conditions at these companies enabled me to earn a living for over 50 years.

I worked a 7 hour day - my wages when I retired were \$12. an hour on piecework.

We managed to get health care benefits in the later years - vacations, holiday pay and life insurance.

Milwaukee garment workers belonged to the ILGWU - later Unite union. I served on nine negotiating committees while at J.H. and we were able to negotiate better wages and working conditions. When I could no longer lift the heavy completed garments to sew, I was allowed to transfer to a job sewing the union labels and company logo on small parts.

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After 51½ years at age 70, I was able to retire in good health covered by Social Security and a small pension distributed by the union. I assure you by that time J.H. was so heavy into transferring work overseas, downsizing, that if that wouldn't have happened, I would have worked past 70 years. A year after I left, the company folded.

At J.H. we were the United Nations. We had employees from countries all over the world - Japan, China, Vietnam, Korea, Poland, Italy, Mexico and Yugoslavia and we all got along. At holidays, mainly Christmas, everyone would join in and we all brought in food from all over the world. It was wonderful. When J.H. started downsizing, it was so sad and Milwaukee's loss.

Sweat shops - inferior wages  
workplace safety and health  
forced labor - child labor  
Freedom of association - unions

I encourage you to pass the Ethical Purchasing Ordinance