

Aldermen: please support the Ethical Purchasing Ordinance

8 reasons the City of Milwaukee should buy only uniforms NOT made in sweatshops

1. Local economies suffer when manufacturing jobs go abroad

Unemployed workers are not the only people who are affected. Communities lose tax revenue; local businesses lose when spending power is reduced by unemployment.

2. Manufacturers uproot themselves to avoid paying fair wages

When manufacturers close plants in the U.S. and move to developing countries, people lose jobs here and the sweatshop conditions of other countries are perpetuated. Manufacturers often move from one developing country to another in search of the lowest costs.

3. The worldwide clothing industry is notorious for its inhumane treatment of workers

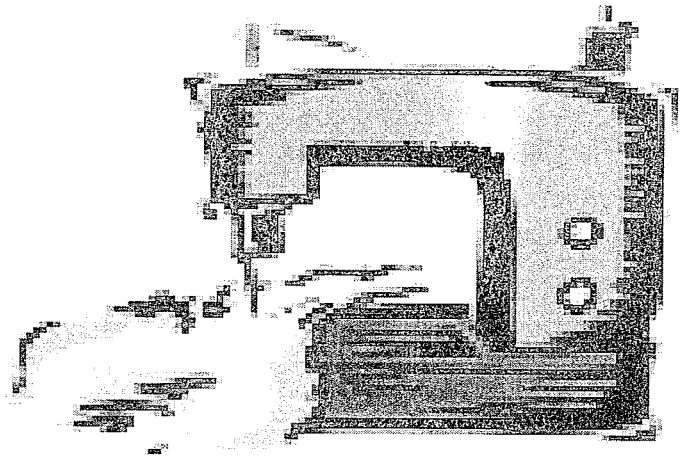
Established international codes of corporate conduct as embodied in the United Nations and International Labor Organization (I.L.O.) conventions are routinely ignored. Governments of poor countries tolerate sweatshops, aware that their own labor laws are being broken. They encourage foreign investment in their country at the expense of their own citizens' well-being.

4. Workers do not share fairly in the profits resulting from their labor

Sweatshop workers are paid substandard wages, which do not even cover the basic necessities of daily life. They get 1% or less of the final sales price.

5. Children are among the workers exploited in overseas sweatshops

Children, some very young, are forced to work long hours. They sew school clothes for American children, but will never go to school themselves.



6. People are exploited in American sweatshops

Illegal immigrants are hired for cheap labor. Companies employ people under inhumane working conditions knowing that the illegal immigrants will not notify authorities. And some clothing is made in U.S. prisons.

7. Labels do not tell the whole story

Even though the United States has strict labor laws, enforcement authorities have extremely limited resources. Therefore, even 'Made in USA' labeled clothes can be the product of inhumane labor practices and child labor. Also, many 'Made in USA' clothes are partially assembled in sweatshop conditions abroad, or made in U.S. territories such as Saipan.

8. Many workers do not have fair work standards

Workers have the right to receive fair standards: just wages and benefits, decent and safe working conditions, and the right to organize.

Thanks for the text to Presbyterian Church USA.
For information, contact
Steve Watrous, 414-933-3033, Coordinator,
Wisconsin Fair Trade Campaign

Briefing Sheet – Ethical Purchasing Bill

The Milwaukee Common Council is now considering the Ethical Purchasing Ordinance, a law to ensure that uniforms and apparel procured by the City of Milwaukee are made and laundered under decent conditions, not in sweatshops. Labor unions and community groups in Milwaukee have united in support of this bill.

Key provisions of the bill:

- **No tax dollars to law-breakers.** All plants producing or laundering apparel & textile products for the City must obey relevant workplace laws in the U.S. and other countries.
- **No tax dollars to poverty-wage producers.** All plants producing or laundering apparel & textile products for the City must provide wage and benefit compensation that at least takes workers and their families above the national poverty line.
- **No hidden factories.** All apparel and textile vendors for the City must publicly disclose the locations of factories, including factories of subcontractors or suppliers, and other information required for enforcement of this law.

Important Background Facts:

- The City of Milwaukee purchases over \$1 million in apparel per year. Most purchases are for uniforms, such as for police officers, firefighters and other unionized city workers.
- The global apparel & textile industry is plagued by an infamous “race to the bottom,” resulting in sweatshop conditions such as poverty wages, violations of workers’ rights, and unsafe and unhealthy working environments, in factories in the U.S. and overseas.
- These sweatshop conditions degrade and destroy jobs in Wisconsin and the U.S. In recent years, over 6000 apparel and textile workers have lost their jobs in Wisconsin alone because of the rise of sweatshops and the race to the bottom. The state has lost over 73,000 net jobs since 1994 because of unfair trade policy. The responsible apparel and laundry companies remaining in the area may be unable to or discouraged from competing for City contracts, because they face being undercut by sweatshops.
- Under current Milwaukee law, there are no protections in place requiring that apparel purchased with taxpayer dollars be produced and laundered free of sweatshop conditions. Without a reporting requirement, City officials often don’t even know where the goods are produced. And sweatshops flourish when they can be hidden from public view.
- Over 30 municipal and state governments in the U.S. have made an effort to remedy this problem by passing anti-sweatshop procurement legislation, including Boston, New York City, New York State, New Jersey and Maine. Milwaukee has an opportunity to join this growing campaign to say “no tax dollars for sweatshops.”