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Fair Trade
Clean Clothes Project
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The clean clothes campaign began in the Netherlands in 1990. In thirteen years, ten Western European countries, Canada and the United States have adopted Clean clothes Campaigns. These campaigns are coalitions of consumer organizations, trade unions, human rights and women's groups, home and factory workers.

The goal of the campaign is to have retailers live up to their responsibility and ensure that all products produced are done so under good working conditions. These guidelines come from the International Labor Organization, a body of the UN. The basic principles are:

1. Freedom of association
2. The right to collective bargaining
3. No discrimination of any kind
4. No forced or slave labor
5. A minimum employment age of 15
6. Safety and health measures
7. A 48 hour work week, with a maximum of 12 hours overtime
8. A living wage and a viable contract

In 1995-96, media attention focused on multinational corporations in the United States shamefully exploiting workers and labor practices in third world countries. Companies like Nike, The Gap, Wal-Mart (and Kathie Lee Gifford), Guess, Disney and Mattel had the spotlight intently focused on their corporate greed.

American consumers began to look at large retailers and their "branding" practices with a critical eye. Outraged by the lack of ethics, the impoverished production conditions compared to the corporate and executive billions, consumers have turned these companies into metaphors for the brutality of sweatshops and modern-day slave labor.

"My theory is, and I think I'm right - and I mean you guys had rioters in Montreal a few weeks ago [for the WTO] - is that going offshore is actually more expensive than these guys let on. What I'm going to prove, and I'm going to embarrass the entire fucking establishment, is that sweatshops are more expensive in the end than vertically integrated manufacturing in Canada or the U.S." I'm about exploitation of human potential instead of the exploitation of humanity. You don't have to be the most ethical person to know that slavery was wrong". American Apparel markets its products as "sweatshop free." **Dov Charney / 34 / Clothing Manufacturer and designer, American Apparel / Los Angeles**

- Charney's 12-year-old-company provides jobs for more than 1,200 people-mostly Mexican Immigrants-in a decidedly non-sweatshop environment in Downtown Los Angeles. Workspaces are fitted with the newest machinery, and all workers have access to low-cost health care, free English and computer classes, on-site massages and livable wages. Though the cost of manufacturing in L.A., rather than, say, Indonesia, is prohibitive for most textile companies, American Apparel still manages to turn a profit with their formfitting super-soft T-shirts. Maybe it's their enterprising approach to marketing: Employees double as models in their catalogs.

Garment workers do not have to be exploited in order to operate a financially successful apparel factory. Consumers are an untapped resource to drive industry change. They are increasingly interested in buying sweat-free, but have historically had few choices they could trust. There are many definitions of a sweatshop, but SweatX intends to meet and exceed all reasonable standards of "sweat-free" by:

- (1) Paying liveable wages, including employer-paid health-care and pensions.
- (2) Including genuine workplace democracy through an independent union, chosen by the workers. The best factory monitor is a unionized worker.
- (3) Enhancing workplace democracy by structuring the operation as a worker-owned cooperative in which employees are ultimately empowered with the knowledge and meaningful ability to enact policies for successful operation of the factory.

Our Goals Are To:

- i. Provide high quality casual apparel to consumers reflecting the high standards under which it was manufactured.
- ii. Create financial success directly benefiting TeamX employee-owners.
- iii. Creatively market to and educate consumers who have growing awareness and concern about sweatshop issues.
- iv. Operate transparently with the highest standards of business ethics and social concerns.
- v. Change the lives of garment workers through the enlightened creation and sharing of wealth.

A new US company, **No Sweat Apparel**, plans to sell clothing produced exclusively by members of independent trade unions in North America, Europe and the developing world. Its "Union Made" sourcing strategy is designed to help protect unionized workers in the North and fragile union victories in the South, and to support worker organizing. All **SweatX** brand clothing is sewn in a unionized factory in Los Angeles, which is run as a cooperative with the workers as co-owners.

"Sick of supporting sweat shops every time you buy clothes? Now you can fight back with every thread you buy. NoSweatShop.com has created the first casual clothing brand that fights sweatshops 5 ways. Come now and see how you can help us clean up the garment industry. No sweat. "

UK-based **Ethical Threads**, sells T-shirts made by women's cooperatives in Nicaragua and Bangladesh, and by a network of UK factories employing people with disabilities. Their philosophy: "it's possible to respect workers' rights and compete in the marketplace". They are also setting new standards for transparency and accountability by revealing where their products are made, and committing to respect and promote international labour standards.

Shopping tips for the ethical consumer

Buying ethical products sends support directly to progressive companies working to improve the status quo, while at the same time depriving others that abuse for profit the possible income derived from your purchases.

- 1. Shop local**
- 2. Frequent health food shops**
- 3. Buy Fair trade labeled items**

- 4. Purchase products not tested on animals**
- 5. Buy more vegetarian products**
- 6. Purchase or grow organic produce**
- 7. Buy non-genetically altered food**

Take [Co-op America's Consumer Checklist](#) with you when you shop, and use it to ask retail managers questions about their labor practices.
[checklist_letter.html](#)

A few of the good guys working to make things better for everyone.

- [Africa Now](#)
- [Anti-Slavery International](#)
- [Arbor International](#)
- [The Body Shop International](#)
- [CAFOD](#)
- [Christian Aid](#)
- [CWS/The Co-op](#) includes downloadable social reports in the Information area
- [Desmonds & Sons](#)
- [Fairtrade Foundation](#)
- [International Confederation of Free Trade Unions](#)
- [International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation](#)

Go to the multinationals pages and click on links and resources. Also check developing trade and workers rights and organising and defending workers rights, but many of the other pages are also relevant.

- [International Union of Foodworkers](#)

Over time, if enough consumers and large – volume buyers, such as the universities, school districts, and cities, avoid buying sweatshop products, running a sweatshop won't merely be immoral, it will be unprofitable.