

A woman with dark hair and bangs is focused on sewing a pair of blue jeans on a sewing machine. She is wearing a dark floral patterned shirt and denim overalls. In the background, another woman in a red shirt is also working at a sewing machine. The scene is set in a factory or garment manufacturing plant.

NETWORK 
Connection

PEOPLE LOBBYING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE • JULY/AUGUST 2007

Clothing Our World in Justice

dear members

Here at NETWORK, we have benefited greatly from your advocacy and bipartisan efforts to fix the broken immigration system. For the first time since I have been here (and I understand since the election of this Administration), we met with White House staff to talk about justice for immigrant families. We had tried valiantly to be in dialogue with the Administration and are immensely grateful that our efforts are beginning to pay off.

We were also able to participate in a press conference with Senators Clinton, Menendez and Hagel on a proposed amendment to the Senate immigration bill. This allowed us to speak of the values we hold dear as people of faith.

We are holding our breath as Congress inches forward on this critical issue. What is most clear to me is the rhythm between our work "on the Hill" and your advocacy with your individual representatives. We are most effective when we work together! Thanks for being the GREAT value added in these days of turbulent struggle. May we continue to build a strong team that will bring a better reality for those who live in the economic shadows of our society.

Simone Campbell, SSS

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected—the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

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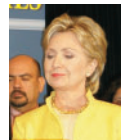
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NETWORK members are in the forefront of efforts to counter a culture of over-consumption and unjust practices in the clothing industry.



NETWORK

A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

NETWORK—a Catholic leader in the global movement for justice and peace—educates, organizes and lobbies for economic and social transformation.

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“...and you clothed me”

By SIMONE CAMPBELL, SSS

I have a t-shirt that is part of a matched set. There are five of them—one owned by each of the members of my sewing circle. We received them years ago as a gift from one of our members because it reflected who we are. We are a group of five women who have been meeting more or less regularly for more than 20 years. We have shared soup, bread, wine and our lives on a regular basis. Over the years, we have plotted activities to change the local practice of law or to support two of our members in their art world. We have tested wild ideas. We have wept and worried together, fought and made up. We have celebrated births, graduations, marriages, deaths. In short, we have lived in relationship for almost half our lives—with sewing being at least a referenced theme.

But what makes me concerned at this moment is that the t-shirt that so described our relationship in a humorous way now seems unacceptable. The shirt says “Ladies Sewing Circle and Terrorist Society.” How can sewing be politically incorrect? But isn’t that what has happened?

I don’t sew much now—just an odd mending, replacing a button, etc. In the hustle and hurry of D.C. life,

I don’t have time for the careful tailoring that I used to do. I buy my winter coat and occasional suit at a store, pre-made and always on sale. This seems to be part of the problem.

It is easier for me (and most, I assume) to buy clothing “off the rack.” This is part of the engine of our economy—consumer goods. So rather than my clothing being pieced with the stitches of relationships with my friends, they are assembled by unknown workers, most likely in various large production facilities around the world.

My clothes no longer remind me of the stories of my friends. They are more or less anonymous articles—the most I remember is where I bought them and what kind of a bargain they were.

This relation-less reality is part of the problem in our country and perhaps in our world. Without daily binding relationships, we can wage war, be terrorists and generally see the other as the enemy or the cause of our pain. We hide in our fears and further isolate ourselves

from those around us. By living without relationship, we can exploit others and never know it.

So I believe that the Matthew 25 exhortation to clothe the naked in our day includes the literal need, but also our need to dress each other in relationship. Maybe we are called to remember the stories of the people who dress us daily in our off-the-rack clothing. In our gratitude, we must reach out in relationship, piecing together our globalized world. By working for justice in garment production facilities, being willing to pay a little more so that others might be clothed, informing ourselves about the reality of the source of our plenty, and being willing to change, we might create new relationships that clothe us in more than fabric. These are the relationships that build empathy and peace.

If we do this, then we can rightly wear the sewing circle t-shirt, because it would be a revolutionary act of the people in a fearful body politic. What a bold move—to step out clothed in relationship! For me this is one key aspect of living the Gospel. Won’t you join me?

Simone Campbell, SSS, is NETWORK’s Executive Director.

*For I was hungry and you gave me food,
I was thirsty and you gave me drink,
a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and
you clothed me, ill and you cared for me,
in prison and you visited me. (Mt. 25:35,36)*



HANS F. MEIER

Consumers Choosing Justice

By SAMANTHA SAARION WITH ADITI FRUITWALA

As we entered the finishing room at Grupo M, a clothing manufacturer in the Dominican Republic's free trade zone, I saw rows of steam presses setting creases on Dockers khakis. From a distance, the presses seemed to be moving at an inhuman pace—pants down, press plate closed, puffs of steam, then Dockers flying off to the next station. As we drew nearer, the heat intensified and through the steam we saw that these weren't just machines. There were people working here too—mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters—keeping pace with the presses. Our guide proudly displayed the work that the employee at the nearest station had completed in less than half an hour, as if to impress us with their efficiency. What made a larger impression on me were the scars on the worker's arms—evidence of dangerous working conditions in the rush to meet quotas.

This visit gave me a glimpse of conditions that workers face in the garment industry every day. I am now able to attach faces and stories to the garments I purchase, and I feel connected to people in ways I had never thought of before. I saw that



EARL DOTER

In 1978 at age ten, Tundra Lucas picks cotton in Bolivar County, Mississippi—which was the last state to enact compulsory education in the mid-1980s after mechanized harvesting supplanted the need for child labor.

each article of clothing we own has an important story to tell. From the cotton grower to the factory sewer to the conscious consumer, it is a story filled with repercussions for people and the planet, yet full of promise for a better way to do business.

From the Cotton Fields

The story behind most of our clothes begins in the cotton field. The farming of conventional cotton is one of the most environmentally destructive agricultural practices—harming the air, water, soil, and farmers' health and safety. The blame for that harm lies mainly with the large amount of pesticides used in convention-

al cotton farming. Although cotton occupies approximately three percent of the world's farmland, it uses more than ten percent of the pesticides, a category that includes herbicides, insecticides and defoliants.

The large amount of pesticides used in conventional cotton farming creates many health risks for farmworkers and those who live near cotton fields. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has labeled seven of the top 15 pesticides used on cotton as "possible," "likely," "probable" or "known" human carcinogens. Other pesticide-related health issues include birth defects, long-term memory loss, headaches, nausea and problems with the nervous system. The World Health Organization estimates that approximately 20,000 people die each year in developing countries as a result of chemicals sprayed on non-organic cotton.

Supporting organic cotton production is the best solution to the enormous threats posed by pesticides. Organic cotton is grown without chemical fertilizers, defoliants, pesticides or herbicides, and from untreated, non-genetically modified seed. Farmers rotate crops to replenish and maintain the soil's fertility, and they control pests and weeds naturally, using insect predators, traps or botanical pesticides that are broken down quickly by oxygen and sunlight. As a result, organic farming is healthier and safer for farmers, fieldworkers, nearby communities and the environment. Growing cotton organically also benefits small-scale farmers who don't have the means to buy expensive pesticides, and it uses significantly less water and electric power than conventional cotton farming techniques.

"When you buy organic cotton, you're supporting a lifestyle that benefits the land and prevents chemicals from entering the body," says Gary Oldham,

BIRGIT SIECKMANN

owner of SOS From Texas, a family-owned business selling organic cotton T-shirts and knit products cultivated from his certified-organic farm. With over 100 years experience in cotton farming, the Oldham family made the switch to organic cotton farming in 1992. "I didn't want to farm with chemicals because it was too expensive and it wore out the land. I didn't want to raise my children around that," Oldham says.

Hemp

Organic cotton isn't the only sustainable alternative to conventional fabrics. Like organic cotton, hemp production is friendly to the earth and to the workers in the fields.

Hemp is known for its long, strong,

highly absorbent fibers and ability to thrive without the use of pesticides. According to the Hemp Industry Association, the hemp plant is susceptible to only 8 of 100 known pests, so it is often grown naturally and is certified organic in many countries.

Although industrial hemp cultivation is not allowed in the United States, many countries around the world, including Canada, India and China, grow industrial hemp. When looking for hemp clothes, it is important to note where the hemp fabric is grown to ensure that workers in the fields are being treated justly. Ecolution, a Co-op America Business Member, sells sweat-free, certified organic hemp clothing and accessories. Ecolution's entire operation, from hemp

seed to shirt, is based in Romania, where workers are provided with a clean, healthy workplace, are paid a fair wage, and receive health and pension benefits from the Romanian government.

Sweatshop Alternatives

No Sweat Apparel operates with a similar business ethic. "We believe that the exploitation of humans and the exploitation of the planet are intimately related phenomena," says Adam Neiman, CEO of No Sweat Apparel. "Our first focus was the human part, since humans tend to be more concerned with nature when they are able to provide for their families. Now we're coupling the union-made, sweat-free dimension with organic cotton and a competitive price."

Since 2001, No Sweat Apparel has been creating union-made clothing and shoes that are both affordable and attractive. In 2004, No Sweat premiered its first fully sweat-free, eco-friendly product—union-made hemp sneakers. This eco- and worker-friendly mission continues with No Sweat's new organic T-shirt produced in a unionized, Palestinian-owned factory in Bethlehem. Working with unions in the United States, Canada and many countries in the developing world, No Sweat is proving that comfort, looks, and affordability can be achieved while simultaneously supporting workers and the environment.

In the best of circumstances, all our shirts and pants would be ethically produced by companies like No Sweat Apparel and Ecolution. Unfortunately, however, the search for cheap labor to feed an ever-increasing profit margin has led, more often than not, to labor conditions like those I witnessed at Grupo M. The media and nonprofit groups around the world continue to carry reports about forced overtime, no bathroom breaks and low wages in many clothing factories.

The National Labor Committee, an organization working to protect human rights in the global economy, recently issued a report on Concord Garments, a manufacturing facility in Jordan. Concord Garments produces women's clothing for Cameron Industries, a distributor



EARL DOTTER

STAY EDUCATED

There are a number of resources to keep you informed about sweatshop issues:

- Co-op America's Guide to Ending Sweatshops
www.coopamerica.org/PDF/GuideSweatshops.pdf
1-800-58-GREEN
- Co-op America's Responsible Shopper
www.ResponsibleShopper.org
- International Labor Rights Fund
www.LaborRights.org
202-347-4100
- Fair Trade Federation
www.FairTradeFederation.org
- National Labor Committee
www.nlcnet.org
212-242-3002
- Hemp Industry Association
www.thehia.org
- UNITE Union
www.uniteunion.org
202-393-4373

SWEATSHOP-FREE CLOTHING COMPANIES

- Ecolution
www.ecolution.com/about/mission
800-973-HEMP
- Fair Industry
www.fairindustry.com
609-240-7015
- Justice Clothing
www.justiceclothing.com
207-941-9913
- No Sweat Apparel
www.nosweatapparel.com
877-99-BSTAR
- SOS From Texas
www.sosfromtexas.com
806-256-2033

For several more responsible clothing companies screened by Co-op America for fair labor practices, consult the National Green Pages™, available for \$11.95 by calling 800-58-GREEN, or free online at www.greenpages.org.

that sells to major stores like Target and Kohl's. The report stated that Concord Garments "supervisors often beat, slap and even kick the young women workers. The male workers say it is almost impossible to watch, knowing that if they attempt to intervene, they would be badly beaten and deported." Workers at the plant are also denied full wages or sick leave, and are often locked inside the factory until production goals are met. They face worse treatment if they speak out against these abuses. Sadly, Concord Garments is only one of many Jordanian clothing manufacturers that continue to violate workers' rights and export their goods duty-free to the U.S. under the U.S.-Jordan Free Trade Agreement.

"We're all consumers and we need to buy clothes," said Bama Athreya, director of the International Labor Rights Fund, in an interview with the BBC. "But I would just ask that people think a little bit about some of the budget clothing that is just so incredibly cheap... it's just not sustainable. The way it's produced is going to cost in human lives, in misery, in environmental degradation. And some way down the line, we're all going to pay those costs."

The Power of Consumers

The final chapter in our clothing's story occurs when we, the consumers, take them home. While we may not be able to stop all the negative consequences of globalization, we can use our consumer power to support systems that benefit people and the planet. I have learned that with a little effort, I can find attractive and affordable alternatives that protect workers in every phase of production.

Reduce and Reuse

An easy way to keep our dollars from supporting sweatshops is through buying less. Many of us have drawers and closets full of clothes we never wear. Instead of buying new clothes every season, consider hosting a clothing exchange with friends and community members. We can also restyle old clothes. It's sur-



prising how a little cut here and a stitch there can completely transform an old shirt, skirt or pair of pants. For ideas and patterns, type, "revamping old clothes" into an Internet search engine and wait for the inspiration to come. If the idea of using a thread and needle seems too daunting, local alteration shops are available.

Another surefire way to avoid supporting sweatshops is to shop second-hand. Thrift and consignment stores offer lightly used items for little money. Yard sales are also a great option for the ethical shopper—and often less expensive than thrift and consignment stores. Yellow Pages and newspaper classifieds provide information on yard sales and thrift and consignment stores. These clothing sources enable us to avoid sweatshops, save money and prevent more clothes from entering the waste stream.

There are also other ways to avoid sweatshop goods. Fair trade and union-



made garments provide assurance to consumers that workers' health and rights are being protected.

Making It Fair

Many consumers are aware that they can buy Fair Trade Certified™ coffee to support farmers, but they might not know they can also support fair trade relationships through clothing purchases. Much more than just a living wage, fair trade supports economic stability, stronger communities and a healthy planet. By supporting fair trade, we are supporting a system that values fairness, empowerment and transparency.

Retailers like Fair Industry help build the fair trade movement by bringing the work of artisans to consumers. Their collection of beautiful, handcrafted dresses, shirts, pants and accessories offer customers style and peace of mind. Fair Industry is a member of the Fair Trade Federation (FTF), an association of fair trade suppliers, wholesalers and retailers that have gone through a rigorous screening process and continue to demonstrate their commitment

to fair trade principles. Retail members of the FTF can be found by searching through Co-op America's National Green Pages™ and greenpages.org, a listing of over 3,000 businesses that support fair labor and environmental sustainability.

Union Made

Many people tend to think that labor abuses and violations only happen in developing countries where labor standards aren't as stringent as they are in the United States. Unfortunately, the truth is that "Made in the USA" does not always translate into fair labor and wage practices. Sweatshops continue to persist in the United States and in U.S. territories like the Mariana Islands, as was recently revealed in the Jack Abramoff scandal.

To ensure your clothing reflects just standards, look for the union label. Unions help ensure that workers have a voice and a safeguard against labor violations. Members of the Union of Needle-

Co-op America

For 25 years, Co-op America has been the nation's leading non-profit dedicated to growing the Green Economy. With over 90,000 individual members and 3,500 green business members, Co-op America's mission is to harness economic power—the strength of consumers, businesses and investors—to create a socially just and environmentally sustainable economy. Co-op America's National Green Pages, a national directory of sustainable businesses, connects consumers with values-based businesses and educates them to create social and environmental change with every dollar they spend. In addition, Co-op America's Corporate Responsibility Programs work to empower consumers to take action on fair trade, climate change, renewable energy and responsible shopping issues. Co-op America also works with Global Exchange to produce Green Festivals, celebrating what is working in our communities—for people, for businesses, and for the planet.

Co-op America
1612 K Street NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20006
1-800-58-GREEN

www.coopamerica.org
www.greenfestivals.org
www.greenpages.org
www.ResponsibleShopper.org



trades, Industrial, and Textile Employees (UNITE) proudly produce a number of affordable T-shirts, pants, dress clothes and more while earning a living wage and working in healthy environments. To find clothing with the union label, visit the websites www.uniteunion.org and www.justiceclothing.com.

Take Action

There are many great options for supporting the health and rights of workers through clothing purchases; however, buying from responsible businesses is only half the solution. If we want to change the course of business to be more just, we must question the business-as-usual actions of major clothing companies. ResponsibleShopper.org provides useful information about the practices of local stores and the resources to ask tough questions of major companies. It is important to let them hear our concerns about sweatshop issues and to participate in campaigns to raise up these issues. Moreover, it is vital that we educate ourselves and help spread the message for a world where people and the

planet are protected and cared for.

Wearing clothes that tell the story of healthy, safe workers feels good—and taking action against sweatshops feels even better. Every clothing decision we make and every dollar we spend (or choose not to spend) is an opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of people around the world.

Samantha Saaron is Executive Assistant at Co-op America. She interned at NETWORK from 2004–2005 as an Associate, lobbying on global peace and security issues. Aditi Fruitwala interned in the Publications Department of Co-op America during the summer of 2006.



Congress Finally Raises the Minimum Wage— But Much Important Work Still Unfinished

By SIMONE CAMPBELL, SSS, MARGE CLARK, BVM, CATHERINE PINKERTON, CSJ, BR. JOHN SKRODINSKY, ST, AND JEAN SAMMON

Congress continues to churn away slowly on important issues. As this *Connection* went to press, the recently stalled immigration bill began to move again in the Senate. NETWORK is determined to keep pressuring Congress to come up with legislation that is both fair and comprehensive. In other areas, there is good news on the minimum wage and funding for economic development in Iraq. As always, much important work remains to be done!

Minimum Wage Increase—Finally!

On May 24, Congress passed the Iraq Supplemental, which contained an increase in the federal minimum wage. This is great news as our lobbying efforts paid off! The increase will go into effect on July 24, and wages will increase incrementally over two years to a new minimum of \$7.25. Already, Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) is proposing to write new minimum wage legislation indexing wages to inflation. NETWORK is thrilled to have such an important victory for our nation's working families as an important step toward a livable wage for all.

Farm Bill

The Farm Bill Extension Act of 2007 (H.R. 2419) worked its way through the House Agriculture subcommittees in June, with full House consideration expected in July. The Senate is developing a separate version of the bill. So far, there haven't been major changes from the last farm bill in 2002, but, because of all the interest in farm bill issues—food and nutrition, conservation, rural development, energy, supports for farmers, export and trade, etc.—we are seeing a variety of “marker” bills that propose changes in some of these policies. (“Marker” bills indicate what individual legislators would like to see in a

larger bill.) We expect a hot debate this summer, possibly continuing through fall. We continue to advocate for reform of farm subsidies and improvements in nutrition, conservation, and rural development programs.

Representatives Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO) and Jim McGovern (D-MA) took the lead in raising awareness of hunger and inadequate benefits for food stamp recipients. Each of them pledged to live for one week on \$21 worth of food, the amount the average food stamp recipient receives in federal assistance. The invitation to take the “Food Stamp Challenge” was offered to all lawmakers, but only Janice Schakowsky (D-IL) and Tim Ryan (D-OH) took part. NETWORK commends the dedication of these four Members of Congress as they highlighted the daily reality of many working families.



Food and faith advocates join NETWORK Regional Field Organizer Barbara Jennings, CSJ (far left) to discuss the farm bill with Rep. Emanuel Cleaver's (D-MO) staff, Darwin Curls (center). Counter-clockwise from bottom right: Patricia Vandebloom, Rockhurst University and Student Trade Justice Campaign; Peter Stauffacher, Director of Kansas City (KC) Farmers' Markets and Fair Trade Project; Michael Halterman, CEO of KC Catholic Charities; Br. Louis Rodemann, Holy Family Catholic Worker House; Rev. Martin Goedken, CEO of St. Joseph Catholic Charities; and Ben Kjelskus, KC Food Circle Founder.

Iraq

We had a significant victory in funding economic development of Iraq by Iraqis in the 2007 Iraq Supplemental funding bill! Thanks to your efforts, we are making a difference in the lives of ordinary Iraqis. As we look forward to the next step, we see initial movement in Congress to address the war in a comprehensive way. Congressman Blumenauer (D-OR), Senator Kennedy (D-MA) and others have submitted bills to address the political, diplomatic, economic and military facets of this issue. NETWORK believes that only through a comprehensive change in policy and focus on diplomacy and economic development will we ever find an effective path to peace. Continue to lobby your representatives for comprehensive engagement with this challenging issue!

Trade

On May 10, Speaker Pelosi and House Ways and Means Chairman Rangel (D-NY), joined by the White House and legislators from both parties who work the trade agenda, announced a bipartisan compromise on trade. Among the chief provisions announced were the enforcement of stronger labor and environmental standards and the limitation of monopoly rights given to pharmaceuticals to raise prices on drugs needed by impoverished people. While NETWORK welcomes this as a real achievement, it still falls far short of the comprehensive changes we have long sought. We will continue to work for fair trade policies.

The president's Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) or “Fast Track” is set to expire on June 30. Under TPA, Congress relinquishes some of its constitutional authority over commerce, allowing the president to negotiate trade agreements with individual nations and bring them to Congress for a simple yes-or-no vote

Need up-to-date information about legislation in Congress? Check out NETWORK's Legislative Action Center at <http://capwiz.com/networklobby/issues/bills/>. ★ To learn what happened to legislation you followed in the past, go to <http://capwiz.com/networklobby/issues/votes/> and enter your zip code in the “Key Votes” field.



NETWORK Executive Director Simone Campbell, SSS, speaks in support of immigrant families at May 23rd Capitol Hill press conference. Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY) was a sponsor of bipartisan legislation designed to help immigrants reunite with family members.

without debate. This denies the electorate a voice in influencing trade negotiations through their elected representatives. The Democratic majority must overcome their differences in order to develop a more just and balanced international trade policy, one that will protect and enhance the livelihoods of millions of our citizens and those of the developing world living on the economic edge.

Housing

Thanks to all who responded to the action alerts for the Government Sponsored Enterprises (GSEs) reform bill, which strengthened oversight of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and included the creation of an Affordable Housing Fund. On May 22, the House approved H.R. 1427, the Federal Housing Finance Reform Act of 2007. In the first year, money from the Affordable Housing Fund will go to Louisiana and Mississippi for the rebuilding and repairing of affordable housing for low-income families in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. This bill also has a provision that sets aside the funds in subsequent years for a future National Housing Trust Fund.

Another bill, H.R. 1852, the Expand-

ing American Homeownership Act of 2007, would transfer Federal Housing Authority (FHA) surplus funds to the same National Housing Trust Fund. The House Services Financial Committee approved this bill on May 3, and a vote in the full House may come before the August recess.

Also pending in the House is H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act (SEVRA). This bill, which would authorize 100,000 additional vouchers over five years, has also been approved by the House Financial Services Committee and is awaiting a vote in the full House.

Budget

Both chambers recently accepted the joint budget resolution representing a compromise between the House and Senate. NETWORK celebrates the fact that Congress set funding at almost \$13 billion above the president's request for non-military discretionary spending.

This is particularly significant given the fact that human needs funding had declined during the past six years, affecting vital services like childcare, assistance with energy costs, and nutritional and housing supports. The FY 2008 budget resolution increases funding without ignoring the pay-as-you-go rule (pay-go) and without raising taxes. Additionally, some of the excessive tax breaks for the wealthiest people in our nation are allowed to expire as some tax loopholes are closed.

The budget resolution creates a strict workload for those involved in appropriating money. Each appropriations subcommittee has been given a set amount and cannot spend beyond it unless Congress decides to overrule pay-go.

Between June and September, program funding limits for each area of appropriations are proposed and committees will work to find the best balance for spending within their areas. NETWORK and our members will be calling, visiting and writing to congressional offices encourag-

ing appropriate funding for the programs in our priority areas.

The administration has threatened to veto any non-military domestic spending bill that exceeds the president's budget request. The same veto threat does not hold true for the congressional increase in defense funding. NETWORK encourages members to tell their legislators that we don't want cuts to non-military domestic spending should a veto take place.

Immigration

In the Senate, the immigration legislation process was begun by an odd coalition of Democrats and Republicans joined together to create "the Grand Bargain," a compromise bill that attempts to appease both parties. Unfortunately this bargain replaces what traditionally has been a family-based immigration system with a merit-based point system, rewarding points for job skills, education, and English proficiency while it only awards few points for family reunification. It would, however, provide visas for undocumented people in the U.S. This bill was stymied in the Senate, and it is unclear if it will be brought up again.

House leaders express disappointment in the Senate merit-based system. Both Speaker Pelosi and Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren, the Chairwoman of the House Immigration Subcommittee, have made it clear that they are concerned about family unification and family immigration.

NETWORK urges Congress to pass a humane immigration bill that includes an earned path to citizenship for the 12 million people who are now living without documentation in our country and supports family unity for all immigrants including guest workers. We have a long way to go, and your advocacy is needed now more than ever!

Marge Clark, BVM, and Catherine Pinkerton, CSJ, are NETWORK lobbyists. Simone Campbell, SSS, is NETWORK's Executive Director. Jean Sammon is Network's Field Organizer. Br. John Skrodinsky, ST, is a NETWORK intern.

Want timely information about key issues in Congress? NETWORK members can sign up for our weekly email legislative hotline. Send your name, zip code and email address to jsammon@networklobby.org.

Nicaraguan Manufacturers Encounter Globalization

By ROGER LACAYO

When my father was a young man, more than half of the people in Nicaragua walked shoeless. Despite the fact that he had not graduated from high school, my father was street smart and very savvy in business. Fifty years ago, he decided it was time to begin modernizing the Nicaraguan shoe industry.

My father imported rubber soles and other materials and started making rubber vulcanized shoes, a real innovation for Nicaragua, where shoes were usually made of leather obtained from local cattle and run through a rudimentary tanning process. Individual shoemakers worked in small handicraft shops with a few workers. Buyers would go to the shops to have their feet measured and to choose a style. Several days later, they picked up their shoes.

People who were poor, if they wore shoes at all, had what is known as “caites,” which were basically leather soles with straps that covered the toes and top of the foot, and tied to the ankles.

For a few of the richest persons, there were either imported shoes or shoes that a parent or a relative would bring from a trip abroad. These shoes incorporated new materials that were being developed by wealthier countries.

My family’s vulcanized rubber shoe factory was a real success. Now shoes were mass-produced, and costs went down dramatically. My father used to say that his objective with the company was to put a shoe on every Nicaraguan foot.

Our factory was located in an industrial area, and right next-door one of Nicaragua’s first modern shirt manufacturers was also taking its first steps. Making apparel is easier than making shoes since it requires only a sewing machine and scissors, so it was done even at home or at the house of a “costurera” lucky enough to buy a sewing machine. Clothing for less wealthy people was made with poor-quality, locally manufactured yarn.

Industrialization of apparel manufacturing started making its way into Central America, stimulated by the creation of the Central American Common Market, a free trade territory with a big trade barrier built around it.

Along with the factory next door, new shoe and apparel factories started to spring up all over Central America. Large-scale production of shoes and clothing under one roof started to develop. New materials like rubber, neolite, vinyl, PVC, TPR, plastics, polyurethane and fabric were incorporated into shoe manufacturing.

Shoes were now produced on a production line, with each worker specializing in a very specific operation. Central American factories gradually adopted new production techniques such as vulcanization and injection molding, which required big investments. Due to the free trade agreement, they could sell their products in any Central American country.

Our factory started to flourish. My father enlarged the factory and started making canvas and leather shoes, and in an ironic twist, he began industrializing the manufacturing of leather shoes that were previously made only by small handicraft shops.

Distribution also became more sophisticated. Manufacturers or wholesalers sold shoes to retailers. My father started a shoe store chain that grew to many stores. They sold the shoes he made and also shoes manufactured by other factories.

When I finished graduate school, my father’s business was booming. I started working alongside him and saw that, although good shoes were being made, there was a lot of room for improvement. Unfortunately, workers were used to their own ways and resisted change. My father was very condescending with them.

Sadly, my father passed away very young, and I became the CEO of the fac-

tory at the age of 27, only three years after coming out of school with my MBA. After a difficult mourning period, I set out to modernize the factory. I hired foreign executives and consultants and started making changes. There was resistance among a good number of the workers who had been there for many years. They opposed change and eventually had to be replaced. In spite of this, the factory began to modernize rapidly, improving productivity and quality while reducing costs.

The modernization process did not last very long. Only four years later, the country underwent a leftist revolution that distorted production and distribution systems. The Caribbean Basin Initiative by the U.S. gave Central American and Caribbean countries unilateral preferential entry into the U.S. market. Unfortunately, Nicaragua was left out for political reasons.

Nicaraguan manufacturing of shoes and apparel started to decline while, in the rest of Central America, production was now diverted to the U.S. market. The Free Trade Zone concept, in which companies dedicated to export were granted tax holidays in several Central American countries, provided a special incentive for new industries to be established, this time for the only purpose of manufacturing for the U.S. market. This kind of labor-intensive industry is called “maquila.” A very large percentage of the maquila industry is apparel and shoes.

During the 1980s, growth of the maquila industry in Central America was fueled by the need of big U.S. manufacturers for less expensive labor. Many large labor-intensive manufacturing companies stated looking south. The most important developments occurred on the apparel industry.

In 1990, democracy returned to Nicaragua. The change in the political climate allowed Nicaragua to become part of the Caribbean Basin Initiative, and the



Vincente Lacayo (front row center, red shirt), brother of the author, with workers at the family's shoe factory.

maquila industry started to develop very strongly. Ten years of leftist government had deteriorated the Nicaraguan economy and raised unemployment so wages for unskilled labor were very low. This fact, plus new favorable laws in Nicaragua, fueled the growth of this industry.

Poor people in Nicaragua had become so impoverished that shoes and clothing needs were met by second-hand clothes and shoes from the U.S.

At the beginning of this century, Central America was engaged in globalization. On one hand, shoes and clothing consumed locally were imported from the world markets, displacing local production of certain items. On the other hand, the Central American countries negotiated a new free trade agreement with the U.S. (CAFTA), which started operating only last year.

Under CAFTA, U.S. trade concessions are no longer a gracious gift. Now, a treaty obligates Central America and the U.S. to grant each other mutual concessions, creating a connection that is a lot stronger than the one that existed with the Caribbean Basin Initiative.

For a country like Nicaragua, with many people who are poorly educated and who have low incomes or are unemployed, working in factories that make shoes and clothing for the U.S. market is an improvement on their condition.

While wages are very low (about 65 cents U.S. per hour) for unskilled labor, at least that's better than unemployment or working as peasants in the fields. The meager salary is not enough for a family to afford food, shelter and clothing. For this reason, there is great family solidarity in Nicaragua where several members of the family work and pool their earnings to maintain the extended family.

High unemployment in Nicaragua provides market conditions for low wages, but the expansion of shoe and clothing manufacturing is greatly contributing to lowering unemployment. Once unemployment is low enough, market conditions will force the industry to pay higher wages. Working conditions are better than they were in a typical Nicaraguan factory producing for the local market. U.S. buyers have become aware of problems with working conditions and are now holding manufacturers to minimum standards.

Unfortunately, ten years of leftist government impoverished Nicaragua so much that real wages today have not improved much compared to 30 years

ago. But if the maquila industry keeps developing at this pace, and the government maintains sane economic policies, unemployment will go down and real wages will finally improve.

As for our factory? Well, I had to leave Nicaragua during the revolution years due to persecution by the leftist government. A succession of family members ran the factory for many years. The scarcity of those years made the factory deteriorate. No spare parts or new machinery could be bought, good management left the factory, and the country lived

many years in isolation. After the return of democracy, rebuilding the factory as it was before the revolution was not practical. Today, the factory, run by one of my brothers, makes some leather vulcanized shoes, but it specializes in rubber slippers that poor people wear as substitutes for the "caite."



Author with daughter Elena Lacayo (NETWORK Lobby Associate).

FAMILY PHOTO

Roger Lacayo is a businessman in Nicaragua and the father of NETWORK Lobby Associate Elena Lacayo.

Justicia!—Made in Mexico, Worker-Owned

By SUSAN MIKA, OSB

We all must be involved in changing our world and our mindsets. There are a variety of ways for this to happen. For some, it may be designing products that are eco-friendly, for others it may be speaking truth to power.

For over 20 years, religious shareholders have questioned U.S. multinational corporations about their practices in the factories called “maquiladoras,” especially in Mexico. The questions centered on sustainable wages, benefits and working conditions. Workers have often



KELSEY URGANOWSKA

meetings, conventions, chapters and anniversaries. Groups, grocery stores, and cities such as San Francisco are looking for alternatives to plastic bags. Since so many plastic bags end up in landfills or along the road, this is a leap toward responsibility. Socially responsibly sewn bags would be an attractive alternative.

The North Country Fair Trade organization in Minnesota works with the groups purchasing the bags or t-shirts. They assist groups

in screening the bags with logos or a printed message on the exterior of the product. This is one small group changing their world and our world for the better, which is a win-win situation for all involved—workers and their families, along with the consumers who know they are buying justly. I believe our purchases speak loudly. We can all make a difference.

Susan Mika, OSB directs the corporate responsibility actions for the Benedictine Sisters of Boerne, Texas. She is director of the Benedictine Coalition for Responsible Investment and the Socially Responsible Investment Coalition. She is a founder of the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras.

For more information:

- North Country Fair Trade—purchase bags or t-shirts
www.ethicalgoods.org
EMAIL: northcountryfairtrade@comcast.net
PHONE: 612-730-4453
- Comité Fronterizo de Obrer@s (CFO)—Border Committee of Workers
www.cfomaquiladoras.org
- Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility—shareholder actions
www.iccr.org
EMAIL: info@iccr.org
PHONE: 212-870-2295



SUSAN MIKA

I have visited the Maquiladora Dignidad y Justicia on several occasions and have seen the workers making these products. The factory is a witness to the fact that workers can make a sustainable wage, can work under conditions that are not oppressive, and can produce a product that consumers will pay extra money to purchase.

This is the new model of development without exploitation. The workers know this and promote this bottom-up model of sustainability with great pride and sense of ownership. Their Web site tells us that ownership is 40 percent workers, 30 percent North Country Trade Fair (their U.S. partners) and 30 percent Comité Fronterizo de Obrer@s (CFO), which is a Mexican non-profit corporation. According to the Web site, “[o]wnership stakes represent decision-making power in the business.” This is a socially just model that could be replicated in other areas.

Recently, the Socially Responsible Investment Coalition in Texas celebrated its 25th anniversary and purchased small tote bags for all who attended its gala as a way of being in solidarity with the workers. The workers were delighted when we took them a sample of the bags. You could see the pride and excitement in their eyes and smiles.

Many of us belong to groups that look for items to share at these types of

shared with stockholders their stories of low pay, few benefits and problematic factory conditions while working for the Fortune 500 companies.

There are some hopeful signs today, and one of those signs is a small sewing factory called Maquiladora Dignidad y Justicia (“Dignity and Justice Maquiladora”). It was started in Piedras Negras, Mexico, across the border from Eagle Pass, Texas. The workers in the factory make cotton t-shirts and tote bags in various sizes.

Some of these factory workers have been fired or blacklisted from other factories because they raised questions about their rights or encouraged others to express concerns about practices inside the workplace. Now, with pride, these same workers sew labels inside their products that say, “Justicia! 100% cotton, made in Mexico, worker-owned.”

Clothing and Catholic Social Tradition

Clothing and the Environment

- Only 2.4 percent of global arable land is planted with cotton, yet it accounts for 24 percent of the world's insecticide market and 11 percent of global pesticides sales. This makes it the most pesticide-intensive crop grown on the planet.
- It is estimated that pesticides unintentionally kill 67 million birds each year.
- 14 million people in the U.S. are routinely drinking water contaminated with carcinogenic herbicides and 90 percent of municipal water treatment facilities lack equipment to remove these chemicals.

Clothing and Work

- Worker wages typically account for 1-1.5 percent of the final retail cost of a garment. For example, a worker is typically paid 25 cents to make a \$20 shirt. If the price were raised to \$20.25, the brand could double the worker's salary with no loss of profit.
- Sweatshop workers earn as little as one half to one fourth of what they need to provide for basic nutrition, shelter, energy, clothing, education and transportation.

Statistics from Lotus Organics, http://www.lotusorganics.com/articles/\cotton_facts.aspx, and Justice League, http://users.wpi.edu/~justice/2006/03/nosweat_information.html

The Church has something to say about these issues:

"The most profound and serious indication of the moral implications underlying the ecological problem is the lack of respect for life evident in many of the patterns of environmental pollution. Often, the interests of production prevail over concern for the dignity of workers, while economic interests take priority over the good of individuals and even entire peoples." —Pope John Paul II, World Day of Peace Message, 1990

"Each person is fully entitled to consider himself [herself] a part-owner of the great workbench where he [she] is working with everyone else. A way towards that goal could be found by associating labor with the ownership of capital." —Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 1981

Some Definitions for the Aware Shopper

Organic refers to crops that are grown without chemical inputs or genetically modified seeds. There are different levels of certification, but as a minimum, a crop must be grown in soil that has been free of chemicals for at least three years. More specifically, organic cotton is rotated with other (mainly food) crops that replenish soil and make farmers less dependent on one crop. In the production of certified organic textiles, the use of chemicals in processing cotton fiber is restricted.

Sweat-free (also known as "**clean**" clothing) refers to businesses that pay minimum wage, comply with health and safety regulations, take no illegal action to deter unions, demonstrate a commitment to workers' rights and living wages, and respect collective negotiations.

Fair trade, which is an alternative to conventional international trade, is a trading partnership aimed at fair, sustainable development for excluded and disadvantaged producers.

Green refers to practices that embody global environmental protection, bioregionalism, social responsibility and nonviolence.

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Clothe Yourself in Justice!

Consumers are moral agents in economic life...[B]y our choices...we enhance or diminish economic opportunity, community life, and social justice.

—U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *A Catholic Framework for Economic Life*, 1996

Most of us are quick to run to places where we find the cheapest prices on our favorite products. With stores like Wal-Mart and Costco selling goods so cheaply, why would we not choose to purchase their products? It is important to remember that in most cases, the lower the price of a product, the more likely it is that one of our neighbors or our environment has been treated unjustly in its production. All too often, we forget that we reveal something about what we value each time we buy something.

Better World Shopper (www.betterworldshopper.com) defines “purchasing power” as voting with our wallets and explains, “The average American family spends around \$18,000 each year on goods and services. Think of it as casting 18,000 votes every year for the kind of world you want to live in.” Making the commitment to spend a little more on fairly traded, locally produced, environmentally conscious and sweat-free goods shows business owners and CEOs that we value the common good.

Here are a few tips for how you can express your values through your clothing decisions.

- Commit to buying clothing that is used, certified organic, fair trade and sweat-free.
- When purchasing large quantities of T-shirts for church, school or other events, support groups like the worker-owned fair trade zone (<http://www.fairtradezone.jhc-cdca.org>), No Sweat Apparel (<http://nosweatapparel.com>), and North Country Fair Trade (<http://www.ethicalgoods.org>).
- Shop at local second-hand clothing shops. Yard sales are also great places to find used clothing.
- Make clothes last longer. Often, the more you pay for an everyday item, the more durable it is and the longer you will wear it.
- Learn to sew your own clothes.
- Organize a clothing swap with friends, neighbors and co-workers. Bring clothing that you're tired of wearing or that doesn't fit, and trade it for clothing that interests you.
- Write letters to clothing companies that could do a better job. As a conscious shopper, you have a right to let companies know that you're dissatisfied with the way they treat their workers or with the materials they use in their clothing.

For more information or to purchase organic, sweat-free, fair trade clothing:

- Co-op America
<http://www.coopamerica.org>
- New American Dream
<http://www.newdream.org/consumer/index.php>;
<http://www.newdream.org/consumer/cotton.php>
(links to purchasing clothing)
- Fair Trade Federation
<http://www.fairtradefederation.org>
- Organic Consumers Association
<http://www.organicconsumers.org/clothes/leaders.cfm>
- The Green Guide
<http://www.thegreenguide.com/reports/product.mhtml?id=32>
- Sweatshop Watch
<http://www.sweatshopwatch.org/index.php?s=59>
- The Clean Clothes Campaign
<http://www.cleanclothes.org/index.htm>
- Try your hand at sweatshop work—can a worker really make it on \$6 a day? For the simulation, go to <http://www.simsweatshop.com/game/>

Compiled by Morgan Gregson, NETWORK Lobby Associates

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Countering the Clothing Culture

By JEAN SAMMON

Our culture, media and fashion industry encourage over-consumption of “fad” clothes that last for only one season. But it seems we can depend on NETWORK members to be counter-cultural! I asked some of our contact people* for their thoughts on clothing. From their responses, I can see that they are concerned about the people who make the clothes and the low-wage workers who sell them. And they are trying to find counter-cultural solutions.

Some buy fair trade clothes online. Several said they had experience sewing their own clothes, but most of them no longer do so because of lack of time and/or patience—and, perhaps most tellingly, because it doesn't seem to be cost-effective. (What does this say about wages earned by those who sew our clothes for us?)

Quite a few avoid buying too many clothes by asking, “Do I need this?” before they buy. And they look for clothes that are durable so they'll last longer.

Karen Kirkwood Weaver managed to raise her children “outside the culture” and her college-aged daughters now sew their clothes from raw materials they pick up at thrift shops.

Thrift shops are also popular with other members for buying inexpensive clothes as well as for recycling clothes. Steph Beck Borden explains, “It's a reasonable middle ground where I don't feel so guilty about knowing I'm pur-

chasing clothing made in sweatshops.” Sister Barbara Lenniger started a second-hand clothing closet with donations from several parishes that serves people in her Bronx neighborhood. Perhaps this is also a nice way to build connections and community.

Our members seem united in their aversion to shopping at Wal-Mart. Harriet Mullaney described Wal-Mart's “philosophy of paying its employees low wages...holding them hostage so that they have to shop there.” She contrasted this with Henry Ford's philosophy of paying his employees enough so that they could afford his product.

Working for Change

NETWORK members contribute to charities and also work for justice for low-wage workers. Russ Banner is part of a parish peace and justice group that talks about issues like living wage, sweatshops and Wal-Mart. He says, “We are changing people one at a time, and sense we are getting somewhere.”

Frances MacDougall visited a clothing factory in Indonesia in 1989 and shares with others her awareness of working conditions and her knowledge of efforts to improve the lives of people there. She has hope that “access to information will eventually be the great equalizer.”

Dee Wallace became a coordinator for a line of clothing (made in Canada) that is sold through home-based businesses

designed to help women supplement their family incomes.

Carole Lombard worked on filing shareholder resolutions for fair practices in clothing companies. In at least one case, this led to dialogues with the company and the hiring of a person to educate buyers and oversee international labor compliance procedures. Jane McCarthy pointed out that Christian Brothers Investment Services works with companies with overseas plants to improve their working conditions. (CBIS handles investments for many Catholic institutions.)

The Spiritual Dimension

Virginia O'Keefe “made a spiritual decision to abstain from buying any clothes unless it was absolutely necessary... This small sacrifice renews my connection to those who live in poverty.”

Karen Kirkwood Weaver asks, “Am I a child of God, beautiful as I am? Or a walking advertisement for [fill in your favorite clothing manufacturer]?”

Mary Jureller remembers the scripture passage about the lilies of the field and feels that “it is better to adorn the spirit and the mind than to worry too much about clothes.”

Kate McLoughlin sums up what many of us probably feel: “I am a work in progress so I keep trying to live out of my values.”

Jean Sammon is NETWORK's Organizer.

*Contact people are NETWORK members who consult with us and/or organize local groups for advocacy. If you would like to be a contact person, email jsammon@networklobby.org. Thanks to all of you who responded to my survey.

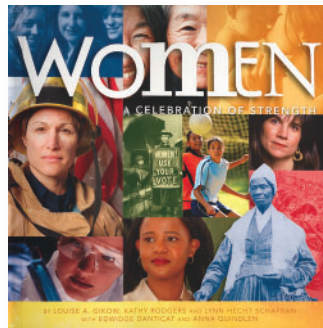
NETWORK recommends



Old Age in a New Age: The Promise of Transformative Nursing Homes by Beth Baker, Vanderbilt University Press, 2007. Former *Connection* editor Beth Baker writes about innovative, humane housing programs for our nation's elderly population. http://vanderbiltuniversitypress.com/bookdetail.asp?book_id=4088

The Moral Measure of the Economy by Chuck Collins and Mary Wright, Orbis Books, 2007. Based on Catholic Social Teaching, this book provides a look at how well our economic system serves the common good. It also lists steps we can take to create a more just system and includes NETWORK on its resource list. <http://www.maryknollmall.org/description.cfm?isbn=978-1-57075-693-1>

The Better World Shopping Guide: Every Dollar Makes a Difference by Ellis Jones, New Society Publishers, 2007. Pocket guide for socially and environmentally responsible shopping. <http://www.betterworldshopper.org/book.html>



Women; A Celebration of Strength by Louise A. Gikow, Kathy Rodgers and Lynn Hecht Schafraan, with Edwidge Danticat and Anna Quindlen, Legal Momentum, 2007. A look at how women over the centuries have shaped their lives and influenced the world. www.legalmomentum.org

calendar

July 19, Baltimore, MD
Simone Campbell, SSS, will conduct a workshop on "Catholic Social Teaching and Mission of Religious Life" at the Religious Formation Conference.

August 1-5, Kansas City, MO
Women religious on NETWORK staff will be at the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) assembly. Simone Campbell, SSS, will be on the panel entitled "The Future of Religious Life and Advocacy" and will also do a presentation on "Immigration and Religious Life."

We may exchange your name and postal address with other organizations or publications with compatible principles. NETWORK acquires potential new members by exchanging lists with like-minded organizations—this is vital to expanding our mission! If you find you are bothered by the extra mail, you can always call or write us to request to be taken off the exchange list. And remember, NETWORK never shares your email information.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has."

—Margaret Mead



NETWORK believes in the power of transformation as we continue effectively working to impact communities through our education and lobbying efforts in support of social justice. We live in an enlightened age, one with an increased level of social consciousness. This has helped us to come together for the sake of creating positive change in our world. Never doubt that your voice through a financial contribution will make a difference!

Our monthly pledging process has never been easier. You can authorize NETWORK or NEP to charge your contribution to your credit card, or enjoy the convenience of opting to have your contribution withdrawn from your bank account each month. If you ever decide to change the amount or discontinue for any reason, simply notify our office.

Contributions can be made in one of three easy ways:

MAIL: Fill out the envelope enclosed in the center of the magazine

ONLINE: Donate through our secure site at www.networklobby.org

PHONE: Contact Ann Dunn, Membership Coordinator, at 202-347-9797, x200

Begin making a DIFFERENCE today!



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