



A Network for Local Action Against Sweatshops

Subsidizing Sweatshops

Factsheet for Vermont

Subsidizing Sweatshops is the first report of its kind. By revealing severe human rights violations in factories that make public employee uniforms for the federal government, states, and local governments, the report shows how governments inadvertently use tax dollars to increase the downward pressure on labor rights, wages, and working conditions.

Subsidizing Sweatshops is based on thorough person-to-person interviews with workers in twelve factories in nine countries producing for eight major uniform brands: Bob Barker Company, Cintas Corporation, Eagle Industries, Fechheimer Brothers Company, Lion Apparel, Proper International, Rocky Brands Inc., and Williamson-Dickie Manufacturing Company.

Key findings include child labor; illegally low poverty wages; forced and unpaid overtime; verbal, physical, and sexual abuse; pregnancy testing; excessively long work hours causing physical ailments; disregard for freedom of speech or association; and elaborate schemes to deceive corporate auditors.

Here are highlights of companies featured in the report that are suppliers to the state of Vermont. The full report is available at www.sweatfree.org/subsidizing.

Brand: Rocky Brands

Factory investigated: Quan Tak Footwear Company

Vendor: Lehigh Safety Shoe Co. (Lehigh is a brand owned by Rocky Brands)

Product: Safety Shoes and Boots

Contract: <http://www.bgs.state.vt.us/PCA/contract/8891.pdf>

Contract dates: 8/23/2005 - 12/31/2008

Conditions found:

- When there are orders, workers must work Sundays for no compensation. The only time workers have a rest day is when there are no orders.
- Punch cards are manipulated so that no overtime pay is awarded and wage slips are not distributed.
- Rocky rejected a winning case brought to the local Labor Dispute Arbitration Committee by the workers, and then took the case to court.

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Child Labor Education and Action (Vermont)
International Labor Rights Forum
Milwaukee Clean Clothes Campaign
New York State Labor-Religion Coalition

Portland Sweatfree Campaign
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United Students Against Sweatshops
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- Rocky continues to ignore worker rights concerns in China factories, despite the public concern of the city of Los Angeles. Los Angeles decided to stop purchasing Rocky Brand due to its pledge to “sweatfree” purchasing.



Brand: Bob Barker

Factory investigated: Arena Fashion Wear, Chittagong, Bangladesh

Vendor: Bob Barker / Leslee Scott

Product: Inmate Sneakers

Contract: <http://www.bgs.state.vt.us/PCA/contract/10760.pdf>

Contract dates: 11/27/2006 - 11/27/2008

Conditions found:

- No safe drinking water; workers drink water from the toilets.
- The high hourly production target is hard to meet. If workers don't fill the target, they must work overtime.
- Employees work without an employment contract.
- When the factory receives emergency orders, working hours are even more excessive. Workers report a few shifts each month from 8 am to 3 am the next day, followed by another shift starting at 8 am.
- Workers cite physical punishment, including beatings, for refusal of shifts, absences, or mistakes.

Recommendations

The report calls on public entities to join the Sweatfree Consortium, a collaborative effort of states, local governments, labor rights experts, and human rights advocates to facilitate sweatfree purchasing policy enforcement by pooling resources, sharing knowledge and expertise, and coordinating standards and code compliance activities.

The report also urges uniform companies to join states and local governments in reforming the industry. At a minimum, companies should respond constructively to the specific factory cases in the report: not by ignoring the problems, or by running away from the problems and turning immediately to alternate suppliers. They need to recognize their responsibility for, and their influence over, the working conditions in supplier factories and by working to improve the conditions for workers.