

For much too long, our trade agreements have incorporated all types of corporate protections, while ignoring the lives of human beings within our global economy. As a result, worker oppression and abuse is rampant around the globe:

- In Jordan, recent reports exposed slave labor conditions among imported workers making products destined for the U.S. market. If workers spoke out against their lack of pay or 18-hour days, they were beaten. Because passports were seized, workers had no escape from their factory compound.
- Manufacturing workers in China are routinely paid sub-poverty wages, locked inside plants and forced to work in filthy, unsafe conditions.
- In Central America, companies exporting to the U.S. routinely target young, unmarried girls for hard labor. Forced abortions are common. When these girls reach a certain age, they are often fired in favor of younger workers.

In the overwhelming majority of these situations, workers have no recourse. They are merely bystanders in the global economy, used and abused by multinational corporations in their quest to fatten bottom lines.

In the United States, workers are forced to compete with products made under these conditions. Downward pressure on wages and benefits, lost jobs and destroyed communities are the result.

We can do better; we can restore justice in our global trade relationships.

## Anti-Sweatshop Legislation

Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) and Representatives Mike Michaud (D-ME) and Chris Smith (R-NJ) introduced landmark USW-backed legislation. This bill, the Decent Working Conditions and Fair Competition Act (S. 367 & H.R. 1992), will ban sweatshop goods from entering our markets. The bill also prevents our government from purchasing sweatshop goods with our taxpayer dollars.



Photo: Textile workers in Bangladesh were beaten and tied with rope after speaking out for their rights.

## What is a Sweatshop Good?

Any good manufactured in a condition that violates core labor standards.

*That includes:*

- The right to associate, organize and bargain collectively;
- The right to work free from forced or child labor; and
- The right to have acceptable conditions of work in terms of wages, safety and health standards, and hours of work.

## Who Benefits from this Bill?

Consumers get peace of mind knowing that they are not supporting sweatshop conditions. Businesses benefit from not having to go up against immoral competitors. Most importantly, workers around the globe will benefit from increased pressure to improve working standards – something our current trade relationships fail to do.

## How is the Bill Enforced?

The Federal Trade Commission is charged with investigation of complaints and enforcement. As an added incentive for businesses not to exploit workers, competitors or investors can bring a private suit against any company using sweatshop labor to produce goods for the U.S. market. This includes manufacturers that operate sweatshop facilities in the U.S. as well.

## Did You Know?

The Dog and Cat Protection Act of 2000 prohibits the importing or exporting of dog or cat fur products into the U.S. market. The goal of this Act is to deter the brutality and suffering inflicted upon dogs and cats, whose fur was being used for products such as coats that were entering the United States. Is it not time to extend these same protections to human beings?

## What Can I Do?

Rapid Response is working to build support for the bill by getting Members of Congress to cosponsor the legislation. Given the free-trading nature of many in Congress, the educational process and grassroots activity are critical.

Please write a note to your Members of Congress today – one to your Representative and one to each of your Senators.

### Sample Note

Dear [Senator or Representative]:

**Please become a cosponsor of the Decent Working Conditions and Fair Competition Act [S. 367 & H.R. 1992].**

**This critical legislation will ban sweatshop goods from entering our markets, restoring some fairness to our global economy. [Add in any other reasons here.]**

Sincerely,

Your Name  
Your Address

#### Address for a Senator:

The Honorable [first name, last name]  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

#### Address for a Representative:

The Honorable [first name, last name]  
U.S. House of Representative  
Washington, D.C. 20515

For a current listing of  
cosponsors, visit:

[www.uswrr.org](http://www.uswrr.org)

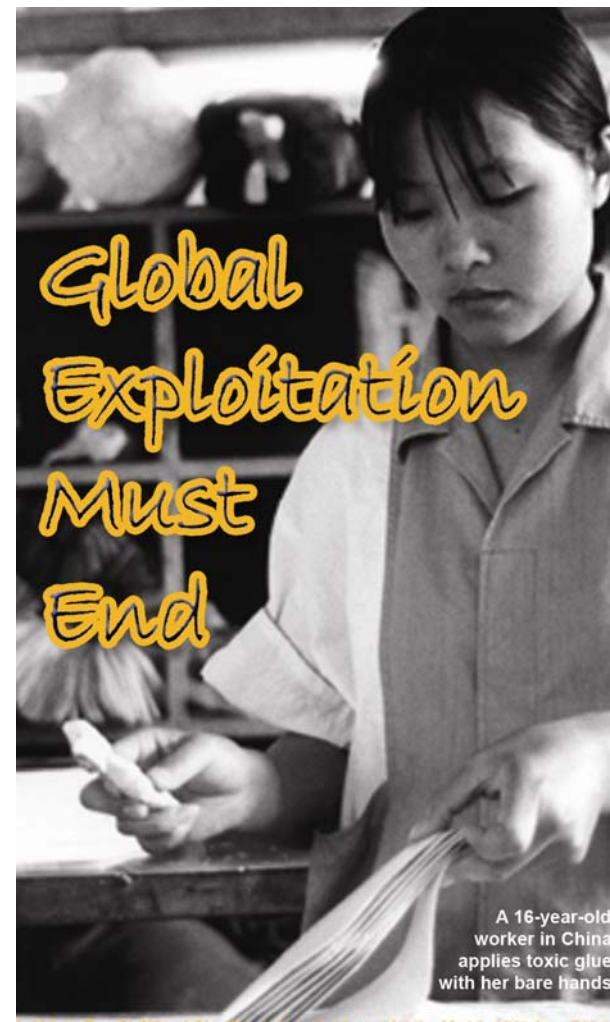
## Quick Facts

- It is not just the garment industry. Common sweatshop goods include tires, auto parts, shoes, toys, computer parts, electronics, and nearly every other kind of manufactured good.
- While some sweatshops exist in the U.S. today, they largely disappeared with the rise of trade unions and government regulation.
- The U.S. government often gives foreign aid to those same countries whose poverty is directly linked to exploitation by U.S. businesses operating abroad.
- A recent poll showed that 76 percent of Americans believe that workers should be protected, just as corporate trademarks and products are in the global economy.

For additional information, contact:

**USW Rapid Response**  
**412-562-2291**  
**[www.uswrr.org](http://www.uswrr.org)**

Photos courtesy of the  
National Labor Committee.



Join the USW's Fight for  
Anti-Sweatshop  
Legislation

UNITED STEELWORKERS  
**Rapid Response**  
EDUCATING • EMPOWERING • ENGAGING