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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

'97 APR 11 AM 10:35

Memorandum to the President

From Rahm Emanuel ^{RE}

Re: Attached Article

Date: April 10, 1997

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN
4-14-97

Your Monday event is to announce this agreement.

Apparel Industry Group Moves to End Sweatshops

Agreement to Bring Worldwide Inspection

By STEVEN GREENHOUSE

A Presidential task force that includes human rights groups, labor unions and apparel industry giants like Nike Inc., Reebok International Ltd. and L.L. Bean has reached a groundbreaking agreement that seeks to end sweatshops by creating a code of conduct on wages and working conditions, including a maximum 60-hour workweek, for apparel factories that American companies use around the world.

The task force has also agreed to set up an association to oversee monitors who would inspect apparel factories worldwide and give a seal of approval to companies that comply with the code of conduct.

Task force members vowed to follow the code in the factories they use in the United States and abroad. Participants said they hoped that dozens of other American companies would commit themselves to meeting the standards, and that the effort would eventually lead to a work standards for the clothing industry worldwide.

The members reached agreement at a seven-hour meeting on Monday, attended by Gene Sperling, chairman of the President's National Economic Council. Task force participants said President Clinton hoped to announce the agreement next Monday at a White House ceremony where he will be flanked by industry, labor and human rights officials. Mr. Sperling, who refused to confirm details of the agreement, said, "The progress that's been made represents a unique and historic step to eradicate sweatshops here and around the world."

He said the diverse group of members "were willing to sacrifice each of their sense of what was perfect to achieve something for the common good."

Companies that comply with the code will be able to put a label or tag on their clothing assuring consumers that it was not made in a sweatshop.

Linda Golodner, the co-chairwoman of the task force and president of the National Consumers Federation, said, "The benefit for everyone is what the whole task force was about: that's to make sure consumers can purchase goods that have not been made in a sweatshop and make sure that there's a process in place to check that factories are not sweatshops."

The agreement came after weeks of meetings in which the apparel companies clashed with labor and human rights representatives about minimum wages and maximum hours in factories and who should monitor the factories. Task force members said they are still debating some wording in the proposed guidelines.

Roberta Karp, the task force co-chairwoman who is general counsel at Liz Claiborne Inc., said, "Industry, human rights, labor and the Clinton Administration shared a commitment and our collective work will result in improved working conditions around the world."

Underlining the difficulty of reaching an accord, the task force agreed on an ambiguous standard for wages, saying that while factories that American companies own or contract with should pay the minimum wage in the countries where they are located, there should be a link between wages and the basic needs of workers. Several labor and human rights representatives on the task force contended that in countries like Haiti, the minimum wage is too low to support a family.

At Monday's meeting in Washington, the most hotly debated issue was working hours. The corporate members, which included Nicole Miller, Patagonia and the Phillips-Van Heusen Corporation, agreed to a maximum 60-hour workweek with several wrinkles: that the maximum standard workweek would be 48 hours in countries that do not already have a standard of fewer hours, while the maximum number of overtime hours required of apparel employees would be 12.

The two labor unions represented were the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees and the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union. Jeff Ballinger, president of Press for Change, a labor rights group that has often deplored the working conditions of shoe factories that American companies use abroad, said the 60-hour maximum was an important step forward.

"If orders are backlogged or if there's a rush, many times workers will have to work 65 to 70 hours a week for weeks on end," he said.

*Return
Suzanne M. O.
Lester O.
B.*

*We are
doing an
edition on
human rights
this issue.*

The agreement on maximum hours will even affect factories in the United States, where there is a standard 40-hour workweek, but no limit on how many overtime hours can be worked. Under the new code, participants would agree not to force employees in their American factories to work more than 12 overtime hours beyond the 40-hour workweek.

The task force, which was set up last summer, reached an agreement early on child labor. Factories should not use workers under 15, although in some countries they would be allowed to employ 14-year-olds.

In addition, in an industry where workers often say they are hit, fondled or shouted at, the task force agree on anti-harassment provisions that human rights representatives praised. The code states that all workers be treated with respect and "no employee shall be subject to any physical, sexual, psychological or verbal harassment or abuse."

In one of the major sticking points, labor and human rights members said they wanted human rights groups or church groups to monitor factories, while corporate members said the monitors should generally be accounting firms with international offices, because such firms can easily operate anywhere.

Under the deal, companies could choose accounting firms to serve as monitors but those firms would be asked to work with human rights groups.

Task force members said that they needed to work out many details over the next such months, including how the governing association will be structured, who will serve on it, who will finance the association and the monitoring, and what labels would be put on clothing to show they were not been made in sweatshops.

Stanley Levy, a Los Angeles lawyer on the task force who represents apparel companies, said, "It's a difficult task to get all the parties to reach an agreement that sets worldwide standards."