

Minutes of the WRC Board Meeting
June 6, 2008

Attendees: Attending were Mel Tenen, Jim Wilkerson, LaMarr Billups, Julie Elkins, Julie Martinez-Ortega, Jill Esbenshade, Thea Lee, Chessa Gross, and Svein Newman. Participating by phone were Mark Barenberg, Dida El-Sourady, Amanda Wilson, and Eric Hoyt. Representing the WRC were Scott Nova, Theresa Haas, Lani Gallagher, Jeremy Blasi, and Nancy Steffan. Also present were Evangelina Argueta and Zack Knorr.

Introductions, Ratification of New Members, and Agenda: Svein Newman called the meeting to order and the meeting began with participants introducing themselves. Svein Newman moved that Eric Hoyt and Dida El-Sourady be ratified to replace Claudia Ebel and Amy Norris. The motion was seconded, and they were unanimously approved.

There was a motion to approve the minutes. It was seconded and they were unanimously approved.

Treasurer's Report: Mark Barenberg said everything looked correct on the financial documents.

Executive Director's Report:

Scott reported on a number of issues, including the University Caucus meeting held the previous day. Scott reviewed the University Caucus meeting agenda and outlined the key points of a discussion of the DSP, during which several schools expressed concerns about the WRC's ongoing support for the DSP and about the anti-trust process. The Board discussed these issues and resolved to continue to be mindful of the views and concerns of all WRC constituencies on these questions.

Jim mentioned a suggestion that was given to him at the Caucus, regarding the creation of a small schools committee. He suggested that there be an informational support page for small schools.

Scott said that the difficulty with the committee was that when this idea was originally tried, they could not get enough participation from small schools. There was also great difficulty getting disclosure data from these schools. Someone suggested that there should be some data to support small schools regarding good choices of licensees or bad ones.

Scott clarified why there is almost no disclosure data from small schools. He said that whereas larger schools do most of their licensing through agents like CLC, the small schools do not. They often do not have the staff resources to collect the disclosure data.

Someone suggested revisiting the idea of the WRC publishing an annual report. Scott said that, in general, annual reports are time consuming and pointless, but that it does seem that the WRC's constituency is asking for one. One participant spoke in defense of

the annual reports. He said that there need to be measurements and specific data presented to universities. A Board member from the Advisory Council mentioned that at her small non-profit, it's quite a struggle to produce the annual report. Another participant said that the organization needs to have an annual report regardless. Someone said that an annual report doesn't have to be glossy report going to a printer. It can just be an annual review. Scott said that based on the conversation, it seems necessary to publish an annual report. However, he wants the Board to realize how significant the drain on resources and staff hours will be. There was a concern raised about presenting metrics, given the tendencies of universities to compare the WRC and the FLA.

Motion: That some sort of summary report be created that will speak to the needs of the universities and that the staff be empowered to create something that does that, while being as non-intrusive to other work as possible, the nature and characterization of which, should be left to the staff. The motion was seconded. The motion was passed unanimously.

Mel suggested that there be some kind of deadline imposed, as well as consultation with the Board. This was accepted.

Scott began a discussion of a request that the WRC agree to provide limited monitoring services as a part of a program to address labor rights abuses in the car wash industry in Los Angeles. This would be the first code of conduct work for the WRC in the service industry. He says that there is currently no organization that is competent to do this kind of monitoring work for this worthy project and that therefore it made sense for the WRC to try to do it, even though it is outside the organization's normal purview. He said there is also value in building relationships with groups in Los Angeles, seeing as there are apparel factories there, which have some of the worst conditions within the United States. Scott said that labor rights work in low-wage or service industry jobs is a burgeoning field. He also said the WRC had made it clear that this work can only be done if the work is fully funded, with no added financial burden to the WRC. Work would be done by a staff person based in Los Angeles. He suggested that there might need to be an amendment to the bylaws to allow the WRC to conduct this type of work. One person said that it should be supported, but since it's an expansion of what the WRC does, there should be an amendment to the bylaws. Many agreed with this idea. Monitoring would be conducted for unions based on an agreement among them.

Motion: Julie Elkins moved that Article I, Section 1.3, Section (e) become "To conduct such other monitoring and/or educational efforts as the Board of Directors deems appropriate." and that the current Section (e) become Section (f). The motion was seconded. Eleven people were in favor, which was all those present. There were none dissenting.

Motion: There was a motion that Section (f) be amended to read "Paragraphs (a) – (e)". This was seconded. All present (eleven people) were in favor.

The meeting then adjourned for lunch.

After lunch, there was a discussion of the wording for Board's approval of the Car Wash project. Scott distributed a proposal with wording about the Car Wash project. One person raised concerns about the WRC adopting a general policy of performing "fee for service" work; she would prefer that each individual project was brought to the board for approval.

The proposed language is "The WRC is authorized by the Board of Directors to undertake monitoring efforts on behalf of projects designed to protect the rights of low wage, private sector service workers, provided that this work is done in a manner consistent with relevant WRC policies and practices, and provided that fees paid by college and university affiliates are not used to fund these efforts. The purpose of this work is to assist ongoing efforts to take the lessons learned in the apparel sector concerning the effective use of codes of conduct and monitoring and apply them to other industries in a way that promotes broader respect for the basic workplace rights embodied in the WRC model code of conduct."

Scott suggested a change to the beginning: "The Board of Directors may from time to time authorize the WRC staff to undertake..."

Motion: A motion was made to adopt the statement with Scott's suggested changes, and it was seconded. All present voted in favor. There were no nays or abstentions. The motion passed.

Motion: A motion was made for the WRC to undertake the Car Wash project. It was seconded. All present voted in favor, except for one abstention. There were no oppositions. The motion passed.

Executive Session: This part of the meeting took place in executive session.

Calendar: The next board meeting date was set for October 17.

DSP/Bookstore Programs: Scott then gave a brief DSP/Bookstore update. He said there are no significant updates to the DSP. The most significant development is the bookstore program. He mentioned that the interested licensee has announced its intention to move forward, pending the details. There has been discussion of WRC verification of compliance with the applicable standards.

Presentation by Evangelina Argueta: Evangelina Argueta then gave a presentation on her experience in Honduras as a labor rights advocate, as well as her specific experience in the Russell case. She spoke about the very important contribution the WRC had made to protecting the rights of the workers at this factory. She stated that originally they thought the approach of the WRC was very skeptical toward the testimony of the workers and the union, but now they realize that it needed to be that way in order to be effective. She said that when unions have tried to be formed in powerful companies, like Russell, they have

generally failed. Someone asked how aware the workers were of the student movement in the US with regard to labor rights issues. Evangelina said that the workers are very aware of the role of the students. Scott asked when the contract negotiations and collective bargaining would begin in the factory. They are currently waiting for a certain type of legal certification for the union document to be certified, but they were concerned that its issuance might be delayed by the company. She thanked the WRC for their assistance and support and said that she thinks the union formed in the Jerzees factory has set an important precedent in the *maquiladora* industry in Honduras. She said the union remains concerned that Russell will continue to undermine workers efforts to exercise their right to organize and bargain.

Adjournment: The meeting was then adjourned.