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"A newspaper that is true to its purpose concerns itself not only with the way things are but with the way they ought to be."

JOSEPH PULITZER

EDITORIALS

Fighting sweatshops

Workers have been exploited in inhumane sweatshops around the world so long that the problem sometimes seems incapable of being solved. A variety of approaches has been tried to stop practices that result in such outrages as rag-clad women sewing expensive blouses they could never wear or 8-year-old boys and girls sewing soccer balls they never could play with.

In recent years, however, university students have started putting pressure on their schools to monitor the conditions under which sweatshirts and other goods bearing the universities' logos are manufactured.

Here in Tucson, that effort resulted in sit-ins at the office of UA President Peter Likins as students tried to call attention to the world-wide problem.

Now, a rights group founded by the students and the universities, including the UA, has scored a significant success by getting Nike to intervene at a Mexican apparel factory on behalf of several hundred workers after a three-day strike.

The success makes clear that the students have found a workable option with their three-prong strategy — pressuring the universities to pressure brand-name manufacturers to intervene in the operations of the sweatshops.

Until students nationwide began agitating on the issue, large brand-name companies such as Nike denied that they had any control of companies they hired as subcontractors around the world. Indeed, they

even refused to identify those companies and to tell where they are located.

Last month's success came after the 67-member Workers Rights Consortium, which includes Brown University, Columbia University and the University of Michigan, as well as the UA, sent a delegation to Atlixco, Mexico, to investigate a labor dispute at a Korean-owned plant that manufactures clothing for Nike, Rebook and other companies. Among the delegation members was Jerry Morales, a UA adjunct law professor and member of the National Law Center.

The delegation released a preliminary report documenting several rights violations: Children as young as 13 working up to 10-hour shifts, workers paid less than the minimum wage, workers being served fewer meals than promised and becoming sick after being served rancid food, union organizers being fired and managers assaulting workers with a hammer or slapping them on the head.

Nike criticized the preliminary report as being inaccurate, but at the same time, the company intervened to pressure the

factory to rehire fired union organizers and strikers. A Nike spokesman told The New York Times: "They understand in the strongest possible terms that Nike's position is that the existing union and management need to work together to ensure free passage back to the factory for workers without retribution."

One success does not make a victory. But the apparel industry in the United States is highly concentrated. Just 14 retailers account for 70 percent of the market. That means the students and universities have found the place where they have leverage.

**The
Workers
Rights
Consortium
made
significant
progress
against a
sweatshop
in Mexico.**