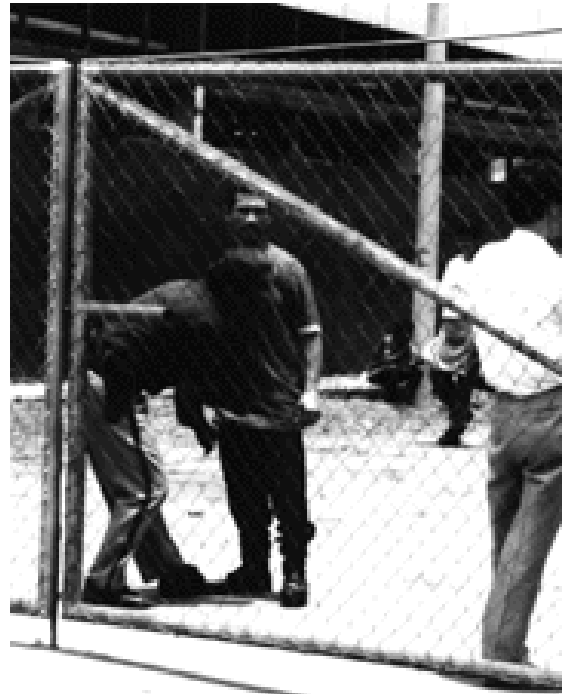


Will this t-shirt...



continue to be made here?



If Columbia clothing is to be made in humane conditions, Columbia must leave the FLA and join the WRC.

Hundred-degree temperatures. Sixty-five hour workweeks. Pay below sustenance level. Non-potable water. Limited, monitored bathroom breaks. Mandatory pregnancy testing. Dangerous vapors and no ventilation. Sound like fun? It's the reality of life for the millions of workers laboring in sweatshops to make your clothes.

In recent years, faced with mounting public pressure, Nike, Liz Claiborne, Kathie Lee Gifford, and other sweatshop abusers formed the "Fair Labor Association" (FLA – pronounce it like 'flaw'). The ostensible purpose of the FLA is to monitor factories where these clothes are made for human rights abuses. However, the FLA is effectively controlled by the abusers themselves, and is in practice little more than a cover-up campaign. Its weaknesses as a monitoring program include:

- The executive director of the FLA has full control over deciding exactly which factories get monitored.
- The companies themselves get to decide who does the monitoring, and they are not likely to choose neutral monitors.
- Factories receive advance warning of monitoring visits.
- All official monitoring reports will be kept internal to the FLA, not released to the public.

There has been a large and growing student movement around the country demanding that school clothing be manufactured under humane working conditions. The Columbia administration, along with the administrations of several other large universities, joined the FLA in response to this movement as an easy way out. We have to let them know that the easy way out is not the right way.

United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) has proposed an alternative monitoring plan: the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC). This plan, unlike that of the FLA, puts the real power in the hands of the workers themselves. Under the WRC, the individual worker would be given the power to report abuses, with investigation and monitoring done by independent, local organizations. Human rights and labor groups agree that this plan would help curb sweatshop abuses, unlike the industry-controlled FLA. Already, Brown University has realized the need for workers' rights and decided to join the WRC.

The time has come for Columbia to insist upon some real standards for the conditions in which its apparel is manufactured. The time has come for the power to be placed in the hands of the workers themselves, not some industry-controlled group. The time has come for Columbia to leave the FLA and join the WRC.

To help get Columbia out of the FLA and end sweatshop abuses, or for more information, get involved with Columbia Students Against Sweatshops. Visit <http://www.columbia.edu/~gs228/>, email csas@columbia.edu or come to one of our meetings, every Wednesday in 613 Hamilton, at 8pm.