



Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

1213 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107

tel: 215.563.7110 fax: 215.563.5527

Missoula Women for Peace / WILPF Branch

400 University Ave. Missoula, Montana 59801

May 8, 2008

Dear President Dennison, and University of Montana Administration;

We are writing in support of the Students for Economic and Social Justice (SESJ) who are asking the University of Montana to sign a conditional letter of support for the Designated Suppliers Program (DSP). See our International Statement for Advancing Human Rights at end of letter.

The DSP would guarantee that University of Montana apparel comes from suppliers who guarantee that factories meet certain basic conditions. The University finally joined the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) last year which we fully support. However, this only occurred due to much work by the SESJ. They gained support from more than 500 UM students who signed a petition asking for UM to affiliate with the WRC and adopt the DSP; the resolution passed unanimously by ASUM. Also, a diverse group of students, student groups, faculty, community organizations, unions, religious groups, urged UM to be a leader in socially responsible business practices. However, the original request was to both affiliate with the WRC and adopt its DSP.

Now, a little over a year later we, along with many others, ask you to sign on to a conditional letter of support from UM to the DSP. This act would not put UM in danger of legal action as it awaits a go-ahead from the Department of Justice program regarding anti-trust laws. In fact, 42 other Universities across the US have signed on; UM is not being pre-emptive by refusing to sign. Instead it would allow UM to be part of a working group that shapes the program. Signing this letter would also make the University of Montana a leader in workers rights and social justice. As citizens we wonder why you feel this is too much to ask.

As you know, in response to two years of unresponsive action in the form of cancelled or ineffective meetings and missed deadlines the SESJ occupied UM President George Dennison's office. They did this as an attempt to move you, the administration forward. Instead of signing the DSP, the university arrested nine students, and later suspended students for three days saying they violated a student code of conduct. We are concerned that this action is meant to squash further efforts to take action against injustice by these SESJ students who showed leadership. We wonder if the University Administration also has a code of conduct that makes them responsive to student/ faculty/community concerns—especially when their concerns address human rights, worker rights. If not, we feel there should be. We urge you to erase any bad marks on SESJ records and conditionally adopt the DSP. Thank you.

The **WILPF Advancing Human Rights/CEDAW*** Committee is committed to promoting the values and principles of **human rights** as preeminent goals and standards of US laws, policies, and regulations, both foreign and domestic. To that end, we **work in our states and local communities** to advance the understanding and application of international human rights instruments, with special emphasis on the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** and the ***Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**.

Sincerely,

Florence Chessin, Chair
Valerie Clubb
Nancy Erickson

Rita Jankowska-Bradley
Eileen Kennedy
Miriam Kurinsky

Andrea Olsen
Connie Skausen
and others

CC: Senator Jon Tester,
Senator Max Baucus
Representative Dennis Rehberg
Governor Brian Schweitzer,
Montana Board of Regents
Students for Economic and Social Justice
MACLC, AFL-CIO
MEA-MFT 119 NEA, AFT (Mont Education Assoc/Mont Fed of Teachers – University Faculty
Association)
Worker Rights Consortium
Jobs with Justice, National
Montana Human Rights Network
Community Action for Justice in the Americas (CAJA)
Jeanette Rankin Peace Center, Missoula
Bozeman Peace Seekers
Helena Peace Seekers
Taking Action for Peaceful Solutions, Butte
Montana Chapter of Amnesty International
Jubilee Missoula Network
the Missoulian
Missoula Independent