

## Indictment

You are responsible for the dehumanizing working conditions and the environmental and cultural destruction caused by the growth of the global economy. You stand accused of the following crimes:

- Paying workers in poor countries less than a living wage.
- Forcing workers to labor long hours with insufficient or no breaks.
- Allowing child labor.
- Intimidating workers with physical and emotional abuse.
- Subjecting workers to hazardous work environments with inadequate lighting and ventilation, exposure to chemicals and pesticides, unbearable temperatures, and other substandard working conditions.
- Destroying rivers and other bodies of water with toxic waste.
- Polluting the land with pesticides and herbicides.
- Polluting the air with poisonous gases.
- Deforesting the land.
- Harming the cultures and values of non-Western peoples.

### How do you live on 31 cents an hour?

You are a worker at a garment factory in the Las Mercedes Free Trade Zone in Managua, Nicaragua, sewing clothing for major U.S. labels. Your wages, including overtime, incentives, and bonuses are about 31 cents an hour, or \$14.88 per week.

<b>Your weekly expenses are:</b>	Round trip bus fare to work	\$2.45
	Breakfast (coffee or juice only)	\$1.92
	Lunch (rice, beans, some cheese, soft drink)	\$6.73
	Rent (cost for sharing a one-room hut with another family)	\$3.53
	Water (from one faucet that doesn't always work)	\$1.41
	Subtotal (exceeds your \$14.88 in weekly wages)	\$15.04
<b>Now add:</b>	Electricity	\$1.77
	Wood (for cooking on outdoor stove)	\$1.88
	Powdered milk (enough for two infants)	\$4.08
	Childcare	\$6.12
	School (textbooks and supplies)	\$0.47
	Total	\$29.34

Now the total is \$29.34, without even including clothing, medical care, or food for dinner. The minimum wage in Nicaragua is about 25 cents an hour. How will you survive?

Source: National Labor Committee

"It is a lie that our wages are adequate," one garment worker said. "Our children don't even have toys. We make baseballs out of old socks. We cannot feed our children right."

# Poor Country Ruling Elite

*You are responsible for the dehumanizing working conditions and the environmental and cultural destruction caused by the growth of the global economy.*

**Y**ou, the ruling elites of poor countries, are responsible for encouraging global sweatshops to locate in your countries. As economic and political leaders, it is your job to represent the people of your country, not to line your own pockets and help the multinational businesses make money. Because of you, citizens in your country face dehumanizing labor conditions and continue to live in extreme poverty. Because of you, the environment in your country is being attacked in numerous ways. You allow corporations to build factories that pollute, to despoil rainforests with oil wells, to log your forests, to dump toxic wastes in your rivers, etc.

Blame the corporations if you want to, but they didn't put you in power. You represent the aristocracy of your society. Apparently, instead of recognizing your connection to fellow citizens, you see yourselves as superior, and therefore unconcerned with the average citizen of your countries. In fact, you rarely see these people in your daily lives. Instead, you spend your days with a small circle of other members of the elite. You belong to the same exclusive clubs, send your children to private schools, circulate in the same vacation spots, and attend the same parties. Your lives are connected and, because you represent the power in your country, your network of friends is able to make rules and laws that protect and ensure the continuance of your positions of status and wealth.

In your pursuit of further wealth, you allow child labor, close your eyes to violations of minimum wage standards, ignore environmental

problems caused by companies and often use support from the military to stamp out worker protests and organizing. Rather than showing compassion for people in your own countries, you idolize the West and the lifestyle it offers. In pursuit of this lifestyle you "sell off" the people and cultures. Yes, multinational companies hire the elites, but the blood and blame of being the middleman is directly on your hands. You are the subcontractors who actually take charge of running these inhumane factories. You are the people who turn your eyes away from the suffering. The profit you make from these actions does not even stay in your own countries. Instead you take the money you make from this venture and invest it elsewhere.

You may argue that in order for companies to locate in your countries, you must make compromises on wages, working conditions and environmental laws. You may argue that these types of industry will lead to "development." What you are really doing is selling the environment, the cultures, and the people for your own benefit.

### **Defense Strategies:**

How does your country benefit from multinational companies choosing to locate here?

If it weren't for these companies and the jobs you help to provide, how would the lower classes of your country survive?

What would happen if you demanded better working conditions for the people of your country?

What has caused you to desire the Western values of profit and accumulation?