



Keep Good Company



Fashion Victims

Workers in Bangladesh are regularly working 80 hours a week for just 5p an hour, in potential death trap factories, to produce cheap clothes for British consumers of Primark, Tesco and Asda's 'George' range. Such shameful practices were revealed in the charity War on Want's new report, *Fashion Victims*, which was based on research among employees

at six Bangladeshi factories in the capital Dhaka which employ over 5,000 workers, mainly women, making clothes for the three bargain retailers.

Primark, Tesco and Asda have all made public commitments to:	But War on Want's interviews with workers in Bangladesh indicate that:
The payment of a living wage to suppliers – commonly calculated to be a minimum £22 a month in Bangladesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> starting wages in the factories are as little as £8 a month, barely a third of the living wage better paid sewing machine operators still receive only £16 a month, which equates to 5p an hour for the 80 hours they regularly have to work each week
Their suppliers not being required to work more than 48 hours a week on a regular basis, and having at least one day off in seven on average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> workers can toil up to 96 hours a week – double the supposed maximum – and often lose their day off factory owners have forced staff to work up to 140 hours a month overtime, often unpaid, or face dismissal
Fair treatment for suppliers' workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> emergency exits are often kept locked in workplaces managers had been given prior notice of these companies' social audits, and workers themselves had been bullied by their bosses to lie about their pay, hours and safety

War on Want's report shows that the companies are not even living up to their own commitments towards their overseas suppliers. To make matters worse, the minimum wage for garment workers in Bangladesh halved in real terms during the 1990s, and many complain their pay is too low to cover food, housing and health costs. Being locked in unsafe buildings has been a common complaint among Bangladeshi factory workers and in February-March 2006 garment factory collapses and fires left almost 100 workers dead and many others injured.

Bargain retailers such as Primark, Asda and Tesco are only able to sell at rock bottom prices in the UK because workers in Bangladesh, most of them women, are being exploited. Thanks to your determined campaigning and faithful prayers in 2006 we have achieved some important improvements to UK company law to start addressing these issues.

The Companies Bill has now become law as the Companies Act 2006. In the Act the UK Government has recognised that UK companies need to be made more accountable for the impact of their activities in the UK and overseas (more details overleaf). This is an important first step towards stronger laws for greater accountability of multinational companies and is a fantastic achievement showing that we really can make a difference!

In 2007 and beyond SPEAK's Big Dress Campaign, as part of the Trade Justice Movement (TJM) and Corporate Responsibility (CORE) Coalition, will keep campaigning to right corporate wrongs.

Campaign Achievements At A Glance

- Real improvements in UK company law, which will help protect the rights of poor people and the environment
- Over 100,000 people contacted their MP on this issue
- A new level of awareness of the need for corporate accountability in the media and Parliament
- Widespread support amongst MPs for the campaign

What Can We Do?

Despite our achievements there is more to do. Please help SPEAK keep up the pressure for the Government to bring in effective regulation to end such situations and bring these companies to account.

- Order SPEAK's Big Dress Campaign **Pray & Post card** to call on the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to act now to improve corporate accountability. The card includes **detailed information, prayer and action points**. Get enough cards to ask people you know to use them.
- **Pray!** We can only hope to impact such big issues if we pray.
- **Email the Prime Minister** explaining what we are calling for and why. You can do this at: www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page821.asp. Also **email your MP** and ask them to raise our concerns with the government – visit www.writetothem.com (or call 020 7219 4272) to find out who they are and to contact them directly.
- **Come to SPEAK network gatherings** to learn more about the issues, meet others and get training.
- **Keep informed and stay involved** – contact us to make sure you are on the email and mailing lists and receive regular SPEAK updates.
- Find **more information** and resources at: www.speak.org.uk; www.corporate-responsibility.org and www.waronwant.org
- **Make a donation** to help pay for the campaign resources we give out - send a cheque to SPEAK.
- For more **help and support** to take action and pray, or about any of this information, contact SPEAK's Network Support Team:
T: 0207 2494309,
E: speak@speak.org.uk
W: www.speak.org.uk

“ Because you run roughshod over the poor and take the bread right out of their mouths,

You're never going to move into the luxury homes you have built...

Seek good and not evil - and live! You talk about God...being your best friend. Well, live like it, and maybe it will happen. Hate evil and love good, then work it out in the public square. ” Amos 5:11a & 14-15a, The Message