

case 1-429-010  
January 10, 2010

## Russell Athletic Tries to Keep the Shirt on Its Back (B)

On February 9, 2009, the University of Michigan's President's Advisory Committee on Labor Standards and Human Rights issued a letter that urged the university to terminate its contract with Russell Athletic.

It stated:

Even if top management at Russell firmly and strongly believes in respect for every human being and respects the right to association, the committee concluded they did a poor job of communicating those ideals to people at the two plants and of implementing/enforcing appropriate practices.

Based on the committee's recommendation, the university decided not to renew the Russell license. On February 23, 2009, The New York Times reported; "The University of Michigan announced on Monday that it was ending its apparel licensing agreement with the Russell Corporation, becoming the 12<sup>th</sup> university to do so in response to the company's decision to close a unionized factory in Honduras."

The University of Michigan's license was terminated on March 31, 2009. By early April, 27 universities had made the decision to let go of Russell. United Students Against Sweatshops began a second tour in the US by union workers from Russell's Jerzees de Honduras factory. After its tour, 73 schools had cut their contracts, including all of the University of California school system. The student group also started to put pressure on the NBA to sever its ties with the apparel company.

Russell continued to follow the Fair Labor Associations' recommendations and also invited university leaders to tour their Honduran facilities, hoping that this would enable them to see the quality and safety of Russell's operations first-hand. Russell executive vice president Gary Barfield said, "If business goes down even further it could displace more employees."

*Published by GlobalLens, a division of the William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan.*

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