

7.5. Laws of the FTC. are good reason not to vote for Gore in 2000.  
Ma. Joan Z. Bernstein, ORIGINAL and vote Labor Party!

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION  
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Lake, CO  
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I would appreciate if you would "toughen up" laws so that "made in the USA" is actually completely made in the 50 states of the U.S.A. and not by Chinese companies hiring Chinese laborers in the Marianas. Loosening "made in the USA" to include products that only 75% is spent on manufacture/assembly

# Made in U.S.A. means something else in Marianas



**Richard Estrada**

"Made in U.S.A." These three little weds, printed on a label, are supposed to promote pride in this country in the excellence of its products and in the labors of those Americans who produced them.

But the words also symbolize something else: a democratic republic that is dedicated to giving working men and women the basic protections that allow them to work their way up the ladder, instead of being forever confined to entry-level or dead-end jobs.

Basic worker protections enshrined in U.S. law are nothing fancy, mind you. That is, except when they are compared to countries that lack such things as a meaningful minimum wage, a 40-hour week and safety in the workplace.

One might think that giving fair consideration to American goods manufactured under American labor standards should rank up there with mom and apple pie. But when it comes to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, a U.S. territory located 3,900 miles west of Hawaii, Republicans such as House Majority Leader Dick Arney and Majority Whip Tom DeLay are supporting efforts to continue circumventing the adoption of basic U.S. labor and minimum wage standards, while continuing to allow the commonwealth to use the "Made in U.S.A." label.

Arney and DeLay have chosen to butt heads with the Clinton administration on the issue. In a recent letter to Democratic Gov. Froilan C. Tenorio of the CNMI, President Clinton reminded Tenorio that the 1976 covenant that established the political union between the Northern Marianas and the United States provided for imposing U.S. immigration, naturalization and minimum wage laws in the territory.

Clinton thinks it's time for the CNMI to finally live up to the agreement. In outlining his concerns, he asserted that the jobless rate among native-born residents of the Marianas remains high, even as massive numbers of foreign workers continue to be imported. The minimum wage remains far too low. And foreign workers are being subjected to gross exploitation while "manufacturers . . . unfairly compete with other production under the U.S. flag."

But Arney and DeLay think two decades of foot dragging in adopting U.S. laws is not quite long enough. On June 6, they wrote Tenorio and in contrast to Clinton focused on a booming economy and an allegedly improved standard of living for all residents of the islands, where the minimum wage for garment assembly is \$2.90 an hem.

The two congressmen also expressed the hope that the administration might send "responsible representatives" to visit the Commonwealth on a fact-finding mission.

One government panel that may do just that is the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform, on which I was asked to serve by the Senate Republican leadership. Regardless of whether I go, a few questions have already sprung to mind.

For example, is it true, as Clinton says in his letter, that "more than half" the people on the islands are low-wage temporary workers from abroad? Is it true, as experts have noted, that most of the garment manufacturing businesses that employ these workers are Asian-owned? And finally, if such assertions are true, how to explain a situation in which Asian businesses are importing low-wage temporary workers from mainland China to a U.S. territory scornful of certain U.S. laws to make clothes bearing a label that reads "Made in U.S.A."?

As House GOP leaders do battle with Clinton, Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., is urging that hearings be held this month. Miller, like Clinton, wants the CNMI to adopt U.S. immigration and minimum wage laws.

Arney and DeLay are justified in making their larger point, of course. The islands are experiencing rapid economic growth. But that only leads to two final questions: Who is really sharing in that growth and are some pulling in the lion's share by lobbying for the continued absence of U.S. laws and standards? And if the laws of America are being ignored, can the goods in question be legitimately marketed as "Made in U.S.A."?

The Dallas Morning News

in the U.S. is unfair to U.S. labor in the 50 states of the U.S. Why is the F.T.C. so against U.S. labor in the 50 states of the U.S. making a fair wage or even having a job?

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