

Office of the Chancellor, 2/21/00 3:19 PM -0600, Update on sweatshop issue at

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Date: Mon, 21 Feb 2000 15:19:10 -0600

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From: Office of the Chancellor <jnweaver@facstaff.wisc.edu>

Subject: Update on sweatshop issue at UW-Madison

Cc: ward@mail.bascom.wisc.edu

Status:

FROM: Chancellor David Ward, University of Wisconsin-Madison

RE: Update on sweatshop issue

NOTE: Please share this message with your colleagues.

Dear Colleagues:

As you are aware, over this past weekend I took the unusual step of removal of some 54 sweatshop protestors from the Chancellor's Office in Bascom Hall. There were sound reasons for my decision, and I want to take this opportunity to share them with you, especially given the often misleading statements of the protestors that appeared in the news media, and the probability that there will be continued protest behavior in the days ahead.

Before providing you with a full context of the recent events leading up to the Sunday arrests, let me emphasize that we have fully committed this university to being part of finding a solution that will end the use of sweatshop labor to produce apparel and merchandise bearing the university's name and logo. I have said repeatedly that we will stop the practice, and that has been our sentiment - how to stop it, not whether to stop it.

The university had been a member of the Fair Labor Association (FLA), which we believed had offered the only viable way to end the use of sweatshop labor, while an emerging group of university students in America have more recently brought forward an alternate new approach known as the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC). The protesting students have been highly critical of the FLA and have insisted that universities leave the FLA and join the WRC. That has been at the core of the debate on this campus and other campuses for past several months.

Beyond the question about the effectiveness of the FLA or the WRC, our goal has been to continue to be - to use this university's longstanding tradition of shared governance with faculty, staff and students to address the issue through the Collegiate Licensing Committee Task Force Advisory Committee and to help chart a path toward a solution. I firmly believe that only through such thoughtful deliberation and debate - not the divisive politics of protest - will we be able to come to meaningful conclusions about resolving the sweatshop

issue. Regrettably, the three student members of the advisory committee resigned because they felt their views were not being heeded. Rather than continue the debate, they chose to leave the shared governance process, abandoning debate for protest.

In the past several days, the differences have been over the best process to solve the sweatshop problem - and specifically, the protestors' demand to leave the FLA and join the WRC, issues which were being addressed. At the outset of the demonstration, the disruptive tactics used by the protesters, most of whom are students of the university, crossed the line from normal, rational and acceptable behavior and quickly escalated, becoming disruptive, threatening and unacceptable. In attempting to take over my office, the protesters literally tried to break down the entrance doors when the action started on Wednesday.

Despite the extraordinary behavior by protesters on Wednesday, I continued to seek solutions to ~~what was appearing~~ to become an impasse.

By Friday, I was successful in getting two other schools, Indiana and the University of Michigan, to join us in provisionally joining the WRC. Vice Chancellor Paul Barrow and Interim Associate Vice Chancellor Roger Howard met with the students, and delivered this news and asked them to end the protest.

By late Saturday, it had become clear that the protestors intended to continue their disruptive behavior and shut down the normal operation of the university administration, and, after being forewarned of the consequences, they elected to continue their occupation of the Chancellor's Office.

I therefore authorized their arrest and removal. I did so because it is my responsibility to ensure that students, faculty and staff do not face intimidation, interference or personal danger as they go about their normal activities anywhere on this campus.

Here is a summary of the events leading up to the arrests Sunday morning, as prepared by the Office of News and Public Affairs as a public record:

Tuesday, Feb. 15

Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Paul Barrows and Interim Associate Vice Chancellor Roger Howard meet with ASM President Adam Klaus and tell him the university is willing to drop out of the FLA on the condition that students rejoin the shared governance process. Barrows and Howard emphasize that the university administration feels the debate over the FLA has become a diversion from the core issue, and, despite believing that the FLA does offer possible solutions, is willing to leave it if doing so will bring the students back to the advisory committee, which had been created as one of the agreements resulting from the sit-in in February 1999.

Klaus takes the offer back to the ASM, but there is no response from student leadership.

Wednesday, Feb. 16

A sit-in begins today at the University of Michigan.

At 2 p.m., seven students, including ASM President Klaus and the three former student

members of the sweatshop advisory committee, enter the reception area of the Chancellor's Office and ask to speak to the chancellor, who is out of the office taping an interview at a local TV station on a variety of issues, including the Madison Initiative and the sweatshop debate. In his absence, Barrows and Howard meet with the students in the reception area. The students refuse to leave the office.

University police who are present in anticipation of the planned demonstration, lock the reception room doors and close the window blinds.

Students hold a scheduled rally on the State Street Mall at 2:30 p.m., and it quickly evolves into a march to Bascom Hall. About 30 protestors march up Bascom Hill and gather in the hallway outside the Chancellor's Office.

From about 2:50 to 4 p.m., students continue loud and disruptive behavior in the hallway, beating on doors and windows to gain entry.

At 4:10 p.m., university police escort staff members out of the Chancellor's Office through Room 97. In the process, protestors seek to gain entry through the Room 97 door as it is opened. In the ensuing pushing and shoving, protestors disassemble a nearby railing and stick a board with nails into the doorway. Police warn the protestors to step away from the door, or be sprayed. Students persist, and are hit with pepper spray. A protestor retaliates by spraying a fire extinguisher into the doorway, hitting an officer.

In the meantime, the students in the reception area lock themselves together with bicycle locks.

At about 5 p.m. Chancellor Ward addresses the group of protestors in the hallway outside his office. He listens to one speaker, then gives the students a statement outlining the university's position. It is to:

- o Withdraw from the FLA;
- o Continue to share feedback from efforts to collect information on vendors' sweatshop locations as a first step in effectively monitoring possible sweatshop locations;
- o Communicate with other major university presidents and chancellors about the possibility of joining the WRC on mutually acceptable terms, but not to do so unilaterally;
- o Report to the protestors by no later than Monday on the progress of those communications; and
- o Allow the protestors to continue their sit-in with the understanding that there will be no destruction of property or illegal entry of offices.

Students cheer the chancellor for his decision to withdraw from the FLA, but express unhappiness over his unwillingness to join the WRC immediately and unconditionally. (The WRC is an organization that will hold its first meeting in early April.) The chancellor tells the students that he will have the doors to his reception area unlocked to allow students to move freely between it and the hallway. The chancellor listens to several comments by protestors, and then leaves for the evening. The students stay the night.

Thursday, Feb. 17

The student protestors continue to occupy the hallway and reception area. The chancellor's staff is unable to return to the office.

Friday, Feb. 18

Chancellor Ward, who is out of town on other university business, communicates with his counterparts at the University of Michigan, where a similar sit-in has been in process, and Indiana University, whose administration has indicated a willingness to consider joining the WRC. An agreement is reached by the three university leaders to join the WRC on a provisional basis, pending further investigation of the terms of membership.

At 3 p.m., Vice Chancellor Barrows delivers a statement from Chancellor Ward that he has formed a partnership with the University of Michigan and Indiana University to agree provisionally to join the WRC. In addition, the chancellor restates the progress

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has made on the sweatshop issue, and again asks the students to rejoin the governance process.

Students continue their sit-in at Bascom Hall. The chancellor's staff is unable to return to the office.

A sit-in ends today at the University of Michigan.

Saturday, Feb. 19

Chancellor Ward returns early from his university business trip and again addresses the protestors in person. He tells them that he has withdrawn from the FLA, provisionally joined the WRC and that any other demands are not negotiable.

He asks the students to decide to rejoin the governance process, declares the sit-in over, and asks the students to leave his office area. The chancellor is joined by University Committee Chair Bernice Durand and Academic Staff Executive Committee Chair Barry Robinson in encouraging the students to rejoin the governance process.

At 4 p.m., Barrows and Howard meet with the students, and receive a new list of demands, which go beyond earlier demands and include an immediate unconditional commitment by the university to a five-year membership in WRC. The students are asked to vacate the building. They remain and spend the night.

At 7 p.m., Barrows and Howard return and inform the protesters that they have achieved their victory, that they should end their sit-in, that the chancellor will no longer respond or negotiate on any further demands. The administrators make one final plea for the protesters to vacate the Chancellor's Office by midnight. The students respond that they are in unanimous agreement that they will not leave until their demands are met.

Sunday, Feb. 20

Just before 4 a.m., university police issue a warning to students to leave the building, or face arrest and removal. The students remain in place, and are arrested without violence.

As I said at the outset of this message to you, I directed the police to act, and they did so in a

responsible, professional manner. It is important to understand that I informed the students repeatedly on Thursday, Friday and Saturday that I had agreed to take the two actions that were fundamental to their stated position: withdraw from the FLA and participate in the WRC. All that I asked in return was for the students to rejoin the shared governance process and help us chart a course that will make the most sense for this university. I also informed the students that I could not go further in response to their demands because to do so would violate the principles of shared governance. I repeatedly invited the students to rejoin the process of shared discussion with faculty and staff, each of which should be active participants in policy development.

The students declined all offers. It is especially unfortunate, in my view, that they have chosen to move away from new advances in our shared interest in dealing with sweatshops, and have turned this debate into a confrontation over how this university be administered. They simply do not have that right. They were told they didn't, they were told to leave, and they chose to remain. They must therefore accept the consequences of their decision.

This university has exhibited more initiative in dealing with the sweatshop issue than nearly any other university in the country. And the students of this university have, until this latest turn of events, been an important part of that effort. But when they abandon shared governance, confront and intimidate others, challenge and oppose the lawful actions of police officers asked to assist staff in exiting the premises, destroy property, and attempt to interfere with the conduct of the university's business, they have simply gone too far. Their behavior has gone well beyond the treasured principles of free speech and peaceful debate, and cannot and will not be tolerated.

I have been successful in initiating a partnership on the issue with Indiana University and the University of Michigan and have indication that other colleges and universities will join us. But, as UW-Madison moves forward, it is important that we return to the mission of this university, and, in the process, return to the use of shared governance by faculty, staff and students in the deliberations of such critically important issues as ending the use of sweatshop labor.

Thank you for allowing me to share my views on the events of the past several days. I promise to keep you informed as we move forward. If any of you have comments or suggestions you feel would be helpful, please share them with me.

One reliable way for you to remain up to date on this issue going forward is to check the university's web site for our most recent news releases and statements:

<http://www.news.wisc.edu/positions/sweatshops/>

David Ward