

# **SOCIALIST YOUTH**

## **Penneys' Bosses Get Millions in Profits from Slave Labour!**



### **Penneys/Primark, Tesco and ASDA profit from super exploitation:**

- 5P AN HOUR** - the wages of workers in Bangladesh making their clothes
- 80 HOURS A WEEK** - their average work hours
- SACKED** if they organise in trade unions to fight for their rights
- BULLIED** by management to remain silent when they are audited by inspectors
- Emergency exits** are often locked by management putting the health and of these workers at risk

### **Profits of these companies in 2005:**

- Primark/Penneys: €227.5 million**
- Tescos: €3.3 billion**

**A number of weeks ago the anti-poverty organisation "War on Want" issued a report showing how chain stores such as Primark (the parent company of Penneys), Tescos and ASDA were benefiting from the super exploitation of garment workers in Bangladesh. A number of garment factories in Bangladesh are supplying these companies with the cheap clothes that they are selling in their stores. It was revealed how these mainly female workers were receiving extremely low wages and working long hours in slave labour conditions.**

All of the above mentioned companies have cynically signed an "Ethical Trade Initiative". Under this code of conduct workers are promised a 48 hour week, at least one day off and overtime should be voluntary and should not exceed 12 hours. In reality they have signed this as a cheap publicity stunt as they know many of their consumers are concerned about workers' rights. In reality they have consciously sought to use Bangladesh as an area of the world where their clothes are produced due to the fact that the average wage there is €33 a month.

**Putting profit before people's needs**

The fact that these companies are making enormous profits from this kind of super-exploitation is not a once off incident by a few rotten apples in these companies. Bosses like these are motivated simply to make profits for a small number of shareholders at the expense of workers' rights.

Not only does this mean that the rights of workers in Bangladesh are being horrifically abused but it also means that the wages and conditions of workers here in Ireland come under attack as well. In Northern Ireland for example Tesco has a two-tier wage system which means that workers under the age of 21 receive less than their older counterparts.

In general the bosses in Ireland are forcing a "race to the bottom" where the rights of all workers are being undermined through the super exploitation of migrant workers from Eastern Europe. This was graphically shown in 2005 with the GAMA and Irish Ferries disputes when these companies sought to employ migrant workers on extremely poor conditions.

**Workers oppose super-exploitation**

The War on Want report also shows how the workers in the garment factories in Bangladesh are getting organised and opposing the slave labour conditions that they are working under. Last summer these

workers took determined industrial action to demand better pay and conditions.

There are two million workers working in 4,000 garment factories in Bangladesh. By taking militant action as was done in the summer the workers can achieve better pay and conditions. Workers in Penneys and Tescos who are organised in trade unions in Ireland should try to build links with these workers and see what solidarity and support they can give them.

**What is Socialist Youth?**

Socialist Youth is the youth wing of the Socialist Party, we are an organisation run by young people for young people. We defend the rights of all workers here in Ireland and internationally. We believe that if young and working people get organised they have the power to oppose the attacks on their rights and conditions by the bosses. This means also getting organised against the economic system that always puts profit before people - capitalism.

This should be linked with the fight for a democratic socialist society where the needs of the majority of working people are prioritised. If you want to find out more about Socialist Youth then talk to one of our organisers today.

I want to join Socialist Youth

I want info on Socialist Youth

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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**Return to Socialist Youth, PO Box 34 34, Dublin 8.  
086-8064801 / [www.SocialistYouth.cjb.net](http://www.SocialistYouth.cjb.net) / [www.SocialistParty.net](http://www.SocialistParty.net)**