

Target rally

continued from page 1

with the Central American People (CISCAP) and other concerned groups gathered Saturday afternoon in front of the Gateway Mall Target store. The demonstration was in support of the workers' rights to remain employed and to belong to a union.

"Ninety-nine percent of the world works, so workers' rights are human rights," HRA member Randy Newnham said. "We need to use our leverage at any point we can to better the plight of workers around the world, because we are only hurting ourselves if we don't."

Target carries clothing under the labels of No Fear and High Sierra, both of which are sewn in the United States-owned Mil Colores factory. Displaying signs that read "Target complicit in union busting" and "Target: Free Trade Zones," demonstrators passed out leaflets to customers entering and exiting the store.

The rally was not intended to be a boycott. Rather, demonstrators encouraged customers to tell Target to use its influence to stop the abuses at the Mil Colores plant and rehire the terminated workers.

The leaflets detailed alleged abuses at the Mil Colores plant including "forced overtime," with shifts ranging from 10 to 15 hours, "starvation wages," with workers earning around 20 cents an hour, and "poor working conditions" such as limited restroom

access during the day and harassment by factory managers.

The only way to fight these abuses, the demonstrators said, is to allow the workers to unionize.

Nicaragua is not unlike other countries in Central America, many of which are facing similar conflicts both with their own governments that condone the breaking up of unions and with the international corporations that run the factories.

At the rally, customer reactions ran from interested inquiries to heated retorts. Someone went as far as accusing the demonstrators of handing out "communist literature" and telling them to go to Russia where they would be appreciated.

"I'd rather there be sweatshops than no sweatshops," one woman snapped in the face of a demonstrator.

In addition to customer face-offs, the demonstrators also had a few run-ins with mall security. Target told the demonstrators they could not stand directly in front of the store but had to stay on the side.

One mall security guard even brought out a sign that read "Say No to Solicitors."

Demonstrators, however, said it was their right to be there and refused to be ushered to one side of the store.

The action was part of a national event organized by the Campaign for Labor Rights. Similar demonstrations in front of stores that have contracts with

the Mil Colores plant are springing up in almost 100 cities across the country between May 8 and May 21 focusing on the Kohl's chain and the Target chain, which includes stores such as Mervyn's California and Dayton's.

"As long as it's attractive for these corporations to exploit workers, they're going to continue doing it," Newnham said.

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**The Neutral Observer Program ...
what is it?**



The Neutral Observer Program provides trained observers (students, faculty, staff) at events that take place on the University of Oregon campus. Their role is to observe the activity of *all parties* who are present at the event. If a situation arises that presents potential damage to people or to property, the observer(s) make note of what they see. When appropriate, they write a report of their observations. This report may be used in the event that action is taken as a result of the escalation. Observers are not on anyone's side and are trained to make *behavioral observations* rather than judgments or interpretations. Observers can be easily identified by the bright yellow "neutral observer" badge worn around their neck.

This program is coordinated by Conflict Resolution Services (CRS). It is modeled after programs of the same name at UC Berkeley and the University of Colorado that were developed in the 1960s.

Some points to consider:

- If you are organizing a group event and would like to have neutral observers present, please call CRS at 346-4240.
- If you are aware of a group event, such as a protest, demonstration, speak-out, or sit-in (particularly those that have not been widely publicized), please call Conflict Resolution Services (346-0617 or 346-4240) to share that information. We will then assess whether it is appropriate to have neutral observers present at the event.
- If you have comments or questions about the program, or if you are interested in becoming a volunteer neutral observer, please contact Annie Bentz at 346-0617 or annhb@oregon.uoregon.edu.

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