

Forum

Products "made in" bites Americans back

■ CALLEY LATHROP

Staff Reporter

Stuff. It's everywhere! Products that we buy in stores like Albertsons, Dollar Tree, Wal-Mart and Safeway, but are made thousands of miles away in foreign countries make up the basis of our existence. Food, clothes and other essentials (as well as many non-essentials) are not only being created in sweatshops, but are coming to this country in some state of toxicity.

The tables have turned and Americans are now paying with their health for the cheap and accessible products that have been reaped illegally and wrongfully for years. Before the recent recalls, most Americans did not worry about where their "stuff" came from. Some took initiative, bought American products and supported the anti-sweatshop movement. However, the "made in" issue now affects every American.

Melamine is a chemical substance that, when put to the test, can resemble a protein compound. Recently,

kidney stones, reproductive system damage and even bladder cancer or failure. It is used in products to give the

children in China were poisoned and four died after 20 Chinese factories began using melamine in their milk. These are factories that could have exported their products to America.

Currently, the U.S. relies on other countries for 80% of its toy market, and 40% for ALL other products. This means that there is a very reasonable chance that any item you pick up will be made in a foreign country. Even products that are perishable are coming from places thousands of miles away, and, most commonly, fruit.

From bananas to melons and everything in between, most of our fruit comes from Central America. In El Salvador, 85% of its fruit products are shipped to industrialized countries. Guatemala, Mexico, Costa Rica and Cuba are all countries that the U.S. relies on for produce. The problem lies in how the fruit

is grown. Pesticides are used and hormones can even be injected to make the fruit bigger and juicier. We will never know what happens 2,000 miles away on that farm that grows our bananas, and greed may get the better of farmers who have no one to answer to.

Another issue is the conditions of the factories where these products are made. Sweatshops. Workers in these factories are paid little, work long hours and are often abused and mistreated. Many companies say that they are abiding by labor laws, when really they are exploiting loopholes and/or their government. If conditions in these factories are not being monitored, then why would the quality and safety of the products they are producing be?

Students are affected as well. Teens bodies are constantly growing and developing, and often the phrase "you are what you eat" rings true. These contaminated and even toxic overseas products are damaging to organs like the kidneys and liver and can even cause permanent damage.

By buying from China we are not only buying contaminated products produced by oppressed workers, but we are supporting a country that has been committing atrocities in the small country of Tibet for decades. In 1951, China invaded Tibet and has occupied it ever since (New York Times), killing Tibetans, forcing labor and committing other human-rights violations that have been overlooked by the rest of the world.

Just like buying products that are sweatshop free, we can also support healthy and safe production, even if overseas. However, this begins with America taking action and starting by improving factory conditions. After that, the product creation can be monitored. Another option is by boycotting products that are made in China as to promote safe, healthy and legitimate production. These movements would take money, time and effort, but isn't the condition of what we live on, sleep on, eat and work with worth it? And, that's not even mentioning our brothers and sisters overseas who are suffering so that we can pay little and live large.



Objects made in China are abundant in the school. The United States has been relying on China and other countries for 80% of its toy market and 40% of all other products. Most of the fruit in the country has come from Central America.

Photo by Mary Wood

Chinese products like baby formula and pet food have been found to contain melamine, which ingestion of can cause deadly effects. The pseudo-protein can cause

appearance of having very high amounts of protein. By doing this, manufacturers can get away with selling cheap and nutritionally lacking foods. Recently, 53,000 young

Measure 60 lacks specific measures of performance

■ SARAH LUND

Staff Reporter

Political activist Bill Sizemore's claim to fame appears to be his uncanny ability to place ballot initiatives before the people of Oregon. He has done so numerous times since he started referring ballot measures in the 1990s. While his track record for the most part has been sponsoring initiatives that are related to taxes, and more recently he has been accused of using tax money for personal needs, this election he is looking into

the education system.

One of his more recent measures, Measure 60, pertains to teachers' pay raises. Teachers' pay raises are based on education and seniority. Measure 60 presents the idea of raising teachers' pay based on performance. This is a good idea in theory; but there isn't a clear definition of the term "performance." This idea probably won't appeal to older teachers as much, but in my school experience the older teachers I've had have done a pretty good job of teaching.

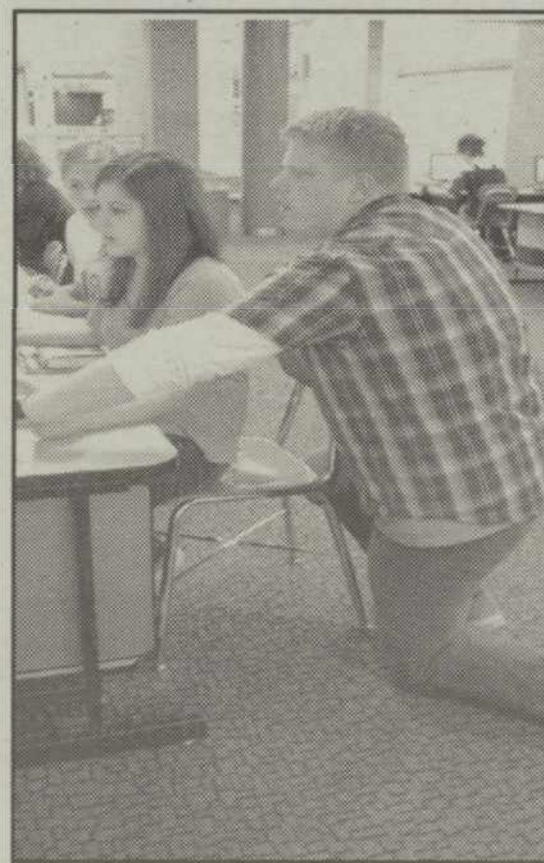
Additionally, it states that job security would be based on job performance. Once again, no definition of "performance" but it seems somewhat fair. If a newer teacher was working really hard at his or her job, he or she would have a better chance of remaining at that school.

Although this measure might sound like a good idea, it probably won't work too well if put into action. There are too many ways to interpret and judge "performance." One person might judge performance based on the average grade attained by students while another might judge based on how the teacher actually teaches. Test scores could be used for judging as well.

Assessing performance based on test scores would not be a good idea because it could cause teachers to focus on only teaching areas that are covered by the test and miss some key points in the process. Some students who don't do too well under pressure could end up missing a problem or two due to nerves; not because the teacher failed to instruct them properly.

There is one more thing that seems to be missing from Measure 60. It goes on and on about teacher performance being the basis for pay raises, but what about student performance?

The teacher could be doing an amazing job, but if the student doesn't care, then the student isn't going to learn anything.



Glenn Krake, English teacher, helps Arielle McKowen, sophomore, with some class work. Last year, Krake was a new teacher. Measure 60 bases pay raises for teachers on seniority, which could prove unfair for newer teachers.

Photo by Mary Wood

Measure 60 has too many unknowns. It leaves undecided the issues of defining performance and how teachers would be rated or qualified. While most people agree to the idea of rewarding teachers for doing their job well, this ballot proposal does not describe the method of judging performance.

Amplifier

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