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Sexual Harassment, Humiliation and Exploitation Should Enrage You. But, Are You Supporting It?

Animal Rights International

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Sexual Harassment, Humiliation and Exploitation Should Enrage You.

But, Are You Supporting It?

Imagine a work environment so tough you can't get permission to go to the rest rooms. Imagine the humiliation of having to urinate on yourself because you are not allowed to leave the workline. Imagine male supervisors who try to trade sex for less demeaning work or for job protection. Imagine work so grueling it can cripple you in a matter of months. Imagine being incapacitated and then thrown out on the street with no compensation. Imagine a boss who goes to the Mafia for help when he hears you talking about unionizing to protect yourself from his abuses.

You'd certainly never support this kind of institutionalized abuse, right?

Well, that depends on whether you buy *Perdue* products. Because all these conditions have been described in sworn testimony to a U.S. Senate Hearing on Poultry Safety (S Hrg 102-228) by women working on the *Perdue* chicken disassembly line.

A Life of Danger

Perdue has been fined for willfully concealing work-related injuries from the government. None of the *Perdue* factories are unionized and in 1986, *Frank Perdue* admitted to the President's Commission on Organized Crime that when his workers tried to organize, he went to the Mafia for help.

Sexual Abuse and Humiliation

Workers, mostly African-American women who cut up to 90 chickens per minute for low pay, are victims to skin diseases, toxic air and crippling arm and hand injuries. National Public Radio reported that workers are forced to urinate on the workline because they can't get permission to leave their work station.

According to former *Perdue* workers, sexual harassment is commonplace. And according to testimony, foremen regularly engage in sexually suggestive comments and pinch and feel workers. Women who go along with this abuse get easier work. Those who don't, get the most demeaning jobs in the plant.

Harassment and Reprisals

Why do workers take abuse? Because the alternative is abject poverty. According to

testimony, *Perdue* supervisors threaten to keep workers from collecting unemployment insurance or from getting work elsewhere.

The Perdue Mentality

What kind of mentality encourages the systematic mistreatment of women? In a profile of *Frank Perdue*, *GQ Magazine* [May '85] recorded the chicken mogul's reaction to a woman worker: "...a cute little thing. Only weighs ninety pounds and twenty of those are boobs."

Are you enraged by abuse and by the exploitation of women who are powerless to defend themselves? Might you, in fact, unknowingly be supporting this kind of behavior? Either way, you can act to put some dignity, safety and security in these women's lives. And the solution to this problem is as close as your supermarket.

So What Can You Do?

Don't buy *Perdue* products. Tell your friends about conditions at *Perdue* processing plants and ask them to join you in boycotting *Perdue* products. Ask the media to tell the *Perdue* story. If you belong to a women's organization or trade union ask them to get involved and to encourage union organizing drives at *Perdue* plants. Call or write *Frank Perdue* at *Perdue Farms*, P.O. Box 1537, Salisbury, MD 21802, 1-800-442-2034. Tell him you're boycotting his products. Demand that he improve conditions to meet accepted public standards. Please forward any responses to us. And bear in mind *Perdue's* pub-

lished remark to an FBI agent: "I'll lie to save my business if I have to..." [Boss of Bosses, p. 89. Deil, 1992]

Perdue's Pattern of Exploitation and Abuse doesn't stop with female workers. He has a long history of environmental abuse and was fined for polluting Virginia's waterways.

Perdue has spent millions bragging to consumers about the life of luxury his chickens enjoy. But, considering *Perdue's* abuse of people and the environment, what kind of treatment do you think his chickens are getting?

Today's chickens are bred to grow unnaturally fast. The birds can barely walk on their flimsy crippled feet and legs. They squat most of the time or breast-stroke their way, lizard-like across the litter. Tens of thousands of chickens are crowded into each darkened shed,— each bird having less than a square foot of space.

Crowded, ammonia filled "warehouses" promote respiratory and other diseases. In addition, food poisoning from poultry is an increasing threat to consumers.

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