

Mutualism and Cooperation

Give new meaning to your gift giving

It's bright and early Christmas morning, and 7-year-old Anthony is sitting in the middle of the living room floor opening a present Santa has left him. The toy he is unwrapping is the one on the top his Christmas wish list. Happy? You bet! But what Anthony doesn't know is that his coveted toy was manufactured by another child just about his age, earning \$2.00 a day for long 12-hour work days. He also doesn't know that many children work in sweatshop conditions in third world countries for large multinationals that exploit them and then sell their products in our beloved department stores. Would you like to be able to make a small gesture to be able to improve this situation and give new meaning to your gift giving this year? Read on.

We have to admit that the holiday season has become a veritable commercial orgy for many of us. And we, the Committee for the Promotion of Mutualism, don't claim to be any different, and certainly not any better, than anyone else! However, we do think that with a little resolve and a hint of social consciousness... it is possible to combine holiday shopping with ethical consumer habits.

You may not always be conscious of it, but each time you make a purchase, you are giving your implicit approval to the commercial practices of the supplier of the product you are buying. This is why it is important to take the time to find out exactly what it is you are buying, to support fair-trade practises, and to favour local merchants and co-ops over multinational corporations when you can.

So here are a just a few stores you might want to visit when doing your holiday shopping. These merchants are making a difference, and so can you by dealing with them:

The Big Carrot (Toronto)

49e Salon des métiers d'art du Québec (Quebec City)

Équiterre (Montreal)

The Body Shop (various cities)

MEC (Mountain Equipment Co-op) (various cities)

Ten Thousand Villages (various cities)

There are countless businesses, organizations and events that need your support when it comes to advocating fair trade. However, given our limited space, we'd just like to remind you of a few of the main principles behind fair trade:

- Producers receive a fair price – a living wage; for commodities, farmers receive a stable, minimum price
- Forced labour and exploitative child labour are not allowed
- Buyers and producers trade under direct long-term relationships
- Producers have access to financial and technical assistance