

Christmas Wish

By Robert MacPherson

Christmas! Yeah! My favorite time of year. I'm so glad that the Christmas season is getting longer and longer every year. Typically the holiday shopping season starts right after Halloween, but I say we get rid of Halloween altogether and start the Christmas season right after Canada Day. Halloween's no fun anyway. The only money you get to spend is on liquer and a costume. That's no fun. You don't get to go shopping and waste all of your money on useless crap that comes from sweatshops, bought from giant box stores and shopping malls that treat their employees like garbage, rob our downtown and local businesses of much needed revenue, and rip you off in the process. Seriously though, these corporations really do need more of our money and we really don't consume enough already. And after all, they give us wicked-ass minimum wage jobs with horrible hours, and refuse to hire anyone but the managers full-time because they might actually have to give them a living wage and benefits. Yes, more consumption is just what this society needs. So my solution is to make the Christmas season all year round.

Okay, you're on to me, that is sarcasm you smell. I actually do like Christmas. I like the high spirits, the social gatherings, the parties, etc. But I'm faced with a dilemma - between what I'm supposed to do and what I should do. Yes, there is a difference. See what I'm supposed to do is take all of the money I saved and put it to good use by purchasing gifts for my family and friends. But that's not what's going to happen, for a num-

ber of reasons, not the least of which is the fact that I have no money to spend. So, what should I do? Well in order to determine that I have to start with what I know. I know that North Americans consume about 600% of our share of the world's resources. I know that per capita Canada is the largest consumer in the world. I know that in order to maximize profit, many of the corporations that we regularly support move the production process to "developing" countries with corrupt governments (Burma, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Haiti, China, Vietnam, Phillipines, Honduras, Bangladesh, etc, etc) so that they can avoid the pesky labour standards and sometimes close to living wages we have here in the Western world. I know that these same corporations contract these factories out to third world capitalists so that when those annoying human rights activists get on their case for the inhumane working conditions found in them, the corporations can rid themselves of any responsibility. I know that this is all perfectly logical if you are a business student. I also know that despite scientific data on both sides of the debate, climate change is real and imminent, and that environmental disasters and industrial 'accidents' are not isolated incidents, but symptoms of a global environmental and humanitarian crisis which is threatening our very survival. I know as well that this said crisis is directly linked to the logic of capital which drives the consumerism and hyper-consumption that plagues the West, especially at Christmas. Feliz Navidad, indeed.

So I pose the question

again, what should I do at Christmas? Well according to all this I should go find some fertile land, build a hut and become completely self-sustainable. But that's rather unrealistic. We all consume, but we all too have the ability to be conscientious consumers. So instead of doing what I'm supposed to do, I'm going to celebrate Christmas by giving to those who need a gift more than anything, namely our planet, and all of those who suffer from our industrial exploitation of it. Well that's noble you say, but however will I do it? I'll tell you. By boycotting Shell for ripping off the victims of it's careless production of oil and gasoline (from Nigeria to Canada), and for investing only 0.6% of its annual profits in renewable energy initiatives. By boycotting Esso for doing the same and investing 0% of its annual profits in renewable energy initiatives. By boycotting Irving for driving out small businesses and farmers all over the Maritimes and for doing their best to bribe our M.P.s. Other great boycott targets include Walmart, the biggest corporation in the world (and second largest financial entity next to the U.S.) for their use of sweatshops and for doing their best to prevent unionization; Phillip Morris and all its subsidiaries, including Post, Maxwell House, and Kraft (yes, your beloved Kraft Dinner is made by the largest tobacco company in the world) for helping get millions hooked on the cool habit of smoking; M&M/Mars for ripping off Third world cocoa growers by refusing to adopt Fair Trade policies; Proctor and Gamble (Folgers) for ripping off Third world coffee

growers the same way; Coke for it's alleged support of union-targeting death squads in Columbia and for targeting children through its sponsorship of Harry Potter; Coke, Pepsi and its fast-food subsidiaries (KFC, Taco Bell, Pizza Hut), and of course McDonald's and any other fast food chain you can think of for trying to invade public schools and for driving up our health care expenditures by feeding us crap. And of course Superstore and Sobey's for driving local grocers out of business and for the ugly giant box stores that they litter the outskirts of Charlottetown with. The list could go on and on.

You see, the great thing about living in a hyper-consuming society is that you can give a gift to those who need it most by buying absolutely nothing. Participate by not participating. And if you do decide to purchase gifts, then give your business to local independent businesses. The Farmer's Market is full of wonderful locally produced, environmentally friendly gift ideas, and there is certainly no shortage of craft fairs this time of year. In fact there's a Fair Trade one coming up at UPEI. And while you're spreading that holiday cheer to your friends and neighbors, why not tell them about how the people of Bolivia successfully ousted their leader for trying to privatize their natural gas resources so that the American corporations responsible for the energy crisis in California (all Schwarzenegger supporters) could build a pipeline to that great state and rip-off consumers some more. Now that's the Christmas spirit! Happy Holidays!