

OUTCOME: Child-Labor-Free Shopping Trip, Quincy, MA

(Youth Network for Children's Rights, Dec '04)

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Well it's over for this year!!! Twenty-seven Broad Meadows Middle School students have gone on a "Day-Before-Thanksgiving" Child-labor-free shopping trip at our biggest Mall!!! So, I bet you're wondering what happened?? Well, we broke into our groups of two or three as explained previously, and headed off to interview the store managers on our lists. We met face-to-face with 102 store managers to introduce ourselves and then ask our one big question: **"Can you guarantee that every item sold in this store is guaranteed "child-labor-free"?"**

1. Some of the store managers didn't even know what child labor was!! Seriously! We actually got answers like "What's that?" and "You think MY store has that stuff going on?!" We even had one manager say they did have products made by child labor!!
2. One VERY popular store denied that their trendy clothes were made in sweatshops, but then that manager told us that his two biggest competitors DEFINITELY had sweatshop made clothing for sale.
3. Not one single manager could produce their **corporate "Workers' Code of Conduct."** Some managers said they had one, but we never saw a single one. Most did not know what a workers' code of conduct is.
4. We did get kicked out of two stores as soon as we said the "child labor" words.
5. A few refused to discuss child labor with us saying, "We are not allowed to discuss that issue."

Statistics:

We visited 102 stores (clothing, food court, sports, electronics, etc.) in 3 hours. Each team of three students had a different list of stores. We did that so we wouldn't miss any store or visit the same store over and over.

* 51 store managers said: "I have no idea" or "I really do not know."

* 25 store managers said: "There is nothing in this store made by children." However, when we asked for the "Workers' Code of Conduct" to see exactly how the store guarantees their goods are child-labor-free, none could show us anything. Are we supposed to just take their word?

* 12 gave answers like: "What's child labor?" Are adults in this country really that ignorant about sweatshops and child labor?

* 2 said: "Yes, we must be selling things made by children." When we asked them how

that made them feel they said: "Bad."

* 2 kicked us out after we asked the question. *We are shopping for knowledge, not trouble. We practiced what to do if a manager got aggressive. We just left. We won't shop there EVER!*

* 10 gave random answers like they were comedians. We didn't think it was right to joke about child labor.

Well it was a brutal 3 hours, but our "Operation Day's Work" group is strong, and we made it through. In fact, after we got back, we still wanted to know if those stores who did not know indeed had child labor, or not. So myself and 5 others got together, broke out our lists and *called the stores' corporate headquarters or home office.*

Some listened to us. Many promised they would *fax or snail mail to us a copy of their "Workers' Code of Conduct."* That was three weeks ago. We haven't received a single one yet.

Now, it is up to you, the one reading this summary. *What do you think you can do to help us on the journey to a child labor free world??* Contact us!! Here's the following address:

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Thank you for reading this!!!

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