

The Business of Change: A Learning Circle

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Steelworkers Humanity Fund

This is a report of a project designed to support a "learning circle" of unions and NGOs to consider a range of models and approaches to labelling or product certification systems and corporate codes of conduct in the promotion of fair trade, sustainable development and core labour rights. In particular, Rugmark and the establishment of Rugmark Canada were primary areas of concern of the project. The over 20 participating organisations in the three meetings held under this project, included UNICEF Canada, Canadian Labour Congress, Oxfam, Fair TradeMark Canada and Labour Behind the Label Coalition/Maquila Solidarity Network. The report includes notes from the three meetings held under this project, agenda documents produced by the staff of Steelworkers Humanity Fund dealing with, for instance, the debate over rugmark, and research papers on various topics relating to labelling, such as child labour. Some of the case studies presented at the meetings include Rugmark, the apparel industry partnership agreement, the Wear Fair Charter, the Forest Stewardship Council. The report does not conclude with a set of policy recommendations, but identifies issue-areas regarding this topic as well as advances discussion on criteria and information needed for evaluating labels and certification systems. These issues include the role of NGOs and human rights groups, the relationship between labelling systems and government responsibility, the requirements of effective monitoring, the financing of codes and labelling systems, the impact of labels/codes on workers and civil society, and the problem of uncoordinated labels and codes.

Appendix III: Research papers

Human Rights Advocacy and Research Foundation, India (Devarajan Geetha),

"Mitigation of Poverty—A Challenge of Child Labour: Need for a Comprehensive Strategy: Importance of Labelling—Rugmark strategy together with consumer benefits of goods," March 1998

Bob Jeffery, "A Brief History of the Labour Behind the Label Coalition," February 1998

Marcelo Levy, "The Forest Stewardship Council's Certification Program: Background Paper," February 1998

Guillermo dos Santos, "Labelling Child Labour products: A Study of Strategies Developed by the Arving Foundation," March 1998

Bob Thomson, "Notes for a Learning Circle Presentation on Fair TradeMark Canada," (March 1998)