

This quote from the Coca-Cola Company 1997 Annual Report gives a shocking glimpse into the company's global marketing strategy:

* This year, even as we sell 1 billion servings of our products daily, the world will still consume 47 billion servings of other beverages every day. We're just getting started. *

- From the Coca-Cola Company 1997 Annual Report



The purpose of Buy Nothing Day

by naomi fleschhut

Could you spend a day without buying a single thing? How about on the first official day of Christmas shopping? This is exactly the question that International Buy Nothing Day begs.

It is a day where culture jammers around the world take action to "draw attention to the global consequences of First World excess and prove how empowering (and surprisingly difficult) it is to step out of the consumption stream for even a day," according to anti-media gurus *Adbusters* magazine.

Its effect is hoped to be like a cold shock to the system, pulling people out of their consumer-induced somnambulism and waking them up to the real world. Forcing people to realize that their consumer habits seriously affect both their own lives, as well as the interests of the rest of the earth and its inhabitants.

Once consumer habits are examined critically, all you need to start a "revolution in human consciousness" are the facts and a sense of empowerment in consumers' ability to change global economic environments.

The facts are that the new global economy — growing quickly and nearly out of control with the powerful new World Trade Organization (WTO)

— is gobbling our resources at an alarming and ever increasing rate. To say that this is unsustainable is an understatement.

Corporations like Monsanto are gaining patent rights to the food we eat and the biodiversity of the earth while governments stand aside docile, bowing to the push for bans on labelling which would otherwise inform consumer choices.

However what is truly disturbing is the shift of human culture towards consumer culture — where consumption fills the void of what we have lost.

We are undoubtedly the most rapacious consumers in the world, consuming as much as 30 times more than those in other countries.

Yet could we also then say we are as many times more happy? Is it making us more satisfied in general, or happier in particular? Are we gaining more leisure time to enjoy family and friends, or to pursue our diverse interests? The answer should be a resounding no.

In fact, people are working more hours, eating more food on the run, and suffering from greater stress — of urban living and environmental degradation — than ever before.

Though this high paced lifestyle is coming more into question of late, an

overwhelming majority of people still seem to feel powerless against mega-international corporations and their agenda for the global economy.

And that is exactly how we are supposed to feel. In fact, even the mainstream media does not want us to so much as consider the legitimacy of corporate agendas, which is exemplified in their lack of coverage for Buy Nothing Day protests and actions.

CBS goes so far as to explain their refusal of air time for a BND commercial on the basis that the spot is "a demonstration in opposition to the current economic policy in the United States." Obviously media impartialism does not apply to television networks.

So this is where the purpose of BND comes in. To lead people to recognize their hidden asset of consumer power by sparking debate through crafty anti-

consumerist spectacles. Last year an approximate one million people participated in the 24 hour moratorium on shopping, while the message reached many more through activist events worldwide. Some unorthodox thinkers actually opened up shops for the day where they sold 'nothing,' while other helpful activists offered a free credit card cutting service for frazzled shoppers.

However, the question becomes what *will* fill the void if we let go of this consumerist drive? Protesters in malls of the United States last year would offer such substitutions as spending time with those you love rather than money on them, and donating to charity during the X-mas gift-giving season.

This brings up an often cited criticism of Buy Nothing mentality — what about the people who depend on retail for their livelihoods? For that

matter, what about the livelihood of our entire society which is driven by this materialistic economy?

But these criticisms are shaky on two accounts. First, they are incredibly simple-minded in that they take the objectives of BND literally. They wrongly assume that the spirit of BND is against the exchange of goods. Which leads into the second problem which is the assumption that no alternative systems of goods exchange exist or are possible.

These people are missing the true purpose of Buy Nothing Day. This upcoming 24 hours of cooperation between people all over the world is a mere exhibition of the power people have to instigate change. It is one of many ways people can come together and speak out to affect the world. It is a testimony to the realization that the actions of everyday people determine our global reality.



Resistance is Mcfutile?

The chance that an McAmerican has worked at McDonalds: 1 in 8

Since 1979, there has been more than 1500% increase in the amount of money Americans spend on fast food.