

## CONTINUED...

## Consumers

Continued from page 1

that the consumer can make purchases that shape the labor conditions of others. In fact, the Fairport-based freelance writer is writing a book titled *The Conscious Consumer: How First World Shoppers Can Ease Third World Oppression*.

The sale of most commercially imported goods return little income to the workers who make them, Ericson said, pointing out that workers worldwide tend to receive between 6 and 10 percent of the money made by the sale of their goods. And there's often no way to know if such goods were made in humane conditions, she added, though she encouraged consumers to ask retailers that question.

Fair, or, as they are sometimes called, alternative trade organizations, try to return between 30 and 50 percent of the income from the sale of a product to a Third World artisan, farmer or laborer working in decent conditions, she said. That extra money can go toward a child's schooling, a mother's health care, or even toward such projects as improving the water system of a village, Ericson said.

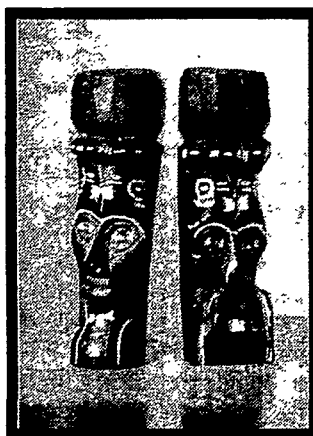
"I can buy one thing and it can make a difference in whether someone can send their child to school," Ericson said. "Suddenly, the thought that I could save a buck by going to

another place doesn't mean so much."

Ericson said she became interested in conscious consumption and fair trade when she began shopping at a Fairport store called One World Goods. Begun with funding from the Self-Development Peoples Fund of the U.S. Presbyterian Church back in 1988, One World Goods is a not-for-profit company that sells goods designed and crafted by artisans primarily in the Third World who live in poverty, according to Patricia Guevara, the store's manager.

One World has also received assistance from the Greater Rochester Community of Churches, to which the Catholic diocese belongs, Guevara noted. She added that Church of the Transfiguration in Pittsford displayed crafts from the store for sale after one weekend's Masses last spring, and that Holy Trinity Parish in Webster plans to do the same in October.

On a tour of the store, Guevara pointed to various items being sold that were displayed along with stories of how the workers who made them benefited from their sale. For example, Costa Rican farmers who grow coffee beans sold as Cafe



Paz (Coffee for Peace) live on cooperatives that are helping to reforest denuded land in the rural region. Meanwhile, impoverished refugee girls in Bangladesh can earn income through the sale of cards, pictures and bookmarks.

And U.S. workers benefit also, Guevara said. She noted that the sale of some goods in the store benefit residents of the nation's impoverished Appalachian region.

Some of the goods sold at One World come from SERRV International, a not-for-profit alternative trade organization funded by the Church of the Brethren, and based in Windsor, Md. Last year, SERRV set up a cooperative effort with Catholic Relief Services, the U.S. Catholic Church's chief overseas relief agency, according to officials from both organizations.

The joint efforts of SERRV and CRS have yielded a program called "Work of Human Hands" through which Catholic parishes plan an event at which goods imported by SERRV are sold. So far, 100 parishes in 17 dioceses have participated, and 1,400 more — included St. Leo's Parish in Hilton — have expressed interest in the program, according to Brian Backe,

marketing director for SERRV, and Kim Burgo, coordinator of church outreach for CRS.

Another alternative trade organization that has worked with the Catholic Church is SELFHELP Crafts, a not-for-profit program of the Mennonite Central Committee located in Akron, Pa. Sixteen Catholic parishes in the United States have held sales in the last year on behalf of SELFHELP according to Larry Guengerich, SELFHELP's media coordinator. And abroad, in such countries as Ecuador, the Philippines and India, Catholic-supported artisans and laborers have made goods sold by SELFHELP in this country.

Despite the extraordinary efforts made by alternative and fair trade groups to bring equity to international trades, advocates of conscious consumption stress that what they are doing is a mere drop in the bucket of the world's trade system.

Labeling products as safely and humanely made is one way of tackling the problem, but fair trade advocates admit that creating an all-encompassing fair trade label will take much time. For example, the Fair Trade Federation, based in Barre, Mass., explored the idea of creating such an independently verifiable fair trade label earlier this year but shelved the idea due to lack of resources, according to a federation official.

Yet, Ericson hopes conscious consumption will become as mainstream as environmentalism has become. Recycling, once an isolated phenomenon, is common now, she noted.

"In 10 to 15 years, it'll be weird not to consider the human costs of what we're buying," Ericson predicted.

**EDITORS' NOTE:** This is the fourth article in an occasional series highlighting the 10th anniversary of the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter, "Economic Justice for All."

## Sponsor a child

at a Catholic mission site

**T**his is Conchita. She lives in Guatemala in a one-room house with a tin roof, a dirt floor and no electricity. Only four years old, she must help her mother carry water for cooking and bathing. She gets very tired but finds little comfort on her stiff wooden bed with a straw mattress. Because her father earns only \$25 per month as a day laborer, there is no money for playthings, and even basic necessities are a luxury to her family of six.

### But there is hope!

You can help one very poor child like Conchita through **Christian Foundation for Children and Aging** (CFCA), a Catholic sponsorship program assisting needy children at Catholic mission sites around the world.

You can help a poor child receive nourishing food, medical care, the chance to go to school and hope for a brighter future. **You can literally change a life!**



Through CFCA, you can sponsor a child with the amount you can afford. Ordinarily it takes \$20 a month to provide a child with the life-changing benefits of sponsorship. But if this is not possible for you, we invite you to do what you can.

CFCA works hand-in-hand with dedicated, trusted Catholic missionaries and lay leaders who know their communities and labor tirelessly to improve conditions for needy children and their families. Your sponsorship dollars help them do the work Jesus has called us to do.

When you become a sponsor you receive a photo of your child, their personal family history, a description of the country where your child lives, and the CFCA newsletter. Your new friend will write you — and you may write them as often as you like. But most of all, you have the satisfaction of helping a child in need.

Please don't miss this opportunity to make a difference.

**Sponsor a child today!**

<p><b>CFCA</b> Catholic Child Sponsorship</p>	<p><b>Yes, I'll help one child at a Catholic mission site:</b></p>		<p>Name _____ (please print)</p>
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Boy <input type="checkbox"/> Girl <input type="checkbox"/> Teenager <input type="checkbox"/> Boy/Girl in most need</p> <p>My monthly pledge is  <input type="checkbox"/> \$10 <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 <input type="checkbox"/> Other \$ _____</p> <p>I will contribute  <input type="checkbox"/> monthly <input type="checkbox"/> quarterly <input type="checkbox"/> semi-annually <input type="checkbox"/> annually</p> <p>Enclosed is my first contribution of \$ _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bill my first sponsorship payment to my credit card</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>  Credit Card No. _____</p> <p>Exp. Date _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I cannot sponsor now, but I enclose my gift of \$ _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Please send me more information about sponsorship</p>	<p>Address _____</p> <p>City/State/Zip _____</p> <p>Phone (____) _____</p>	<p>Send to  <b>Ray Frey</b>  <b>Catholic Courier (CFCA)</b>          PO Box 24379          Rochester, NY 14624-0379          (716) 328-4340</p>
<p>404</p>	<p>FOUNDED AND DIRECTED BY CATHOLIC LAY PEOPLE</p>		<p>Member U.S. Catholic Mission Association, National Catholic Development Conference, Catholic Network of Volunteer Service, National Catholic Council for Hispanic Ministry</p> <p>Financial report available on request / Donations are U.S. tax-deductible</p>

### Groups aid consumers to buy fair trade items

People interested in buying products made by fairly treated labor can often grow frustrated trying to find them.

The following organizations, which are devoted to promoting fair trade and conscious consumption, may help locate such products.

• **SERRV International**, 500 Main St., New Windsor, Md. 21776. Phone: 410/635-8757.

• **Fair Trade Federation**, P.O. Box 126, Barre, Mass. 01005. Phone: 508/355-0284. Fax: 508-355-6542.

This organization will provide consumers with a complete guide to retail stores and catalogs that provide fair trade products.

• **International Federation for Alternative Trade**, 704 Main St., P.O. Box 500, Akron, Pa. 17501-0500. Phone: 717/859-2622. This is also the address for SELFHELP Crafts.

• **International Labor Rights Fund**, 110 Maryland Ave., NE, Box 74, Washington, D.C. 20002. Phone: 202/544-7198. Fax: 202/544-7767.

E-mail: laborrights@igc-apc.org. This group works to tie U.S. trade practices to improvement of worldwide labor standards.

• **Pueblo to People**, 2105 Silber Road, Suite 101, Houston, Texas 77055. Phone: 800/843-5257. Fax: 713/956-8448.

Two stores within the diocese that specialize in selling fair trade products are:

**One World Goods**, 118 Fairport Village Landing, Fairport. Phone: 716/223-6370.

**Nepal Crafts Store**, 108 S. Albany St., Ithaca, in Tompkins County. Phone: 607/272-1176.

— Rob Cullivan