

"We'll take the one with the sticker"
by Dave Olson for United Nations Group Project

Overview: To illustrate the potential benefits of a United Nations endorsement "sticker," this play features a couple out shopping for DVD players. While at the store they notice 2 similar models yet one is \$7 more than the other. One of the couple points out he/she has learned about the sticker campaign on a TV talk show and shares the information with the other. During their discussion, they are visited by the voice of scandalized TV personality Kathie Lee Gifford and "visited" by workers who provide case studies of working conditions.

Characters:

Pat and Chris: 2 roommates

Malaysian worker: a worker employed by Sony

Sweatshop worker: a worker employed by Kathie Lee

Kathie Lee Gifford: voice only

Act One:

Scene: Electronics chain store "Electro-rama." Pat and Chris are intently comparing 2 DVD players on a shelf.

Pat: Geez ... these two are pretty similar, both play DVDs and karaoke disks. I reckon we should buy this one, it's seven bucks cheaper than the other.

Chris: While the features are about the same - this one has got the blue sticker.

Pat: This one's got a sticker as well, it says "opening case voids warranty."

Chris: No I mean this blue sticker, it says "United nations endorsed, Happy workers equals quality products."

Pat: Ahhh geez, another bleeding heart cause! All these machines are made in the same factory anyhow, mostly by robots don't ya know ...

Chris: I don't think so, I heard about the sticker on the TV last week.

Pat: Ohmygoodness, not more of that Dr. Phil crap!

Chris: No no, this blue sticker denotes participation in a United Nations program about proper working conditions.

Pat: Sheesh, all these corporations care about is the bottom line, everyone knows that! So grab the cheap one and let's get out of here!

Chris: Hold on now, you are right, the corporations do just care about the bottom line. The UN realized this too and since they aren't an enforcement agency, they came up with this voluntary incentive program as a way to help cause of the workers by educating consumers.

Pat: You know we can hardly take care of American workers, now we have to tend to the foreigners!

Chris: This does help American workers too, sweatshop labor doesn't just exist in foreign countries ya know.

Kathie Lee: (*Unseen - sounds "ferklept" and weepy*) That's right Chris, sweatshops aren't just in other countries.

Chris and Pat: (*looking up, surprised*) Who's that? Where's that voice coming from? Who's talking?

Kathie Lee: It's me, America's disgraced morning show sweetheart.

Chris and Pat: (*quickly and surprised*) Oh my goodness, is that you Kathie Lee? Why can't we see you? Are you a ghost? Aren't you in jail?

Kathie Lee: No worse, i'm at Kmart.

Chris: Oh, are they still selling your clothing line?

Kathie Lee: No i am working at the checkstand to pay restitution to the workers I abused. You see, (*sniff, sniff*) just a few years ago, my reasonably-priced, signature clothing line was selling great to the housewives of America. I was just trying to keep costs low, then ... then (*sniffing*) I was found out ... but (*sniff, sniff*) but i didn't know, (*weeping*) I just didn't know ... until it was too late!

Pat: (*indignantly*) Yeah well I guess you learned your lesson, now excuse us we're just here to buy this DVD player and leave.

Kathie Lee: No wait, i must tell you more... you see, my PR people made me and Frank vow to Congress that I would stop sweatshops but I keep getting caught, don't you people understand ... i love children! ...

Pat (interrupting): Yeah, as employees! You should be ashamed - getting caught once is bad but three times!

Chris: Even my Grandma stopped buying your clothes. First, Honduras, then New York City and then the poor Salvadorans (*shaking head*)... (*lightening up*) But c'mon Kathie it wasn't that bad was it?

Kathie Lee: I didn't think so but then I spent a day with the workers, well not a day, really about 15 minutes was all I could take! It was a nightmare, I am still haunted by images of the workers, ... their hungry faces, little worn fingers with no nail polish, their tired eyes ... they weren't even smiling! ... and the things they said to me were so crude ... and (*her voices trails off*) ...

-- On another part of the stage, a Sweatshop worker sits at a table with a sewing machine looking unhappy and tired.

Sweatshop Worker: Hey Kathie. You know Kathie, when my sister got fired for trying to unionize the workers here, I vowed I would get back at you. I took her job to support our family and like everyone here I work here 11 hour days, 6 days a week so I had to quit school. The buildings are poorly lit with little ventilation. Do you how hot it gets in here Kathie! There's no shade because your factory is surrounded by barbed wire fences with armed guards! No one is happy, especially the women who are fired for being pregnant and must take tests, ... all for 60 cents an hour Kathie! How much do you make an hour? So we do the shoddiest work we can do and not get caught! But now we got our revenge, after my sister was fired and received death threats for complaining about our conditions, we wrote letters to the American media and congress and someone listened to us and now the people are not mad at us Kathie, no, no, the people who used to like you, now despise you ... (*voice trails off*) ha ha, they all think you are evil ...

Kathie Lee: (*sniff sniff*) Yes the room was dark with no windows and poor lighting, ... all so i could sell my clothes a bit cheaper. The machines were old and the workers were even charged for broken needles. And then there was the workers in (*emotionally*) in New York City, I didn't even pay them!

Pat and Chris: (*gasp*) New York City! I thought there was laws against that in this country.

Kathie Lee: Well there are labor laws in the USA, but both here and abroad, cut-throat companies will always find a way to exploit workers with poor wages and unhealthy working conditions unless the consumers use their spending power to change conditions.

Chris: Because consumers should care about more than just the bottom line right?

Kathie Lee: You're right and that's why these little blue stickers are so important! The stickers represent a voluntary incentive program for business to show that they understand that humans are a valuable resource and better conditions equal better products. You know, ... recently Giffy and I visited the factory where that Sunny brand DVD player was assembled. It was right after my second arraignment ... (*voice trails off*) ... the buildings were so pretty ...

-- A happy looking worker sits at a table with an assembly line type device putting together some electronic parts

Malaysian worker: I've been working here since the government and Sunny brand built this new modern production facility. Sunny trained me well and helps me pay for more classes. I think they realize that if you treat us workers well and pay us a living wage, that we will work harder and be more loyal. We are all proud to work here and they reward our work with proper medical care, child care and holidays. Even the equipment is well-maintained resulting in better products. I don't know where the products we make go, but we do know if we make good products, then other companies will come and make more jobs for our friends and relatives. Maybe by then i will be a manager!

Kathie Lee: Heck, by buying the one with the blue sticker, you're part of the solution!

Chris: Gosh Kathie, you are really an inspiration to us all! Thanks!

Kathie Lee: No need to thank me, it's all part of my community service sentence ...

Pat: Well, I guess there's just one more thing, ... we'll take the one with sticker!

Kathie, Chris and Pat: (*laughing together*)

the end