

Coke's benefiting from dangerous child labor

Before I cast my vote for election of directors, I want to know if the board and particularly Herbert Allen, Howard Buffett, Barry Diller, Donald Keough, James Williams and you, Mr. Kent, who beneficially and collectively own shares worth billions of dollars, are going to allow The Coca-Cola Company to continue to benefit from what is described as one of the most hazardous, cruel and worst forms of child labor.

In 2004 Human Rights Watch exposed the fact that Coca-Cola's sugar supplier in El Salvador uses sugar cane harvested by children. Film footage taken in 2007 and aired in a nationally televised documentary in the UK confirmed that child labor is rampant on the plantations harvesting cane for Coca-Cola's sugar supplier.

A book entitled "Belching Out the Devil" by Mark Thomas, published in 2009 in the United States, made it clear Coca-Cola has done nothing to seriously address and stop this child abuse.

Unfortunately, eight years after Human Rights Watch's expose on Coca-Cola and child labor, I must ask: Is Central Izalco still a supplier of sugar for any Coca-Cola products? Is child labor still being used to harvest sugar cane for Central Izalco or any other of Coke's sugar suppliers? And what does the board plan to do to make sure that no child labor is used in its supply chain to produce Coke products?

I must ask this question as it pertains to Colombia as well. Human rights abuses against labor leaders by Coca-Cola bottlers in Colombia are horrific, but to make matters worse, an International Labor Organization report in 2008 quoted a Coke manager in Cali saying that Coke's suppliers of raw materials such as sugar should not use child labor but added, Coke "did not yet exercise oversight of the issue."



Is this still accurate?