

Are you ready to set the world on fire, with your newly minted diploma or degree in hand? Are you looking to kick start your career? Here are some considerations

Without a doubt, you will be looking for a job that pays a competitive salary, offers good benefits, perhaps has child care and provides the opportunity to learn and to advance. Above all, you will want to be sure you have the opportunity to make use of your skills.

In addition to these considerations, many people are starting to measure the kind of work an organization does against their own values. Apropos of this trend, *Learning Curves* came across the following article. The views expressed created lots of discussion amongst Learning Curves staff and we hope amongst our readers too.

The 10 Worst Corporations in the World

(Reprinted from the CCPA Monitor (The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives is an independent, non-profit research organization which promotes research on economic and social policy issues)

Corporations carry out some of the most horrific human rights abuses of modern times, but it is increasingly difficult to hold them to account. Economic globalization and the rise of transnational corporate power have created a favourable climate for corporate human rights abusers, which are loyal only to their shareholders and are governed principally by the codes of supply and demand.

Several of the companies listed below are being sued in U.S. federal courts under that country's alien Tort Claims Act, a law that permits such suits to be filed by the citizens of any country who have been victimized by corporate misconduct.

- 1. Caterpillar: For years, the Caterpillar Company has provided Israel with the bulldozers used to destroy Palestinian homes. The company ignored a letter to CEO James Owens from the UN High Commissioner on Human**

Rights, which stated that ‘the delivery of your bulldozers to the Israeli army, in the certain knowledge that they are being used for such action, might involve complicity or acceptance on the part of your company to actual and potential violations of human rights.’ Peace activist Rachel Corrie was run over and killed by a Caterpillar military bulldozer in 2003 when she tried to stop it from destroying a home in Gaza. Her family has filed suit against Caterpillar.

- 2. Chevron:** The petrochemical company Chevron is guilty of some of the worst human rights and environmental rights abuses. It is responsible for the violent repression of peaceful opposition to oil extraction in several countries, including Nigeria, where it hired private military personnel to open fire on protesters. A subsidiary of Chevron, Unocal, recently settled a lawsuit filed by villagers in Burma alleging the company’s complicity in many human rights violations, including rape, torture, and forced labour. Another Chevron company, Texaco, earlier dumped 18 billion gallons of toxic waste into rivers in Ecuador, afflicting local residents with cancer, skin lesions, and birth defects.
- 3. Dow Chemical:** Dow has been destroying lives and poisoning the planet for decades. The company is best known for supplying the U.S. military with the lethal defoliant Agent Orange and the incendiary chemical napalm, both of which were used to kill thousands during the Vietnam War. Dow also inherited the toxic legacy of the worst peacetime chemical disaster in history when it acquired Union Carbide in 2001. A gas leak from that company’s plant in Bhopal, India, in 1984, killed and maimed thousands of local residents. Dow still refuses to address the liabilities for this disaster that it assumed when it took over Union Carbide.

- 4. DynCorp:** Private security contractors have become the fastest-growing sector in the global economy since 9/11—a \$100 billion-a-year virtually unregulated industry. DynCorp, a principal provider of these services, has flagrantly abused human rights while patrolling African oil-fields, eradicating Colombian coca plants, body guarding Afghanistan politicians and performing similar functions around the world. In 2001, a DynCorp mechanic in Bosnia publicly accused fellow employees of ‘engaging in illegal and inhumane conduct,’ including raping girls and trading them into slavery.

- 5. KBR (Kellogg, Brand, and Root)—A subsidiary of Halliburton Corporation:** KBR is a private company that provides military support services. Notorious for its questionable bookkeeping, dishonest billing practices and no-bid contracts, KBR is a major violator of human rights. Many Third World labourers have been hired by KBR to ‘rebuild’ Iraq. Generally hailing from impoverished Asian countries, they are forced into hard labour seven days a week, 10 hours a day. They have to sleep in crowded trailers and wait outside in scorching heat for their daily food rations. The company’s dubious accounting practices came to light in 2003 when Pentagon auditors uncovered overcharges for gasoline and other products. The company paid \$2 million to settle a Justice Department lawsuit.

- 6. Lockheed Martin:** The world’s largest military contractor, Lockheed Martin provides planes, missiles, satellites, and other lethal high-tech items to the Pentagon. Since George W. Bush became U.S. President in 2000, the company’s stock value has tripled. It is no coincidence that Lockheed VP Bruce Jackson was a key player in the Project for a new American Century, the intellectual incubator of the Iraq invasion. Another lawyer who formerly represented the company, Stephen J. Hadley, now has Condoleezza Rice’s old job as Assistant to the President on national security.

These war profiteers have a powerful and illegitimate influence on U.S. international policy decisions.

- 7. Monsanto:** Monsanto is by far the largest producer of genetically modified (GM) seeds in the world, dominating more than 70% of the market for crops such as wheat, corn, soy and cotton. Monsanto is also the world's leading producer of the herbicide glyphosate, marketed as Roundup, which harms crops as its toxins accumulate in the soil. Plants eventually become infertile, forcing farmers to purchase GM Roundup Ready Seed that resists the herbicide. This creates a cycle of dependency on Monsanto for both the weed killer and the only seed that can resist it. Both products are sold at inflated prices. Exposure to Roundup can cause cancer, skin disorders, abortions and damage to gastrointestinal and nervous systems. Monsanto has been charged by the International Labour Rights Fund of employing child labour in India, where an estimated 12,400 children work in cottonseed production.
- 8. Nestle:** Illegal and forced child labour is rampant in the chocolate industry because more than 40% of the world's cocoa supply comes from the Ivory Coast, a country that has more than 100,000 child labourers working in dangerous conditions on cocoa farms. Save the Children Canada reports that 15,000 children between 9 and 12 years old have been tricked and sold into slavery on these farms, many for just \$30 each. Nestle, the third largest buyer of cocoa from the Ivory Coast, is well aware of the tragically unjust labour practices on the farms with which it continues to do business. Nestle and other chocolate manufacturers promised to put an end to abusive child labour on cocoa farms by July 1, 2005, but have failed to do so. Nestle is also notorious for its aggressive marketing of infant formula in poor countries, which is another reason it is one of the most boycotted corporations in the world.

9. Pfizer: Pfizer is the largest pharmaceutical company in the world, and is also one of the worst abusers of the human right of universal access to HIV/AIDS medicine. In addition to Viagra, Zoloft, Zithromax and Norvasc, Pfizer produces the AIDS drug fluconazole under the name Diflucan, and sells it at prices that poor people with AIDS cannot afford. The company refuses to grant generic licenses of fluconazole to governments in countries like Brazil, South Africa, or the Dominican Republic, where patients are forced to pay \$20 per pill, although their average wage is only \$120 a month.

10. Wal-Mart: Wal-Mart is the biggest corporation in the world, with 5,100 stores worldwide and 1.7 million employees, as well as millions more in the factories of its suppliers. Most people have heard of the way Wal-Mart steamrolls its way into every possible city and town, destroying local supermarkets and countless small businesses. We have also heard about Wal-Mart's long track record of worker abuse, from forced overtime to sex discrimination to illegal child labour to relentless union-busting. Wal-Mart also notoriously refuses to provide health insurance to cover half of its employees. Less well-known is that Wal-Mart maintains its low prices by allowing substandard and often abusive working conditions in the overseas factories producing most of its goods. A lawsuit was recently filed against Wal-Mart supplier sweatshops in China, Indonesia, Bangladesh and other nations on behalf of workers who are denied minimum wages, forced to work unpaid overtime and denied legally mandated health care.

**Adapted from a Global Exchange Report.
To read the full report go to www.alternet.org/**

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