

Recitation B

Child Labor

Do you have any friends at school who work part-time in order to support their families? In Africa, over 40% of all children under the age of eighteen do so, including many children who are as young as five! Worldwide, about 120 million children work full time, and 130 million of them work part-time.

Most of these children work on farms, harvesting cotton, coffee beans and other crops. Many others work in factories, making carpets, matches and even toys for richer children their own ages. Working conditions are often terrible and many children suffer from diseases and from the beatings they receive if they don't work hard enough!

Why do these children have to work so hard in such awful conditions, instead of going to school and playing with their friends as children in Japan and other richer nations do? Many do so because their families are too poor to send them to school, too poor even to feed them! Given the choice between working and starving, they work. Many others, however, do not even have this choice. In their cases, when their parents borrow money from local moneylenders, they are forced to use their children as security for the loan. If it is not paid back, the children have to work for the moneylenders for the rest of their lives, often in miserable conditions.

Some private organizations and NGOs have campaigned for a long time to stop the use of child labor around the world. Unfortunately, their efforts have not always been successful; international organizations such as the United Nations and UNICEF have also been working hard to ban child labor. They all think that the only solution is to eliminate poverty. In order to achieve this goal, we – the members of the international community – should work together so that children everywhere will have a chance to enjoy their childhood and not be forced to work.

(317 words)