

Have a crappy 'made in China' Christmas!

by Ben Goff
News Editor

We live in a consumerist world of junk, and at no time is this more apparent than the holiday season. The holidays are a time of giving, and so we give presents to loved ones, friends and people we have the misfortune to see once a year.

The problem is we don't want to. Giving things to others is contrary to the American dream of consumption and self absorption. So we give crap, the easiest and cheapest gifts possible. The business world has taken advantage of the laziness by flooding the market with worthless junk during the holiday season.

Beginning earlier and earlier every year stores stock displays with electronic trinkets, doohickeys, and gizmos that look somewhat useful and might just make the perfect gift for your second cousin's ex-husband's sister-

in-law

They bill these items as the hot item of the year and sell them for the 'low, low price of only \$99.99' because they think we are stupid enough that \$99.99 looks like a lot less than \$100 even if it isn't.

They make sure to package the lousiest gifts such that you can't actually see the item, but the picture on the box looks appealing- and it lights up! The perfect gift for that certain someone in your life that isn't worth a thoughtful and creative gift!

The product is stuffed under a tree somewhere until the person opens it to find that the size of the item is much smaller than that on the box, and it is in fact made of cheap plastic and feels like it would shatter into a million pieces if you sneezed near it.

The unfortunate recipient will say "Yeah!" and "Thank you, it's just what I've always wanted" before setting it aside and forgetting about it. At best

it may provide a few hours of amusement or be re-gifted at a later time to someone even less appreciated.

The item also likely has a little label saying "made in China" that is usually a good indicator that the thing was assembled by the emaciated fingers of little Chinese children who work for two cents a day.

After the holiday season rolls by the gift will likely make its way to the Island of Misfit Toys where it will sing and dance with Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. Seriously, that's where they go- not to the landfill where they become part of our massive waste stream.

Part of the problem, I think, is the way capitalist business works. It may cost pennies for a company to manufacture some trinket item like a digital clock/timer grill tongs with built in flashlight and radio, but it is sold for maybe \$10- little enough that Scrooge would buy it, but still a huge profit margin.

It's this huge profit margin that lines the pockets of CEO's pulling in six and seven figure salaries while the cost of living sprints ahead of the average person's wage that creeps up at a geological pace. Meanwhile the market and the landfills are being flooded with worthless, practically disposable junk products.

I don't know where or when the gift-giving trends we see today began, but I don't like where they are going. I think an obsession with material goods has replaced a friendly spirit of giving and is eroding the place of Christ in Christmas.

This year as children go to sleep on Christmas Eve and visions of ipods and Xbox dance in their heads a jolly fat CEO and his little pointy-eared elf from Texas will be raking it in while leaving crappy gifts for all the girls and boys, crafted by tiny hands in a far-away land

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