How are you this December? Wishing you were on holiday? Thinking if you hear one more person, yourself included, worry over Bush, Blair, corporations, shopping, war, or that cough, you’ll do something you may be forced to regret - go mad with boredom, for example? Well, do not despair. Corporate Watch has amassed some antidotes to all of the above, in the shape of... REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL

‘Occasionally there’s a drought, and sometimes it becomes dammed, but in everyone exists a spring of hope.’

Hamish, filmmaker

‘MacDonalds’ branches are closing down!’

Dave, writer

‘Community resistance strategies and legal challenges can win’

Geoff, campaigner

‘What has cheered me up this year is that we’ve moved beyond people saying ‘Oh, you don’t like capitalism, so you must be a communist’. People are actually, genuinely asking me, ‘Well, if you don’t like capitalism how would you like the economy arranged?’. And taking an interest in the answer. This feels to me like the year we really started building the new economy that I want to live in.’

Dr Molly Scott Cato, Green Economist, Social Researcher, Homemaker

‘My reason to be cheerful is that Bush’s reign is nearly over.’

Sue, South Africa

‘The bravery of Britain’s young people - shown when over 10,000 of them walked out of
school against the war.'

Katherine at the New Internationalist

‘It’s the most corrupt country in the world and Africa’s most populated. Sixty-percent of its people are below the poverty line and they can only expect to live until 51 anyway. But guess what? Despite Shell, despite Halliburton, despite everything, Nigeria’s people are the happiest in the world! Yay Nigerians!

And guess who’s next? They achieved independence from Spain in 1821 and were soon confronted with the gringos and their crazy idea of Manifest Destiny. Then it was Free Trade. Under NAFTA, basic grain imports doubled between 1994 and 2001 while Mexican producer’s prices fell 47%. Yet, according to researches for the World Values Survey, its population is the world’s second happiest. Viva los Mexicanes!

So it’s official. The desire for material goods is ‘a happiness suppressant’. In industrialized countries, unhappiness levels have remained virtually the same since World War II, although incomes have risen considerably. The World Values Survey, conducted every four years by an international network of social scientists, is a worldwide investigation of socio-cultural and political change. New Scientist magazine says that although such surveys are not new, they are being increasingly taken into account by policy makers.’

Justin, Corporate Watch

‘This year the EU finally agreed an EU-wide ban on cosmetics animal testing. It won’t come into force until 2009, but this was a historic vote.’

Wendy Higgins, BUAV

‘The conclusions of the World Bank Extractive Industries Review! The final report has actually advocated strong positions on the World Bank withdrawing from oil, gas and coal projects, and ensuring companies operate to human rights principles.’

Andy, campaigner

‘Monsanto pulling out of England.’

Matthew, London

‘Clause 28 has gone. The age of consent is equal. There are happy lesbians snogging and flirting in my local pub’

John Hoggett, infamous Reading homosexual

A smile from a stranger

The day when the oil runs out

being able to feel cheerful at all
warm clothes on a cold day
cool clothes on a warm day
the seasons a meal from food from your own garden a meal from food from someone else's garden

Dawn

A smile from a baby
Swimming in the Sea
Is that enough?

Biowizard - The Shire

'It's been a terrible year for the public relations industry'.

Chris, Corporate Watch

'At the beginning of term, Oxford Brookes became the UK’s first official ‘Fairtrade University’ after two years of work by students and staff. At Edinburgh over 1000 students turned up to vote on Fairtrade at their Students’ Association General Meeting, which as James from the People & Planet group says is usually attended by 25. “They had people crammed in hallways, turned away for lack of space. Final vote was 900 to 14. Great stuff!” After overwhelming support, Warwick, Nottingham and Southampton also all look set to follow soon.’

Martha Rose, People & Planet

'READERS’ CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME.

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