

The Christmas Declaration

We, the Elves of Factory #5, having laboured for many years as employees of Saint Nicholas of Myra, have in recent days become dissatisfied with the state of affairs in our workplace. Having recognized:

- that mass-production in a factory setting has made our work uninteresting and sometimes even dangerous, compared to the cottage-based toy-crafting we were doing a hundred years ago, and
- that there are now so many children in the world that we must work night and day without a holiday all year round just to keep up, and
- that our pay is much lower than pay for the same work in developed countries around the world, and represents only a small amount of profits that our employer was awarded in his supply contract with Wal-Mart,

we have decided that the time has come for a change. This change is necessary not only for the benefit of the Elves, but also for the benefit of everyone who celebrates Christmas. We demand these changes absolutely. If St. Nicholas agrees to our demands, we will resume work according to our terms. Otherwise, all work Factory #5 will cease and the Factory will be kept closed by power of a magic spell.

We demand the following changes:

1. Dangerous chemicals will be handled by automatic robotic devices and not by elves. Likewise, reasonable safety inspections will be performed in all factories, and safety precautions established. When necessary, safety gear will be issued to all working elves.
2. Toy-making elves will receive a minimum of one month of holidays each year, and one day off per week, with no exceptions. Overtime can be refused by any elf who does not want it. Furthermore, elves will no longer be expected to clean the reindeer stables without extra pay.
3. The elves will receive a 10% cut of the total profits from the Wal-Mart supply contract agreement.
4. Elves will from now on be involved in the design of toys, instead of only in making them. Elven designs will be given an equal chance to compete in the marketplace, and popular elven designs will result in a reasonable share of the profits for the designer.
5. Elves will no longer be expected to wear the ridiculous green uniforms of days past. From now on, elves can dress however they like for work.
6. Elves will be treated with dignity and respect. Elves will no longer be called racist names like "shorty" or "pointy-ears" while working in the Factory. It is our work that makes Christmas possible each year, and it is time we are treated like it.

Questions for Small Group Discussion

1. What kind of document is this? Who has written it, and why?
2. Do you ever feel this way? About what?
3. What do you do about these feelings, if anything?

The example document is mostly a joke. However, there are social groups who do face serious difficulties and/or injustices.

Your job for the duration of this exercise is to choose one of these groups. They could be elementary schoolchildren, stay-at-home moms, illegal foreign workers, office workers, university students, dogs or cats, or members of any other social group who might want to speak out about problems and make some demands of society.

With your group, suggest a few possible groups, and then choose one. Put yourselves in their shoes, and go through the following steps:

1. Make a list of their problems or troubles.
2. Decide what they will do to bring about change
3. List their demands of society or of whatever group of people they're dealing with.

One week from today you will be making a group presentation on this topic. You will also be submitting a document similar to The Christmas Declaration to me for evaluation.