”You Made It; You Deal with It”
Annie Leonard – “The Story of Electronics”

1. Have you ever noticed how often you have to buy a new phone or new computer? Why do they break so easily and get out-of-date so quickly?

2. We used to be able to fix things when they broke, but these days it’s cheaper to throw it away (or recycle it) and buy a new one. Why aren’t products made to last?

3. What happens when you throw away or recycle your electronics? Who pays for that?

4. Who pays for the health of the workers who make the product?

5. Workers in China or Nigeria break open recycled electronics to remove valuable metals; then they burn the rest.

6. What effects does that have on the people, air, and water? Who absorbs that “cost”?
7. Corporations want to “externalize” as many costs as possible. In other words, they don’t want to have to take responsibility for the hidden costs of their products. They leave those costs for other people (including future generations) to pay.

8. Because corporations want to make as much money as possible, they make products that have to be replaced every year or two. Their profits keep increasing partly because they don’t have to take responsibility for the pollution and health problems that their products cause.

9. In some countries, people have fought for “Take Back” laws. They say to the corporation, “You made it; you deal with it.” This provides an incentive for the corporation to make the products that last longer, are less toxic, and are easier to dispose of.

10. Some consumer advocates are pushing corporations to make products that are designed to last—instead of designed for the dump.

**Extension Activities**

**What is the main idea** of this cartoon? Write a one-sentence summary.

**Discuss the idea of “planned obsolescence.”** (This is when manufacturers design things purposely not to last.) How does planned obsolescence affect you?

**Who do you think** should take responsibility for the hidden costs of electronic products being made today?

**Research the “Take Back” laws** in your state, in the U.S., and around the world. Share what you learn.

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