

Ministry comes to aid of local teens

So you want a part time job, do you?

This question is likely to elicit an anxious "Yes, do you know where I can get one?" from students in their early teens, kids who have suddenly found their \$5-10 allowance falls well short of their needs now they are faced with the financial requirements of a high school social life.

But with so many employers insisting their part time hired help be at least 16 years old, that leaves most Grade 9 and 10 students out in the cold. Baby sitting, the old standby of girls in their early teens, quickly loses its appeal when Friday and Saturday nights become the social focal point of the week.

This predicament led several Stouffville area females in their early teens to be lured by visions of \$25 daily paycheques for hustling games and rides for a mini-carnival at the Stouffville Flea Market this summer season. The outfit, called Sunny's Amusements, hires the teens on a commission basis, with the girls being told they'll receive 15 or 20 per cent of whatever they bring in for the day.

Not being accustomed to coaxing and cajoling for their supper, the girls soon got discouraged.

Not only do they have to settle for a paltry sum of \$8-10 for a Saturday's work, they are told to clean up the site at the end of the day.

Several quit after only a few days work, dispirited and feeling like they'd been had.

Sensing that something was a little amiss, I went over to the carnival site and had a chat with a young lady named Shelly, who is in charge of training the new recruits.

She insisted the operation was entirely above board, that the girls know exactly what they are signing on for, and that they just have to learn to make some noise to attract enough business to earn them a handsome stipend. It's just like selling cars, she told me. You sell, you earn.

But a call to the Ontario Ministry of Labour painted a different reality altogether. According to Bob McLelland, the ministry's media contact, the Employment Standards Act states that any business offering employment to students under the age of 18 must guarantee their employees a minimum wage of \$5.90 an hour. Commission is allowed, but must be topped up to the \$5.90 mark if it falls short. The only exceptions are for charitable operations or for work contracted out to self employed people.

McLelland said teens facing questionable employment practices at this carnival or anywhere else are encouraged to lodge an official complaint with the nearest Employment Stan-



From Where I Live
Bruce Stapley

dards Office in Scarborough. Or call the ministry at 1-800-268-9466 for direction.

Another ministry official confirmed that it was probably pointless complaining to the employer. Make a copy of your pay slip, he suggested, and go

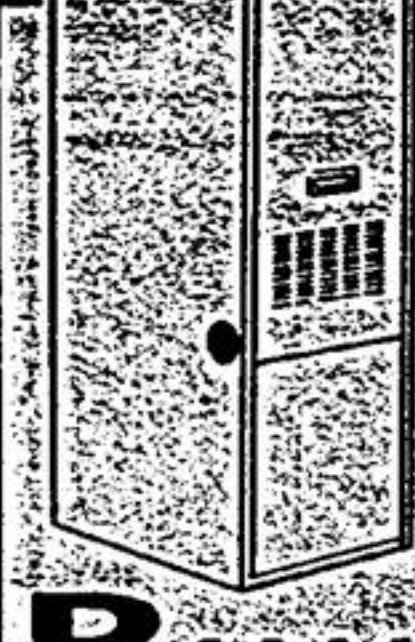
straight to the ministry. If you're willing to follow it through to the end, you'll get reimbursed by the company when they're contacted by the ministry.

A call to Flea Market manager Rob Shannon made it clear the carnival was solely responsible for the way it was conducting its business.

Shannon said the market simply rents the space, but has no say in how its clients run their business.

Shannon did say, however, that he would look into any situations where vendors were receiving constant complaints.

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