

Make (Fair Trade) Chocolate, Not War

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Wednesday, January 19, 2011

<http://politicsrespun.org/2011/01/make-fair-trade-chocolate-not-war/>

Day three of the five-day trek through five of [Global Exchange's](#) 2011 campaign goals orbits the dialogue around converting free trade to fair trade after exploring [how to reduce corporate control of our lives](#) and [embracing clean energy as we abandon our carbon addiction](#) over the last two days.

Transition from free trade to Fair Trade: Despite almost ten years of commitments from Hershey's to take responsibility for their cocoa supply chains and improve conditions for workers, significant problems persist. Hershey's lags behind its competitors when it comes to taking responsibility for the communities from which it sources cocoa, so we're calling on them to "[Raise the Bar](#)" and go Fair Trade. To get the word out, we'll be spreading the message of Fair Trade to thousands of families across the country through Reverse Trick or Treating and other actions throughout the year.

As [Canadian civil society groups are in Europe](#) to confront the rapacious agenda of the Canada-European Union Free Trade Agreement this week [the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, or CETA], it is important to focus on how free trade as a paradigm is all about reducing democratic impediments to unlimited corporate growth and control. I don't like that at all.

I don't think corporations should decide on how to marketize bulk water or exploit Canadian tarsands. Water is essential to life and cannot be commodified. The tarsands development will send us hurtling backwards as time is running out on averting climate breakdown. These policy choices belong to human beings. For the last quarter century, the free trade agenda has been all about ensuring human politicians abrogate our human right to decide policy for the sake of corporate decision making.

This must stop.

Neoliberal capitalism is a reboot of the origins of laissez-faire market capitalism from Adam Smith. Capitalism has only been a part of our society since 1776 when *The Wealth of Nations* hit the presses. Before that we had economics, markets, domestic and international trade, but it was largely governed by priorities that didn't put corporations in the centre, with significant exceptions like the British East India Company and the Hudson's Bay Company.

We can have trade without laissez-faire, deregulated corporate libertarianism. These days one of the most compelling movements to make trade fair is the [Make Trade Fair](#) movement, naturally, led by Oxfam. One of many fair trade movements in the world, Make Trade Fair is all about certifying that people involved in economic activity are treated with dignity and paid fairly. Often this means a whopping ten cent higher cost to a cup of boutique coffee. And by boutique, I mean ALL coffee. Small change for rich, caffeine-addicted consumers means a significant lifestyle improvement for impoverished foreign pickers.

And despite the fact that Dairy Milk is about as boring a chocolate bar that I can find anywhere, especially compared to the more expensive fair trade bars with more exotic tastes and ingredients, [Cadbury has received certification that the cocoa in Dairy Milk to be fair trade](#). I'm buying Dairy Milks

now, albeit sporadically. But before that, I've had a 15 year boycott of Big Chocolate.

So Global Exchange is confronting Hershey, that American icon, to live up to moral expectations.

We can do our share at Halloween and especially at Valentine's Day next month to let our socially-conscious people know about the [Dark Side of Chocolate](#) and how buying fair trade makes a difference.

In the end, if we'll pay a little bit more for fair trade luxury items like coffee and chocolate, that mentality should seep into all our economic transactions. No more sweatshops, only ethically sourced goods. That means doing a bit of research into how to do business [in a way that respects living wages](#) and even [stopping conflict chocolate](#)...yes, conflict chocolate, like conflict diamonds but with more caffeine.

There are more opportunities every month for us to spend our dollars ethically. If we care to do it, we need to put some effort into better consumer sourcing. And along the way, we need to fight back the free trade wave because in the end, we're all just widgets in the economic warfare of free trade neoliberal capitalism. To be real people, we need to put our money where our ethics are.

This is the third reason why I support [Global Exchange](#). And so should you.