

What's Wrong With McDonald's?



McDonald's spend over \$1.8 billion every year worldwide on advertising and promotions, trying to cultivate an image of being a 'caring' and 'green' company that is also a fun place to eat. Children are lured in (dragging their parents behind them) with the promise of toys and other gimmicks. But behind the smiling face of Ronald McDonald lies the reality - McDonald's only interest is *money*, making profits from whoever and whatever they can, just like all multinational companies. McDonald's Annual Reports talk of 'Global Domination' - they aim to open more and more stores across the globe - but their continual worldwide expansion means more uniformity, less choice and the undermining of local communities.

PROMOTING UNHEALTHY FOOD

McDonald's promote their food as 'nutritious', but the reality is that it is junk food - high in fat, sugar and salt, and low in fibre and vitamins. A diet of this type is linked with a greater risk of heart disease, cancer, diabetes and other diseases. Their food also contains many chemical additives, some of which may cause ill-health, and hyperactivity in children. Don't forget too that meat is the cause of the majority of food poisoning incidents. In 1991 McDonald's were responsible for an outbreak of food poisoning in the UK, in which people suffered serious kidney failure. With modern intensive farming methods, other diseases - linked to chemical residues or unnatural practices - have become a danger to people too (such as BSE).

EXPLOITING WORKERS

Workers in the fast food industry are paid low wages. McDonald's do not pay overtime rates even when employees work very long hours. Pressure to keep profits high and wage costs low results in understaffing, so staff have to work harder and faster. As a consequence, accidents (particularly burns) are common. The majority of employees are people who

have few job options and so are forced to accept this exploitation, and they're compelled to 'smile' too! Not surprisingly staff turnover at McDonald's is high, making it virtually impossible to unionise and fight for a better deal, which suits McDonald's who have always been opposed to Unions.

ROBBING THE POOR

Vast areas of land in poor countries are used for cash crops or for cattle ranching, or to grow grain to feed animals to be eaten in the West. This is at the expense of local food needs. McDonald's continually promote meat products, encouraging people to eat meat more often, which wastes more and more food resources. 7 million tons of grain fed to livestock produces only 1 million tons of meat and by-products. On a plant-based diet and with land shared fairly, almost every region could be self-sufficient in food.

DAMAGING THE ENVIRONMENT

Forests throughout the world - vital for all life - are being destroyed at an appalling rate by multinational companies. McDonald's have at last been forced to admit to using beef reared on ex-rainforest land, preventing its regeneration. Also,

the use of farmland by multinationals and their suppliers forces local people to move on to other areas and cut down further trees.

McDonald's are the world's largest user of beef. Methane emitted by cattle reared for the beef industry is a major contributor to the 'global warming' crisis. Modern intensive agriculture is based on the heavy use of chemicals which are damaging to the environment.

Every year McDonald's use thousands of tons of unnecessary packaging, most of which ends up littering our streets or polluting the land buried in landfill sites.

MURDERING ANIMALS

The menus of the burger chains are based on the torture and murder of millions of animals. Most are intensively farmed, with no access to fresh air and sunshine, and no freedom of movement. Their deaths are barbaric - 'humane slaughter' is a myth. We have the choice to eat meat or not, but the billions of animals massacred for food each year have no choice at all.

CENSORSHIP and McLIBEL

Criticism of McDonald's has come from a huge number of people and organisations over a wide range of issues. In the mid-1980's, London Greenpeace drew together many of those strands of criticism and called for an **annual World Day of Action against McDonald's**. This takes place every year on **16th October**, with pickets and demonstrations all over the world.

McDonald's, who spend a fortune every year on advertising, are trying to silence

world-wide criticism by threatening legal action against those who speak out. Many have been forced to back down because they lacked the money to fight a case. But Helen Steel and Dave Morris, two supporters of London Greenpeace, defended themselves in a major UK High Court libel trial. No legal aid is available so they represented themselves. McDonald's engaged in a huge cover up, refusing to disclose masses of relevant documents. Also, the defendants were denied their right to a jury. Despite all the cards being stacked against them, Helen and Dave turned the tables and exposed the truth by putting McDonald's business practices on trial. Protests against the \$30 billion a year fast-food giant continue to grow. It's vital to stand up to intimidation and to defend free speech.

WHAT YOU CAN DO - Together we can fight back against the institutions and the people in power who dominate our lives and our planet, and we can create a better society without exploitation. Workers can and do organise together to fight for their rights and dignity. People are increasingly aware of the need to think seriously about the food we and our children eat. People in poor countries are organising themselves to stand up to multinationals and banks which dominate the world's economy. Environmental and animal rights protests and campaigns are growing everywhere. Why not join in the struggle for a better world. Talk to friends and family, neighbours and workmates about these issues. Please copy and circulate this leaflet as widely as you can.

LEAFLET your LOCAL McDONALD'S - leaflets \$5 per 100, \$12.50 PER 500, \$15 PER 1000 from US McLibel Support Campaign, details below.

Please send me more information I enclose \$_____ donation to the campaign

Name _____ Address _____

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Independent Internet info at <http://www.mcspotlight.org/>