

**Fairtrade
changes lives ...**



**...and could
change yours too!**

Keswick and District Fair Trade Campaign

Newsletter No.9, June, 2006

Fairtrade Fortnight

Since our last Newsletter in February we have continued to be very active. (When have we not been?) The big event – perhaps of the year – was the afternoon celebration at Keswick School on 11th March with George Alagiah, BBC News presenter and journalist, and Shailesh Patel, of Agrocel, India. George was with us in his capacity as Patron of the Fairtrade Foundation, and Shailesh was on a Fairtrade Fortnight producer tour of the UK. Over 140 people heard George and Shailesh speak powerfully of the impact of Fairtrade on the lives of poor farmers in ‘the South’. Shailesh told us about the way the Fairtrade premium, earned from newly certified Fairtrade cotton, has begun to improve the lives of the very poor cotton farmers, with whom he works, in Gujarat. It was a very special and moving occasion to which many of you came.

In the evening over 200 people attended a second reception for Cumbrian Fair Trade campaigners at which George presented the award of Fairtrade County status to Cllr. John Collier, Chair of the County Council, who received it on behalf of the people of Cumbria. Cumbria is only the second Fairtrade County in England (after Somerset), but in terms of the amount going on here, especially within the tourist sector, is almost certainly the leader. Interestingly out of the 100 or so guest houses and hotels in the county which serve Fairtrade teas and coffees to their guests almost half are in Keswick! Which is why, in a recent Radio Cumbria Programme on Fairtrade, Keswick was spoken of as the ‘Fairtrade Capital of Cumbria’.

Though no more new Cumbrian Fairtrade Towns were ‘declared’ in Fairtrade Fortnight, there are several more ‘in the pipeline’,

including Kirkby Lonsdale, Grange, Wigton, Barrow and Cockermouth. We are in touch with all of these through Cumbria Fair Trade Network.

In Fairtrade Fortnight we also ...

... held another very well attended coffee morning on 7th March at Theatre by the Lake, when we played a very challenging ‘game’ of sharing Fairtrade Easter Eggs, before we ate them with our Fairtrade coffee! This was the third – and last – monthly coffee morning that we had held there this year. We are planning more in the autumn (both there and at the Wild Strawberry), about which we will tell you more nearer to the time.

Since Ethiopia

We expected that following the January visit which three of us made to coffee farmers in Ethiopia, there would be many requests for talks. But we could not have anticipated the level of demand! To date nearly 1400 people have heard us tell our stories on no less than 32 occasions. Of these nearly 1000 have been students and children mainly in Keswick, but also in Sedbergh, Kendal and Windermere. More talks are in the pipeline. In March Joe Human spent a day working with Lesley Lamb, Year 5 and 6 class teacher at Braithwaite Primary School, on Ethiopia, coffee and Fairtrade, a day which he describes as one of the best he had spent in his life working with primary school children.

Ethiopia October

We are beginning to plan our next visit in October to the village of Choche, Ethiopia, the legendary birthplace of coffee. On Saturday 10th June we held a workshop for those interested. If you want to know more about the

Ethiopia project, contact Joe Human on 017687 80047 or at j@human.go-plus.net

Membership and other plans

We now have nearly 230 members. But our plans are ambitious! We are now thinking about how we might double that over the next 3 years as part of our plans, 2006 - 2009. Will you help us? We are also thinking about how we can significantly increase the numbers of guest houses, restaurants, and tea and coffee shops in and around the town – as if there aren't enough! But as George Alagiah said, 'So, you have nearly 50 guest houses doing Fairtrade, which is terrific! But how many are there in Keswick?' Again, if you have any ideas about how we can do this, tell us, please.

Fairtrade Products

Do you know that there are now well over 1500 products bearing the Fairtrade Mark? For the latest, see your copy of Fair Comment (p.7.) The very good news locally is that both Four Seasons and Caterite are now stocking Fairtrade teas and coffees, and that the Coop and Booths continue to expand their ranges.

'A Monumental Struggle'

The Trade Justice Lobbying Group of the Fair Trade Campaign joined forces with activists from the Keswick **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** group in January. We are together determined that the impetus of the worldwide campaigning in 2005 for aid, debt relief and trade justice should not be lost. The giant leap forward demanded by campaigners was not delivered by governments, although their rhetoric still reflects awareness of the aspirations of the movement.

So far this year we have focussed on two questions: the first of these is the meeting of the G8 which is to take place in July in St. Petersburg (Russia is in the chair this year, as Britain was in 2005). The G8 meeting has barely featured in the press this year, and the agenda suggests there is little hope that much time will be spent on the issues which concern us. However, one of our members, Allan Sharman will repeat his feat of last year when he cycled to Edinburgh, by taking his bicycle to central Europe and then cycling to St. Petersburg: *nil desperandum!*

Our second focus has been the continuation of the Doha Round of talks at the *World Trade*

Organisation. These talks have notably failed so far to respond adequately to the needs of the South, the 'developing' nations, but the 'monumental struggle' (to quote Peter Hardstaff of the *World Development Movement*) is not over. The Lobbying Group uses what clout it has to write to the press (an extract from a letter appeared in *The Guardian* 11 May), and to the Minister responsible, through Tony Cunningham, M.P. The latest reply assured us that the British Government agrees with the proposals that we endorse (such as 100% coverage for duty and quota free access for the products of the Least Developed Countries), and shares our 'sense of frustration at the lack of progress in the DDA [Doha Round] negotiations.' There is some contrary comfort in that response, and in the recognition expressed by the chairman of the House of Commons International Development Committee that the WTO discussions constitute 'endless wrangling around the margins on issues which will not, in the end, benefit the poorest people.' Meanwhile we fear that the best outcome of the talks will be a failure to agree, rather than an agreement forced on the economically weaker countries. The one encouraging aspect of such an outcome would be that the bullying of the South by the North would not have succeeded.

Any member of the Campaign who would like to join our Lobbying Group will be very welcome. We believe that despite – perhaps because of – the gloomy depiction of the situation given above it is still important to lend our voice to those seeking economic justice on a world scale.

And finally ...

The Committee which until now has met most Tuesday afternoons for the last three years is changing to a pattern of fortnightly meetings, which will be held in the evenings, probably on Tuesdays. This will operate from the autumn, and we hope will enable others to join for whom meeting in the day is impossible, and for whom meeting every *week* is also too much. Please let us know if you would like to join and take on a small (or large!) project – the possibilities are almost endless and we welcome both new people and new ideas!

Even if you can't join the Committee, but have any thoughts about what else we could and *should* be doing – please tell us. We don't have *all* the bright ideas!

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