

What's Wrong With McDonald's?



McDonald's spend over \$2 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 multinationals. The company's sales are now \$40 billion a year. The continual worldwide expansion of fast food chains 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 processed 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. Modern intensive farming and production methods are geared to maximising profits. As a result, the widespread use of unnatural practices and chemicals has also affected people's health (e.g. BSE and food poisoning).

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 have no alternative to being bossed around and

exploited - 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. This suits McDonald's who have always been opposed to workers' rights and Unions. The same is true for workers toiling in sweatshops in China to produce McDonald's 'happy meal' toys.

ROBBING THE POOR

The demands made by multinationals for cheap food supplies result in the exploitation of agricultural workers throughout the world. 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. The heavy use of chemicals in modern agriculture destroys wildlife, plants and the soil. Every year McDonald's use over a million tons of

unnecessary plastic and paper packaging, the production of which requires environmentally-damaging chemicals and degradation of forests. Most of the packaging ends up littering our streets or polluting the land buried in landfill sites.

CRUELTY TO 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 short lives are cruel and their deaths are barbaric - 'humane slaughter' is a myth. We have the choice to eat meat or not, but the billions of animals slaughtered for food each year have no choice at all.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Food is central to our everyday lives, yet we have virtually no control over its production and distribution. The way we eat, and even the way we think about food is being manipulated by these powerful institutions and their sophisticated marketing campaigns. But despite strenuous marketing efforts, McDonald's is widely despised, and its 'reputation' - along with that of the food industry in general - continues to sink ever further.

Every year on 16th October there is an annual World Day of Action against McDonald's and all they stand for - with pickets and demonstrations all over the world. Together we can fight back against the institutions which currently control our lives and our planet, and we can create a better society without exploitation or oppression. 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. Environmental and animal rights protests and campaigns are growing everywhere. People in poor countries are organising themselves to stand up to multinationals and banks which dominate the world's economy. 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.

For more information, visit: www.mcspotlight.org

Please copy and distribute. If unable to copy, contact:
Anti-McDonald's Campaign, c/o 245 Gladstone St, Nottingham NG7 6HX

Your local contact (if applicable) is: