

# **Union Council Motion: April 2008**

## **Fairtrade Merchandise**

### **This union notes:**

1. That many famous high street brands have been exposed as sweatshop employers.
2. That the stories that hit the headlines are not one-off aberrations — worker exploitation is systemic in the garment industry.
3. That it is likely that our student union and university merchandise has been produced in sweatshop conditions.
4. That as of February 2008, Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Council's 'Ethical Threads' brand and 'Epona Sports', which has a partnership with NUS, are credible suppliers of sweat-free clothing.
5. As well as supporting alternative ethical suppliers, to improve working conditions in the garment industry we need to address the practices of mainstream companies and this requires grassroots campaigning for systemic change.
6. The Ethical Trading Initiative is an alliance of companies, trade unions and NGOs focusing on improving the implementation of 'codes of practice' on supply chain working conditions.
7. That the £1.2 billion bonus paid to Philip Green, CEO of the Arcadia Group, in 2005 was enough to double the wages of the entire Cambodian garment workforce for eight years.
8. That students can also be exploited in the workplace.
9. That the University of Portsmouth are selling Fairtrade T-shirts and Hoodies for graduates.
10. The University of Portsmouth, the Students Union and the City of Portsmouth all support and are certified Fairtrade supporters.

### **This union believes:**

1. That workers in every country should have positive legal rights as set out in the conventions of the International Labour Organisation, including the right to a living wage and to join a trade union of their choice.
2. That codes of conduct mean little unless the workers themselves can enforce decent working practices by organising in independent trade unions.
3. That students should be able to expect that the workers producing their student union merchandise have these rights respected.
4. That the student union should take what action it can to support worker organising and improve working conditions in the supply chains for Union and University merchandise.

**This union resolves:**

1. That all clothing (e.g. Hoodies and T-shirts) supplied to volunteers, staff and special event staff are Fairtrade certified. Furthermore, all clothing with a Fairtrade alternative sold at the Union's Copy Shop including Hoodies and T-shirts are Fairtrade.
2. That the Union shall contact its current suppliers and printers for all hoodies and tshirts sold at the Copy Shop and supplied to volunteers, staff and special event staff, and say that the Union wishes to be supplied with only fairtrade certified clothing.
3. That the Union will give the option to clubs and societies to purchase Fairtrade certified clothing in the form of tshirts and hoodies.
4. That the Union executive, including the relevant services/finances officer(s), should investigate the origins of clothing purchased by the Union ensure that merchandise is purchased from a supplier where employers receive a living wage, work in safe and healthy conditions and are free to join an independent trade union.
5. That the Union executive, including the relevant services/finances officer(s), should investigate the origins of University clothing and if necessary launch a campaign to ensure that merchandise is purchased from a supplier where employers receive a living wage, work in safe and healthy conditions and are free to join an independent trade union.