

# Right corporate wrongs

From March to October 2006 across the UK



**Lobby your MP  
for new laws  
for trade justice**

## Introduction: We need your help this spring to right corporate wrongs

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Two-thirds of world trade is carried out by multinational corporations. Today, many corporations have become richer and more powerful than some national governments.

Multinational corporations can be a force for good – providing jobs, boosting the economy and helping to protect the environment. But some do more harm than good. There are too many instances where irresponsible behaviour by UK companies has caused harm to poor communities, abused workers' rights and caused environmental damage.

We have a unique opportunity to hold companies to account this spring as the UK Government decides on new laws for UK companies. The UK Parliament will debate the Government's proposed Company Law Reform Bill from March onwards. You can influence this by asking your MP to ensure the Bill does all it can to make companies respect the rights of people and the planet.

Following on from an amazing year of campaigning in 2005, this is a specific opportunity for the UK Government to take concrete action on its promises to make poverty history and help deliver trade justice.

**We need your help – please meet with your MP face-to-face at some point between March and October to ask for their support to make companies accountable.**

**You'll be joining thousands of people across the UK for this exciting nationwide campaign. This guide will tell you all you need to know.**

The Trade Justice Movement is a coalition of over 75 UK organisations including campaign groups, trade unions, student groups, faith groups and environmental organisations.

[www.tjm.org.uk](http://www.tjm.org.uk)

The Corporate Responsibility (CORE) coalition represents over 130 charities, trade unions, faith groups and campaigning organisations.

[www.corporate-responsibility.org](http://www.corporate-responsibility.org)

## Background to the Company Law Reform Bill

### Why do we need to right corporate wrongs to achieve trade justice?

Above all, because it is companies who trade! We can't achieve trade justice without making sure that companies behave responsibly.

Trade has the potential to lift millions of people out of poverty by providing families with a livelihood and enabling them to be self-reliant.

But unfair trade rules and the poor behaviour of some multinational corporations can harm poor communities, workers and the environment.

When multinational companies are not held accountable for their social and environmental impacts, their business operations can keep people in poverty, as well as lead to human rights abuses and environmental damage (see examples below).

Global businesses also wield great political influence and play a role in shaping government policies at the national, regional and international level. These policies have a big impact on poor people and their environment. For example, it is often multinational corporations who are pushing for, and benefiting from, international trade agreements. These companies and their powerful lobby groups have often pushed for free trade policies to get access to new markets and cheap labour.

**We need new laws to help UK companies act as a positive force and to ensure they are held accountable for their impact not only in the UK but also overseas.**

**We have a unique opportunity to do this as Parliament debates the Company Law Reform Bill this spring.**

### Give me some examples of problems associated with UK companies

#### **Tesco and workers' rights in South Africa**

ActionAid's 2005 research in South Africa shows that as Tesco has pushed down prices paid to farmers and demanded tougher supply conditions, the rights of thousands of casual women fruit pickers have been violated. Women working on farms supplying Tesco reported dangerous exposure to pesticides, lack of protective equipment, poverty wages, long hours, and increasingly insecure employment. Although Tesco has started to work with local organisations to address the problem, it has taken more than two years of campaigning to achieve this.

*More at: [www.actionaid.org.uk/doc\\_lib/14\\_1\\_rotten\\_fruit.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org.uk/doc_lib/14_1_rotten_fruit.pdf)*

#### **Supermarket use of palm oil and environmental degradation**

Friends of the Earth's research in South East Asia shows that the increasing establishment of palm oil plantations has resulted in deforestation, destroying the habitat of orang-utans and also leading to human rights abuses and violent conflict. Palm oil is used in one in ten supermarket products. But few British supermarkets have agreed to Friends of the Earth's requests for them to adopt minimum standards to ensure their palm oil comes from sustainable, non-destructive sources.

*More at: [www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/oil\\_for\\_ape\\_summary.pdf](http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/oil_for_ape_summary.pdf)*

#### **Gas flaring and pollution by Shell in Nigeria**

Despite the legal prohibition of gas flaring in Nigeria since 1984, Shell has continued with this method of disposing of by-products of its oil-drilling activities, causing severe environmental and health problems for the people of the Niger Delta. Whilst Shell has committed to eliminating gas flaring in the Delta by 2008, this harmful activity has

actually increased since 2003, and the company has repeatedly ignored orders issued by the Nigerian Government for it to pay compensation for the extensive environmental damage caused.

*More at: [www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/lessons\\_not\\_learned.pdf](http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/lessons_not_learned.pdf)*

#### **Tobacco farmers suffer pesticide exposure supplying British American Tobacco**

Many farmers growing tobacco in Brazil and Kenya have suffered health problems in recent years, which they link to their use of harmful pesticides sold to them by British American Tobacco (BAT). Farmers have experienced skin rashes, chest pains and breathing difficulties due to the pesticides. Although BAT recommended farmers use protective clothing, many could not afford it. Raising in public the issues faced by BAT-contracted farmers has led to some change. But without legislation, improving the lives of many farmers will be a hit-and-miss process.

*More at: [http://www.pressureworks.org/tradejustice/features/casestudy\\_bat.html](http://www.pressureworks.org/tradejustice/features/casestudy_bat.html)*

These examples show that even UK companies who promote their ethical codes of conduct continue to be implicated in irresponsible behaviour in the UK and overseas. In spite of this, the UK Government argues that this voluntary approach is working.

We are calling on the UK Government to introduce new laws to ensure all UK companies act as a positive force and ensure they do not harm the rights of workers, communities or the environment.

#### **Why now? The Company Law Reform Bill in brief**

From March 2006, the House of Commons will debate the Company Law Reform Bill – the biggest shake-up of laws on companies for 150 years. If amended, it could ensure UK companies are held responsible for their impact on people and the planet.

At present, the Government's proposed Bill will oblige directors of companies to put profits to shareholders above all other concerns, whilst having regard to the interests of employees, the community and the environment.

But it does not oblige directors to act on this and does not address problems that may arise when the social and environmental impact of a company's actions conflict with its obligation to make a profit.

## What are we calling for?

We want to see the Company Law Reform Bill amended so that:

- **Companies are legally required to report on their social and environmental impacts.** All companies are required by law to produce annual financial reports. We believe companies should also have to report on how their activities have affected employees, communities and their environment, both in the UK and overseas. It will then be easier to make sure all companies act responsibly.
- **Directors are legally obliged to minimise any damage their company does to local communities and the environment.** The current company law requires directors to put profits first, and communities and the environment second. Directors should be required by law to take steps to consider and minimise their company's negative social and environmental impacts.
- **People overseas who are harmed by the activities of a UK company are able to take action against them in a UK court.** Citizens and communities abroad who are harmed by the activities of UK companies or their foreign partners, should have the right to seek compensation in a UK court, if they are denied access to justice at home. We want to make sure there are provisions for this under UK law.

## What can I do?

**Please meet with your MP sometime between March and October 2006. Ask him or her to support our campaign to right corporate wrongs by taking the actions below.**

If you can't meet with your MP, please do write to him or her. Use the information in this pack to help you.

Find events or join supporters near you at [www.tjm.org.uk/lobbies](http://www.tjm.org.uk/lobbies), or phone an organisation listed at the back of this pack. To advertise details of your lobby email [lobbies@tjm.org.uk](mailto:lobbies@tjm.org.uk).

## What should I ask my MP to do?

**Please ask your MP to:**

- 1) Write to Rt. Hon. Margaret Hodge MP, the Minister responsible for the Bill, about your concerns
- 2) Sign Early Day Motion\* 697 'Modernising Company Law' if your MP has not already done so
- 3) Support the Trade Justice Movement and CORE's amendments to the Company Law Reform Bill.

Don't forget to give your MP the 'Request to MP' sheet on page 16.

It is crucial that we get MPs to act in support of our demands. The Government will then face real pressure to change the Bill. You will not be on your own. Thousands of people across the country will be meeting with their MPs between March and October to ask them to show their support for trade justice.

*\*An Early Day Motion (EDM) is like a petition that MPs can sign to show support for something. The greater the number of MPs who sign an EDM, the greater pressure on Government to act.*

## Lobbying your MP

Don't be intimidated by lobbying your MP. All you need to do is meet with your MP face-to-face and ask him or her to represent your concerns to make companies work for people and planet. They won't expect you to be an expert!

### Who's my MP?

It's easy to find your MP – call the House of Commons information line on 020 7219 4272, or visit [www.locata.co.uk/commons](http://www.locata.co.uk/commons) and type in your postcode.

### How can I contact my MP?

Simply phone, email or write to your MP's office to arrange a meeting. After all, they are there to represent you! Many MPs hold weekend surgeries in their constituency, so you could arrange an appointment during one of these.

If you really cannot meet your MP, please do put your concerns a letter instead. Anything you can do will help make a difference. You can write to them at: House of Commons, Westminster, London, SW1A 0AA.

### When should I meet my MP?

Please arrange to meet your MP any time between March and October. This is the prime opportunity for them to influence the proposed Company Law Reform Bill. MPs have a summer recess from 25 July until 9 October, so some MPs may be unavailable during this time. On the other hand, some MPs use this time to do more constituency work. See what their office suggests.

### What does my MP already think about the Company Law Reform Bill?

It's a good idea to find out a bit about your MP before you meet him or her. Try searching for them at [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk) or [www.google.co.uk](http://www.google.co.uk).

You can check whether they have already signed the parliamentary Early Day Motion we are calling on MPs to support, EDM 697 'Modernising Company Law'. Go to [www.edmi.parliament.uk](http://www.edmi.parliament.uk).

### What do I say?

The first thing to emphasise is that you really don't have to be an expert. MPs have to keep up to date on many issues and cannot be an expert on everything. You may know more than him or her!

You don't need to be intimidated by your MP – they meet with constituents all the time and they're keen to meet with you. After all, they want to make sure you'll vote for them at the next election.

It's worth thinking through the key things you want to say in advance. You can read the questions and answers on pages 9-12 for more information.

**Above all, make sure you are clear about exactly what you would like your MP to do as result of the meeting.** (See box on page 5 and the 'Request to MP' sheet)

You could mention:

- The support for trade justice amongst any local group, church, trade union or school that you are connected with
- Why you are concerned about righting corporate wrongs (see examples of corporate

- wrongs on pages 3-4)
- You're doing this as part of the Trade Justice Movement's campaign. Thousands of people are also lobbying their MP across the UK
  - That the Company Law Reform Bill is a unique opportunity for your MP to take action.

#### Other tips for a successful meeting:

- Keep it simple – make some notes in advance and stick to your main points
- If your MP asks a question you can't answer, offer to find out more and get back to them (see the back page for a list of organisations you can contact)
- Take notes if you can
- Give your MP the 'Request to MP' sheet and make sure he or she commits to take at least one of the actions.

#### What do I do after the meeting?

Thank your MP for the meeting and tell them you will be in touch to follow-up any action that was agreed. Please tell us how it went by completing a feedback form at: [www.tjm.org.uk](http://www.tjm.org.uk) or contacting any of the organisations listed on the back page.

#### Join up with other local supporters and groups to lobby your MP

Look out for local groups of the organisations listed on the back page in case you can link up with other campaigners in your area. It will make a bigger impact, and show the diversity of people who care about this issue if you join together to lobby your MP.

To join with local groups or supporters near you visit [www.tjm.org.uk/lobbies](http://www.tjm.org.uk/lobbies) or phone any of the organisations listed at the back of this pack.

To advertise your contact details or the details of your lobby or event send a short email to [lobbies@tjm.org.uk](mailto:lobbies@tjm.org.uk).

#### Will our lobbying really make a difference?

Yes, definitely! To maintain their seat in Parliament, MPs need their constituents' support so they have a big incentive to listen to you and respond to your concerns.

We need to contact as many MPs as possible. Some MPs are already sympathetic but many more don't know much about the Bill at present. You can help to give them the information they need to take action. That's why your postcards, letters and lobbies will make a big difference.

*"There is no more effective way to get an MP's attention than personal contact from constituents. The more MPs are educated and lobbied by our constituents about global poverty and justice, the more we will press the Government to take action."*  
John Battle, MP for Leeds West

#### What can we help you with? Information and resources available

Contact any organisation listed on the back page for more information and materials. The following materials are available:

- Postcards to send to your MP
- A4 posters to promote your local event or meeting

- A5 flyers to promote your event or meeting
- A lobby pack including tricky questions and answers
- Further briefing materials
- A 'Request to MP' sheet.

### A quick guide to the three main parties' policies on the Company Law Reform Bill

**Labour** – The Government believes the Bill already makes it clear that directors must consider the impact of their company on employees and the environment. They are keen to avoid being seen as 'anti-business' so Chancellor Gordon Brown announced at the end of 2005 that he would weaken requirements on companies to report on social and environmental impacts (see Q&A on page 9).

**Conservatives** – New leader David Cameron has said that the Conservatives will not be a mouthpiece for big business and that companies should behave ethically. However, their recent announcements on the Bill have not backed this up. Instead, they have talked about the threat of increased 'red tape' or bureaucracy to business and suggested that business should not be regulated.

**Liberal Democrats** – They have put a big emphasis on making business transparent and accountable. They are pushing for stronger requirements for companies to produce reports covering their social and environmental impacts, as well as financial performance. Unfortunately, they have weakened their policy on companies' obligations to communities and the environment over the last year.

Don't be put off by these official policy lines. Many MPs hold a different view to the party line and can be persuaded by constituents like you.

### Top facts

- Out of the 61,000 multinational corporations, only 1,500 – 2,000 produce annual reports on their social and environmental impacts
- Two thirds of global trade is carried out by multinational corporations
- More than 750,000 people in the UK have signed a 'Vote for Trade Justice' action card. One of the demands of the vote calls on the UK Government to make laws to stop business profiting at the expense of people and the planet.

*The information below will equip you to talk to your MP about righting corporate wrongs. Please contact any of the organisations listed on the back page for further information.*

### **Is the Trade Justice Movement anti-business?**

No. We believe that if properly managed, the investments brought by multinational companies to communities in both rich and poor countries can help reduce poverty, promote people's rights, protect the environment and generate growth.

### **Aren't the current laws adequate?**

Far from it. At present, companies have a huge amount of power over the rights of employees and over communities and the environment where they work. They often enjoy significant privileges such as tax breaks which make it easier for them to operate. We need laws to ensure these rights are balanced with appropriate responsibilities.

### **Won't more regulations make British companies less competitive?**

All serious companies recognise that some legal standards are essential. Regulation can be useful in developing and maintaining a fair, level playing field for businesses to operate within. Furthermore, some companies already take consideration of their social and environmental impacts. Raising the bar so that *all* UK companies have to report on and minimise any negative impacts on employees, communities and the environment would mean that responsible companies would not lose a competitive advantage to less scrupulous companies.

### **Won't this mean more 'red tape' for company directors?**

The Bill would not explicitly tell company directors how they should go about monitoring and minimising any negative environmental and social impacts, providing plenty of flexibility for directors to choose a system that would work most effectively for their company. Several countries have introduced tougher regulation on companies and have not lost their competitive edge. For example, Sweden, Finland and Denmark have high levels of business regulation and were ranked in the top five in a national competitive index in 2003-2004.

UK business should be leading by example – doing business in a sustainable and profitable way.

### **What about small businesses? Won't they be over-burdened by increased regulation?**

Most of the companies we are concerned about are large UK companies with an international reach. These companies, rather than small UK businesses, are most likely to be affected by the changes we are seeking to company law.

Firstly, smaller companies tend to have more immediate relationships with their employees and suppliers and so are more likely to be aware of and could more easily demonstrate that they have considered any problems in their operations. Larger, multinational corporations have more complex supply chains, so laws need to ensure they put in place adequate monitoring systems. Secondly, any cases brought against company directors are likely to be for the worst case abuses. These are more likely to be brought against larger companies, which have more significant impacts.

### **What do UK companies think about the Company Law Reform Bill?**

We've been in discussions with some large UK companies about corporate responsibility and the Company Law Reform Bill. Although the Confederation of British Industry or CBI (the main UK business lobby group) publicly states its opposition

to new rules on companies, many enlightened businesses have privately stated that they see a benefit in ensuring there is a level playing field that requires all companies to meet minimum social and environmental standards.

**Will this mean lots of legal cases will be brought against UK companies?**

The changes we are seeking to the Company Law Reform Bill are only likely to result in the worst case abuses being brought before a UK court through shareholder actions. In the same way, only the most blatant cases of financial mismanagement currently land directors in court. Legal processes are extremely time-consuming and expensive, so there is unlikely to be a big increase in cases being brought for more minor issues.

Stronger obligations on companies to report on and take steps to minimise their negative impact will bring benefits to both companies and communities by raising the benchmark against which companies are expected to perform. This will mean that directors of UK companies will have to take a precautionary approach and be aware of their impact on communities and the environment in their planning and decision-making.

**My MP says the Bill is based on 'Enlightened Shareholder Value' (ESV). What does that mean?**

Enlightened Shareholder Value (ESV) asserts that the primary duty of a company director is to manage the company in the collective best interests of its shareholders, but with consideration of wider interests, such as communities, employees and environmental concerns. We believe that this approach is unlikely to stop cases of irresponsible behaviour, since it fails to explain what a company should do when its profits conflict with wider social or environmental issues.

For the Bill to help ensure that UK companies do not harm the rights of communities, workers and the environment, there must be clear and stronger obligations on directors to not only consider but also to take steps to minimise any negative impacts. We don't just want directors to think about these issues – we want them to act on them!

**My MP says I am misunderstanding company law**

The Government has responded to our concerns saying that we are confusing the purpose of the Company Law Reform Bill. They say we are confusing legislation about a vehicle (the company) with legislation about the journey (where you want the company to go). They are arguing that we are trying to put too many specific requirements on companies within the Bill and that other forms of regulation, such as environmental laws or labour laws should deal with our concerns.

We disagree with this. We are calling for general requirements on directors of companies to consider and minimise any negative impact on communities, employees and the environment. This will help to ensure that directors of companies cannot shift their responsibilities to communities and the environment to other parties or play off weaker labour, human rights or environmental laws in one country against another when considering their investment and operations overseas.

**Don't companies already have to produce social and environmental reports? What's the OFR?**

In March 2005 the Government introduced new regulations requiring the largest companies listed on the UK stock market to produce a report detailing their social and environmental impacts, alongside their annual financial reports. However, this Operating and Financial Review (OFR) was ditched by Chancellor Gordon Brown in November 2005 in an attempt to placate the CBI. In doing so, he has baffled

many companies, investors and civil society groups as many companies were midway through producing their reports. Now the Government is proposing that companies produce a 'business review' instead, which would not cover social or community impacts and make it more difficult for anyone to monitor companies' progress on ethical issues. We need to ensure the Company Law Reform Bill includes a requirement for businesses to monitor and report on labour, human rights and environmental issues.

**What about companies who aren't based or listed in the UK?**

Ultimately, we need international solutions to ensure good corporate behaviour. But 25% of the world's largest companies are listed on the London Stock Exchange. So changes to UK Company Law would be a first step towards ensuring our own companies and those listed in the UK act responsibly. This would also set a precedent internationally.

One way forward would be to have international rules on human rights to be applied to business through the United Nations. We are also pushing for World Trade Organisation agreements to conform to International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions that enshrine basic rights for all workers.

**Won't the costs of regulation be passed on to suppliers, producers and consumers?**

Most costs are likely to come in the changes companies may have to make to their reporting and auditing systems. These costs are likely to involve short-term costs whilst monitoring and screening systems are put in place. But since all UK companies will be expected to make such adjustments, no one company will lose its competitive advantage and companies should be able to take on board new costs without passing them on to consumers or producers. Ultimately, the changes we want to see will benefit shareholders by ensuring they have better information about their companies' operations and that the company has a long-term, sustainable future.

**My MP says the Bill doesn't deny justice to people overseas who are affected by irresponsible UK companies**

At present, the Bill will not protect poor communities, workers and the environment from irresponsible behaviour by UK companies.

We believe company directors should be considering and taking steps to ensure their companies' operations, subsidiaries and suppliers not only comply with local labour and environmental laws but also respect the rights of workers, communities and their local environment wherever they work.

At the moment, the Bill will fail to ensure directors do this, and offers no means for people whose rights have been violated to get justice.

**Aren't voluntary measures and consumer pressure making companies act responsibly?**

Some companies have put a lot of time and energy into drawing up 'corporate social responsibility' procedures and policies. But unfortunately there are some companies that hide bad behaviour behind glossy brochures and fine-sounding promises. That's why we need laws that will require all companies to produce thorough and useful reports on their impacts.

Pressure from customers has definitely helped change the behaviour of some companies, but only 5% of customers consistently shop ethically, so we need other mechanisms alongside consumer pressure to hold companies to account. Poor

behaviour by multinational corporations is too serious to leave to voluntary initiatives – instead there should be clear laws that set standards right across the board.

**Will the changes you're suggesting to the Bill mean that UK law will be applied overseas?**

Multinational corporations should respect the laws of the countries within which they are operating. The changes which we are seeking do not challenge national laws in other countries. The UK Government must make it clear to directors that they cannot hide behind their subsidiaries and suppliers overseas but must do all they can to ensure their companies behave in a responsible manner.

**Why should affected communities be able to bring legal action against a company in the UK?**

Communities harmed by irresponsible business practices should seek justice in their own local or national legal systems first of all. But sometimes this is not possible.

For example, 20,000 people died and tens of thousands were critically injured by a devastating gas leak from a Union Carbide factory (a US company) in Bhopal, India in 1984. Twenty years on, there are still reports of groundwater contamination. The chief executive of Union Carbide and the company itself have both been charged with manslaughter and 'culpable homicide' in India, but the charges have not been carried out as both have refused to appear before the Indian court. To date, few of the victims or their families have received adequate compensation.

Examples like this demonstrate why communities affected by corporate irresponsibility should be able to get justice in the home courts of the company responsible.

**What about the world trade talks?**

We will still be keeping a close eye on world trade talks. Further World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations are taking place this spring. Although the UK Government has shifted its rhetoric to agree with the Trade Justice Movement that poor countries should not be forced to open their markets, we now need to see it influencing its European allies and ensure these words are put into action.

**How are multinational corporations influencing and benefiting from World Trade Organisation talks?**

Over recent years many multinational corporations have used their influence to push rich and poor country governments to negotiate trade rules that will benefit their business. For example, corporate lobby group the European Services Forum (ESF), which represents EU services companies such as Barclays and British Telecom, has privileged access to high-level EU trade policymakers. The ESF has been pressuring EU officials to force poor countries into opening up their markets for services through WTO talks.

The ESF's lobbying appears to have paid off. Despite huge opposition from developing countries, the EU succeeded in getting a new agreement on services at the WTO summit in Hong Kong in December 2005. This will mean that developing countries will be under greater pressure to open their markets for services, including water, healthcare and education.

This is why we need to stop rich country governments from pushing poor countries to open their markets, alongside rules to stop companies profiting at the expense of people and the planet.

### Media coverage

MPs love any local radio, newspaper or television appearances. So if you can arrange for local media to cover what you are doing it will make your MP more likely to put time into meeting you and will increase your impact.

#### Some simple steps to attract the local media

- 1) Contact your local radio, television and newspapers. Tell them of your plans and why it will interest local people. Send through a simple explanation of what you are calling for and why.
- 2) You may find the media will be interested in the simple story of your meeting with your MP, and the fact that it's part of a nationwide lobby of MPs. If so, make sure your MP knows they are covering the story.
- 3) Photo shoot – why not arrange a fun photo with your MP to attract local press or television coverage? Perhaps get a photo of your MP signing a giant petition in support of the campaign? Or plan a photo-stunt with bowler hats and props to highlight the need to make sure companies behave responsibly?

### Sample press release

Here's a sample press release to help you. Remember to follow up with at least one phone call.

#### LITTLETOWN CAMPAIGNERS LOBBY LOCAL MP TO RIGHT CORPORATE WRONGS

Members of Littletown Trade Justice Group will be meeting with Joe Bloggs MP today to ask for new laws for trade justice. They'll be calling on the local MP to take action in Parliament to make UK business work for people and planet.

They'll be joining up with thousands of people across the UK who are calling on MPs to toughen up proposed legislation this spring. At the moment, UK companies are legally obliged to put profits above any concerns for people or the environment, at home or abroad. Last year the group called on the UK Government to make poverty history. This year they are doing all they can to make sure Tony Blair's team put their words into action.

"More than seventy per cent of world trade is done by multinational companies, many of them from Europe and America," said Bethany Bilton, a member of the local Trade Justice group. "To end poverty and protect the environment, we need laws to make sure companies respect the rights of communities, employees and the environment."

Joe Bloggs MP said, "I know that trade justice is a big concern for many people in Littletown, so I will be doing all I can in Parliament to make sure their voices are heard."

**For more information, contact:** Bethany Bilton on 01234 567890

**Photo opportunity:** At 12 noon on Saturday XX March, Mr Joe Bloggs MP and the Trade Justice group will be signing a giant petition to call for new laws on UK companies.

#### Notes to editors:

- The Trade Justice Movement is a coalition of more than 75 UK organisations including campaign groups, trade unions, student groups, faith groups and environmental organisations. [www.tjm.org.uk](http://www.tjm.org.uk).
- The Corporate Responsibility (CORE) coalition represents over 130 charities, trade unions, faith groups and campaigning organisations. [www.corporate-responsibility.org](http://www.corporate-responsibility.org).
- The Company Law Reform Bill is passing through Parliament this spring. It is the biggest shake up of UK company law for 150 years.

## Organising a public meeting

If you want to do something more ambitious, you could organise a larger public meeting to lobby your MP. This is a particularly good idea if there are lots of supporters and groups in your constituency who want to get involved in the campaign. It will also make your campaigning more effective by showing your MP just how many constituents care about this issue.

### Here are some ideas for events you could hold to right corporate wrongs

- A public meeting with speakers and your MP: invite local business people or a speaker from a Trade Justice Movement organisation to speak at a public meeting, alongside your MP
- A High Street stall and stunt: organise a stall in your high street to tell shoppers about the campaign. Hand out postcards, dress up, and invite your MP to come and meet you at the stall
- A coffee morning: invite friends and colleagues to a coffee morning about the campaign and get your MP along too
- A games evening: organise an evening of bingo or unfair football to highlight problems of corporate power vs. people power – don't forget to invite your MP!

### Some tips to bear in mind when organising an event:

- **Speakers:** have someone from a local group present some case studies on corporate accountability and why we need changes to the Company Law Reform Bill. Or ask one of the Trade Justice Movement organisations to provide a speaker (see back page)
- **Venue:** can you hold the event in a local church, school, town hall or outside? Check if you need Council or local authority permission for the event
- **Timing:** give yourselves plenty of time to organise the event in advance and to make sure it's in your MP's diary
- **Local celebrities:** getting a local celebrity or dignitary involved will attract lots more people to your event. They could chair or speak at the meeting. Or invite a journalist from your local newspaper, radio or television to chair the event
- **Refreshments:** can you offer or sell fairtrade tea or coffee and refreshments?
- **Safety:** if you are organising a large event in a public space, inform the police and other authorities as early as possible and make sure it is safe.

**Don't forget! Publicise your event:** make sure you have posters and/or leaflets. You can order free posters and flyers to help promote your event (see back page). Get your event listed or link up with other local campaigners on the Trade Justice Movement website.

# Lobby checklist

## What can I do?

Please meet with your MP sometime between March and October 2006. Ask him or her to support our demands to right corporate wrongs. We want to see the Company Law Reform Bill amended so that:

- Companies are legally required to report on their social and environmental impacts
- Directors are legally obliged to minimise any damage their company does to local communities and the environment
- People overseas who are harmed by the activities of a UK company are able to take action against them in a UK court.

## Please ask your MP to:

- 1) Write to Rt Hon. Margaret Hodge MP
- 2) Sign Early Day Motion 697 'Modernising Company Law'
- 3) Support the Trade Justice Movement and CORE's amendments to the Bill.

Don't forget! Find events and supporters near you at [www.tjm.org.uk/lobbies](http://www.tjm.org.uk/lobbies) or phone an organisation listed below. To advertise details of your lobby email [lobbies@tjm.org.uk](mailto:lobbies@tjm.org.uk).

After the event: once you've lobbied your MP please tell us how it went by completing a feedback form at [www.tjm.org.uk](http://www.tjm.org.uk) or contacting an organisation listed below. Follow up with your MP on any actions they agreed to take.

### For more information

Contact any of the organisations for further information:

<b>ActionAid</b>	<a href="mailto:campaigners@actionaid.org">campaigners@actionaid.org</a>	01460 238047
<b>CAFOD</b>	<a href="mailto:campaign@cafod.org.uk">campaign@cafod.org.uk</a>	020 7326 5692
<b>Christian Aid</b>	<a href="mailto:campaigns@christian-aid.org">campaigns@christian-aid.org</a>	020 7523 2225
<b>Friends of the Earth</b>	<a href="mailto:stephg@foe.co.uk">stephg@foe.co.uk</a>	020 7566 1679
<b>Oxfam</b>	<a href="mailto:active@oxfam.org.uk">active@oxfam.org.uk</a>	01865 473123
<b>SCIAF</b>	<a href="mailto:campaigns@sciaf.org.uk">campaigns@sciaf.org.uk</a>	0141 354 5555
<b>SPEAK</b>	<a href="mailto:speak@speak.org.uk">speak@speak.org.uk</a>	020 7249 4309
<b>Tearfund</b>	<a href="mailto:enquiries@tearfund.org">enquiries@tearfund.org</a>	0845 355 8355
<b>Traidcraft</b>	<a href="mailto:policy@traidcraft.co.uk">policy@traidcraft.co.uk</a>	020 7242 3955
<b>War on Want</b>	<a href="mailto:mmcgregor@waronwant.org">mmcgregor@waronwant.org</a>	020 7620 1111
<b>World Development Movement</b>	<a href="mailto:tamsyn@wdm.org.uk">tamsyn@wdm.org.uk</a>	020 7274 7630

Visit [www.tjm.org.uk](http://www.tjm.org.uk) and [www.corporate-responsibility.org](http://www.corporate-responsibility.org).

# **Request to MP** **to right corporate wrongs**

## **Company Law Reform Bill**

We want new laws to ensure UK companies don't profit at the expense of poor communities, workers and the environment.

We have a unique opportunity to do this as the UK Parliament debates the Company Law Reform Bill this spring.

## **What are we calling for?**

We would like to see amendments made to the Bill so that:

- Companies are legally required to report on their social and environmental impacts
- Directors are legally obliged to minimise any damage their company does to local communities and the environment
- People overseas who are harmed by the activities of a UK company are able to take action against them in a UK court.

**As my MP please:**

- 1) Write to Rt. Hon. Margaret Hodge MP, the Minister responsible for the Bill, about my concerns**
- 2) Sign Early Day Motion 697 'Modernising Company Law'**
- 3) Support the Trade Justice Movement and CORE's amendments to the Company Law Reform Bill.**

The Trade Justice Movement is a coalition of over 75 UK organisations including campaign groups, trade unions, student groups, faith groups and environmental organisations.

The Corporate Responsibility (CORE) coalition represents over 130 charities, trade unions, faith groups and campaigning organisations.