

Boycott Action Kit



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Introduction

Critical consumers: the new political superpower

There are two superpowers today: the USA and the people opposed to the war. Many people realise that the way they can most make a difference is as a consumer. There are many examples of effective consumer boycotts, some of which you can find in this Boycott Action Kit. In the words of the Dalai Lama: "If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito." In our words:.. (Critical consumers are the new political superpower.)

Let's be aware of the power of our spending money, and let's get organised effectively.

How to use this booklet: No money for war!

This booklet has been put together as a source of advice for anyone who wants to take part in, or organise an action to inform consumers about how US corporations are shaping and supporting the politics of the Bush administration. It will give you some background for running effective boycott campaigns. But primarily it intends to be a very practical tool for becoming part of an emerging global movement on a local and regional level.

What you can do with this Boycott Action Kit ?

- Boycott: get a short historical background and successful stories
- Why a boycott of US products?
- Use it to prepare your actions...
- A TOP 5 suggestion of possible targets
- Reaching out to consumers
- Getting more people involved in your campaign and actions
- Get your story in the media
- Further reading

Translate it if you can. Let us know if you translate this Action Kit. We might upload it on our website.

...and please send us feedback on how useful you find it and what could be improved.

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Why boycott US products?

With the boycott of US products we want to press the US government to reenter the international community, complying with the rules of the United Nations and international law. With the military attack and invasion of Iraq in March 2003 the US acted as a “rogue state”.

With that attack they violated the UN charter. Today more than ever, US companies seem to have a major impact on the policy of the US administration. The US government policy has increasingly been marked by arrogance and self-interest:

Amongst others the US:

- refuses to adopt the Kyoto protocol to stop global warming
- refuses to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty halting all nuclear tests
- refuses and later bypasses –with bilateral agreements- the International Criminal Court to prosecute war criminals
- obstructs a Treaty for complete nuclear disarmament;
- undermines the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
-

These unilateral policies must stop now and all US troops must leave Iraq immediately.

As consumers we do not want our money to be used to fuel wars, environmental destruction or human-rights violations.

You can sign-on for the boycott on the website

http://www.motherearth.org/USboycott/index_en.php#pledge

History of boycotts

The term originated in Ireland in 1780 when English estate manager Charles Cunningham Boycott was “boycotted” by famine-threatened Irish farmers for refusing to lower rents.

Since then, boycotts are used to protest national or global issues such as unfair labor practices, civil liberties, discrimination, human rights, animal protection, environment, etc. by targeting companies’ practices or government policies involved in those issues.

Boycott action won acclaim as **a non-violent tool** with the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott organized by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the 1950s, which became a defining moment of the Civil Rights Movement for the Black community in the USA. It has become one of the means of protest used by peace organizations. Boycotts helped overthrow apartheid South Africa and end French nuclear tests.

Successful boycotts

Apartheid

One of the most significant boycott victories was the abolition of apartheid in South Africa. The boycotts of Shell, Kellogg's and Coca Cola among others had been launched worldwide to protest the racist policies of South Africa's government. The companies targeted prompted shareholder resolutions demanding divestment from the country. This became the catalyst for the abolition of apartheid in 1994.

French nuclear testing

Another recent significant boycott was launched in 1995 by the International Peace Bureau in opposition to French nuclear testing in the French Polynesia (<http://www.motheearth.org/archive/archive/boycot/boyidx.html>). The French wine industry was hit especially hard by the boycott because of its international popularity. According to Bruce Hall, coordinator for the Comprehensive Test Ban Clearinghouse, the boycott combined with the protests had a real impact: the number of tests were reduced by 25 percent. Additionally, French President Chirac committed to signing on to a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. France eventually ratified the CTBT in April 1998.

The McBride Principles : a long-term boycott

Some boycotts are significant for their length. The longest was the 12-year boycott of Ford Motor launched by the Irish National Caucus. It ended in 1998, when the company agreed to implement the McBride Principles. Those principles prevent US companies from subsidizing anti-Catholic discrimination in Northern Ireland.

Scott Paper : the shortest boycott

Occasionally the threat of a boycott can make a company yield to the demands of people willing to boycott. In the United Kingdom, Survival International threatened Scott Paper with a boycott because its plans for a eucalyptus plantation and paper mill in Indonesia threatened the survival of tribal peoples. In a letter to Scott Paper, Survival International wrote, "if we call a boycott, we will mobilize our 20,000 members, and it will also be endorsed by the Sierra Club which has two million members." In response to the threat, Scott Paper abandoned its plans.

More significant boycott victories in Co-op America's Boycott Organizer's Guide (See: Further Reading).

The Power of Boycott

Well-organized boycotts are successful most of the time and can greatly impact companies' attitudes and practices, and can consequently influence government policies.

A survey in the USA found that business leaders consider boycotts to be more effective than other consumer techniques such as class action suits, letter writing campaigns, and lobbying. They directly threaten sales and so the company leaders take them seriously – even if it's likely to influence a very small percentage of their customers. (Friedman, 1991)

According to John Monogoven, senior vice president of Pagan International Inc., a public relations firm, the success of a boycott action is more than just a decrease in sales. Very rarely is the impact felt at the cash register s. In actuality, they have problems with employee morale—employees don't like working for a company that is being criticized and questioned. For the same reason, they have problems with recruiting the top students from colleges and universities. And top-level executives spend a large amount of time on the issue when they should be doing other things. (Insight, 10/26/87, p. 44)

Since the 1990s, boycotts are becoming better organized and have gotten more media attention than ever before. As a consequence, they can be very effective in a shorter time period than previous boycotts. **Today, with the web network, a consumer boycott can be endorsed by hundreds of millions of people** (605.6 million people online in Sept. 2002 ; Source : Nua Internet Surveys : http://www.nua.ie/surveys/how_many_online/).

How is this boycott organized ?

This boycott campaign will be marked by the first International Action Boycott Day on April 15th 2003. The call for this international day was launched by For Mother Earth and has now been picked up by the new emerging GBP- network (Global Boycott for Peace).

Our boycott campaign relies on the dedication and work of volunteer activists, the support of enthusiastic consumers, and lots of planning. Once our targets have been chosen, we have started networking with others activists, organizers, community groups, and media to spread the message of the boycott and gain publicity.

We have a media strategy which is based on :

- the use of non-violent direct actions involving politicians as members of the European Parliament and national VIP. MEP took part in the blockade of Esso and Texaco petrol stations in Brussels, Belgium :
http://www.motherearth.org/USboycott/essoaction_en.php
- press releases about those actions with photographs for media and consumers
- informational materials (Resources to download:
http://www.motherearth.org/USboycott/resources_en.php)

1. Selection of Boycott Targets

We must be ready to justify why we chose our targets to consumers and to media. The choice of the targets answers two objectives :

- boycott US companies economically crucial to US government and/or US Army to hit where it hurts !
- boycott US companies economically linked to Bush's Republican Party and its war in Iraq

It appears that some companies meet the both criteria... This is why we are especially calling to boycott the US oil, car and airline companies which are directly linked to the US army and are driving the US economic policies in Iraq and other parts of the world. For the same reason, we are calling to boycott General Electric, which produces engines for US and British military planes and helicopters (<http://www.geae.com/engines/military/index.html>).

Amongst the complete list of the US companies targeted by our boycott campaign, some of them belong to the 30 biggest Republican Party donors in the 2000 election cycle (http://www.motherearth.org/USboycott/donors_en.php).

The US companies targeted are clearly guilty by association. They may not have directly pressed the Republicans to wage war on Iraq, but they must bear

responsibility for the government that their funds have helped to elect. They, as corporations, made their choices, and now we as consumers must make ours.

They have strong businesses and/or financial ties with the US government and/or the US Army. They are also able to exert substantial pressure on US government (i.e. oil, car and plane companies).

In addition, we have included US companies which are symbols of US imperialism such as McDonalds and Coca Cola for people who want to endorse a blanket boycott of all US products.

For the boycott resources (posters, flyers, ...), we have selected amongst them 12 companies, including oil, car and airline companies, because it is easier for consumers to remember fewer product names. They are visible, easy to identify and image-conscious. The complete list of the US companies targeted is available on our web site:

(http://www.motherearth.org/USboycott/index_en.php#companies)

As a result, we want the US companies targeted to pressure the US government into yielding the boycotters' demands (See "Why boycott US products?").

2. Goals of the Boycott

a) The boycott's effect

This boycott should pressure the companies selected both by impacting their products sales and spirits (economic and consumer-oriented boycott) and by attacking their reputation and media-image (we expose their complicity in the war in Iraq). The reputational impact is easier to accomplish as companies pay more attention to cultivating more socially concerned images. However, companies remain highly sensitive to any consumer concern which appears to affect purchasing behaviors.

b) The boycott's demands stated to the targeted companies and consumers

Boycotts that ask a company to agree a specific demand are more successful than boycotts that express general displeasure. This is why we have made a list of the specific demands we are asking in "Why boycott".

We have told clearly the companies targeted why we boycott and what actions they must make to end the boycott. (See "Letters to US companies facing boycott"): http://www.motherearth.org/USboycott/letter_en.php)

- 1) They have to exert pressure on US government to stop its war in Iraq and to make it cooperate with the international community. (See "Why boycott?")
- 2) The boycott is likely to be a long-term boycott, as long as the US government doesn't stop its self-interest and arrogant international policies. We will stop the

boycott only when the USA has endorsed all the specific points stated in “Why boycott?”.

We are also collecting the pledge of the people who sign the call to boycott US products on our web site. In this way, we are preparing to present numbers to the companies to show the support for and strength of the boycott.

c) The boycott time frame

As far as we know, the global boycott of US products is positioned to become the biggest boycott in human history as the opposition against the war in Iraq is gigantic !

But we have to consolidate our resources to continue this what is likely to be a long-term boycott in order to get results. We have to be prepared for an extended battle – boycotts can take years before achieving the desired result. (See “Successful boycotts” in this kit). This is one of the reasons to organize a first global anti-war boycott action day on April 15th 2003 to put together all the boycott forces.

Top 3 of actions for international day of boycott

Top 1

US petrol companies

Brands: Chevron, Esso, Exxon, Mobil, Texaco



US petrol companies are obviously linked to the US-led war in Iraq. For this reason, we encourage people to organise an action at a petrol station from Exxon-Mobil (Esso in Europe) or Chevron-Texaco. Together these companies donated 2 million US dollar to the Republican Party's election fund. According to the Wall Street Journal (http://www.motheearth.org/USboycott/oil_en.php#wallst) oil-industry officials say Mr Cheney's staff hosted an informational meeting to discuss the future of Iraq's oil reserves with industry executives in October 2002, with Exxon Mobil Corp, Chevron-Texaco Corp, ConocoPhillips and Halliburton among the companies represented.

Top 2

Let's come out with a similar poster across the world

Philip Morris Poster

Philips Morris International Top Global Brands : Apollo Soyuz, Bond Street, Caro, Chesterfield, Diana, F 6, Fajrant, L & M, Lark, Longbeach, Marlboro, Merit, Multifilter, Muratti, Optima, Parliament, Peter Jackson, Petra, Philip Morris, Polyot, Red & White, SG, Start, Vatra, Virginia Slims

(http://www.altria.com/about_altria/01_04_03_pmi.asp)

Philip Morris donated \$2.9million to the election campaign of the Republicans in 2000. They have not only brands in the tobacco industry : Miller, Kraft, Nabisco, Maxwell House, Kenco; Bird's, Cracker Barrel; Jacobs Suchard, Toblerone... Let us know which brands they sell in your region and be sure to inform people to stop smoking their cigarettes.

(logo's : Choose the three most popular brands in your country. You can find photos on the numerous cigarettes web shops as <http://www.discount-cigarettes-store.com/shopping/search.php>)



"ATTENTION, SMOKING CAN SERIOUSLY AFFECT YOUR HEALTH...
... AS WELL AS THAT OF IRAQI PEOPLE.
Philip Morris donated \$2.9 million to the election of President Bush"

BOYCOTT US PRODUCTS

Other US companies support the US policies and endanger peace:

www.boycottthewar.org

Top 3

Microsoft

Brands : Windows, Internet Explorer, Word

You want to participate in the boycott by sitting in your office or home? It is possible!

Microsoft Corp donated \$2.400.000 to Bush his campaign in 2000. Probably the biggest American monopoly is to be found in software: Microsoft. No wonder that Microsoft-boss Bill Gates is the richest person on earth. But there is a non-commercial alternative for windows now: the Linux operating system. Free, open and much more stable than Windows. These days Linux is as user-friendly and easy to operate and has as much choice in utility-software as Windows or Apple. Check www.linux.org , [www.linux.\(your country code\)](http://www.linux.(your country code)) or for a user-friendly distribution www.mandrake.com . If you don't want to dump Microsoft yet, try some free software that runs on windows: www.openoffice.org looks just like MS Office and is compatible with it, www.mozilla.org is a good alternative for Internet Explorer and www.gimp.org is just as good as Photoshop. Free downloads. A choice for free software is also a choice against patents and for free information www.eurolinux.org

If you plan to start the change to Linux, send the story of your intention or change to your network of friends and colleagues. Let us know.

Mobilising for your campaign

To get more people than just the organising core group (or even just you as one person!) to your actions you need to outreach. There are countless ways of letting people know about your plans and convincing them to join you.

Make a flyer and distribute it in cafes, bookshops - and other people's mailings. Hand it out on the street or at other demonstrations.

make a poster and put it in public places

invite the members of your organisation

make a contact-list of the activists taking part in your action and invite them next time

write an article to be published in activist/alternative-media

get the date of your action published in the listings and magazines of other groups and organisations that you invite to join the action

keep your website updated and create links with other webpages

send info, an article etc. to different email list-servers, and activist websites such as the Independent Media Centre <http://www.indymedia.org>.

create and use an e-mail signature about your actions

use your friendly press contacts to get your plans published in newspapers, radio...

talk about your actions in meetings and info-evenings

go to actions and demonstrations of other groups and organisations to invite people (use the flyer!)

invite your friends, family, neighbours...

These are some examples on how to spread the information and reach activists, and to people who are not (yet) involved in peace movement.

OUTREACH TO DIFFERENT GROUPS

Be aware that different groups and people may have different reasons for joining the campaign. Here are some examples:

Bar, shop & restaurant owners

In the campaign, these individuals –who are not activists- have been very important to visualize and communicate the opposition to the US policies and to demonstrate alternatives.

Development groups

Military spending cuts down on development aid programs.

Environmental groups

Environmental impact of war.

Families and parents groups, Medical organisations

Enormous military budgets cutting in social funding programs.

International issues/justice organisations

Violation of UN charter and international law. Use of double standards and hypocrisy around issue of weapons of mass-destruction.

Peace organisations

Opposed to wars.

Political parties & lawyers groups

Legislators are very concerned about the recent events and the impact for the UN & International law. It can be very helpful for your campaign to get politicians on board. It gives you a lot more credibility with mainstream press, the public and other NGO's.

Public spending campaign groups

Military spending

If your campaign is going to be successful, it is vital that you reach people who are outside of the activist "scene". This will show that there is broad public support for your message, and stop you from being marginalized or criminalized.

Getting your message in the Media

Through the years campaigners & activists have realised that there is effort and skill needed to get a campaign published in the mainstream and alternative media. These guidelines are to give you a start.

Publishing your campaign is not just about attracting attention to yourself or even to your political issue =. It is also about responsibility. Today you want to stop the violation of the UN charter and international law and get this information to the public and political leadership.

Be aware that members of the media - like all of us in some way - have their own agendas. You need to be aware that sometimes your words and even your issue may be manipulated, even by sympathetic journalists. In other cases your action may not be reported at all, however much effort you put into getting the media there.

Non-violent actions are very good tools to get public attention to your campaign

Before the event:

First of all, realise that members of the corporate press are not our friends, but also not our enemies. They need us as much as we need them.

Try to identify a contact person(s) at every media outlet, and keep him/her informed. Provide him/her with background papers, and let them know that you are committed to the issue.

Don't be afraid to ask about the needs of reporters: how they work, deadlines, etc. Please be aware of deadlines! Don't call in middle of radio-news, or five minutes before closing time of the news desk at the TV-station.

Always keep your message short and simple. Speak slowly. Remember your audience. Be aware that only a few sections of the media will give us the opportunity for a more in depth story, (for example some magazines or the opinion-page in newspapers).

Write a short invitation/news release with 'The Five Ws' in first paragraph : who, what, why, when and where. Always mention contact the contact details.

Create a 'visual' action. Brainstorm about the image you want to relay to the general public. Create a photo-opportunity which contains all the elements you want to communicate - five Ws! Think about the image when planning a protest or event. Make clear clean banners (black print on white or yellow)!

Remember that television and photos are the most powerful communication tools today. Camera people and radio reporters want a good interesting story, and – do not forget- they want (contrary to newspaper reporters) movement and sound.

Contact the wire services (AP, Reuters, your national agency) first, as they will distribute your story to TV, radio, newspapers and magazines. Wire services provide one of the best ways to insure successful coverage. Don't forget the national and international TV and photo-agencies if you can guarantee a good

story. A good photo-story might be picked up by several newspapers and reach millions of people.

If you have an important story, arrange for your own camera (Betacam, digital or Hi-8) and photographer. Absent agencies might be interested in your video-footage and photos. Send your pictures to the picture desk with your photo-story (with 5 w's)

During the event:

Radio news and news agencies cover events as they happen. Their news desks are among the first to call when your protest has started. Call them with regular updates if your event takes several hours, and brief them once it has ended.

Don't forget to appoint one activist responsible for the contacts with the media during the event, to give regular briefings, point out spokespeople and photo-opportunities, take note of their names and contacts, deal with press calls on the mobile, etc.

SPECIAL MEDIA TERMS

EMBARGO- give information under 'embargo' if it's confidential until a certain time.

POOL- release your photographs or TV-footage as a 'pool' so other reporters can also make use of them (not exclusive).

OFF THE RECORD- Go 'off the record' if you don't want this information being quoted (but be aware that some journalists might not respect this - so be careful what you tell them).

EXCLUSIVE- You can give a reporter an 'exclusive' story (one which you don't give to other reporters) if this might help to break the news. You might be able to give it to other reporters afterwards, but it's important to be careful.

ATTENTION: TOO OFTEN FORGOTTEN

After the event:

From experience we know that this is very often neglected.

Go from A all the way to Z

Please write news-reports and send photos to mainstream and alternative media the same day! In the ideal situation you have someone doing this during the action for news-agencies & radio-stations as they want breaking news. Have a final report mailed immediately after the action to your complete media list. Also post your news on your website and on your local outlets (i.e. Indymedia).

After the action, send an objective report to your contacts. Mention agencies on your action-report (for example TV footage and photographs through Reuters). This might encourage a local TV station or a newspaper to pick up the story.

Spread the word yourself, using your own media - your own newsletters or magazines, or information evenings and video showings. Publish it on your website as the campaign develops

Use for example www.indymedia.org to publish your story and pictures. Check your regional and local outlets for your 'breaking news' on the internet.

Further reading

http://www.coopamerica.org/boycotts/boycott_organizer_guide.pdf: This Boycott Kit is partly based on the "Boycott Organizer's Guide" written by Co-op America, a US nonprofit organization working to educate consumers and businesses on how to align the power of their buying and investing habits with social and environmental responsibility : www.coopamerica.org

ALL LINKS OF BOYCOTT CAMPAIGNS & RESOURCES

Boycott campaigns and resources about multinationals corporations:
http://www.motherearth.org/USboycott/links_en.php

Other Anti-War Boycott Campaigns

IDEA - International Group for Direct Economic Action against the war
International network to boycott companies involved in the war against Iraq

<http://www.boycottwar.net/index.htm>

BoycottBush.net

Campaign established by Ethical Consumer

<http://www.boycottbush.net/>

Adbusters.org (English/French/Spanish/Arabic)

Boycott Brand America

<http://www.adbusters.org/>

Other Boycott Campaigns

Stop Esso

Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, ... campaign against Esso/ExxonMobil

<http://www.stopesso.com/>