



INTRODUCTION

*Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number—
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you—
Ye are many – they are few.*

– Shelly, *The Mask of Anarchy*

On 31st May 1997, the giant soft drink company, Pepsico cut all ties with Burma, marking a significant victory for Burma's democracy movement against the military rule of SLORC. Pepsi had entered Burma officially on November 22, 1991, with a bottling plant in Rangoon, as a joint venture with Burma's Thein Tun, who had developed a reputation for being an SLORC businessman and supporting the military regime. By entering Burma, Pepsi was supporting the SLORC, which had engineered student massacres in 1988. The All Burma Students' Democratic Front, which had asked for an international boycott of Pepsi in 1990, renewed its call. Finally, after seven years of resistance, Pepsi gave in and agreed to withdraw completely from Burma.

The Pepsico boycott was one more example of a successful consumer boycott of a Multinational Corporation, a movement initiated by the international call to boycott Nestlé in 1977 by a group of activists and NGOs fighting to protect the lives of babies against unethical marketing practices of the baby food industry. The Nestlé Boycott, as the campaign came to be known, is an instance of the longest standing boycott against an MNC, with participants straddling the globe.

History of boycott

Boycott and ostracism are not new tools of the 20th century; the use of non-cooperation as a means of applying pressure against individuals and groups is not characteristic of any age or period in history. Ostracism appears to date back to ancient Greece and refers to the act of exclusion of an unacceptable individual from the fellowship of society through general consent. Boycott is a form of ostracism to gain a specific social or political

end. In 494 BC, the Roman plebeians, upset at their status and condition of life, withdrew to a hill above the city, and refused to play their part in civic affairs until their grievances were met¹. Around 1600 AD, women of the Iroquios Indian nation refused to have sex with their warrior husbands and bear them sons, until they obtained the right to decide on whether or not the nation should go to war².

Boycott is a means of collective passive resistance against a dominant force – when individual acts taken by a sufficient number of people united in a common belief have the force of collective action. In the past it has been used successfully against the state in numerous occasions. The Protestant Reformation itself can be considered as a resistance movement against the dominant theological ideology of the time. The seventeenth century saw numerous radical sects and movements such as the Levellers, the Diggers, the Quakers, the Ranters, etc. The Diggers for example sought to establish a political regime of complete equality, where all property would be common property. Their resistance was the equivalent of today's non-violent direct action: they squatted on common land, which they proceeded to dig up and cultivate. The Quakers denounced the abuses of their day in forthright terms, and did not comply with any law they regarded as immoral, resulting in hundreds of them being imprisoned.

The term “boycott” is coined

The term “boycott” was coined in 1880 by the Irish leader, Charles Stewart Parnell to describe the kind of ostracism that was used against Captain Charles Boycott by members of the Land League, in their struggle against

the English landlords. Parnell and Michael Davitt had founded the Land League to fight for fair rent, free sale and fixed tenure for Irish peasantry. The early victory against Capt. Boycott sparked off numerous other “boycotts”.

The case of Capt Boycott also underscores the difference between ostracism and boycott. While ostracism is more of a punishment, boycott is more of a strategy to achieve a specific goal. Commenting on the Land League’s, Benjamin Tucker, founder of the pivotal periodical *Liberty* called it the “Shortest road to success: no payment of rent now or hereafter; no payment of compulsory taxes now or hereafter; utter disregard of the British parliament and its so-called laws; entire abstention from the polls henceforth; rigorous but non-invasive “boycotting” of deserters, cowards, traitors and oppressors...”

Social boycott: inclusive rather than exclusive

Boycott is of two types: primary boycott and secondary boycott. Primary boycott is the personal refusal to deal with people or agencies, which when carried out by numerous persons for a common reason, becomes a significant force. Secondary boycott is the name given to strikes and blacklists. An example is a strike where labour union tries to persuade consumers not to buy from boycotted firms. This also includes picketing and other forms of persuasion.

While boycotts appear to be exclusive, they are, from another point of view, inclusive In part 2 of his three-volume work, *The Politics of Non-violent Action*, Gene Sharp lists three ways in which this inclusive characteristic of social boycotts can be used strategically:

- boycotts could “induce large sections of a population to join”, for example, the Gandhian crusade in British India, or the French Resistance movement during World War II
- as a corollary, boycotts could be used to induce people from cooperating with or working together with the object of the boycott
- boycotts would “apply pressure on... the opponent’s representatives, especially his police or troops.”

Economic boycotts

Sharp has defined economic boycott as “the refusal to continue or to undertake certain economic relationships, especially the buying, selling or handling of goods and services.” Strategies have refined these boycotts to include refusal to rent, refusal to produce raw material, refusal to supply and handle material, withdrawal of bank deposits, revenue refusal. However, all strategies are aimed at hitting where it hurts most - at the profit lines.

The most expressive form of primary economic boycott is the consumer boycott. The consumer boycott has become particularly important in current times of globalisation. Since the late 1960s and the 1970s, people across the world have become more conscious of their rights - women, consumers, the poor, the minorities. During this period, the Third World started the demand for a new economic order, based on equity and equality, rather than on corporate profits.ⁱ This phase also saw the growth of multinational corporations on the one hand, the increasing discussion in boardrooms of social costs

ⁱ However, in the 1990s, this demand has been overturned by the establishment of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

and benefits on the other hand. The word “stakeholder” rather than “shareholder” and “accountability” rather than “growth” started becoming central to these discussions as public awareness and pressures grew.

The consumer boycott is an effective tool of public pressure on and protest against multinational corporations, whose presence in several continents allows the boycott to go global. Patricia Young, a key player in the Nestlé Boycott saga, states:

A boycott is simply the intentional exercise of the power to spend or not to spend. We make buying choices all the time. More people buying less can be an effective form of protest carried out on behalf of others. The more who buy less the more power we demonstrate. The less we buy, the more we witness to our concern.

The growing Nestlé Boycott represents the civil society’s deepening belief that life is more precious than profits, and that corporates have a social responsibility which they must exhibit and adhere to.

Evaluating boycotts

Boycotts can disrupt lives of the people working in institutions that are being boycotted. For example, during the Indian freedom movement, Gandhi gave a call for boycott of foreign goods, especially cloth, and initiated the movement of the spinning wheel, where people spun the cotton into yarn, and wove cloth for their own consumption. As this would hurt the workers in the textile mills of Manchester, he made it a point to meet with them and explain that the boycott was not directed against them, but against a policy that forced hundreds of thousands of Indians into penury by forcing them to

sell cotton cheap to the British and buying it back from them at high prices.

Steve Froemming, in *Some Thoughts about Boycotts* lists four factors that legitimise boycotts and could be used to evaluate them:

1. *Just Cause*. A just cause is based on “higher” values, the common good, individual and group rights as they are best expressed in our times. In the Nestlé Boycott it is the health of millions of children that is at stake. Scientific evidence has proved without doubt that breastmilk is the best food for babies. When artificial milks are promoted in regions of the world where mothers cannot afford it, do not have access to clean water, fuel wood, cannot guarantee hygiene and sanitation, babies get malnourished, suffer frequently from diarrhea and other infectious diseases, and in many cases, die. When women are given free supplies of artificial foods for a few days, their breastmilk stops being produced, and thus they have no choice but to continue giving artificial milks which they cannot afford. Corporations like Nestlé often use doctors, nurses and other health workers, to present these milks as more scientifically balanced and better for the baby than breastmilk.
2. *Right Intention*. Institutions and systems that need to be changed, and not people in them, must be the target of the boycott. When the first group of Nestlé boycotters met with company representatives, everyone was addressed by their first name rather than by a title. While it had a distinct tactical advantage for the boycott committee in disarming the Nestlé people by removing them from the security of their assumed roles, it was also an effort to

humanise the conflict and remove it from an us against them mentality. It is important to remember that many values come into play at all/different times in the conflict.

3. *Right conduct*. Boycotts, even if they originate spontaneously from grassroots and gut-level feeling, should emerge only after other strategies of protest have been tried and proved ineffective, and should be part of an overall coordinated strategy. Activists across the globe had worked for an International Code of Marketing to restrain the unethical marketing practices of baby food manufacturers led by Nestlé. Later, in spite of the development of such a Code, Nestlé refused to abide by it. The strategies of the Nestlé Boycott were developed as the Boycott progressed in response to corporate anti-boycott strategies.

There must also from the start be a reasonable chance of resolving the conflict and the commitment of energy to make that happen. Most importantly, a boycott should have clearly stated aims and be addressed as best as possible at those groups most directly responsible. It must affect those who have the power to make the changes called for. It must differentiate between the workers and the management decisions they work under. There must be an attitude of participation in a process of working towards points of agreement and broadening the consensus, rather than coercion or battling “the enemy.” The aims of the Nestlé Boycott were defined and refined as the Boycott progressed. For a long time, Nestlé refused to negotiate with the coordinators of the Boycott, but when finally they did, the

coordinators were willing to work towards ending the Boycott if Nestlé met their demands.

4. *Competent Authority*. Competent authority must ultimately come from a higher value - some kind of universal moral principles not subject to the whims of majority rule, but having ultimate faith in the capacity of the community to arrive at a point in harmony with these higher values. The guidelines covering the overall conduct of a conflict should start with a declaration of common values and assumptions about how to proceed, and proceed to building greater and greater areas of agreement. Even if both parties do not start communicating in good faith, the process must ultimately lead that way. Persuasion to change must be aggressive in appealing to the public, where the ultimate power rests to make it happen, and to the opposition, to open it up to respond to public debate.

As Froemming puts it,

Boycotts can be a strong, effective tool. Like all attempts to resolve conflicts, they are dependent on the wider environment and there is no magic formula or assurance of success.... Effective nonviolent action is something more than economic warfare. And it is something more than personal shopping patterns. Numerous values always come into play and make decisive action hard. Conflicting information always comes out of the struggle and makes the search and commitment to truth hard. The best organised boycotts are those that make the conflict visible to people in the most simple, yet essential manner, and where the solution can be most immediately grasped.

The Nestlé Boycott

The Nestlé Boycott is the most long-standing economic boycott of a transnational corporation ever conducted. The Boycott was initiated as baby food companies, of which Nestlé was the world's largest, were aggressively marketing their products in Third World countries, where sanitary and economic conditions made these foods the harbinger of malnutrition. Malnutrition is the primary underlying factor in the majority of the deaths of under-fives in Third World countries. Many of these deaths could be prevented if babies are breastfed exclusively for the first six months of their lives, followed by adequate and appropriate complementary feeding along with continued breastfeeding up to the age of two years and beyond. Baby food corporations were however falsely promoting their products as superior to breastmilk. Their strategies included using medical and health professionals and other workers for such promotion, giving free samples through hospitals and health care systems as well as directly to mothers to hook them on to artificial feeding of their babies, using attractive advertisements and so on.

Following pressures by civil society, as well as the Nestlé Boycott, world leaders met as the World Health Assembly and unanimously (with the exception of the US) adopted the *International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes* in 1981. The Code clearly stated the superiority of breastmilk over substitutes, and laid down lucid and unambiguous guidelines regarding the promotion of substitutes.

The Nestlé Boycott has seen two phases. The first phase was from 1977 to 1984, when the Boycott strategy was defined and refined. The Boycott was called off when Nestlé agreed to all the terms and conditions laid down.

However, it was soon apparent that the world's largest food corporation was not going to adhere to its promise to follow the International Code. Monitoring done by the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) showed clearly that Nestlé continued to violate the *International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes* in many Third World countries as well as in developed countries. The Boycott was reinitiated in 1988.

Consumer boycott is

- Casting a vote every time you drink coffee/tea
- Casting a vote every time you eat a chocolate
- Casting a vote every time you visit the grocer



The Boston Tea Party

Various colonies made diverse plans to prevent the cargo of tea from landing. At Boston, the company's agents were "persuaded" to resign. When this did not work, and it became evident that the tea would be landed, on December 16, 1773, one hundred and fifty persons, dressed as Indians, boarded the three ships and threw the chests of tea into the harbour. As news of the "tea party" spread, other seaports followed with their own acts of resistance.

The Boston Tea Party, as the action came to be known, played an important part in the American fight for independence. England's response was the passing of the four Coercive Acts of 1774, which hastened the formation of the First Continental Congress - consolidating the American resistance to British rule.

Consumer Power

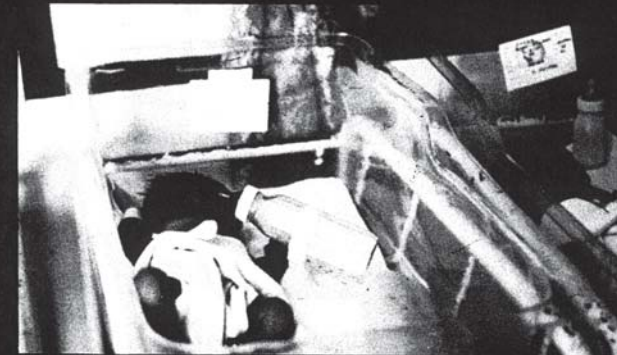
Some people would say that boycotts do little more than make the boycotter feel good. In many cases that may be enough. But a personal boycott can do more. As more people become conscientious consumers and create personal boycotts, more pressure will be placed on companies to match their conduct and actions to the behavioral norms expected by most consumers. The key premise

of conscientious consuming is that the collective conscience of people (their idea of right and wrong) is basically good. Most people share the same concepts of proper company behavior. Products should be safe, workers should be treated fairly, and all people should have basic rights. Governments may have limited powers to make these things happen, but consumers, conscientious consumers, also have power.

Consumers can create change if they work together in large numbers. A single person, taking a stand and creating a personal boycott can start the process of change. When numerous like-minded conscientious consumers join a cause, work together and convince others, companies can be forced to change their behavior. When united, thousands of personal boycotts have the power of an organised boycott. And organised boycotts have changed the conduct and actions of companies. When companies are confronted with the negative publicity and loss sales created by large numbers of personal boycotts, they will be highly motivated to change their actions. A single person with a great idea can change the world.

[www.conscientiousconsuming.com/
payoff.htm](http://www.conscientiousconsuming.com/payoff.htm)

The best start in life



..for Nestlé?

Every three minutes, Nestlé spends £18 persuading you to buy Nescafé. In the same time another baby dies from unsafe bottle feeding.

Nestlé, the world's largest producer of baby milk, floods Third World hospitals with enough free baby milk to ensure that newborns are routinely bottle fed. This practice is condemned by the World Health Assembly because it places babies at risk of life-threatening infections.

Breastmilk is free and safe - but companies know that unless they get babies on the bottle, they don't do business. **We can't let them get away with it.**

Wake up to the facts. Not Nescafé

For more information contact **Baby Milk Action**,
6 Regent Terrace, Cambridge, CB2 1AA

The Chinese boycott of American trade

Edited excerpts from "The Chinese Boycott" by John W. Foster, The Atlantic Monthly, January 1906; Volume 97, No. 1; pages 118 - 127.

THE Chinese boycott of American goods is a striking evidence of an awakening spirit of resentment in the great Empire against the injustice and aggression of foreign countries.

The boycott has not been a sudden outburst of popular passion, but is the culmination of a long series of events extending through a generation, and marked by various phases in the intercourse of the two governments and peoples.

The root cause of the Chinese boycott was the treatment meted out to Chinese immigrants to the United States. Citizens or subjects of foreign governments were supposed to be guaranteed the "full and perfect protection of their persons and property in the same measure and under the same conditions as citizens of the United States. Hence, under the favored nation clause, Chinese laborers and all other Chinese in the United States were guaranteed the same rights as to their persons and property as the citizens of the United States. These included the following provisions:

- No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.
- In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a trial by an impartial jury, to be confronted with the witnesses, and to have the assistance of counsel for his defense.
- Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.
- The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated.
- The privilege of the writ of habeas corpus shall not be suspended.

However, as pointed out by Justice Brewer in *United States vs. Ju Toy*, May 8, 1905, under the laws of Congress and the regulations of the Immigration Bureau the Chinese were deprived of due process of law for the protection of their liberty and property, of the right of trial by jury, of being confronted with the witnesses, and of having the assistance of counsel; and he characterised the examination or hearing to which they were subjected on their arrival in the United States as "a star chamber proceeding of the most stringent sort."

Such treatment persuaded the Chinese people to boycott American goods so that the impact was felt across the US. President Roosevelt, during his Southern tour in October last, set forth in his Atlanta speech the true remedy for our present unsatisfactory relations with China, when he said:-

We cannot expect China to do us justice unless we do China justice. The chief cause in bringing about the boycott of our goods in China was undoubtedly our attitude towards the Chinese who come to this country....Our laws and treaties should be so framed as to guarantee to all Chinamen, save of the excepted coolie class, the same right of entry to this country, and the same treatment while here, as is guaranteed to citizens of any other nation. By executive action I am as rapidly as possible putting a stop to the abuses which have grown up during many years in the administration of this [exclusion] law.....The action I ask is demanded by considerations that are higher than mere interest, for I ask it in the name of what is just and right. America should take the lead in establishing international relations on the same basis of honest and upright dealing which we regard as essential between man and man.

MAHATMA GANDHI

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who came to be known as Mahatma Gandhi - the Father of the Nation was born in the village of Porbandar, India, on October 2, 1869. At age 13 Gandhi married Kasturba, a girl of the same age, and had four children.

Gandhi studied law at University College in London and in 1891 was admitted to the British bar. Unsuccessful at setting up a practice in India, he left for South Africa as a legal advisor. In South Africa, Gandhi encountered racial apartheid. Disgusted at the widespread refusal of rights, he initiated his non-violent battle for equality and dignity, testing out his policies of passive resistance, civil disobedience and non-cooperation with unjust laws - Satyagraha - the Sanskrit term for truth and firmness. The newness of these policies stumped the South African authorities, who, in 1914, agreed to his demands for the recognition of Indian marriages, and the abolition of the poll tax.

After 20 years in South Africa, Gandhi returned to India, to try and put into practice there all that he had learnt. The passage of laws giving the policy emergency power to deal with supposed revolutionary activities sparked off Satyagraha. Gandhi's call for a national day of prayer resulted in the massacre of hundreds of Indians attending a peaceful meeting at Jallianwala in Amritsar. The Indian people reacted with a massive protest and strike. Gandhi was arrested and jailed.

Gandhi repeated the call for boycott of British goods and started the movement for homespun cloth. The spinning wheel became a symbol of independence - political, economic and spiritual from the yoke of colonisation. Gandhi's real understanding of India's poverty and his vision of the new India made him a saint in the eyes of the people, to whom his word became law.

In 1930, following the British imposition of tax on salt, Gandhi began his Salt Satyagraha, calling upon the Indian people to refuse to pay unjust taxes, such as the one on salt. With thousands of Indians following, he marched to Dandi by the Arabian Sea, where the marchers made salt by evaporating sea water. Gandhi was arrested again and was released in 1931.

Gandhi's strategies for achieving independence - whether it was the Quit India Movement, or the Swadeshi Movement, or the Salt Satyagraha, differed from other freedom movements as they offered each Indian a chance to participate in his/her own sphere. The Satyagraha was truly a movement that converted the personal into the political. Each act of self-reliance became, as it were, a statement for independence.

On January 30, 1948, Gandhi was assassinated as he was on his way to his evening prayer meeting. His teachings inspired nonviolent movements everywhere, especially civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr in the United States.

Nonviolence: why it works

Nonviolence succeeds because through organised disruption of the existing social structure (sit downs, sit ins, boycotts, etc.) the old order *cannot continue to function*. It must choose between violent repression and negotiation. Nonviolence doesn't work because it appeals to the "best in the enemy", (though it certainly always does make that appeal). It works because the "enemy" is not only treated as a brother or sister, but also because our tactics absorb the pain and suffering *even as we create social disorder so great that something must yield*. By behaving, always, with dignity we compel our opponent to see us in new ways, making it hard for him to use violence (though violence will be used - nonviolent social changes does *not mean no violence - it means we will not use violence but it is certain it will be used against us*).

And it works because it changes how the oppressed think of themselves - it gives them pride and confidence. And nonviolence empowers the *whole community* - it can be used by old and young, weak and strong, professors and those still illiterate. This is in contrast to armed struggle which is usually limited to the young and healthy.

Source: www.nonviolence.org

Montgomery Bus Boycott (1956)

“There comes a time when people get tired of being kicked around by the brutal feet of oppression.”

When the Montgomery Bus Boycott began in December of 1955 it seemed hopeless, but it was all the black community could risk. They had no support from the Federal government at that point, and they faced the armed force of the local (and state) police. No one had successfully defied the white power structure in the South - resistance was suicidal. But the black community felt the police would have a hard time coping with something as simple as . . . NOT riding the bus. What could the police do if people chose to walk instead of ride? And in Montgomery that winter, and that spring, black folks walked. They walked if they were young, they walked if they were old. They walked if they were tired and they walked if they were sick. If they couldn't walk, the Montgomery Improvement Association arranged for some transport by car.

At first the whites laughed. They weren't threatened by black people walking! But King and his co-workers were creating

new facts. One of the first facts was that blacks were learning that, even if they were still afraid, they could act. Every step they took was seen as a step forward to a new goal. One of the white women asked her maid, who was arriving at work by walking a great distance, if she weren't tired to which the maid said “my feet are tired, but my soul is rested”. A change began to occur within the white community, similar to the change Gandhi had been able to achieve in the British community - people who had looked on the Indians or the blacks as barely human, suddenly saw them emerge as people with dignity. With each passing day, the white community grew more restless and uneasy. No bullets had been fired by King's people. Yet the community in the heart of the capital of the Confederacy sensed something was changing forever. One of the changes was that the bus company said it was losing so much money it would have to go bankrupt - and this meant that *no one, black or white*, would have public transportation. Faced with this fact, the white community negotiated a settlement. Long weeks after it had begun, blacks and whites were no longer segregated on the buses.

Source: www.nonviolence.org

Public demonstration and Shelley

Shelley's poem, *The Mask of Anarchy*, was written in response to the Peterloo Massacre of 1819. This occurred when a large orderly crowd, including many women and children, who had gathered in St Peter's Field, Manchester, to hear the radical orator Henry Hunt, was attacked by yeoman cavalry and huzzars. Eleven people were killed and hundreds injured in what became known as the 'Battle of Peterloo' - an ironic reference to Waterloo. The poem combines a scathing polemic against the postwar reaction and tyranny in Britain with an explicit advocacy of nonviolent resistance to overcome it.

*I met Murder on the way -
He had a mask like Castlereagh -
Very smooth he looked, yet grim;
Seven blood-hounds followed him:
All were fat; and well they might
Be in admirable plight,
For one by one, and two by two
He tossed them human hearts to chew
Which from his wide cloak he drew.*

*Let a vast assembly be,
And with great solemnity
Declare with measured words that ye
Are, as God has made ye, free -....*

*And if then the tyrants dare
Let them ride among you there,
Slash, and stab, and maim, and hew,-
What they like, that let them do.
With folded arms and steady eyes,
And little fear, and less surprise,
Look upon them as they slay
Till their rage has died away.
Then they will return with shame
To the place from which they came,
And the blood thus shed will speak
In hot blushes on their cheek.
Every woman in the land
Will point at them as they stand-
They will hardly dare to greet
Their acquaintance in the street.
And the bold, true warriors
Who have hugged Danger in wars
Will turn to those who would be free
Ashamed of such base company...
Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number-
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you-
Ye are many - they are few.*

Procott

A procott is a movement educating and organizing around conscious consumer efforts to support the production and purchase of earth/justice-friendly goods and services. One can find lists of products that are often single-issue friendly such as the black pages, green lists and ethnic directories. These lists encourage consumers to buy from African-American owned businesses, from environmental-friendly producers and from multicultural sources.

The procott movement seeks to enhance the power of these lists by organizing people to consider our own choices as consumers. This sort of community education can turn a dormant list into a tool of transformation for a great many people as word spreads that such lists are available and as we work collectively to know how best to use them.

Values-Based Investing

This recent movement encourages investors to consider investing in stocks or mutual funds that reflect their values. Investors are invited to screen out companies that are related to the tobacco or arms industries, for instance and to select companies that work for positive change in their production, staffing and service. They also engage in shareholder activism and community investing to influence corporate decision-making. Examples of socially responsible mutual funds would be

Citizens, Domini and Pax World Funds. According to a 1997 study by the Social Investment Forum, \$1.2trillion in assets - nearly one tenth of all investments - were managed in socially and environmentally responsible portfolios.

Many consumers do not have savings to invest due to the increasing disparity of wealth in our country. Nevertheless, even small savings can be invested in many of these social funds, allowing our dollars to support our values both as consumers and as money-savers. The power of such economic discernment was shown when the antiapartheid movement successfully pressured major US companies including Mobil, Goodyear and Nabisco, to stop doing business with the apartheid government of South Africa. This pressure was instrumental in supporting the South African freedom campaign that resulted in Nelson Mandela's release from prison and election as president and the subsequent dismantling of apartheid.

For the procott movement, these examples demonstrate the importance of grassroots efforts of consciousness-raising and organizing around common concerns. Consumers, have a vested interest in taking charge of their lives every bit as much as women did in the 60s and 70s and the poor and working people did during the Depression.

Source: www.web.net/~procott/origin.htm

Swadeshi movement - Buy Indian Movement

Gopalrao Deshmukh of Pune was the first to advocate in 1849 the consumption of indigenous goods instead of foreign goods. The first person to argue forcefully in favour of the boycott of everything foreign was Bholanath Chandra of Bengal, who in the *Mookerjee's Magazine* – a well-known nationalist magazine – wrote an article entitled 'A voice for the commerce and manufactures of India' during the 1870s. The anti-Partition movement of 1905 that followed was one of the most creative periods in the history of modern India. This political movement gave a definite impetus to the economic movement for national regeneration. 'Boycott of foreign goods' was one of the main slogans of the time which spread like a prairie fire to all parts of Bengal and beyond.



Salt satyagraha, Spinning wheel and revolution

Mahatma Gandhi did two things which were crucial to victory. The first was to give the Indians a pride in themselves, a sense that they were not weaker than the British. (It is common when you are in an oppressed group to feel that perhaps the reason you are oppressed is because you deserve it - the old pattern of self-hatred or a lack of self-respect common to the oppressed, whether black, gay, women, etc.). When Gandhi led the famous Salt March to the sea (to protest the British tax on salt), this simple act - so simple it would have made the British look foolish to try to stop it - let all of India see this man with a handful of followers walk from his "Ashram" across India to the sea. With every step he took all India began to feel a new pride. When he reached the sea and began the process of collecting the salt (which could be had at low tide when the salty sea water had evaporated and left deposits of "raw salt"), he was arrested and jailed. But not before some of his followers had begun to send the collected salt across India where it was auctioned for money for the Congress Party.

At every auction new arrests were made until thousands were in jail. A foreign correspondent talking to a high caste Indian asked if he didn't find it embarrassing that someone of his social standing faced prison, to which he responded "Oh no, all the best people are in prison." That was the first step - an open, public defiance of

the law. A proof that Gandhi and his followers were not afraid of the British prisons.

The second step - both in this campaign and in the many others Gandhi led - was to create such disorder that the British were forced to negotiate. One of the actions Gandhi urged on his followers was the weaving of their own cloth, so that they would not depend on the British for imported cotton. (Up to that point the British bought the Indian cotton at a low price, then milled it and made garments in England, which were sold back to the Indians at a much higher price).

The spinning wheel and revolution

For Gandhi, it was important to have a "Constructive Program" which would involve all Indians in the movement. His use of the spinning wheel was a symbol of "self reliance". Gradually the British mills began to face bankruptcy as their exports to India fell. Gandhi was creating a new reality, was "changing the political facts" so that the British either had to engage in massive violent repression, or negotiate. There were many ways in which Gandhi created such facts - massive sit-downs in front of trains, general strikes, the famous "passive resistance" which so fascinated the West in the 1930's. Here was a little man in a loin cloth, unarmed, and yet able to bring the British Empire in India to a standstill. He could, simply by issuing the call, stop trains from running.

Source: www.nonviolence.org

Boycott for Equality: The Anti-Apartheid Movement

Forty years ago, on June 26th, 1959, a group of South African exiles and their British supporters met in London's Holborn Hall to call for a boycott of fruit, cigarettes and other goods imported from South Africa. The boycott got off to a slow start, but by the following March shopkeepers were being asked to stop selling South African products, the TUC, Labour, Liberal and Communist parties were backing the campaign, and twenty-two local authorities had banned South African fruit from their schools and canteens. On March 9th, 1960, Labour Party leader Hugh Gaitskell went on television to ask viewers not to buy South African goods.

Ever since the victory of the National Party in South Africa's 1948 general election, people across the British political spectrum had watched with alarm the introduction of legislation segregating whites, Africans, Coloureds (people of mixed race) and Indians in South Africa. Trevor Huddleston's elegy for Sophiatown, *Naught for Your Comfort*, sold over 100,000 copies. From 1955 Labour Party conferences passed resolutions questioning South Africa's fitness to be a member of the Commonwealth. In a move which prefigured later campaigns to ban segregated South African teams from world sport, South Wales miners protested at the presence of the all-white South Africans at the 1958 Cardiff Commonwealth Games.

This concern was part of a movement of support for freedom for Britain's own African colonies and of opposition to racial discrimination at home. The Movement for Colonial Freedom (MCF) campaigned for African and Asian independence; Christian Action, headed by John Collins, Canon of St Paul's Cathedral, collected funds for anti-apartheid leaders on trial in South Africa; and the Committee of African Organisations

(CAO) gave a platform to exiled politicians from all of Anglophone Africa.

In South Africa the African National Congress joined with the Indian Congress, the Coloured People's Congress and the white Congress of Democrats to fight apartheid with direct action, mass stay-at-homes and passive resistance. But by the end of the 1950s the government had outlawed almost all forms of public political activity and arrested or placed bans on most of the Congress leaders. So Congress turned to boycott. In 1957, the people of Alexandra Township walked to work for over three months and forced the local bus company to rescind a penny increase on fares. At its 1958 annual conference the ANC announced: 'The economic boycott is going to be one of the major political weapons in the country'. In the spring of 1959 it announced plans to boycott potatoes grown on farms using forced labour and launched a boycott of goods made by firms which supported the National Party. This was to begin on June 26th, the day marked every year since 1950 as South Africa Freedom Day.

The ANC was well aware of both the potential and the need for support from the outside world. In December 1958, the All-Africa People's Conference, held in Ghana, had called for an international boycott of South African goods. So now the ANC and its allies looked to friends overseas, saying 'When our local purchasing power is combined with that of sympathetic organisations overseas we wield a devastating weapon'.

One of the arguments used then, and later, against the boycott, was that it would hurt the very people — African workers and their families — whom it was supposed to help. Later this argument came to be used

by people who were hostile to the boycott; but there were also those, among them many trade unionists, who then genuinely feared that a boycott would drive down African living standards. As an African representing the ANC, Makiwane argued convincingly that black South Africans were suffering already and were willing to pay a further price for their freedom.

When the ANC, in the spring of 1959, asked the Committee of African Organisations (CAO) to organise a boycott, there was a ready-made constituency. CAO, with the support of a group of South African exiles organised in the South African Freedom Association, responded by organising a 24-hour vigil at South Africa House and the Holborn Hall meeting on June 26th.

By the autumn CAO's Boycott Sub-committee had evolved into an independent Boycott Movement, involving both South African supporters of Congress and Patrick van Rensburg, a prominent member of South Africa's multiracial Liberal Party, together with representatives of British organisations. The Movement decided to organise an intensive month of boycott in March, when South African fruit started arriving in Britain.

At this point, in October 1959, the Labour Party suffered its third successive election defeat. The party was divided over nationalisation and nuclear disarmament, and in an attempt to harness the idealism of many of its activists and potential recruits, it declared 1960 to be 'Africa Year'. As part of this, it supported the March boycott month. The secretary of its Commonwealth sub-committee, John Hatch, had recently returned from South Africa where he had met members of the Congress movement; the party was probably also influenced by the decision of the South African Liberal Party that the

boycott was 'a legitimate political weapon'. The Labour Party was joined by the TUC, which acted in response to a call from the international trade union confederation, the ICTFU. Of the three organisations which made up the National Council of Labour, only the Co-operative Union refused to back the boycott. However, some of its biggest affiliates, among them the Manchester and Salford, South Suburban and Royal Arsenal Co-op Societies, rejected its advice and took South African products off their shelves. The British Liberal Party also declared its support.

The Boycott Movement accepted that the time was not ripe for calling for a government ban. 'The boycott is essentially a gesture', it said, 'but it is a gesture of the greatest significance'. Its aim was to be 'a truly national movement, in which the people of this country are free, for Once in a while, to forget their domestic political wrangles in order to devote themselves to a great cause'.

Above all the AAM called for sanctions and for the total isolation of apartheid South Africa. Mass demonstrations forced the cancellation of the 1970 Springbok cricket tour and sports-mad South Africa was expelled from nearly every international sporting federation. British business was a harder nut to crack. But in the mid-1980s, Barclays Bank and other British companies began to sell their South African subsidiaries and exports to Britain fell as more and more people backed the boycott. For thirty five years, hundreds of thousands of people in Britain joined Anti-Apartheid Movement campaigns, until in April 1994 South Africa held its first one-person, one vote general election.

Source: www.anc.org.za

Philippine Farmers Boycott GMOs

Farmers launch boycott of biotechnology firm

May 22, 2003

By Ma. Diosa Labiste
and Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer News Service
ILOILO CITY -

In May 2003, over 7000 farmers from all over the Visayas in Philippines joined a nationwide boycott of farm chemicals and seeds sold by a US-based company. The boycott movement came after the end of a 30-day fast in protest of the government's approval of the commercial production of genetically modified corn (Bt-corn) of Monsanto. The farm chemicals came under the label Power, Advance, Round-Up, Direk, Machete, Maverick, Harness and Extra, and the seed brands targeted for boycott included Magilas rice, Cargill, Dekalb and Asgrow.

Genetically modified corn, or Bt-corn, has a bacterium "*Bacillus*

thuringiensis" added to its genes. The bacterium attaches itself to a cell and passes a new gene to the corn's DNA making the corn less vulnerable to Asian corn borer (*Ostrinia furnacalis*).

The DA gave the commercial approval in December for Monsanto to distribute and plant Bt-corn in the Philippines, despite protests from environmentalists and farmer groups.

Monsanto had conducted field trials of Bt-corn, under the label Yieldgard, in Mindanao. Bt-corn is the first genetically modified crop to be approved for commercial planting in the Philippines.

Masipag said Bt-corn may cross-pollinate non-Bt-corn, spreading their alien genes with yet unknown consequences. Masipag also raised fears that farmers would also lose traditional control over their corn seeds because they have to buy them from giant seed companies.

(c)2003 http://www.inq7.net/reg/2003/may/23/text/reg_1-1-p.htm

Nestlé warned by consumers of possible boycott over GMO products

Bangkok, March 14, 2003 - Thai consumers condemned Nestlé today for selling GMO contaminated food products in Thailand and warned the company of a possible boycott if it does not respond to their demands. The Anti-GMO Alliance, comprised of the Thai Consumer Network, GreenNet, Biothai and Greenpeace, held a protest at Nestlé headquarters in Bangkok and handed a letter to Mr. Graham Campbell, general manager of Nestlé Thailand, to demand that the company stop treating Thai people like guinea pigs and second class citizens.

Specifically the Anti-GMO Alliance demanded that Nestlé

1. Stop selling GMOs
2. Stop using Thai kids as guinea pigs
3. Stop double standards and stop treating Thai people as 2nd class citizens
4. Stop being a part of the movement by international corporations to control the food chain

"As consumers, we will not tolerate this

experiment done by Nestlé on our food. Nestlé's slogan is 'good food, good life' but they've been lying about this all along. They have never informed Thai consumers that their foods, especially baby food, are contaminated with GMOs. Nestlé said that Thai consumers don't really care about what they do, so here we are today to stand for our rights and demand that Nestlé treat us in the same footing as European consumers. Thai consumers know that Nestlé is selling only GMO-free products in Europe, they must do the same in Thailand," said Sairoong Tongplon, manager of the Thai Consumer Network.

Kraisak Sripanom, coordinator of the Consumer Network of Surin Province said, "We're giving Nestlé a deadline to stop using and selling GMO products. By 30th of April 2003, which is the Thai Consumer Rights Day, if Nestlé does not meet our demands, we'll campaign for a boycott of Nestlé products, and on that same day the network together with local communities from Surin will march to Nestlé to press for our rights."

According to Greenpeace, test results for two consecutive years have found Nestlé products to be contaminated with GMOs.

"Nestlé does not have policy to avoid using

GMOs in Thailand. Greenpeace has campaigned to educate Thai consumers to know their rights and use those rights to demand what's right for them," said Varoonvarn Svangsopakul, Genetic Engineering campaigner of Greenpeace Southeast Asia.

Nestlé hits back at critics of GM food

By Roger Cowe, Friday May 7, 1999

Nestlé, the food group with interests ranging from Nescafe to Polo mints, yesterday mounted a strong defence of genetically modified ingredients as well as its record on social responsibility.

The Swiss group is Europe's biggest food manufacturer and its baby milk is the cause of the world's longest-running consumer boycott. But the new chief executive, Peter Brabeck, yesterday attacked critics for their shortsightedness and emotional approach to health and food safety. Genetically modified foods (GMOs) were the most promising solution to world shortages and the safest products in the group because they had been scrutinised in such depth, he said.

"There are always risks. To be able to handle the risks you have to be close to the

technology. We would not be avoiding the risks by not researching the technology."

Mr. Brabeck warned that, if gene technology became established, Europe would lose out by avoiding involvement. "It is a pity if we leave to the US once again the leading role in a new technology, and we will have to look to them in the future for guidance."

He acknowledged the need to bow to local consumer demand and promised to provide GM-free products in the UK and other countries. But he added: "I still have the profound conviction that GMO is the technology for the future."

Peter Melchett, director of Greenpeace, questioned whether Nestlé could separate production for Britain, given its centralised manufacturing system. And he dismissed suggestions, promoted yesterday by Nestlé's rival Unilever, that only British consumers were concerned about GMOs.

He also referred to the dangers of HIV being transmitted in breastmilk. But Patti Rundall of Baby Milk Action dismissed his claims. "It is quite wrong to say that Nestlé's policy is more or less in line with the WHO code. Their policy is appalling. It is outrageous that he should raise HIV. Only a third of babies which are infected with HIV get it through baby milk."



Why Jane Asher won't buy Nescafé

"Breastfeeding is best for all babies - but for those who live in poverty it's a life-line. It appals me that Nestlé continues to promote their baby milks for profit, knowing that they are placing these babies lives at risk"

WAKE UP TO THE FACTS. NOT NESCAFÉ

For more information contact: Baby Milk Action (BMAC) 6 Regent Terrace, Cambridge CB2 1AA

What Is this thing Called Nestlé?

In the 1860s a young Swiss scientist mixed farinaceous pap with condensed milk, and made baby food. The young man was Henri Nestlé and the food “Farine Lactée”. The first merger, with Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Co. gave Nestlé entry into the British market and doubled his infant consumers. Nestlé was convinced from the beginning that to grow, that the milk market had to be created amongst ordinary women and not the rich. He did not advertise much, but pitched his promotion at doctors and chemists, and directly at mothers.³

In 1909, the company sent the intrepid Edouard Muller to Istanbul as a salesman. Muller promptly got the more modern veil dropping young women to work for him in promoting Nestlé milk. In four years, he had placed his representatives in Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Balkans, but was earning the parent company more than a million dollars a year.

To grab the market for its condensed milk (for babies) in South and Southeast Asia, Nestlé first targeted the expatriate population, and later, the local women. The company used local language and employed milk nurses to convert the women from breastfeeding to bottle-feeding, first arming them with Nestlé’s baby books. For doctors, the free goodies were sample tins. In Burma, the red dressed milkmaid came to be known as the Red Woman.⁴ Nestlé’s 1946 handbook *This is your company*

eulogises this work. “The true value of this form of personal promotion, although commercial in character, cannot be assessed against the background of Western culture with its advanced ideas of pediatrics, its welfare centres, clinics, hospitals and array of specialists ready to assist all mothers and babies. These nurses carried the ideas of elementary hygiene and proper nutritional care into thousands of homes where appalling ignorance prevailed.” As a result of such *educational* efforts in schools, by 1946 Brazilian children were hooked onto the use of condensed milk in sandwiches.⁵

In Nestlé’s definition, the upshot of such “education” was “happier motherhood”. “The families who buy (Nestlé’s products) and particularly the mothers want dependable quality, value for money and, above all else, purity and safety in the milk they give to their babies. So perhaps it can be written that your Company’s greatest success lies not in its industrial progress but in the fulfillment of the founders’ greatest ambition - an ever-widening contribution to happier motherhood and the health development of children of all nations.”⁶

To ensure Nestlé’s definition of “happier motherhood” was actually ever-widened, the company opened branch offices wherever it went, and later, local production. By 1946, the company had 14 branch offices in Brazil, employing 669 people.⁷ By the end of 1920, Nestlé had 80 factories worldwide, and more

than 300 depots, sales office or agencies.

Besides personal promotion and free gifts to doctors, Nestlé’s “campaign for better health” as it called its marketing endeavours, included attractive signs, displays, demonstrations, lectures on infant nutrition, baby shows, films and explanatory literature.

In the years after WWII, the growth of the baby food industry (and Nestlé’s growth) was phenomenal.

Today, Nestlé is the largest food company in the world, with a presence in over a hundred countries, and over 500 production facilities worldwide. Its total assets in 2003 were 89,561 million Swiss francs, and its total sales for the year were 87,979 million Swiss francs. Its products range from infant milks and foods and condensed milks to chocolates and ice creams, bottled water and beverages, spreads and pickles, cereals, cosmetics and pet foods.



Nestlé's milk food label, registered in 1875

¹ Civil Resistance www.ctv.gu.se/fred/resurser/bok/chap2.html

² Civil Resistance www.ctv.gu.se/fred/resurser/bok/chap2.html

³ Jean Heer, 1866-1966: The First Hundred Years of Nestlé, p. 40

⁴ “Swiss Family Nestlé”, *Fortune*, Feb. 1946

⁵ *This Is Your Company*, Nestlé, 1946

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ *ibid*