

Giving power to the people

Level 2 | Intermediate

1 Pre-reading: Key Vocabulary

Match the words with the definitions:

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| 1• boycott (v/n) | a• someone who buys and uses goods or services |
| 2• campaign (v/n) | b• a feeling of having no interest in or enthusiasm about anything |
| 3• consumer | c• a serious lack of food that continues for a long time and causes many people to die |
| 4• purchasing power | d• a series of actions intended to produce political or social change |
| 5• apathy | e• not taking part in an event or not buying or using something as a protest |
| 6• famine | f• the ability of people to buy goods and services |

2 Pre-reading: True or False

Read these statements about the effect of consumer boycotts and decide whether you think they are TRUE or FALSE:

- 1• The Greenpeace boycott of Shell products in 1995 led to a fall in sales of more than 75%.
- 2• The National Union of Students boycott of Barclays Bank in the 1980s led to a 10% decrease in Barclays share of the student market in the UK.
- 3• The Stop Esso campaign led to a 70% fall in sales of Esso petrol in the UK.
- 4• A 5% boycott can have an effect on a company's profits.
- 5• Nestle is asking for the repayment of a \$60 million debt by Ethiopia.

Now read the text and check your answers.

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Ethiopia is a very poor country, which is currently suffering from famine and which is also deeply in debt. Recently, the multi-national company Nestle caused a great deal of public anger when it was learnt that it was demanding a \$6m debt repayment from Ethiopia. Shoppers hesitated before buying their usual KitKat chocolate bars or Perrier mineral water. The question of boycotting consumer products and the effectiveness of such boycotts was raised once again. Boycotts have achieved some important successes. When Greenpeace called for a boycott of Shell in June 1995 over the company's decision to dump the Brent Spar oil platform at the bottom of the Atlantic, sales of Shell products fell by 70% in some countries, and within a few days the company announced that it had changed its mind. During the 80s, there were numerous boycotts as a result of growing anger at the apartheid regime in South Africa. A boycott by Britain's National Union of Students, for example, meant that Barclays Bank's share of the student market fell by 10% in two years. The

anti-apartheid movement insisted that a consumer buying South African oranges or wine was just as guilty as a multinational investor, and for the first time consumers were able to link their purchasing power with international politics.

British comedian and activist Mark Thomas, who has made two television programmes about Nestle's practices, says that boycotts must have a clear objective and be morally right. "An individual has to both feel that they will be making a difference by not buying or joining something" he says. "Consumers can really annoy companies. Every brand can be attacked and it seriously affects their image."

The tactics of campaigners have changed in recent years, he adds. "We have come quite a long way from saying, 'Don't buy that,' to saying, 'Here's a fairly traded alternative.'" Campaigners are becoming more sophisticated, agrees Scott Clouder, research manager of Ethical Consumer magazine. "Groups campaigning against sweatshops, for example, do not ask consumers to boycott companies like

Gap or Nike. They would rather encourage the companies to improve conditions for their workers than close their factories and create more unemployment."

The Stop Esso campaign, organised by a coalition of Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth might have seemed unrealistic at the time. But it began because people wanted to show their anger and frustration at President Bush's refusal to sign the Kyoto Protocol, says climate campaigner Nick Rau. "We identified Esso as the most active anti-Kyoto company behind Bush," Rau says. The Stop Esso campaign led to a 7% drop in the number of regular petrol buyers who said that they used Esso (in Britain), while 47% said they would join the boycott if environmental groups asked them to join.

"The logic of a boycott is that you don't need to have 100% success. Even a 5% boycott can have an effect on a company's profits. We hear a lot about public apathy, but we find that people welcome the opportunity to express themselves," Rau says.

The Guardian Weekly 12-1-2003, page 21

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3 Comprehension Check

Match the beginnings and the endings of the sentences:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1• The demand by Nestle that Ethiopia should repay its \$6m debt caused a lot of anger because ... | a• ... the boycott led to a fall in sales of 70% in some countries. |
| 2• Greenpeace called for a boycott of Shell in 1995 because ... | b• ... people were angry about President Bush's refusal to sign the Kyoto Protocol. |
| 3• Shell changed its mind because ... | c• ... they seriously affect their image. |
| 4• There were numerous boycotts in the 1980s because ... | d• ... Ethiopia is a very poor country, which is currently suffering from famine. |
| 5• Consumer boycotts really annoy companies because ... | e• ... many people were strongly opposed to the apartheid regime in South Africa. |
| 6• Campaigners don't call for boycotts of Gap or Nike because ... | f• ... they have an effect on company's profits. |
| 7• The Stop Esso campaign began because ... | g• ... such boycotts might create more unemployment. |
| 8• Even 5% boycotts are effective because ... | h• ... Shell was planning to dump an oil platform in the Atlantic. |

4 Vocabulary: Word Building

Complete the table

VERB	NOUN
1• _____	repayment
2• announce	_____
3• move	_____
4• _____	achievement
5• agree	_____
6• improve	_____
7• employ	(un-) _____
8• frustrate	_____
9• campaign	_____
10• succeed	_____

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5 Vocabulary 2

Fill the gaps using an appropriate preposition:

- 1• In 1995 Greenpeace called _____ a boycott of Shell.
- 2• Sales of Shell products fell _____ 70% in some countries.
- 3• There was a lot of anger _____ Bush's refusal to sign the Kyoto Protocol.
- 4• Ethiopia is deeply _____ debt.
- 5• Some groups campaign _____ sweatshops.
- 6• The Stop Esso campaign led _____ a fall in sales.
- 7• Even a 5% boycott can have an effect _____ profits.
- 8• As a result _____ boycotts, some companies change their policies.

6 Discussion

What products would you be prepared to boycott and why?

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Key

1 Key Vocab

1 e; 2 d; 3 a; 4 f; 5 b; 6 c

2 True or False

1 f; 2 t; 3 f; 4 t; 5 f

3 Comprehension Check

1 d; 2 h; 3 a; 4 e; 5 c; 6 g; 7 b; 8 f

4 Vocab 1

1 repay
2 announcement
3 movement
4 achieve
5 agreement
6 improvement
7 employment
8 frustration
9 campaign
10 success

5 Vocab 2

1 for
2 by
3 at
4 in
5 against
6 to
7 on
8 of