



Friends of  
the Earth

PULL-OUT

# How to be a better corporate campaigner

Corporations are set to become a major focus of FOE's campaigns over the next couple of years, and it will be local groups that will be on the front line. Here FOE Corporate Alert Campaigner, Craig Bennett and FOE Corporate & Investment Campaigner, Simon McRae explain what you can do to get your campaign message into the boardrooms, and on to the corporate agenda

FOE HAS been working to change corporations for years - the very first action was to drop thousands of bottles on the doorstep of Cadbury Schweppes' HQ, after it introduced the first non-returnable drinks bottle. But now the time is right to develop a specific campaign focus on corporations. After all, of the world's 100 largest economies, only 49 are countries - the other 51 are companies.

For best results campaigners need to be clear about:

- 1 Who to target and why?
- 2 Who are the investors, and whose money are they using?
- 3 What can local groups do to touch the corporate nerve?
- 4 What is FOE's overall campaign message and objective?

## BOTTOM LINE READING

**Capital Punishment** FOE report which exposes the UK's top 15 insurance companies and their investment in companies which damage the environment through climate change, biodiversity damage and toxic pollution. To order a copy contact SSU on **020 7490 1555**. Price £5 to local group members plus £1 postage.

**Challenging corporations: introduction to FOE's corporate campaign** FOE briefing. For a copy contact Hannah Griffiths on **020 7566 1666**

**Ethical investment** FOE briefing. For a copy contact Simon McRae on **020 7566 1670**

## **Captive state: the corporate takeover over of Britain**

George Monbiot (Macmillan, £12.99). Already in its third reprint, this is a must for every corporate campaigner's bookshelf.

**No logo** Naomi Klein's surprise best seller. The paperback edition is due out in 2001 (Flamingo, £8.99). *No logo* has been called the, "Das Kapital of the growing anti-corporate movement."

## WONDERFUL WEBSITES

Adbusters: [www.adbusters.org](http://www.adbusters.org)

Corporate Watch : [www.corporatewatch.org](http://www.corporatewatch.org)

Ethical Consumer: [www.ethicalconsumer.org](http://www.ethicalconsumer.org)

Baobab Corporate Power Info Centre:

[www.baobabcomputing.com/corporatepower](http://www.baobabcomputing.com/corporatepower)

## 1 Who to target and why?

### Corporations

Clearly, it wouldn't make sense for FOE to criticise every corporation every time they did something campaigners disagreed with. That's why FOE uses the best of sector and worst of sector concepts to help select corporate targets. The oil and gas sector, for example, is one which is inherently unsustainable. But even within this, it is possible to identify some oil companies as being even more intransigent and arrogant than others (eg, Exxon, which still has to accept the reality of climate change).



Joe Sheehan/FOE

*Climate culprits: choose the right targets.*

If the worst of sector corporations are likely to be influenced by a FOE campaign, then they make good targets. If not, then it might be best to target the middle of sector corporations, to encourage them to improve their environmental and social performance first. It will then be easier to tackle the more obstinate corporations, as by then they will be way behind the rest of their sector.

### Staff

While Chief Executives will often be the key targets, it is always worth thinking about how FOE can get its message across to employees across the corporation.

Ordinary staff within large corporations, whether they work in the accounts department or in office management, may be just as concerned about environmental issues as campaigners. The more FOE can get them asking the right questions, whether at meetings or in the canteen, then the sooner the corporation will change.

**TRICKY QUESTIONS: During the General Election, FOE will be campaigning for manifesto commitments to make directors accountable for the social and environmental impacts of their companies. See Green X Code news on page 8.**

## Press for change

### Join Corporate Alert Network

Over the next year, the Living World team will be publicising the worst examples worldwide of corporate behaviour, and just who is funding their activities. These will be excellent campaigns for your local group to campaign on. For more information see box on the Corporate Alert Network, page 14.

## 2 Who are the investors, and whose money are they using?

Over the years FOE has been successful at targeting particular companies, because of their detrimental impact on the environment. But where does the money come from for their activities? In most cases, it is large public sector or private sector pension funds and investment companies. Which means that their money comes from people like us.

That's why it is time to target the investment sector, and get them to start making the sort of demands on corporations that FOE is making.

### Private pension funds

These are effectively group or pooled funds where a number of individuals invest their money together under an agreed policy (eg, for maximum returns, or according to ethical criteria).

UK pension funds now control over a third of the UK stock market and their influence continues to grow. Currently only a minority of UK residents have private pension cover but this is expected to increase dramatically over the coming years as stakeholder and occupational pension funds become more popular.

**BETTER SAVING: In July 2000 the Pensions Act was amended so that pension funds were required to disclose to their members, pension holders, if they take ethical considerations into account when investing. As pension holders we can now challenge fund managers as to where our money is invested.**

**FOE is completing a survey of the top 100 occupational pension funds to ask what ethical considerations they make when investing. The results should be available in early 2001.**

**>>Local Government Authorities are some of the biggest pension fund providers in the country. Why not ask what ethical criteria your Local Authority pension fund uses when making investments?**

## Insurance companies

These are similar to pensions in that individual funds or contributions are pooled or shared. Insurance companies are also substantial investors in other corporations.

## Banks

Banks lend money to lots of clients from individuals to corporations and even other lending institutions. Banks are also significant shareholders in companies. A few banks have ethical lending criteria, but in general most do not take any ethical consideration of their investments.

**HIGH STREET CHALLENGE: As individual account holders we can challenge where banks invest. See article on the BNRR campaign, page 18.**

## Public investment

FOE already runs campaigns, both nationally and internationally, to get environmental and social accountability into publicly funded initiatives, and these will continue to be important. Examples include the UK Export Credit Guarantee Fund and institutions such as the European Investment Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

## 3 What can local groups do to touch the corporate nerve?

**Successful local campaigns nearly always make use of tried and tested campaign actions – but using them in new ways to suit new targets. Here's some examples of brilliant actions that work:**

### Shop front actions

**Aim:** To make sure customers and staff understand the issue, and start asking questions.



Jenny Bates/FOE

*FOE protesting outside Argos in London, which was selling garden furniture made from Vietnamese rainforest timber.*



Ben Rogers/FOE

*FOE reminds supermarket shoppers at Sainsbury's that their favourite store allows GMOs in the food it sells.*

### Demonstrations at head and regional offices

**Aim:** To influence staff as they arrive at work, or as they sit at their desks and get them talking about the issues during breaks and in the staff canteen.



Joe Sheehan/FOE

*FOE leaflet staff arriving at Esso's HQ about climate change.*

### Demonstrations at the factory gate

**Aim:** To connect the issue to the product.



Jenny Bates/FOE

*FOE makes the point outside timber yards, like Latham Timber, with a giant inflatable chainsaw, during the successful Mahogany is Murder campaign.*

### Conferences

**Aim:** To embarrass your target in front of their corporate peers, and to worry other companies that they may be next to get such personal attention. This type of action usually works well - outside or inside - because the company will not be expecting you.



*Many local groups have attended conferences and fired off difficult questions to key speakers at the end of their presentations. FOE staff held a demonstration at a top oil industry conference at which Lee Raymond, Chief Executive of Exxon*

*Mobil was speaking. Banners with Raymond's photo on it, under the slogan, "Wanted - for blocking action on climate change", were held up to the bemusement of his audience.*

## Trade shows

**Aim:** To spoil the party! Companies use trade shows to promote products direct to their most valued customers. If you can make it clear that there are problems with those products, they will have to think again.

Jenny Bates/FOE



FOE staff held demonstrations against peat-bog strippers, Scotts, outside the prestigious Chelsea Flower Show, ensuring thousands of keen gardeners found out more about peat free gardening. This was an excellent action as it

allowed FOE to speak direct to the target audience, for minimum cost.

## Annual General Meetings (AGMs)

**Aim:** To spoil the most prestigious event in the corporate calendar by highlighting that there is more to business than profit and loss. If you are a shareholder you can attend the AGM and ask difficult questions.

Nick Cobbing/FOE



FOE protests outside British Airway's AGM.



Mark Allen from Leicester FOE even thought about becoming a director of Scottish Power, the company Leicester FOE was campaigning against.

## Targeting individuals

**Aim:** Sometimes a key individual in the company may be the stumbling block. In those cases, it can be fun to make sure they get a personal message, which also embarrasses them publicly (but this needs to be done sensitively).



Birmingham FOE played the sound of aircraft take off, flight and landing noise outside the home of the Director of Birmingham Airport.

## Key Government offices and local authorities

**Aim:** To expose the cosy back room secret deals that can be made between local government and corporations.

The close relationship between Enfield Council and Fairview New Homes - which led many people to believe that there was impropriety in the way homes came to be built on a contaminated site. This was exposed in *Unsafe as houses*, a report by Enfield FOE, Enfield Lock Action Group Association and FOE London Campaigns Co-ordinator, Paul de Zylva.

## 4 What is FOE's overall campaign message and objective?

Over the next year FOE will be identifying the changes that need to happen to ensure that corporations improve their environmental and social performance worldwide. FOE may campaign for a binding code of conduct on transnational corporations. However the campaign is at an early stage - to keep up-to-date join the Corporate Alert Network (see box on right).

## KEY CORPORATE ALERT NETWORK CONTACTS

Don't miss out - sign up for regular email information about Corporate Alert. To join the network contact Hannah Griffiths on **020 7566 1666**

>>You can join the corporate alert email alias by sending an email to **majordomo@foe.co.uk** Leave the subject heading blank and put the following command in the body of your email message **<subscribe corporate\_alert>**