

Labour Party Conference

Xposed Awards 2004



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Ceremonial Brochure

*Celebrating the confusion between corporate
rhetoric and reality*

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Welcome

All of you understand the exceptional drive being honoured this evening. Let's face it, being a big company these days is tough. Not only must we make pots of cash, we have to look good making it – that, Ladies and Gentlemen, takes skilful hokum, hoodwinking, and chutzpah.

Our winning companies – and their lobby group pals – have successfully convinced important decision makers and civil servants that the voluntary approach to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is working, while marginalising those wacky NGOs with their inane calls for so-called “progressive” new laws. What a giggle!

Here you will discover success stories that will astound and inspire. If you want to follow in our winners' illustrious footsteps, all you need is the right combination of desire and disregard.

This year's ceremony celebrates 16 nominees.

The Xposé Awards recognise:

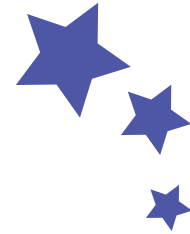
- ★ Aesthetically pleasing CSR reports that report very little and promise even less.
- ★ Masterful corporate lobbying which tries to scare MPs into believing the way we currently conduct business cannot be changed to include mandatory and measurable CSR.
- ★ Terrific tax-evading, public-subsidy-engaging expertise, which somehow gets the Government to pick up the tab – over and over again.
- ★ “Voluntary” CSR agreements - lots of talk but little action. The perfect way to keep change at bay.
- ★ Companies doing a superb job telling the West how much they care for Africa, while robbing the continent blind.
- ★ Publicly applauded products that wreak havoc on people and the environment while making their producers a packet.

The Xposé Academy was spoilt for choice this year – you are all champions in our book. But tonight is about the winners. So prepare to be dazzled and delighted, because our nominees' stories are about to unfold.

The Xposé Academy

Celebrating the confusion between corporate rhetoric and reality

Xposé *for Best Omission*



With no rules on CSR reports, what they include is up to each company. Who has published the glossiest report while skilfully omitting the biggest environmental or social impact?

And the nominees are...

BAE SYSTEMS

This year BAE won commendation for their CSR status and were listed in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index, despite their raison d'etre being to create products that kill people as effectively as possible. “BAE Systems, innovating for a safer world” goes the spiel, by supplying £12 billion worth of armaments and associated paraphernalia, every year. Genius!

BAE’s 2003 CSR report cunningly included an independent “opinion piece”, exploring ways defence companies can become legitimate socially responsible entities, yet BAE Systems didn’t actually cover these points in its report – a classic ruse.

This “opinion piece” stated that defence companies are responsible for whom they sell their products to. This was a particularly tricky tightrope for BAE. On the one hand, they desire to publicise their dominance, on the other, the CSR agenda forces

We commend BAE’s brilliance in removing the dreaded word “defence” from much of their literature. “Systems” is infinitely less offensive, and if we’re honest, a great cover-up of their real business. Take a bow boys.

them to play down how their weapons make the world’s hot spots even hotter – somehow, they’ve managed to carry it off.

On their website BAE Systems boast of their operations across five continents, the 90,000 people they employ, and the £12bn annual sales generated.¹ Courageously, they also brag about their customers in some 130 countries. Brilliantly, their CSR report contains no disclosure of **how** this “defence” company ensures its weaponry does not exacerbate regional conflict, aid corruption and human rights abuses, nor does it explain whether impoverished countries can even afford such expenditure – inspiring stuff.



BAE Systems

Armed and dangerous: BAE Systems “innovating for a safer world”.



Perennial favourite Shell has won this Xposé every year, quite a record. Shell's simple philosophy of their talk taking a decidedly different route from their walk has helped the company to a decade of success.

Shell's outstanding dexterity in denial and spin are envied by all. Some of their best work has been in Nigeria – detailed later in our special “Services to Africa Xposé”. For the moment, let's examine how Shell operates in the good ol' US of A.

Ripping off the developing world is one thing, but pulling off such manoeuvres in the land of litigation is a real achievement. Most of Shell's US plants and refineries are beside poor communities, often populated by African-Americans or Hispanics.

Frustratingly, poverty does not entirely preclude tenacity. Yet by engaging fully with those who couldn't care less, Shell has done extremely well isolating those with genuine gripes, making complainers look like wacky, unreasonable extremists. Get it? Still lost? Here's a model you can follow:

- **Donate \$100 to a basketball club.**
- **Donate \$500 to a youth club.**
- **Sponsor an “environmental drawing competition” at a local primary school.**

NOW

- **Encourage those marvelling at your generosity to join a local “feedback” group.**
- **Shut out anyone who has previously complained against your operations.**
- **Publicise your successes with this group relentlessly, particularly in your CSR report.**
- **Consistently employ the “our local feedback groups tell us there is no problem” line when anyone tries to claim there is one.**



Hilton Kelley/Community In-power Development Association

Sleep tight: who needs a dummy?

The perfect example of this strategy is at Port Arthur, Texas. Shell's CSR report proudly discusses Port Arthur's “Community Advisory Panel”, active for 11 years, and boasts a 33 per cent reduction in local air emissions over the last four years. Beautiful stuff chaps, just beautiful.

We've done a little investigating of our own and found that the air monitoring at Port Arthur is actually extremely selective. It's only completed every 12 days. “None of the (Shell) managers have ever really come out to talk with me about plans to reduce emissions in our community.” said local resident Hilton Kelley in June this year to an Xposé researcher. “I watched people getting sick, I watched little kids develop asthma and have to use a nebulator to breathe, and to me it's environmental racism.” This is a damn impressive cover-up. Just how do you Shell boys get away with it?

It would of course be remiss not to mention Shell's “overbooking oil reserves incident”. Considerable brownie points were lost in January, when Shell applied CSR skills to its financial reporting regarding a 20 per cent overestimation of oil reserves. Doh!

Shell's CSR reporting stands out from the crowd. In one classic loophole-loaded line from the masters of CSR-speak, Shell claimed to recognise its “responsibility to minimise and mitigate the effect of our activities on the environment.”³ We just love how Shell, er, “minimised” Nigerian gas flaring and dredging during spawning season off Sakhalin, Russia.



Tobacco is a tough industry. For starters, there's the whole "50 per cent of our customers die when using our products as they're intended"⁴ factor. Naturally, the only way to deal with this is denial, distraction and clever PR, something British American Tobacco (BAT) have put into practice splendidly.

BAT's plan of attack is to dazzle people with their CSR reporting, which details their extravagant environmental policies and magnificent relationship with 250,000 farmers around the globe.⁵ This backfired somewhat when those pests at Christian Aid released their scathing *Behind the Mask* report⁶ which claimed, outrageously, that many BAT



Ute Klaphake/Photofusion

Wicked! 'Tackling youth smoking'

farmers suffered ill health from the pesticides they had to use without protective clothing, revealed the poisoning of rivers by said pesticides, showed that 80 per cent of their Kenyan farmers incur a financial loss and demonstrated how BAT have undue influence over the Kenyan government's tobacco growing legislation. Wow! It was great to see BAT Chairman Ken Clarke MP bounce back from that kicking with this hard-hitting rebuttal: "If there is any substance to these claims, we will certainly look to see where performance can be improved."⁷ You're the man Kenny baby. Sock it to 'em!

So with 50 per cent of BAT's customers walking corpses and the western world insisting upon draconian advertising restrictions, BAT had to come up with some pretty cunning plans to keep sales up. Aggressive advertising and marketing practices in the developing world is a given, and BAT's CSR reporting creatively labelled some of these as "anti-smoking" schemes for children. Brownie points galore. Research by the Xposé Academy reveals that some initiatives were actually counterproductive because they portrayed smoking as an adult decision and therefore more appealing to youth.⁸ BAT really knows how to "tackle youth smoking".⁹

Sadly, newspaper reports last year revealed BAT's plans to make cigarettes more "rebellious" so as to appeal to the kids despite "competition with cannabis, glue-sniffing and possibly hard drugs – heroin and cocaine."¹⁰ We don't know how this document didn't make it to the shredder. This is sloppy boys, but it can happen to the best of us.



Xposé *for Taking the Most from the Government Box Office*

Big Business is rightfully proud of its risk-taking record, aided and abetted by taxpayers riding to the rescue when things go wrong. Which industry made the most creative use of public subsidies or tax exemptions, getting money for what they do anyway?

And the nominees are...

Aviation

Has any industry secured a better deal? £9.2 billion per year in tax exemptions.¹¹ Or put another way: £9,200,000,000! Just how do they do it?

- Airlines pay no duty or VAT on their fuel. That's right, zero. So when Ms Average fills up her car it costs about 81p per litre yet Richard Branson pays only around 17p per litre to fill up his 747s. When Ms Average takes her car to get serviced or eats a meal in a restaurant, she forks out for VAT at 17.5%. When Branson buys a new plane or eats a meal on a transatlantic flight, he's in a VAT-free zone. Quite right too!
- Duty free shops are goldmines. Airports subsidise their operations through retail income, helping BAA offer airlines some of the world's lowest airport charges, despite Britain's airports being among the most congested. Indeed BAA makes more from shopping than from running airports.¹² Everybody wins! Well, everyone that matters.
- Although there's been whinging by local communities and greenies, the aviation industry has thus far managed to avoid any environmental tax. Quite a feat if you take into account global climate change and the 1998 Transport White Paper suggesting "aviation should meet the external costs, including environmental costs, which it imposes". Who cares about the "polluter pays" principle?



Bill Osment/Friends of the Earth

Free Ride: airlines dodge £9.2bn in taxes every year – woohoo!

Big Oil

Key moments of recent history are synonymous with oil – Bush I, Iraq, Bush II, Afghanistan and Iraq again – it all makes the heart swell. Little wonder the industry feels society owes it something in return. Luckily, when push comes to shove, governments agree.

There are endless examples of how the oil companies have wangled cash from you and me, but our favourite for 2003 is:

The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) Pipeline

The BTC is a mighty 1,750 km pipeline from the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean, via Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. This monster will carry one million barrels of crude oil a day and is described as “one of most important energy projects on earth”.¹³

The consortium building the BTC, which includes BP, TotalFinaElf and ENI, somehow managed to squeeze hundreds of millions from supportive governments, with our own pitching in \$150 million. Why shouldn't the UK public help private companies make pots of dosh?

A consortium including Shell and Mitsubishi may build a pipeline crossing 22 active earthquake fault lines in Sakhalin Island, Russia,¹⁶ threatening the last remaining population of Western Pacific Grey Whale, all subsidised by British taxpayers via the EBRD. Three cheers for the biggest of the big boys!

Our Government justified this hand-out by claiming that the pipeline “will serve to promote regional stability”.¹⁴ Who cares that two months prior to the decision there was a revolution in Georgia, elections in Azerbaijan were deemed “fraudulent” by international observers,¹⁵ and Turkey saw major bomb attacks. All this will end when the pipeline comes on stream. And I'm Eduard Shevardnadze.

Simultaneously, the BTC consortium negotiated agreements with Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey making it exempt from any laws – including environmental and labour – that may affect its profits. Outstanding icing on an outstanding cake.



Nick Rau/Friends of the Earth

Pipeline-o-rama: more tax-payer money for pipelines in the Caspian and the Russian Far East.

Heart of Gold Xposé for Voluntary Action

Voluntary initiatives litter the CSR landscape. Which voluntary agreement has most effectively prevented mandatory rules, while actually making the smallest possible difference to the way business is run?

And the nominees are...



When the Xposé Academy first heard that the United Nations was challenging business leaders to join a new-fangled international CSR initiative we were obviously concerned. Then we heard the initiative was supported by such models of social responsibility as Nike, Starbucks, Rio Tinto, Pfizer, Shell and Nestlé, and we knew everything was going to be okay.

The Global Compact agreement is based on 10 principles of human rights, core labour standards, environmental protection goals and anti-corruption measures. Obviously, once signed up, no one has to actually follow the agreement.

The Compact promises not to “police, enforce or measure the behaviour or actions of companies” relying instead on companies “enlightened self-interest.”¹⁷ That makes us feel all warm and fuzzy inside. Today over 1,500 companies¹⁸ participate in this charade, sorry fun and games, providing some of the best CSR “public relations cover”¹⁹ available.

The Compact’s importance cannot be overstated. It conveniently ties up the UN and governments around the globe (who honestly think it’s effective - bless ‘em) thus preventing them getting together and implementing an agreement with a legal framework that might make a blind bit of difference. The Global Compact is something the Xposé Academy is happy to support for many years to come.

The Global Compact is “by far the world’s largest initiative promoting [not achieving] global corporate citizenship.”²⁰





OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises

The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises came into play back in the 1970s and cover a range of issues including human rights, information disclosure, labour and the environment. Outrageously, since 2000, the Guidelines have applied to the global operations of multinational corporations based in any OECD country.

Unfortunately much of the control regarding the Guidelines sits with governments. In fact, they are the only global corporate responsibility instrument formally adopted by governments. Endorsing governments are required to create a “National Contact Point” (NCP) within the government, who must publicise the Guidelines and handle complaints brought against companies’ alleged violations.

These Guidelines came dangerously close to being effective, but thankfully were undermined because they are:

- Voluntary, non-binding and unenforceable
- Not monitored
- Free from penalties

The NCPs:

- Have no set schedule to follow for handling complaints. One waited a year before acting, while others have ignored complaints completely.²¹
- Can choose to withhold some or all information, without explanation.
- Cannot be forced to justify their decisions as there is no appeals process.
- Don’t monitor whether companies fulfil their commitments after complaints are resolved.

A classic example is the role big business played in “perpetuating the war” in the Democratic Republic of Congo and “profiteering from it.”²² In 2002 the UN Security Council cited 85 companies it believed had violated the Guidelines through their Congo operations. By 2003, 74 had mysteriously been “resolved” – fortunately without any embarrassing details being made public – with the remainder pretty much un-investigated by the governments responsible. Truly, these Guidelines work.



Supermarket Code of Practice

A wonderful home-grown nominee, the Supermarket Code of Practice was a windfall for Asda, Safeway, Sainsbury and Tesco. The Code sets out how business “should be conducted between supermarkets and their suppliers, such as manufacturers and farmers.”²³ Sure the Code, technically speaking, is 'legally binding' (shudder) but the supermarkets were key contributors in its development, thus they made sure it was weak enough for them to happily sign up. What clever bunnies! The supermarkets think it's spiffing, as well they should. What's the deal?

The Code was born in 2002 when the Competition Commission boorishly claimed that large supermarkets were some kind of monopoly, though why this was construed as “engaging in unfair

trading practices”²⁴ rather than applauded is beyond us. Things could have gone haywire, but the supermarkets are a level headed lot and they kept their cool. Lots of hard work paid off when the DTI announced the details of the Code, which hinged on the Xposé Academy recommended word “reasonable”. There really is no vaguer way – not really – to hold companies to account.

Danger could be afoot. The troublesome Office of Fair Trading is attempting to ruin the fun. They scandalously reported that 80 per cent of suppliers claim the Code has failed to bring about any change in the supermarkets' behaviour – didn't they realise that's what it was for? 73 per cent reported that suppliers were afraid to claim under the Code.²⁵ The chickens. Squawk, squawk.



DigitalVision

Whizz-bang consumerism: more power to supermarkets.

As an added bonus, the supermarkets somehow worked in a complaints procedure whereby all breaches must first be raised with the supermarkets themselves.²⁶ The Code has not only reinforced the power of the big four over their suppliers, it has made it worse. You guys rock!

Xposé for the Most Spectacular Special Effects



From the minimum wage to new chemicals legislation, corporate lobby groups constantly warn of hellfire and damnation if “progressive” regulations are introduced. Who was the stand-out performer utilising such diversionary tactics, special effects and exaggeration?

And the nominees are...



The International Chamber of Commerce, aka the “world business organisation”, should need no introduction. This is the mother of all corporate lobby groups, with hundreds of multinationals in its ranks. Over the past year the ICC has achieved outstanding results in its work sabotaging the UN’s snappily titled Draft Norms on the Responsibilities of Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises With Regard to Human Rights.

These UN Norms have caused us a real headache. Sure, everyone knows all the Norms did was to bundle all existing human rights commitments for multinationals into one neat, accessible package. But this equates to ever more people knowing precisely what we are supposed to be doing and that isn’t helpful. Thankfully the ICC stepped in to scare governments off with such corkers as:

- We “strongly support greater efforts to secure the enjoyment of human rights.”²⁷
- The “practical effect” of the Draft Norms would be to “undermine human rights.”²⁸
- The Norms will “undermine the rights and legitimate interests of private business.”²⁹
- The Norms are “extreme” as they “privatize” human rights by shifting “human rights duties from states to civil society actors”, undermining “the credibility of international human rights law that so many people have worked so hard to achieve.”³⁰

- The Norms “will not make a positive contribution”.³¹
- “While the draft Norms has taken an essentially ‘negative approach’ to the promotion of human rights, we stress the need to integrate negatively-oriented measures within a broader, positive strategy.”³² Of course we do!

In July of this year the UN Norms were thrown into another consultation period. Known as the Geneva Process, this consultation precedes the consultation on the next big consultation. Yet another calamity narrowly averted thanks to the power of an ICC production.



Mikkell Ostergaard/Panos

Quarrying in Cambodia: no UN Norms needed here.



The Voice of Business

Is there an organisation of which Britain can be more proud? Headed by our 2002 Lifetime Achievement Winner Digby Jones, the CBI consistently “protects” British industry from draconian legislation that would only serve to benefit people and the environment.

The CBI has made some class calls over the years – the minimum wage will mean “widespread job loss”, local councils waste £3 billion a year through inefficiency, so business council tax must not rise,³³ green laws will cost £4 billion,³⁴ the millennium bug is a “time bomb” that could see companies going out of business in the technological “meltdown”,³⁵ and one of our favourites: “the UK Government and the CBI are at one on the need globally for effective environmental and economic solutions.”³⁶ Do you want a Whopper with that sir?

The CBI’s longstanding arch-enemy is CSR. Voluntary CSR is one thing, and okay it gets some of us brownie points and product differentiation within a crowded marketplace, blah blah blah, but mandatory, measurable and monitored CSR must never be allowed to exist. Ever.

Thankfully the CBI with all guns a-blazing is one tough cookie, and when your adversaries are charity-type pansies, it’s hardly tricky convincing the

The strength of the CBI lies in its ability to say one thing, while lobbying for the other. They challenge their critics head on, “we are not anti regulation or against rigorous enforcement”, then subtly introduce their real agenda, “but we make no apology for complaining about sloppy laws that are implemented poorly and enforced in an ill-considered fashion.”⁴³ Outstanding!

DTI who they should listen to. After all, the CBI represents the lowest common denominator of Big Business, not hippie communists.

There’s the added incentive that if the Government doesn’t do as it’s told, the CBI will ensure widespread criticism of the “over-zealous interference of the nanny state”.³⁷

But we can all learn from the CBI’s approach – so here are some top tips to be like them:

“NGOs are missing the point.”³⁸

A hardy perennial – well, when aren’t they?

“If CSR is to develop successfully, it should remain voluntary.”³⁹

Particularly useful for FTSE 350 company directors who heeded the Prime Minister’s challenge to publish environmental reports by the end of 2001. Admittedly they are outnumbered 3:1 by FTSE directors who didn’t bother – but keep that quiet and you’ve got a great sound bite.

“Legislation in this area would simply constrain business activity and reduce CSR to a lowest common denominator.”⁴⁰

Another great argument – but make sure you use it on CSR only. If you enjoy your executive pay deal, and don’t want to see that reduced to legal minimum levels, then never, ever use this argument against the minimum wage.

“Business (does not) exist to solve the problems of the world”⁴¹ or “business must take an active part in ensuring the benefits of the wealth it creates are distributed equitably within society.”⁴²

A great example of being flexible with your arguments...



Freedom to Fly Coalition

If there's one thing we love, it's a bogus community stakeholder alliance/corporate funded and directed lobby group. This year the best example is Freedom to Fly, a group set up for one reason and one reason only: to ensure the Government's Aviation White Paper was BAA/British Airways/Virgin Airways et al friendly.

With political correctness running rife, it's tricky for companies with a strong brand presence to come out and say what they really think. If BA or Virgin Airways said, for instance, "we don't give a toss about the environment or local communities, we want more runways, more flights and more money, damn it", those bloody tree huggers would conjure some bloody backlash. God forbid – a boycott may ensue.

The solution? Come together with like-minded businesses, set up a seemingly independent lobby group, say Freedom to Fly, then funnel all your brand-endangering opinions through this mouth piece with NGO-like phrases such as "people want the freedom to fly".⁴⁴

A lot of time, energy and expense was put into Freedom to Fly – but was it worth it? The Government's White Paper approved new runways at Stansted, Birmingham, Edinburgh and Heathrow or Gatwick, green-lighted expansion at many other UK airports, continued the tax concession regime, and gave the industry at least four years grace from tackling its climate change impacts. The proof, friends, is in the pudding.

Alas the flurry of media activity, pamphleting and associated activities by Freedom to Fly in the months of the consultation abruptly ended with the release of the White Paper. The once vibrant website has vanished. Freedom to Fly has gone – but it will live on in our hearts and memories.

If you are clever, your front group can even back-up your own arguments to make you look more popular. So a Guardian article headlined, "BAA calls for extra runways",⁴⁵ begins, "the UK's main airport operator (BAA) today called for at least three new runways to be built at existing terminals in south-east England."

Further down the same piece, "Dan Hodges, from the Freedom to Fly campaign, said BAA's announcement 'exposed' the inconsistencies in the arguments being put forward by those opposed to expansion".



BRITISH AIRWAYS



BAA



Virgin

Special Achievement Xposé for Services to Africa

To mark Tony Blair's prioritisation of Africa when the UK chairs the G8, we have a special award this year. Which company has promised the world to Africa, but done the least?

And the nominees are...



Shell have been in Nigeria since 1956. Back then life was much easier. Pillaging and plundering Africa's natural riches, irrespective of impacts to local environmental and community health, was once the done thing. Now with lots of do-gooders making pillaging in Africa much more complicated, businesses actually need to look like they care about Africa, or risk losing millions of sales in lucrative markets.

Luckily for Shell, "looking" like they care about Africa's environment and people is easy. The company's gas flaring in Europe is minimal and controlled, mainly because Europe is crammed with affluent, educated people whose complaints would damage Shell's public image. In contrast, Africa is populated by poor people with limited access to decent food, water and sanitation, never mind education. As a result Africa's ability to maintain a campaign that hurts this multinational's image is somewhat limited.

Shell have brilliantly capitalised on this dichotomy. Their annual "People and Environment" report profiles their operations in Nigeria. This serves the dual purpose of placating Western lefties and providing the world with the "official version of events", according to Shell.

Buried in the report Shell admit that gas flaring actually increased in 2003,⁴⁶ opposite a dreamy page depicting waterfalls and children's drawings of a pristine environment – the Shell boys have chutzpah in spades. The report has pages of pictures of forests and wildlife, the survival of which, naturally, owes nothing to Shell's operations.

Shell waste oodles of gas every year in Nigeria by persisting with gas flaring, because it's just so damn convenient. For Shell anyway. Locals say Shell "is disrupting our communal way of life, it is responsible for causing chaos, division and pollution. Shell came... and turned everything upside down. When Shell comes into your community so many things happen - they could destroy your water ways, they could cut down your forest, they could pollute your land, they could flare gas."⁴⁷

But thanks to the amazing Shell CSR team, this kind of quote never makes it to their report.

According to Shell routine gas flaring will end in 2008 – thus it's a non-issue. Besides, Shell recently invested \$200 million into the Niger Delta to attend to the huge social and environmental problems (they created). Considering Shell only made a profit of \$12.5 billion last year, that 1.6 per cent is pretty generous, right? Another superb piece of spin.



Elaine Gilligan/Friends of the Earth

Hot stuff: gas flaring is on the increase – and that's the way we like it.

MONSANTO



If ever a PR marriage was made in heaven, then GM and Africa is it. Monsanto are desperate to get their GM crops into any food chain they can. In fact the company are so eager to get people hooked on their carte du jour, they're willing to give it away. Long term thinking is not something we normally applaud, but you have to admire Monsanto's enthusiasm.

After those uppity Europeans threw a spanner in the works with their pansy GM moratorium, Monsanto needed another market fast. The solution to their woes? Africa. If there's one thing Africa has, it's people. And the one thing Monsanto needs is a lot



Elaine Gilligan/Friends of the Earth

Yes please: more mouths for GM food

USAID also funds the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), an organisation promoting the growth of GM in the developing world and supporting various GM projects in Africa. Surprise, surprise, ISAAA is also funded by Monsanto. What super synergy!

of mouths. If they could just get one crop in, the flood gates would open. The problem was getting in that one crop. Luckily for Monsanto, those benevolent souls at USAID rode to the rescue.

Monsanto and USAID have joined up to provide Africa with a "bio-technology related public-private partnership,"⁴⁸ dedicated to "providing more farmers around the world access to improved techniques, knowledge and partnerships."⁴⁹ This basically means investing millions pushing genetically modified crops into the African food-chain, eventually hooking Africa's farmers up to a regime whereby they must buy their crops from Monsanto.

Ch-ching!

We are mightily impressed with Monsanto's determination and perseverance. Despite several African nations, notably Zambia, making outrageous claims of GM being "poisonous" and "intrinsically dangerous",⁵⁰ one has caved in. Take a bow Burkina Faso, who recently announced they have accepted Monsanto's proposals and will allow the planting of GM cotton, the first country in the continent to do so.⁵¹ Now we just need the bees to do their thing and the wind to blow a little, and soon cross-contamination will ensure everyone in Africa will be on the GM bandwagon – and an integral part of the Monsanto money making machine. We drink to that!



Voted for by Local Group Members of our kind sponsors, Friends of the Earth

It is hard to get a good, money-making product out there these days without some pinko claiming human rights, environmental or some other kind of abuse. This award goes to the product enjoying great success while failing to blip on the Good Samaritan radar.

4x4

If Mother Nature made cars they would surely be 4x4s. Whether a Cherokee, Mercedes or Landrover, the humble 4x4 is typically portrayed as one with nature – traversing a river, climbing a mountain, crossing the desert. The novel notion of collaborating to present a unified, eco-friendly image across all 4x4 brands has actually worked. Just how the motor industry sustains sales of 150,000 of these vehicles every year in Britain alone⁵² enthrals us, especially when 7 out of 8 never get driven off road like in the adverts.⁵³ In fact only 2 out of 5 have ever been driven out of town!⁵⁴ The general public – is there anyone more gullible?

The best thing about 4x4s? Their ability to consume excessive amounts of gas. These are among the most fuel inefficient cars on the road, thus their contribution to climate change increases in line with their popularity. These beauties spew out 47 per cent more air pollution than an average car and cost thousands more to run every year.⁵⁵ Mother Nature's own vehicle of choice causing her the most damage – we never knew such a delightful dupe was possible.



Tricia Phelan/Friends of the Earth

Road Hog: 7 out of 8 never leave the road, and they all cost a fortune to run – oh the hilarity!

Palm Oil

This nominee has done a spectacular job becoming the ingredient whacked into about one in three supermarket food products. When the Xposé Academy first discovered that UK financiers were helping to turn huge Indonesian tropical forests into palm oil plantations, we weren't impressed. "Big whoopee," we said.

Then we discovered the \$10 billion price tag, and knew something was up.⁵⁶ This palm oil stuff is an absolute goldmine. It's found in frozen foods, soaps, crisps, cosmetics and detergents and plenty more besides.⁵⁷

The amusing part of this whole palaver is that, despite palm oil's prevalence, few people have heard of it and no one really knows where it's from. So no one cares that its production is causing the destruction of South East Asian tropical rainforest and the decimation of indigenous cultures. It almost goes without saying that palm oil is generally tended to by under-paid plantation workers – what a bargain!

Some greenie types try to make users of palm oil responsible for their suppliers – that nutty CSR gig again. Thankfully all the records on suppliers and buyers are in such a mess, they haven't a chance in hell of pinning any of us down.



Clear the way: we want Walker's crisps more than a crap rainforest.

Patio Heaters

Once upon a time people outside on a summer evening getting a little chilly put on a jumper, very often the same jumper each time, and where is the profit in that? Thankfully someone spotted this hopeless situation and invented patio heaters – the product you never knew you needed until everyone else had one.

These little bundles of "fuel-generated heat that shield you from the cold and keep you as cosy as a blazing fireplace on a winter evening"⁵⁸ were once "luxury items"⁵⁹ only found in "trendy bars"⁶⁰. It wasn't long before the beautiful people had them at home, and now you can't keep the little buggers on the shelves. Our research reveals extra icing on the cake: patio heaters for the home are around 57 per cent more inefficient than the ones in the trendy bars.⁶¹ Not only does that equate to more profit but also more energy use, meaning (all together now) more contribution to climate change – nice one!



Warm summer nights: thanks to this nifty little gas guzzler.

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