

This document presents the views opposed to Asda and its activities

Before all rushing to sign a petition to bring Asda to Gorseinon, we should all take a moment to consider the bigger picture. Asda, as part of Wal-mart, is responsible for innumerable corporate crimes:

1. Worker's rights.

Lured by the prospect of more local jobs, we are ignoring the fact that Asda, as part of Wal-mart, is notorious for worker exploitation. Through sub-standard wages, poor benefits and a lack of health insurance coverage, the company puts pressure on all aspects of society. Not only is the pay insufficient but temporary contracts means that Wal-mart can ignore the long term consequences of the way in which it treats its workers.

The story does not end there. Wal-mart tries to prevent their workers from unionizing by creating separate departments to make co-operation between workers more difficult. Its comprehensive management strategy involves intimidation and firing. What's more, company officials have taken individuals behind closed doors where groups of managers push workers into accepting Wal-Mart's anti-union position. According to Charles Kernaghan, director of the US National Labour Committee:

If British people knew more about Wal-Mart, they'd be quite frightened. Wal-Mart is the nastiest company we've dealt with. It has no moral compass. It tours the world looking for workers willing to accept the lowest pay and the least benefits... What impact it will have on Safeway and Asda in the long run is very troubling. (Quote from <http://www.observer.co.uk/business/story/0,6903'882102.html>).

In December 2008 it was discovered that workers producing clothes in Bangladesh for some of the UK's biggest retailers are being forced to work up to 80 hours a week for as little as 7p an hour. The study from War on Want claims that conditions in six factories supplying Primark [part of Associated British Foods], Tesco and Asda are worse than they were two years ago when the charity carried out its first investigation.

2. Environmental Issues.

Also worrying is Asda's environmental policy. Asda's website states:

Our aim is to identify, monitor and reduce any direct negative effects we have on our environment through a process of continuous monitoring and improvement in the way we manage our day to day business operations. We also try to influence our colleagues, customers and suppliers as this can also help reduce the effect we have on the environment.

While claiming to reduce their greenhouse gas emission and minimizing packaging they do not explain how they plan to achieve this. An Asda spokesperson added that 'getting a high environmental profile' was not one of Asda's key goals. The conclusion to be drawn here is that instead of a genuine attempt to adopt effective environmental policies, this is an empty gesture which will enable Asda to look "green." There is damaging evidence to suggest that this is true. The US state of Connecticut has already sued Wal-Mart for allegedly polluting state waters with fertilisers and pesticides. The company was also selling irradiated beef products in the U.S. Furthermore, in trying to sell cheap petrol, Asda can never describe itself as being environmentally friendly.

3. New Stores.

Where Asda has been building new stores it is often doing great harm, by developing on greenfield sites, creating traffic problems and taking trade away from small local businesses.

On a bigger scale, Wal-Mart has been encroaching on Puerto Rico's agricultural land which has rendered many local farmers destitute. More information on this can be found in March 2000 edition of Earth Island Journal.

According to Friends of the Earth,

Asda claims that it will create new jobs, but does not say how many other jobs in local communities may be lost as a result of its new superstores opening, or how many may be simply replacing existing retail jobs. Trends in retail employment show growth in superstores has led to an overall reduction in the number of retail jobs, and a trend from full- to part-time employment.

I feel that I have only really scratched the surface here. Before advocating the arrival of Asda in Gorseinon, please visit this website for more information. Make an *informed* decision!!

For more information please visit

<http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk/?query=walmart&lid=21>