

SENATE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL CONCERNS  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
OCTOBER 8, 2001

[In these minutes: Approval of September 10, 2001 minutes, WRC Code of Conduct, Fair-Traded and Shade-Grown Coffee, Proposed Pub in Coffman Memorial Union, No Further Discussion on the Use & Care of Animals Planned for '01-'02 by Social Concerns].

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or Assembly, the Administration or the Board of Regents].

PRESENT: Robert Brown (Chair), Judi Linder, Margaret Kuchenreuther, Laura Barry Hamilton, Greg Schooler, Jean Niemiec, Mark Pedelty, Andrew Pomroy, George French, Brian Wiedenmeier

REGRETS: Julie Sweitzer, John Beatty, John Jensen, Yvonne Redmond-Brown

ABSENT: Catherine Forseide-Hussain, Luis Ramos-Garcia

OTHERS: Kate Suchomel (MPIRG) and Emily Scholtka (MPIRG)

I). APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 10, 2001 MINUTES: Professor Brown requested a motion be made to approve the September 10, 2001 meeting minutes. Judi Linder motioned to approve the minutes and Mark Pedelty seconded that motion. The minutes were approved.

II). Professor Brown welcomed those present and asked that everyone introduce themselves for the benefit of the new members and for others who were unable to attend the first meeting.

III). WRC/Code of Conduct Discussion: Professor Brown asked for testimony from the Minnesota Public Interest Research Group (MPIRG) representatives on their views regarding the WRC and the Code of Conduct. Two main issues were raised by MPIRG:

- The University of Minnesota has not yet ratified a Code of Conduct.
- In addition to having an established Code of Conduct there is also a need for disclosure. Disclosure information needs to be easily accessible and frequently updated.

Professor Brown responded by explaining that the Social Concerns Committee approved its version of the WRC Code of Conduct last year after considerable discussion. In addition, testimony was solicited from opposing voices and the Committee received two responses, the memo from Paul Glewwe, and testimony from Ian Maitland. In the end, the Committee has continued to align itself with the Code versus the laissez-faire market position of many economists. Professor Brown volunteered to find out the status of the

Code and why it has not yet been approved by President Yudof's office as well as inquiry on how to access compliance data. He will report back on his findings to the Committee at the next meeting on November 12, 2001.

IV). Margaret Kuchenreuther shared with the Committee the two major issues impacting the coffee industry:

A). Professor Kuchenreuther provided the Committee with some history on the coffee industry as it relates to fair-traded coffee:

- The coffee industry is very labor intensive. Coffee can only be harvested by hand and is grown at relatively high elevations primarily in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Bringing coffee to market usually involves individual farmers selling to intermediaries who then retail the coffee to a wholesaler. The wholesaler will then sell the coffee to a roaster who finally sells it to either one of the giant concerns such as Nestle, Sarah Lee, Proctor & Gamble or Phillip Morris or a specialty roaster such as Starbucks etc.
- Most recently, coffee prices have been extremely volatile, and volatile in a negative way. Referencing the Oxham Report published in May of 2001 Professor Kuchenreuther stressed that recent coffee prices to farmers had hit an all time low, and that farmers were not even being paid enough to cover their production costs. Yet, when consumers go to the grocery store to purchase coffee it is being sold, on average, between \$8 -\$12/pound.

B). Sustainability: Sustainability is the agricultural method with which coffee is produced. Professor Kuchenreuther outlined the various types of coffee cultures:

- Traditional Coffee Culture whereby coffee is grown as an 'under-story' crop (shade grown coffee). Because most of the life in a rainforest is in the canopy, traditional coffee culture does not harm the over-story and the ability of the forest to support other forms of life.
- Traditional Polyculture System involves clear cutting the forest and planting coffee, but also planting a lot of other crops such as bananas, nut trees, and other agronomically important crops which would make a layered forest that would grow over the coffee.
- Commercial Polyculture entails removing the original forest canopy trees and introducing other types of trees i.e. cedar, rubber, banana and nitrogen-fixing plants.
- Shaded Monoculture calls for clearing the forest and planting coffee with one other over-shading tree.
- Unshaded Monoculture is also known as sun grown coffee. Sun grown coffee gives the farmer the ability to increase yield by using fertilizers and pesticides. While the sun-grown coffee per bush yield is higher, the bushes themselves don't live as long and require more care. Farmers are interested in this type of low input agriculture in large because of the low prices they are receiving for their coffee.

Currently rainforests are being lost worldwide at a rate of 40 million acres per year. Impacts of deforestation include, but are not limited to, dramatic declines in

migratory songbirds and carbon cessation. Whereas traditional shade coffee has numerous ecological advantages, sun grown coffee production only appears to benefit rich, international conglomerate industries. A lot can be done to improve the situation by demanding coffee be fairly traded and grown in a manner which supports ecological values. An engaging discussion followed Professor Kuchenreuther's presentation and various ways to approach this issue were considered:

- 1). Invite contracted vendors from each campus to come and speak to the Committee on the possibility of making available fair-traded and shade grown coffee. Make vendors aware that they have been invited to the meeting because this is an initiative that the Social Concerns Committee will be pursuing, and their support is encouraged.
- 2). Pass a resolution for all campuses to make an attempt to have fair-traded and shade grown coffee available all University of Minnesota campuses.
- 3). Conscientiousness raising efforts on campus to make others aware of this issue.

It was agreed that a representative from University Services and ARAMARK would be invited to the next Social Concerns Committee Meeting on November 12, 2001. In addition, Brian Wiedenmeier volunteered to present this issue to MSA in an attempt to gain their support in this venture. The Committee also supported the idea that MSA members should be encouraged to attend the next Social Concern Meeting.

V). OTHER BUSINESS: It was mentioned that consideration is being given to locating a bar/pub in Coffman Memorial Union. Drinking and alcohol use has been an issue that this Committee has dealt with in the past, and it may be something that will need to be looked at again. Secondly, the Committee agreed that they spent an adequate amount of time on the issue of Use and Care of Animals last year, and would not be taking up this issue again.

With no further business, Professor Brown thanked all for coming and adjourned the meeting.

University Senate  
Renee Dempsey