

SOCIAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
NOVEMBER 12, 2001

[In these minutes: Welcome, Update on the WRC Code of Conduct, Fair-Trade Coffee Presentation]

[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: George French, Acting Chair, Mark Pedelty, Kari Lindeman, Margaret Kuchenreuther, Greg Schooler, Jean Niemiec, Yvonne Redmond-Brown, Karen Holtmeier, Patrick Buckle, Anne Decker, Brian Wiedenmeier, Laura Hamilton, Judi Linder

REGRETS: Robert Brown, Julie Sweitzer, John Jensen

ABSENT: Catherine Forseide-Hussain, John Beatty, Luis Ramos-Garcia, Cameron Brauer, Andrew Pomeroy

GUESTS: Leslie Bowman and Kay Akey

I). Acting Chair, George French, called the meeting to order and welcomed all those present.

II). Update on the WRC Code of Conduct: Professor French provided new Committee members with a brief history on the WRC Code of Conduct. To summarize, the Code sets forth standards for manufacturing companies in third world countries that do business with the University of Minnesota. The University of Minnesota's membership in the Worker's Rights Consortium (WRC) requires the University either adopt the Consortium's Code of Conduct or adopt its own. The University wrote its own Code and the final draft version is before President Yudof awaiting his approval and signature.

III). Leslie Bowman, Director, University Dining Services Contract Administration and Kay Akey, ARAMARK Operations Director – Catering, addressed the Committee on the possibility of offering fair trade and shade grown coffee at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities Campus.

The University currently has three coffee suppliers and all three offer a fair trade coffee:

1. Superior McGarvey, a division of Sara Lee Company, offers Prebica Rainforest Blend Coffee. This is a fair-trade, organic and shade grown coffee. The University of Minnesota uses Superior McGarvey coffee for all its catering requests.

2. Java City offers two coffee blends that meet the fair trade certification and one espresso bean.
3. Starbucks Coffee offers two blends of coffee that meet the fair trade certification requirements.

Fair-trade coffee is purchased from a certified grower. Purchasing fair-trade coffee guarantees farmers that produce this coffee receive a minimum price for their harvest. Currently the minimum price is two times more than the futures market for green coffee. Increased profits allow farmers to support a better standard of living as well as invest in farming operations. Organic coffee is free of pesticides and artificial chemicals. Although not all fair-trade coffee is organic, approximately 80-85% of fair trade coffee farmers avoid the use of pesticides. Lastly, most fair-trade coffee is shade grown or a “bird friendly coffee.”

In response to demand and after considerable discussion, UDS and ARAMARK proposed offering fair-trade coffee in a couple campus locations one day per week. Volume and acceptability will be monitored and if warranted, consideration will be given to increasing the number of days per week that fair trade coffee would be available. Test pilot locations will be:

- Essentials on the West Bank, a Java City location, will offer fair-trade coffee every Wednesday.
- The Cup in Williamson, a Starbucks location, will offer fair-trade coffee one day per week as well.

In response to questions and comments raised by Committee members the following points were made:

- Wednesday was chosen because it seems to be the busiest day of the week for most locations.
- Fair-trade coffee is slightly more expensive than regular coffee. The additional cost will not be passed on to consumers at this time.
- How will UDS/ARAMARK promote fair trade coffee offerings? Both Java City and Starbucks have very good point of sale advertising materials. Also, there is a plan to contact The Daily in an attempt to announce the sale of fair trade coffee being offered on campus. Other ideas include: sending promotional postcards to departments, faxing announcements to departments that order frequently as well as posting the new offering on the UDS website.
- Contractually how linked is the University of Minnesota to its three coffee suppliers? Would it be possible to go outside these suppliers to purchase coffee for the University’s retail outlets, catering and residence halls? The University by way of ARAMARK has binding contracts with Java City and Starbucks, and the University’s arrangement with Superior McGarvey is that if the University uses

their coffee they will provide the equipment. If Superior McGarvey coffee is not offered the University would need to find another supplier that could provide both fair trade coffee as well as equipment.

It was mentioned that Peace Coffee is a local company that roasts fair-trade and shade grown coffee. An interesting alternative to Superior McGarvey would be Peace Coffee because they would be able to supply equipment as well as the fair-trade and shade grown coffee. Leslie Bowman went on to say that the only retail location on campus where there might be some flexibility is at the Carlson School of Management. CSOM is currently operated with Superior McGarvey product and equipment.

- Is there a possibility of offering fair-trade coffee more than one day per week at each of the two locations to determine coffee consumption habits more accurately? UDS and ARAMARK agreed to explore this possibility.
- The University has a ten-year contract with ARAMARK. Therefore, any partnership ARAMARK enters into with its vendors is binding on the University for the remainder of the contract.
- Peace Coffee will be presenting to MSA on November 20, 2001 at 3:30 in room #25 Mondale Hall. Free coffee will be offered.

Professor French asked Committee members whether they thought it appropriate for the University of Minnesota to purchase and serve any coffee that is not fair-trade and shade grown? Committee members then spent some time discussing this question. As part of the discussion, Professor Kuchenreuther, a conservation biologist, passionately argued for shade grown coffee in addition to fair-trade coffee. She went on to say it would be a larger social justice to make sure we are humane to each other as well as the affected wildlife population.

In conclusion, with an appropriate marketing campaign, socially conscientious people probably would be willing to pay more if they understand what is at stake. Educating people on this topic will be extremely important, and it will require the efforts of many different groups.

Professor French asked if it would be appropriate for Social Concerns to take some type of action? He went even further to suggest a motion that fair-trade coffee be offered some place on campus every day rather than only one day per week. Brian Wiedenmeier and Professor Kuchenreuther volunteered to write a resolution stating the Committee's position on the fair-trade, shade grown coffee issue. It was also mentioned that the Social Concerns Committee contact The Daily in a proactive approach to educate the public and address steps being taken to introduce fair-trade and shade grown coffee on campus. UDS and ARAMARK representatives, Leslie Bowman and Kay Akey respectively, volunteered to return to the next meeting when there will be discussion on the resolution before the Committee. Input from UDS and ARAMARK will be important.

IV). Professor French reopened the WRC topic by asking new Committee members if there were any additional questions he could try to answer. A question was raised concerning President Yudof's position on the Code and why it is taking so long for him to sign it. Professor French believes that President Yudof is in favor of the WRC, but is being cautious in light of a letter that came across his desk signed by prominent economists from across the country, including five from the University of Minnesota. The economists have risen up to criticize college campuses for getting involved in an issue that they really don't know enough about. Economists are concerned that the United States has an imperialistic attitude, and oftentimes tries to force standards on the rest of the world. Professor French thinks the University of Minnesota's Code addresses this concern. President Yudof wants to be sure the University of Minnesota economists have had an opportunity to give input on this issue, and that the Social Concerns Committee has done its homework. As a result, over the summer Professor French, Professor Brown and other Committee members took it upon themselves to solicit input from the economists. Their responses were available for the Social Concerns Committee to look at this past fall.

V). Topics for the next meeting to be forwarded on to Professor Brown:

- Further discussion and an update on the fair trade, shade grown coffee issue.
- Facilities Management to address the Committee on its energy codes.
- Brian Wiedenmeier volunteered to ask representatives from Peace Coffee to address the Committee.

With no further business, Professor French thanked everyone for coming and adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate