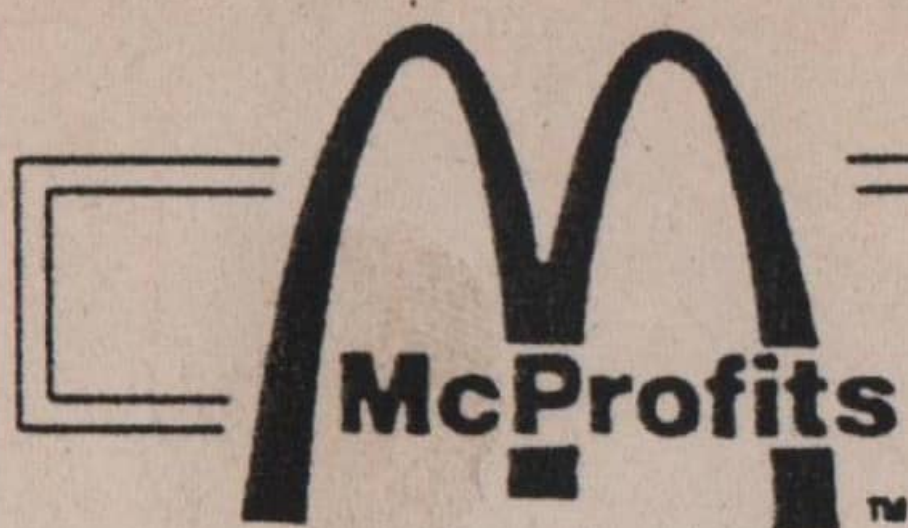




McLIBEL SUPPORT CAMPAIGN

Summary Jan 94

TRIAL DATE SET FOR 28TH FEBRUARY 1994 IN LIBEL CASE BETWEEN MCDONALD'S AND LONDON GREENPEACE SUPPORTERS

After three and a half years of pre-trial legal argument, a date has finally been set for the High Court libel trial brought by the \$20 billion a year McDonald's Corporation against two unwaged supporters of London Greenpeace. The trial is due to begin on Monday 28th February, and is expected to last throughout March. Since the writs were first served on the Defendants, McDonald's, with the collusion of the court, has done its utmost to stop the truth from being heard, and to prevent any chance of a fair trial. Last month, at the request of McDonald's, **the Court removed the Defendants right to a jury trial.**

The McDonald's Hamburger Corporation is the largest retail property owner and food service organisation in the world, with annual sales of nearly \$20 billion. But behind the slick advertising and glossy image is the reality - a profiteering racket :

- * exploiting workers - low pay, poor conditions, authoritarian management, no trade unions
- * conning customers - overpriced, mass-produced and unhealthy 'food'
- * indoctrinating children - over £100m spent annually on deceptive ads and dodgy promotions to entice kids in
- * destroying the environment - with their packaging and waste, and the effects of beef ranching
- * abusing animals - millions are imprisoned and murdered every year, completely unnecessarily
- * creating a junk culture - plastic and soulless

Over the years many people have criticised and protested about McDonald's practices. In 1985 London Greenpeace (a small, independent collective active since 1970) launched a general anti-McDonald's campaign to try to co-ordinate and strengthen opposition. This has been enormously successful, especially the world-wide annual Anti-McDonald's Day every October 16th (UN World Food Day), involving hundreds of local protests. A detailed 6-sided Factsheet: 'What's Wrong With McDonald's - Everything They Don't Want You To Know' - was produced and translated and taken up in dozens of countries.

McDonald's initially attempted to ignore such opposition, but then began to counter it. On one hand they stepped up their propaganda efforts (including producing their own 'McFact' cards), and began to project a 'green' and 'caring' image. On the other hand they began to use the legal system to try to suppress free speech. In Britain, a range of organisations and media bodies, from radical movements and from the establishment, were threatened with costly and time-consuming libel proceedings. They were forced to 'apologise' for daring to criticise this transnational corporation - (this included the Scottish TUC, vegetarian and green groups, labour research institutes, The Guardian, Channel 4 and many more).

Libel laws exist to protect the interests of the rich and powerful. The laws and court procedures are extremely complex, and unless you are represented or have legal advice you stand virtually no chance of being able to defend a case. The cost of legal representation is hugely expensive, and no legal aid is available to fight libel cases. It is for these reasons that people apologise for what they've said, **not** because it was untrue. The purpose of libel law is not, as we are told, to uphold the truth, but rather to ensure that critics of wealthy people and powerful organisations are silenced.

The McLibel Case

Despite McDonald's efforts, the grass-roots campaign continued to grow. In September 1990, after having sent spies to London Greenpeace meetings and events, individuals connected to the group had writs served on them, alleging the group's Factsheet was 'libellous'. The aim was to try to create a climate of intimidation against activists in order to censor the distribution of leaflets to the public. However, the defendants, Helen Steel & Dave Morris, decided to fight the case and, with other campaigners, decided not to bow to McDonald's intimidation. Instead, protests against McDonald's were stepped up.

The fast food giant has admitted that it's not their case that Helen and Dave actually even wrote or printed the Factsheet, but they've refused to drop the case claiming that the defendants attended meetings where the leaflet was available, and that Helen handed it out on one occasion! In the couple of years after the writs were served there were requests on both sides for more details of each sides' case (further and better particulars). The defendants had to draw these up themselves with only informal legal advice. McDonald's dragged this stage out asking for more and more details, hoping that the defendants would be exhausted and lose interest in fighting on. Eventually they realised that the defendants were not going to give in, and last year McDonald's became as obstructive as possible and deliberately speeded the proceedings up, to make it harder for the defendants to prepare their case. In 1993 alone the defendants attended a dozen pre-trial hearings, some of which lasted several days.

THE GREAT COVER UP - McDonald's were legally obliged in pre-trial procedures to answer a list of defence questions about all the issues in the case, and to hand over all relevant documents about their practices in their possession, however sensitive. They refused to do so. They are terrified of having to reveal what they've been able to hide for so long - that they are a fraud, and that their critics have been right all along. Instead they provided mostly bland 'policy' details, annual reports and accounts of charitable activities. The Court colluded with this COVER UP, first it ordered that, contrary to normal procedure, the Defendants would have to serve all their witnesses statements before McDonald's would have to hand over the documents. The defendants were given just **THREE WEEKS** to serve the statements. This was an attempt to get Helen and Dave's case thrown out by the back door in the hope that, due to lack of money and experience, they would be unable to get all the statements they needed in that short period. Despite this, statements from 65 people were served for the defence, including about 30 ex-workers and the rest from experts on the

various issues. But even after the Defendants served all these statements, the Court still refused to order McDonald's to hand over the documents. If libel cases are really about establishing the truth, WHY are McDonald's being allowed to hide all these documents?

NO CHANCE OF A FAIR TRIAL

Despite having got away with the cover up, and despite the inequality in resources available to each side, McDonald's still feared a jury would see through their lies. They applied for the case to be tried without a jury, claiming that the issues were too complicated for members of the public (jury) to understand and also that it would be cheaper for them to have the trial by judge alone. Overturning normal procedure yet again, the court ruled that the defendants could not have a jury trial. The Court has also banned some of the defence evidence, including proof that McDonald's has lied to the public. The defendants have applied to appeal against these denials of their rights.

If they lose the case the Defendants will face a mammoth bill for costs and 'damages', although it is unlikely that they would ever be able to pay. In addition McDonald's are seeking a gagging injunction to prevent the defendants from handing out leaflets about them, which if breached could lead to the defendants being jailed. Although the trial will be difficult to fight because of the defendants legal inexperience and the vast difference in resources available to each side, it will be a public forum for the truth in front of the world's media, as anything said in court can be published without fear of libel writs. It should be a real eye opener for millions of people and a spur to further protests and boycotts. This is why the case must be fought.

FIGHTING FOR FREE SPEECH

Rather than halting protests, the threat to free speech has only served to further damage McDonald's reputation and to strengthen the determination of their critics. It is encouraging to discover just how much opposition world-wide there has been, and continues to be, against McDonald's. There have been protests in support of the defendants, a day of McLibel Solidarity (with protests in a dozen countries) and a 500-strong demonstration in London. Local pickets continue every week. We thank the hundreds of people who've written letters, articles, passed resolutions and sent donations they've raised. As the trial approaches, it's vital that this support grows! Of course the best response to this threat to free speech is to redouble the local protests. Lets show that opposition to injustice can never be silenced and that any empire built on exploitation, suffering and lies can be undermined... Censorship and intimidation must never be allowed to succeed.

FREE SPEECH PLEDGE - Free speech is our right. We call on all concerned and campaigning organisations to pledge to defy libel threats and to freely circulate anti-McDonald's literature, whatever the verdict at the trial - over half a million leaflets have already been handed out on the streets since this case started! Let's show them that efforts to silence critics will backfire. PLEASE SIGN THE 'FREE SPEECH PLEDGE' BELOW.

APPEAL

1. Please STEP UP THE PROTESTS against McDonald's. Send us reports. Leaflets in bulk from: Veggies, 180 Mansfield Rd, Nottingham - 0602 585666. Cost £12 per 1,000. Can be printed with your local group contact. Veggies also have Anti-Mac posters, stickers and badges.
2. CIRCULATE DETAILS OF THE CASE. Copy and pass on this leaflet. Leaflets are available in other languages.
3. Please RAISE MONEY. Lots of money is needed to prepare the case, to bring witnesses to the trial etc.
4. Please get your group to SEND MESSAGES OF SUPPORT and donations, and to put this leaflet in their mailouts / paper. We need your help in the campaign. Please fill in the slip below, or come along to the weekly London meetings.

DEFEND FREE SPEECH

SATURDAY 26th FEBRUARY - DAY OF ACTION AGAINST McDONALD'S - picket all their local stores!

MONDAY 28th FEBRUARY, 9.30am. - PICKET THE HIGH COURT, Strand, London, WC2. (Holborn tube) - on the first day of the McLibel trial.

SATURDAY AFTER THE VERDICT - Picket your local McDonald's

SATURDAY 21st MAY - National FREE SPEECH DAY - picket your local McDonald'

I/We back the McLibel Support Campaign

I/We also back the 'Free Speech Pledge'

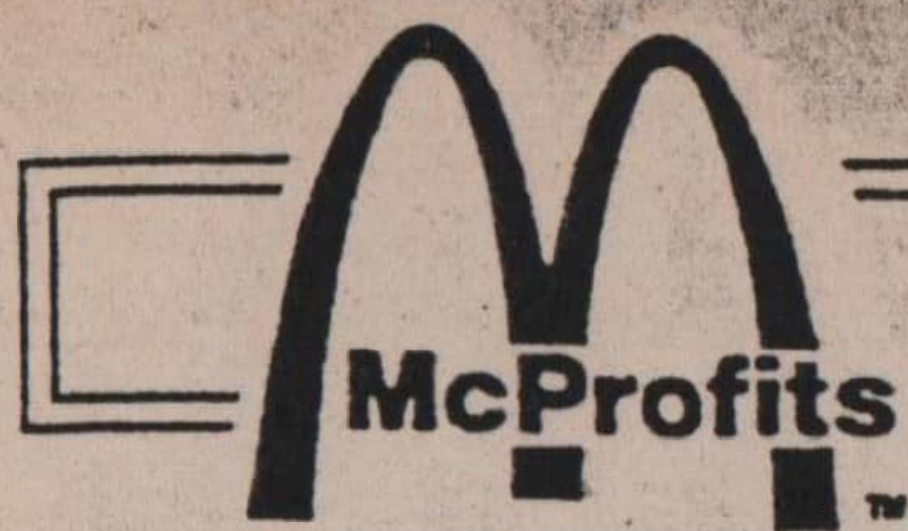
Name.....

Name of Group.....

Address..... Phone

I/We enclose a Donation : £..... (cheques to 'McLibel Support Campaign').

Return to McLibel Support Campaign c/o London Greenpeace, 5 Caledonian Rd, London N1. Ph 071 837 7557



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TRIAL DATE NOW SET FOR APRIL 18th 1994 *

IN LIBEL CASE BETWEEN MCDONALD'S AND LONDON GREENPEACE SUPPORTERS

After three and a half years of pre-trial legal argument, a date has finally been set for the High Court libel trial brought by the \$20 billion a year McDonald's Corporation against two unwaged supporters of London Greenpeace. The trial is due to begin on Monday 18th April, and is expected to last 2-3 months. Since the writs were first served on the Defendants, McDonald's, with the collusion of the court, has done its utmost to stop the truth from being heard, and to prevent any chance of a fair trial. Last month, at the request of McDonald's, the Court removed the Defendants right to a jury trial.

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DEFEND FREE SPEECH

I/We back the McLibel Support Campaign

I/We also back the 'Free Speech Pledge'

Name.....

Name of Group.....

Address..... Phone

I/We enclose a Donation : £..... (cheques to 'McLibel Support Campaign').

Return to McLibel Support Campaign c/o London Greenpeace, 5 Caledonian Rd, London N1. Ph 071 837 7557