

Green Party, Georgia: Resolution to Boycott Coca-Cola Beverages Because of Widespread Labor, Human Rights & Environmental Abuses

Whereas, in 2001 and 2006, lawsuits were filed in the United States against The Coca-Cola Co. headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, and its bottlers in Colombia charging that the bottlers “contracted with or otherwise directed paramilitary security forces that utilized extreme violence and murdered, tortured, unlawfully detained or otherwise silenced trade union leaders;”

Whereas, the lawsuits were filed on behalf of SINALTRAINAL – the major union representing Coca-Cola workers in Colombia – several of its members and the survivors of Isidro Gil and Adolfo de Jesus Munera, two of its murdered officers;

Whereas, a fact-finding delegation to Colombia in 2004 led by a former New York City Council Member issued a report concluding that Coca-Cola is “complicit in human rights abuses in Colombia” and that its “complicity is deepened by its repeated pattern of bringing criminal charges against union activists who have spoken out about the company’s collusion with the paramilitaries;”

Whereas, the report further concludes “that Coca-Cola bears responsibility for the campaign of terror leveled at its workers is unavoidable. The company has pressured workers to resign their union membership and contractual rights, and fired workers who refused to do so...Most troubling to the delegation were the persistent allegations that paramilitary violence against workers was done with the knowledge of and likely under the direction of company managers...”

Whereas, in July 2006, the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association-College Retirement Equities Fund (TIAA-CREF) divested 1.25 million shares of Coca-Cola Co. stock and has banned further investments in its \$9 billion CREF Social Choice Account, the nation’s largest socially screened fund for individual investors, because The Coca-Cola Co. does not meet TIAA-CREF’s standards as a socially responsible company;

Whereas, campaigns against Coca-Cola are growing worldwide because of labor, human rights and/or environmental abuses in Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Russia, Turkey, the United States, Venezuela and other countries;

Whereas, it has been reported that The Coca-Cola Co. has been accused of benefiting from prison labor in China (*BBC News*, 5/21/07);

Whereas, a report released in Beijing on December 14, 2008, exposed extensive abuse of workers in Coca-Cola bottling plants in China. “ ‘These employees are involved in the most dangerous, intense and tiresome labor, work the longest hours, but receive the lowest wage and face arrears with and even cutbacks on their pay.’ said a 28-page report written by seven university students after a month of participatory research...” The *China Daily* [12/16/08] said the report “accused the company of exploiting the workers -- some of whom worked more than 100 hours of overtime per month, above the 36 hour maximum stipulated by law - paying them the minimum wage and giving them few rights.”

Whereas, Coca-Cola has been criticized for massive water exploitation and discriminatory workplace practices in Mexico and the *Chicago Tribune* (10/30/06) reported, “many U.S. corporations — including Coca-Cola...are engaging in hiring practices that appear to violate their U.S. fair employment policies.” It noted, “Job seekers [in Mexico] considered too old, too chunky or too dark are screened out by companies that sometimes specify the ideal candidate’s marital status, height, weight, tone of voice, even the part of town in which the person should reside...”

Whereas, the Environmental Law Research Center in Geneva issued a report in May 2007 concluding that “the availability of good quality water for drinking purposes and agriculture [in India] has been affected dangerously due to the activity of the Company [The Coca-Cola Co.]. Apart from that, the Company had also polluted the agricultural lands by depositing hazardous wastes. All these point to the

gross violation of the basic human rights, that is, the right to life, right to livelihood and the violation of the pollution control laws.”

Whereas, one Coca-Cola plant has been shut down since 2004 due to protests and the *Atlanta-Journal Constitution* (12/16/07) reported that India’s Kerala State Pollution Control Board sent a letter to Coke’s India head office in September 2007 “accusing the company of polluting with cadmium and asking executives why they should not face criminal prosecution.”

Whereas, on Nov. 19, 2007, a documentary film, “Mark Thomas on Coca-Cola” broadcast nationally in England highlighted Coke’s human rights and environmental abuses in Colombia and India, its offensive history of racial discrimination, and how Coke continues to benefit from hazardous child labor cutting sugar cane illegally in El Salvador;

Whereas, a well-documented book, “Belching Out the Devil,” by Mark Thomas, recently published in the U.S. in Spring 2009, was reviewed in major U.S. publications. Newsweek (6/6/09) stated: “...he writes, the iconic white-and-red ribbon is a slick PR blindfold for child labor, union crackdowns and even violence, all to protect cash flow and the supply chain...” The Atlanta Journal-Constitution (6/28/09) stated: “What Thomas discovers is shocking: According to workers and human rights organizations, Sinaltrainal, after more than a decade of union-busting attacks and intimidation by paramilitaries allegedly hired by the Coca-Cola plants, is struggling to survive.”

Whereas, more than 50 colleges and universities have removed Coca-Cola products from their campuses, including large universities like Rutgers, DePaul and State University of New York Stony Brook, because of widespread labor, human rights and environmental abuses;

Whereas, after the decision was made to remove Coke beverages from Smith College in May 2007, Smith President Carol Christ issued a press release stating:

“As a private college with a public conscience, Smith College takes issues of human rights and environmental sustainability very seriously. Social responsibility is a core value of the college, one we aspire to reflect in our educational mission and in our campus operations. In severing our ties with the Coca-Cola Corporation, Smith joins other institutions and organizations around the world in urging Coca-Cola to take significant steps toward more responsible business practices across all realms of its operations.”

Whereas, the website KillerCoke.org documents past and current massive labor, human rights and environmental abuses worldwide

Resolved, that the Georgia Green Party calls on its members to initiate and support campaigns in schools, labor unions and public institutions, etc. to hold The Coca-Cola Company accountable by removing all Coke machines and Coke beverages and banning the sale and advertising of Coke products;

Resolved, that the Green Party will ban all Coke products from all its meetings and events;

Resolved, that until The Coca-Cola Company can prove that it has taken genuine remedial actions to become a responsible corporate citizen, the call for this ban on Coca-Cola products by the Green Party of Georgia will remain in effect.