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PRESS RELEASE: Students protest university involvement in sweatshops

Contact Beth or Jim for more information, interviews or high quality pictures on +44 (0)1865 245678, or buyright@peopleandplanet.org.

Students across the UK, the USA and Europe are starting a new wave of direct action, this time directed against their universities' complicity in labour abuses. The International Week of Action, 22 – 28 November, was called by charities People & Planet [1] and War on Want [2].

Students took action in a number of imaginative ways: Oxford demonstrated that they'd rather go naked than wear sweatshop-produced clothes, Sussex launched an anti-sweatshop campaign on their campus, the University of East Anglia used street theatre to 'bring the sweatshop to the campus', Bristol had a week of awareness-raising activities, and other universities hid secret scrolls in the pockets of clothes in shops, worked out for workers rights and presented petitions to university management. They are all calling for their universities to sign up to a labour rights monitoring organisation set up by students called the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC)[3].

Birmingham's student union recently announced that they would be the first UK institution to sign up to the WRC[3], and several thousand students have already signed the "10 000 voices for Human Rights" petition as part of People & Planet's "Buy Right" campaign [4]. Students taking part in the campaign have been talking directly to trade unionists from the Dominican Republic and Honduras about the 'sweatshop conditions' workers face in factories that produce clothing for universities

Ellie Davies, from Reading University, said "Students at Reading University are horrified at the conditions that people are forced to work under to produce the goods that we all buy. We have links with a number of staff members at the University of Reading, and we hope to work with them to make the university's purchasing sweatshop free."

Beth Tichborne, an anti-sweatshop campaigner from People & Planet said "It's amazing to see the wave of student activity around campaigning for workers' rights. Universities spend £8 billion a year on everyday goods, so they have the power to make a real difference."

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Notes to editors

[1] People & Planet (peopleandplanet.org/) is the largest student network in Britain campaigning to end world poverty, defend human rights and protect the environment. www.peopleandplanet.org

[2] War on Want fights poverty in developing countries in partnership with people affected by globalisation. They campaign for human rights and against the root causes of global poverty, inequality and injustice. www.waronwant.org

[3] The Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) is an independent labour rights monitoring organization, conducting investigations of working conditions in factories around the globe. The WRC has the support of over 175 college and university affiliates in North America and their primary focus is the labour practices of factories that make university-related apparel. www.workersrights.org

[\[4\] Universities spend £8 billion a year on the things that students use day-to-day. Much of this money goes to big companies with appalling records of human rights abuses in their supply chains.](#)

Students around the UK are now demanding that our universities take action. We want to **defend**

human rights throughout university supply chains. www.peopleandplanet.org/buyright