

## The Anti- Lidl Campaign, europe-wide!

Since the middle of August Attac Germany's Anti- Lidl-Campaign has gained increasing public attention. Attac started this campaign under the banner of '**Global Social Rights**'. With these demands we globalisation opponents want to focus on the links between various social (resistance) battles across the world and give our actions and demands an explicitly international flavour of solidarity. The following text attempts to show how a country specific anti- Lidl campaign can be built up and be linked to existing (trading) corporation critical campaigns.

The **discounter Lidl** is under Attack, a company that stands like no other across Europe for environmental, social, and price dumping practices. Lidl is known for its aggressive low-price-strategy, and hides its true corporate structure behind a network of some 600 trusts and limited companies. Lidl is expanding massively in 15 european countries, and - according to experts - has already left its biggest competitor Aldi way behind. Through its mixture of dominance in the market place and ruthless cost cutting Lidl has become *the* negative-trendsetter for the retail sector.<sup>1</sup>

The Attack against Lidl is supported by a variety of organisations:

- With its own 'Black Book Lidl' at the end of 2004 the largest German Union Ver.di criticised the unacceptable working practices and conditions in Lidl outlets. Since then Ver.di has run a campaign demanding workers' rights and the introduction of workers councils<sup>2</sup>.
- Agricultural organisations such as the Farmers for Agriculture (Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft, AbL) have called for protests against Lidl and other discounters since the beginning of 2004. The discounted price for milk is for example below the cost production and is undermining the existence of dairy farmers.
- Development organisations (WEED, Germanwatch) and groups for Fair Trade have shown in reports and studies the link between bargain prices in the North and poverty, the lack of human rights and environmental damage in the South..

According to our information in many European countries groups and residents are already mobilising against Lidl. For the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Romania an activist has prepared an unofficial dossier about the respective accusations against the corporation. In Sweden and Switzerland many local areas are actively trying to stop the opening of Lidl supermarkets, so as not to get caught up in their price dumping policies.

With this campaign **Attac criticises** the causes and disastrous consequences of this form of 'Globalisation in the shopping trolley'. We are acting against corporations because we believe that it's politically reasonable to stress a concrete phenomenon that can be experienced in everybody's daily life. With this campaign, we are criticising globalisation and consumerism in a way that – this shows us our experiences - is understood by the people easily. Therefore we have formulated demands that are aimed directly at the corporation Lidl, but still leave room for further considerations on a political level:

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<sup>1</sup> In this respect we see many parallels with the WakeUpWalmart campaign in America, Tescopoly in the UK and Peuples Solidaires in France.

<sup>2</sup> To date there are workers councils in 8 out of 2600 outlets. Initiatives for workers councils are opposed by Lidl.

- **Fair prices for bananas, water and milk!** This is a demand that is most easily understood. We've chosen products for which we've got well-founded informations about the mechanisms of price dumping and for which we have good partners for this battle. With these examples we can easily arouse interest in the pedestrian precincts and in front of the stores.
- **Social rights for all – here and across the world!** We want to bridge the working conditions of the Lidl workers, its suppliers and producers. We have solidarity with the people that are suffering under Lidl's price dumping policies.
- **Allow democratic controls!** Here we are Attacking a basic principle of Lidl's corporate practice. The corporation must open itself to our criticism and be prepared to discuss our demands. With the second and third points, we are furthermore supporting Ver.di's campaign.
- **Cards on the table, let's see where the products come from!** This takes up the demands of transparency and democratic control and combines them with fair prices. We want to increase the power and awaken the conscience of consumers and we think that Lidl has a duty to provide the information to enable consumers to make their own choices. This should be a matter of course within the international chain of value creation.

Our **campaign slogan** is: “Lidl ist nicht zu billigen!” (Lidl is unacceptable)<sup>3</sup>.

The **Attac Lidl Campaign** is a decentralised campaign organised from the grass roots. Dozens of regional Attac groups, co-ordinated from a nationally operating Campaign Team, are running information events and protests. In this sense networking is very important for us, and on a local as well as national level we are co-operating with a variety of organisations and associations: Unions, Green, Agricultural, and Fair Trade groups and leftist political parties.

In addition, we want to **escalate the Campaign internationally** and believe that international co-operation is especially important:

- Pressure should come from many sides and not be predictable for Lidl. By this means the Campaign will appear uncontrollable and should force a reaction. Besides that, Attacks from many quarters – let it be country, topic, or product related issues - will have an exponential effect on public attention.
- International networking strengthens international co-operation and brings us closer to the aim of being a globally active anti-globalisation movement.
- Criticism of specific companies make the complex relationships of globalisation issues concrete, interesting and easier to understand. Criticism of the corporate politic of discounters refers to the vicious circle of social decline and economic cost-reduction strategies. International networking will make it easier for Attac to make these relationships vividly and believably clear to a wider audience.

We encourage all initiatives and organisations who are working now or in future against Lidl, or similar corporations, to contact us for buiding up an international information network and developing a common strategy. Please contact us as below.

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<sup>3</sup> Translators note: this is an untranslatable play on words. In the original it is 'Lidl ist nicht zu billigen' whereby 'billigen' means to accept, and 'billig' means cheap. Literally, Lidl is not acceptable, and too cheap, but the joke only works in German!