

Speech by Fiona Bruce MP during Fair-Trade Fortnight.

The following speech was given by Fiona Bruce in her constituency on Saturday 5th March to coincide with Fair-Trade Fortnight.

Fiona continues to call on Cheshire East Council to become a Fair Trade Council.

Why buy Fair Trade?

The Archbishop of York, John Sentamu has said:

“Fairtrade is not about charity, it’s about justice. It’s about people getting fair pay for produce no matter where they live in the world”.

I agree; Fair-trade is about justice not charity; it’s not about giving a hand out or a donation to a charity, although these are in themselves very good and a great deal of this happens here. Fair-trade is about more than that; in one sense it’s even more dignified.

Fair-trade is about mutual self respect; it’s about treating a fellow human being, wherever they live in the world, with fairness; it’s about ‘leaving some goodwill in the deal’. It’s about paying a fair price for a product, recognising that the contribution every individual makes has worth.

Fairness is something which all human beings understand innately – even little children – as I remember so well from when my boys were toddlers and would, at times, instinctively say ‘that’s not fair!’ The application of fairness to trade is something which we neglect at our peril – if we do so it makes us less human.

Justice is not just about one person not committing a crime against another, but about the many ways we interact with each

other, whether with our husband, wife, employee (if you are an employer), pupil (if you are a teacher), or neighbour.

Our neighbour today is not just down the road, but in our global environment, our neighbours are across the world.

I was reminded of this only last week when my son went to Africa – for half-term! – to help in a school there. That school is situated on the shores of Lake Victoria in Tanzania. What has happened there is that a fish, alien to Lake Victoria, called the Nile Perch has been introduced into the Lake. The Nile Perch is a raider – it kills the other fish and grows to a huge size. Fishing companies are now able to fish out the Nile Perch and make profits exporting this abroad. But, a trade injustice has resulted. All that is now left in the Lake for the villagers who live round about it to eat are tiny bony fish – and often those villagers go hungry. As his response to this injustice, my son is writing an extended essay as part of his A Levels.

What can we do when we see trade injustice? Often we feel frustrated because we feel we can't do anything about it. Injustice like when boys and girls on the Ivory Coast are forced into what is basically slavery to harvest cocoa beans to make chocolate.

Fair-trade offers us all the opportunity to do something about injustice like this. If we believe in justice and want to put our money where our mouths are, quite literally, then we can do something.

We can buy Fair-trade.

Picture shows Fiona Bruce MP supporting Fair-Trade.