

Passed Union Council 12/2/09

Bottled Water – as amended by the proposer, plus additional amendments.

Changes to original motion in italics.

Proposer: Leejiah Dorward, PhotoSoc (Leejiah@googlemail.com)

Seconder: Anna Thomlinson, Amnesty International (A.Thomlinson@uea.ac.uk)

This Union notes:

1. Union outlets currently stock Evian, Volvic, Brecon Carreg and One water.
2. Both Evian and Volvic water is bottled in France and transported to the UK.
3. Transport is the fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions.
4. 40% of bottled water comes from taps.
5. Bottled water costs an estimated 500 times more than tap water.
6. The plastic bottles it comes in take approximately 1,000 years to biodegrade.
7. Leeds University Union, along with 16 universities in the Americas, has banned bottled water from Union shops.

[removed notes 8 & 9]

This Union believes:

1. UEA, as a leading university, should be leading the way in environmental sustainability.
2. The Union should be active in assisting the global reduction of consumption necessary to avoid irreversible climate change.
3. In industrialised countries, bottled water is no more pure and healthy than what comes out of the tap.

This Union resolves:

1. To apply for dispensation from NUSSL to allow us to remove all compulsory and non-compulsory offers from bottled water products.
2. *To apply for dispensation from NUSSL to allow us to only stock bottled water bottled in the UK.*
3. To make students aware of the environmental and economic disadvantages of bottled water.

Amendment 1

From: Natasha Barnes (Environment Officer)

To Add to This Union Resolves

4. To make tap water more readily available to students around campus by installing an additional water fountain in Union House, and by lobbying the university to add more water fountains around campus.
 5. To provide long-lasting, affordable, reusable bottles in Union outlets.
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RESOLUTION ON BOTTLED WATER

Received:

A resolution from L Dorward (PhotoSoc) and A Thomlinson (Amnesty International). (copy placed in minute book).

Noted:

That the proposer had accepted an amendment from N Barnes (Environmental Officer), (Copy placed in minute book).

Noted:

L Dorward, proposing the resolution, noted that it was being brought on environmental and social justice grounds. He acknowledged that choice had an important role in society and the resolution had been drafted to reflect that importance. He outlined the extra environmental damage caused by importing bottled water. On social justice grounds, he questioned whether we would want to be part of a society where we spend on bottled water over five times the amount needed to prevent the 1.8 million deaths of children, annually, due to lack of access to clean water. The proposed policy would cost the Union some lost revenue but not, he would submit, as much as the figures in the briefing paper from Union General Manager.

Noted:

A second amendment to the resolution from Jonathan Clark, (Other YR UG HIS) submitted before the meeting. (copy placed in minute book)

Jonathan Clark, moving the amendment, noted that he did not reject the goals of the original resolution but he thought the amendment would be a compromise which would obvert some of the problems posed by the resolution. The amendment would ensure that the needs of students on placement, international students and members of Sports Clubs for bottled water would be met. The Meal Deal would not be compromised; this was an important point as Union Resolves 1 of the original resolution would jeopardise the Meal Deal and have a serious effect on members. He argued that it was immoral and unjust to stop members benefiting

from special offers. He noted that, in his experience working in the UFO, many international students do not like the taste of British water, tap or bottled, and the resolution would as it stands discriminate against them.

D Sheppard (Academic Officer) against the amendment, argued that the Union had to lead on the issue of climate change and could not shy away from the economic consequences of any action. The problem with the amendment was that it, in effect, destroyed the essential point of the resolution. If one wanted to debate that the economic cost of tackling climate was too high then one should do it openly.

JP Goddard, (YR 1 UG LAW) for the amendment, agreed with the aims of the original resolution. However, he noted that he was concerned about its impact on student choice. The Union was set up to enable choice not to tell students what choices they should make. He argued that if Council simply banned the sale of water in the UFO, students would purchase it elsewhere. Particularly in a time of recession, it was wrong to deprive students of access to special offers. The amendment would serve the interest of preserving choice whilst helping to fulfil the laudable aims of the original motion.

A Thomlinson, against the amendment, argued that by introducing the sale of re-usable bottles for tap water, the resolution would provide an additional choice. Students would have the option of tap water or UK bottled water, this was, surely, preserving an acceptable range of choice.

L Dorward, in a clarification through the Chair, noted that the re-usable bottles would be sturdy and durable.

M Davison (Other YR UG LAW), for the amendment, argued that the amendment would preserve the key element of choice that comes with the Meal Deal and that depended on the inclusion in the Meal Deal of a specific brand of imported water. He noted that he had had experience of local tap water and it does taste awful so for some people it could not be regarded as an acceptable choice.

A Taylor (Co-opted Member) against the amendment, argued

	<p>that the UFO is a convenience store and that the arguments about penalising hard up students did not add up. If , one was struggling financially, one did not buy bottled water. The original resolution was intended to ask students to think about their decisions and make them in a rational cognitive manner rather than just by habit. He argued that if the Union applied for a dispensation from the Meal Deal, it would flag up dissatisfaction with the current system and in time that dissatisfaction will force change to the system. During that time, the Union could bear the cost and not pass it on to its members.</p>
Resolved:	<p>That the amendment was defeated by 35 votes against and 25 for.</p>
Noted:	<p>D Le Page (Other YR UG PSI), against the resolution argued, that taking bottled water off the Meal Deal was in health terms a stupid idea, the Union would be depriving students of a healthy option. In terms of green editing which had been mentioned by A Taylor, it was gradually limiting people's choices until they were narrowed down to just the things that A Taylor, and those who sympathise with him, agreed with. The Union should ask a wider range of students about whether the decisions that the Union takes should be green edited. In a time of recession when revenues from bars are falling, he felt it did not make sense to harm the Union by taking away a profitable source of revenue.</p>
Noted:	<p>That in a clarification through the Chair, the resolution would mean that all non-UK bottled water would be taken out of the Meal Deal. That in a second clarification, the Union would be able in future to set up its own Meal Deal.</p>
Noted:	<p>In summation, L Dorward, the proposer noted that the matter was a question of money or morals: the Union could still have a Meal Deal, it would just make less profit. He argued that leaflets and campaigns could only go so far, sometimes one needed to challenge people to change their behaviour. Students would still have the choice of three types of bottled water. He felt that the argument that the resolution would hit poor students was a false one as it would encourage them to use free tap water rather than paying £1 for a bottle of imported water.</p>

Resolved:

To adopt the resolution by 43 votes for, to 17 votes against ,
with 4 abstentions.