

## **Cardiff University Fellow Inspires Local Fair Trade Supporters**

Fair Trade supporters from across the county were informed and challenged at a recent lecture in Pembrokeshire, presented by Dr. Alastair M. Smith, of Cardiff University's School of Planning and Geography.

Moved by the dire effects of poverty, event organiser and active Fair Trade supporter, Amelia Gardner, invited Dr Smith to share his knowledge, when they met at this year's Fair Trade Nation five year celebrations in Swansea.

Dr Smith encouraged participants to discuss what 'fair trade' meant to them, and highlight questions that they wanted addressed in the talk.

Beginning this talk by situating the fair trade within the wider context of international development Dr Smith emphasised the: "relevance of understanding development as an aspiration to expand and equalise human freedom to a subjectively valuable life."

He noted that trade was one of the key activities available to help improved standards of human welfare and to advance development of a given community; suggesting that growing trade helps reduce poverty and increases opportunities.

Dr Smith spoke about aspects of the unfair and illegitimate slave trade system. He highlighted similar conclusions, reached by many, concerning the current state of global trade; opining that social justice is key to freedom and development.

Listeners leaned how pro-development trade might be more accurately understood, and how fair trade is one means by which ordinary citizens can contribute to the expansion of human freedoms. According to Dr Smith:

"Fair Trade is a response to the failure of conventional trade to deliver sustainable livelihoods and development opportunities to people in the poorest countries of the world; a grass roots response to the failure of state led efforts to reform the international trade system along the lines of social justice and the promotion of human development."

In conclusion Dr Smith encourages those involved in the fair trade movement, including the citizens and government of Wales, to think about how their support might be further developed: "it is argued that fair trade stakeholders need to move beyond activities to promote the consumption of products. If the fair trade movement is to continue to make a meaningful contribution to history, it will be essential to facilitate significant changes in international trade rules: arguably through the engagement with wider global frameworks as currently advocated by the World Fair Trade Organization's *Fair Trade Beyond 2015 Campaign*."

"We want to make a difference. Fair Trade is a good start but Alastair's lecture challenged us not to remain satisfied with the current systems, but to seek ways to push forward. Demanding answers to difficult questions; challenging decision makers to constantly consider new ways to address the lack of development, dignity and freedom enslaving people in poverty due to a faulty and unfair trade system." said one local supporter.

Much of Dr Smith's published academic work on the subject of international development and trade justice can be accessed through Cardiff University's repository; as part of the institution's on-going effort to make all its research publically accessible. Please visit:

<http://orca.cf.ac.uk/view/cardiffauthors/A1282002.html>

Dr Alastair M. Smith makes many of his public and university presentations available online for public use. Please visit: <http://www.authorstream.com/Alastairsmith/>

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