

ASUO Survival Center encourages Fair Trade

■ The Survival Center looks to start a full-fledged Fair Trade coffee campaign to raise student awareness

By Emily Gust
Oregon Daily Emerald

With campaigns across the country calling for an end to the exploitation of coffee growers and the beginning of a more just system of distribution, the movement may finally be making its way to the University.

Deborah James, Fair Trade director for Global Exchange, is coming to campus tonight to share her message of the Fair Trade coffee campaign. James's keynote address is sponsored by the ASUO Survival Center and will take place at 7 p.m. in the Fir Room in the EMU.

Fair Trade "basically means that farmers get a living wage for their coffee," James said. She explained that most growers currently make

about 30 cents per pound of coffee because they sell it to "middlemen" who then sell it to distributors and take a chunk of the profits.

But when growers participate in what James calls "democratic farmer cooperatives" — groupings of farmers that skip over the middle step and sell directly to distributors — they are able to earn \$1.26 per pound of coffee sold.

This, James said, is the difference between a living wage and a slave wage.

"Coffee is the second-largest traded commodity in the world after petroleum," James said, and about a quarter of the world's supply is consumed in the United States.

Not only that, but many people who drink coffee have it daily, which means they have the chance every day to make a difference.

The huge market means there is a huge opportunity for change.

"Buying Fair Trade coffee is a simple, easy thing you can do on a daily

basis to support fairness for farmers around the world," James said.

With more than 2,500 retail outlets offering Fair Trade coffee to consumers, and studies showing that people chose Fair Trade products instead of traditional ones when given the choice, it appears the effort is meeting with success.

“Buying Fair Trade Coffee is a simple, easy thing you can do on a daily basis to support fairness for farmers around the world.”

Deborah James
Fair Exchange director
Global Exchange

Starbucks began distributing Fair Trade coffee in its stores Oct. 4, but is only providing it in bags of whole beans that cost \$11.45 and not in an individual cup of coffee.

"We're excited about the opportunity to bring Fair Trade coffee," said Starbucks spokesperson Megan Behrbaum. "We were in conversations with TransFair USA and Global Exchange and we all share a common view to improving the lives of farmers in coffee origin countries."

James said the price between the two types is minimal. While the world price for coffee is \$1, buying Fair Trade coffee is just 26 cents more.

What makes the difference inconsequential is that the gourmet coffee focused on by the campaign sells for well over the world price. The 26 cents become even more insignificant when spread out over 40 cups of brewed coffee, which is how many cups a pound of beans generally yields.

More success is seen in the fact that several cities have already passed purchasing restrictions, stating they will buy only Fair Trade coffee. These cities include San Francisco, Santa Cruz, Berkeley and

Oakland, Calif.

Many colleges, too, have brought Fair Trade coffee to their campuses, including University of California-Davis.

And while there is not a full-fledged campaign underway at the University yet, there are certainly those students who hope there will be soon.

Survival Center Co-coordinator Randy Newnham said initiating a Fair Trade coffee campaign on campus is his personal crusade for the year.

Students play an important role in initiating change, James emphasized. Not only can they become involved in the grassroots campaigns, but they can potentially influence what coffee is served on their campuses.

James' visit was meant to be the kickoff for an entire weekend event — the "UO Disorientation" — put on by the Survival Center. However, organization complications caused the center to postpone the rest of the event for a few weeks.

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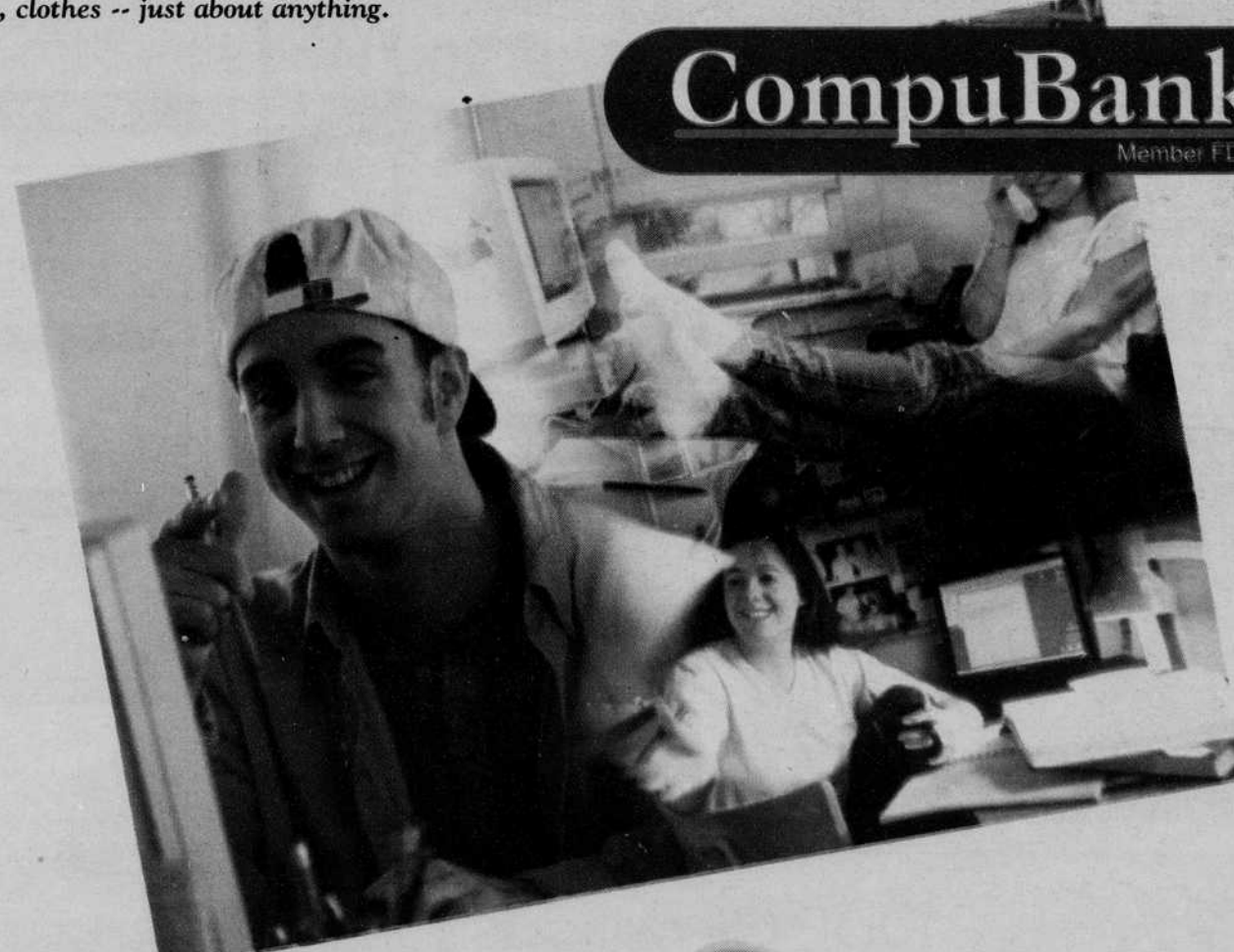
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