

Opinion: Sustainable sourced goods not new

By Calvin Schermerhorn

Today, land developer and businessman William Cooper is best known for founding Cooperstown, N.Y., home of the Baseball Hall of Fame. But back in the 1790s, Cooper was a judge and a congressman who used his power to market a different sort of pleasure—American-made maple syrup—as an ethical homegrown alternative to molasses made from cane sugar, which was at that time farmed by slaves. He took tours of the Eastern Seaboard, extolling the virtues of “free sugar,” as he called it. Maple sugar never really took off as a sugar substitute, but Cooper’s advocacy made it a favorite of abolitionists, eager to improve society through virtuous goods.

It sounds distinctively modern—fair trade, sustainably sourced, slave free—all familiar touchstones of ethical capitalism in America today. To many of us, morning coffee just seems more enjoyable when the worker picking the beans earns a living wage; a shrimp cocktail, more palatable when it is not processed by children forced to toil in peeling sheds. When trendy apparel is impossibly cheap, and likely the handiwork of exploited laborers, the conscientious consumer seeks an alternative.

Many Americans assume we’re living in a unique moment for ethical commerce, and witnessing the dawn of moral capitalism. But what seems new is actually a 250-year-old tradition, launched by a small cadre of 18th century religious reformers: Quakers and other evangelical Protestants. For activists in both the United States and Britain, sugar was the conspicuous commodity that crystalized the evils of the age because of its role in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. It was a product, they argued, that ethical consumers should avoid.

Sugar cane, which is native to Asia, had been rare in Europe until the 15th century, when Spanish and Portuguese merchants discovered that it grew well on the Canary Islands and Madeira. Columbus carried cane cuttings to the Caribbean in 1493, and Santo Domingo became the site of the region's first sugar mill in 1516. But it was Portuguese slave traders who figured out how to really profit from sugar, forcing captive Africans to work on the equatorial islands of São Tomé and Príncipe. The traders reinvested their profits to buy more slaves to grow sugar in Brazil. In the 17th century, the Dutch took over the slavery-fueled Brazilian and Caribbean sugar operations, followed by the British and French a hundred years later.

The sugar trade was lucrative and competitive because Europeans and Americans had gone sweets-mad. British sugar consumption quadrupled during the 18th century. Production in Haiti, a French colony, increased 40 percent from 1760 to 1791. By the last decade of the 1700s, Britain and France each claimed close to 40 percent of the still-growing commercial sugar market. Enabled by slavery by the mid-19th century, 12 million Africans had been forced into the holds of slave ships, about two million dying en route.

Abolitionists in Britain organized, petitioning Parliament to end the slave trade. Vested interests, however, fought back, marshalling an array of excuses: slavery was salutary to British wealth and success, slavery was civilizing to lazy Africans, and if Britain didn't claim slavery's wealth, a competitor would.

So the Quakers and their allies looked for another strategy—and found it in 1791. The year had been a propitious one for abolition, with a slave revolt breaking out in Haiti and an unsuccessful but attention-grabbing attempt to abolish slavery pushed in Parliament. Against this backdrop, Baptist printer William Fox published “An Address to the People of Great Britain on the Utility of Refraining from the Use of

West India Sugar and Rum,” urging Englishmen to stop buying sugar on moral grounds. Admired and promoted by Thomas Clarkson, the leading abolitionist in England, Fox’s “Address” was published in several editions, with a quarter-million copies in print by 1792. Historian Timothy Whelan contends that it was “the most widely distributed pamphlet of the 18th century,” exceeding the reach even of Thomas Paine’s “Rights of Man.”

In response to Fox’s treatise, about 300,000 consumers, mostly women purchasing household goods, boycotted West Indian sugar—and created the first free produce movement in history. The effort was huge by modern standards, involving 2.8 percent of the British population—and helped turn public opinion against slavery. The abolitionist British poet Robert Southey even penned an anthem for the popular cause, writing in a sonnet: “O ye who at your ease/ Sip the blood-sweeten’d beverage,” not caring whether “beneath the rod/ A sable brother writhes in silent woe.”

Britain banned the trans-Atlantic slave trade in 1807, but not because of the protests: Passing a ban gave Britain, which was at war with Napoleonic France, a pretext to attack French shipping. After the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars, British consumers again mobilized. The boycotts of the 1820s were bigger than those of a generation earlier, perhaps more than half a million consumers—mainly female—participating. Leaders formed a Free Labour Company to source sugars in India, and again the protest was felt in Parliament, which abolished slavery in the British West Indies in 1833.

The idea that ethical demand drives supply soon crossed the Atlantic, but isolated American activists like Cooper struggled to be heard. Quaker Benjamin Lundy opened a “free produce store” in 1820s Baltimore. But as an abolitionist editor who set up a printing press in a slave port, he was deeply unpopular. The shop was burgled and after discovering that enemies paid a black man to commit the crime Lundy

refused to prosecute.

Leadership of American consumer protests fell to African Americans like New York shopkeeper David Ruggles, who advertised in 1828 that his sugars were “manufactured by free people, not by slaves.” The Colored Free Produce Society of Pennsylvania (CFPS) organized in 1830. It was an African American antislavery organization dedicated to educating consumers about who grew and processed their cotton, sugar, and tobacco. The CFPS was a success, quickly boasting 500 charter members who were able to buy 50-pound bags of free sugar.

African American women became the movement’s leaders. Judith James and Laetitia Rowley led the Colored Female Free Produce Society in 1831, composed of members of Philadelphia’s Bethel Church. They drew on women’s purchasing power to force change. At each of the first five Colored Conventions delegates urged black consumers to buy free. One resolution called on “colored capitalists” to invest in free labor stores, and in 1834 African American businessman William Whipper opened one next to Bethel Church. Lundy, the Baltimore Quaker, praised black women’s efforts and said they should be a model for white female activism.

These consumer movements against slave-grown sugar were swimming against a tide. The federal government propped up U.S. domestic sugar interests with protective tariffs, and Americans’ sweet tooth was even sharper than Britons’. On average, each American ate 12 pounds of the stuff each year in 1830, increasing to 30 pounds by 1860. (Per capita, we consume several times that quantity today.) In a world of cheap sweets, Americans cared less about the provenance of their pies and cookies. Abolitionists shifted their strategy to opposing cotton, the great symbol of American slavery, with retailers pledging to work with slave-free suppliers and abolitionists, once again, promoting free produce as a means to fight slavery.

For all the organizing, the crescendo of the free produce movement in America was scarcely audible. Between 5,000 and 6,000 people abstained from slave-produced products. As many as 1,500 joined free produce societies. One source claims 10 percent of Quakers—10,000 in all—were active abstainers.

Today's activists carry this older movement's torch. NGOs like Amnesty International decry the use of forced labor in the consumer electronics business, and scholar-activists like Kevin Bales point out the connections between slavery and environmental degradation. Even U.S. states now facilitate ethical shopping. In 2010, California, the world's sixth-largest economy, passed the Transparency in Supply Chains Act, which requires large firms to disclose efforts to eradicate slavery and human trafficking among their suppliers. The push led some companies to seek out new sources for slave-free cottons and ethically-farmed food.

But sugar is, to some extent, still bloodstained. It's been 500 years since the first sugar mill was built in the Dominican Republic, but hundreds of thousands of debt-bound Haitians continue to toil in squalor and poverty in the cane fields earning below-subsistence wages. That certainly looks like modern-day slavery. While the Quaker-inspired fight for "ethical capitalism" continues—both as a goal and as an ideal—crusaders have never fully reformed that sweet symbol.

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Craft beer makers ride double-digit gains

By Bill Chappell, NPR

The number of American breweries topped 5,000 for the first time last year, with craft beer makers accounting for 5,234 of 5,301 U.S. breweries, according to new figures from the Brewers Association.

Just five years ago, there were only about 2,000 U.S. craft brewers, which the Brewers Association defines as small or independent beer makers. Last year alone, more than 800 opened for business.

Compared to those increases, changes in the overall American beer market were less dramatic, the industry group says. While craft brewers managed to capture \$23.5 billion of the money spent on beer last year – a 10 percent gain over 2015 – their volume share remained essentially flat, at 12.3 percent of the amount of beer sold in the U.S.

Read the whole story

Nevada going after distracted drivers

Law enforcement agencies throughout Nevada will be Joining Forces and focusing on distracted drivers through April 15.

Nevada Highway Patrol will be working diligently to urge motorists to keep your eyes on the road and put away cell

phones or other items that cause distractions.

Five seconds is the average time eyes are off the road while texting. When traveling at 55mph, that's enough time to cover the length of a football field blindfolded.

For more information on Joining Forces and other statewide traffic safety programs, go **online**.

2 SLT youth hockey teams win state titles



Lake Tahoe Grizzlies – Pee Wee A Team: (l-r, first row

kneeling and sitting) – Drew Gunderson, Will Posey, Tadi Wright, Charlotte Sonntag, Blaise Broadhurst, and Brennan Monroe; (op row, l-r) Head Coach Mike Gunderson, David Salcido, Assistant Coach Jeff Posey, Carson Oleson, Hayden Cannon, Health Fellows, Assistant Coach Dave Monroe, Jacob Pratt, Patrick Webster, Assistant Coach Jake Pratt, Lauren Romsos, and Assistant Coach Shane Romsos.

The Lake Tahoe Grizzlies Pee Wee A and Bantam B hockey teams won their respective divisions at the state tournament last weekend at Sharks Ice in San Jose.

The wins represent the first time in California state championship history where two teams from one hockey club took home the gold in the same year.

Mike Gunderson, head coach of the Grizzlies Pee Wee A Team, said, “These kids worked their tails off all year long and it really paid off for them. It’s easy to lose focus over such a long season, especially with the ski season we just had, but they never lost sight of their goals. You’d be hard pressed to find a more diverse group of personalities anywhere but they bonded and pulled it together when it mattered most. I am super proud of each one of them and their families should be too.”

Assistant Coach, Shane Romsos, remarked, “These young men and women deserved this after leading the regular season standings in the Northern California. I can’t wait to raise the banner at our home rink!”



Lake Tahoe Grizzlies – Bantam B Team (l-r, front row) Goalies Tammer Bohatch and Devon Cole; (second row) Andrey Shemyakin, Adin Burns, Quinn Proctor; (third row) Head Coach Ken Wood, Diego Honda, Pablo Honda, Noah Sorrenson, Petey Sullivan, Nate Cimino, Mason Croskery, Wallace Sonntag, Ty Gunderson, Assistant Coach Gary Gramprie.

The Pee Wees regular season standings were 10 wins, two losses and three ties.

The Bantam Team had a dominating regular season as well going 11-2-1.

Their performance at the state tournament was similarly amazing, going undefeated for the tournament. Bantam Head Coach Ken Wood said the team played as a team, everyone contributed, and that makes a huge difference in this sport, especially considering that nearly half of the players commuted from Mammoth and Bishop to participate this season.

Assistant Coach Gary Gramprrie noted the team's statistics as a reason for success: "Our team's power play broke other team's backs, scoring about 80 percent of the time during the regular season, and 100 percent in the state championships."

He also recognized that the team only had 11 players this season – "all contributed in different ways."

South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena operator, Van Oleson said, "The success of both teams will further help to put Lake Tahoe on the hockey map."

Pee Wee A is a division of youth hockey that includes youngsters aged 11 and 12. Bantams are ages 13 and 14.

– Provided to Lake Tahoe News

Jobs grant to benefit El Dorado, Placer counties

By Mark Glover, Sacramento Bee

California's Employment Development Department says it has received up to \$36 million in a National Dislocated Worker Grant to help 34 counties clean up in the aftermath of recent rainstorms.

EDD said the funds approved by the U.S. Department of Labor will provide temporary jobs for 1,800 unemployed workers in the affected counties for clean-up and repair projects. The affected counties include Sacramento, El Dorado, Placer and Yolo.

At the request of Gov. Jerry Brown, the Federal Emergency

Management Agency made three major disaster declarations in California following storms that began in early January.

Read the whole story

Opportunity for youth to journal about nature

Kids' Nature Journal Club is coming to the South Lake Tahoe Library.

This is for youth who love Lake Tahoe and the outdoors. They will be taught skills for exploring the natural world around them and how to capture their adventures in a nature journal.

Some materials will be provided, but everyone is encouraged to bring a notebook and pen. Dress for the weather, explorations will be outside.

The club will be April 8, April 22 and May 13 at 10am at the library, 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd. It is free for children 10 and older.

Trump approves funds for California relief

By Christopher Cadelago, Sacramento Bee

President Trump announced Sunday more than a half-billion dollars would be coming to California to help cover the damage from the winter storms, including \$274 million for repairs to the Oroville Dam spillway.

The fulfillment of the fourth presidential declaration for damage from the winter storms totals an estimated \$540 million.

Trump's fourth declaration makes available money for hazard mitigation measures statewide. It covers 42 counties, including Sacramento, Yolo, Amador, Yuba, El Dorado, Merced and San Luis Obispo. The White House said additional designations can be made later if requested by the state and warranted by further damage assessments.

Read the whole story

Spring showers to blanket Tahoe basin

Mild, spring-like weather is expected in the Lake Tahoe Basin for the start of the week. Winter, though, is in the forecast.

By the weekend it's possible snow will be falling. If not the white stuff, then rain will be coming. Expect both.

The National Weather Service in Reno is forecasting a high of 60 in South Lake Tahoe on Wednesday and by Sunday it will 38.

Plan on the wind being a factor in this system as well.

Overnight lows are going to be near or below freezing for the week.

Task force analyzing LTCC theater's future

By the end of June a recommendation is expected about what the future of Lake Tahoe Community College's theater program should look like.

The 20-member community task force that was convened to delve into the program has met twice, and will continue to meet every other Thursday until June. Solutions are expected to be presented to the board by the end of the academic year.

The two main areas of discussion are the credit program currently offered and what role the college could play in the community in regards to performing arts.

Theater arts has been under scrutiny internally at the college for a couple years because classes are not highly sought after and it is expensive to run. **Last fall** it appeared the department was headed for elimination by the administration. **Community outcry** put a stop to that.

Michelle Risdon, LTCC's interim vice president of Academic Affairs, said one thing that needs to be addressed is how to attract more students from Lake Tahoe Unified School District. Tahoe Valley Elementary School's focus is performing arts and South Tahoe High School's theater program is outstanding, so LTUSD should be a natural feeder into LTCC in this regards.

For now, all possibilities are still on the table.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- It is possible to go **online** to request work orders from South Lake Tahoe's Public Works Department.
- Pete Bansen, who joined the Squaw Valley Fire Department in 1981 and has been chief for 24 years, is retiring at the end of June.
- To receive texts about Tahoe road conditions and estimated drive times text TahoeRoads to 99000.
- Valhalla has released its lineup for 2017. This festival season runs June-October, with tickets available **online**.
- Benjamin Houlton will talk April 20 at Sierra Nevada College about the current state of carbon sinks that absorb carbon pollution, their vulnerability to future changes, and how global climate policies are susceptible to the sustainability of natural carbon dioxide uptake. The lecture starts at 6pm and costs \$5.