

The Sugar Boycott

In 1791, many anti-slavery supporters were frustrated that after two years of listening to evidence, Parliament had voted against abolishing the transatlantic slave trade. A pamphlet was produced encouraging people to boycott sugar produced by slaves. The aim of this was to hit at the people who profited from producing sugar. These were the plantation owners, merchants and retailers.

It was incredibly successful. Families all over England stopped using sugar to sweeten their tea and food.

Perhaps up to 400,000 people abandoned sugar. Grocers reported that the sales of sugar were drastically reduced in some areas and some offered sugar that was not produced by slaves. Plantation owners were worried by the drop in sales.

As well as having an economic effect, the boycott showed something else. People were prepared to take direct action on behalf of people they did not know even when it made their lives less pleasant (no sugar to sweeten drinks and foods).

They were taking a stand because they thought it was the right thing to do as citizens.

There was a second sugar boycott in the 1820s. This was largely led by women who refused to buy groceries at stores selling sugar produced by slaves. They were also very active in going round persuading people not to buy sugar. The boycott was effective because a large number of people took part. It also helped to raise awareness of the anti-slavery movement.

