Tibetans boycott Chinese vegetable vendors, Qinghai, Tibet/China, 2011

February 2011 to: July 2012

Country: Tibet
Country: China
Location City/State/Province: Nangchen, Jyekundo, Dzado, Surmang counties in Qinghai province

Goals:
The boycotters did not explicitly state goals, the boycott itself was to protest and eventually, as one Tibetan participant stated, shut down the Chinese vegetable vendors who refused to charge standard prices for their goods.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 015. Group lobbying

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 190. Alternative markets

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 190. Alternative markets

Methods in 4th segment:

- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 190. Alternative markets

Methods in 5th segment:

- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 190. Alternative markets

Methods in 6th segment:

- 071. Consumers' boycott
- 190. Alternative markets
Additional methods (Timing Unknown):

- 192. Alternative economic institutions

Classifications

Classification:
Change
Cluster:
Economic Justice
Group characterization:

- Tibetan businessmen
- Tibetan citizens

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:
Unnamed Tibetan "community organization"
Partners:
Not known
External allies:
Not known
Involvement of social elites:
Not known

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:
Groups in 2nd Segment:
Groups in 3rd Segment:
Groups in 4th Segment:
Groups in 5th Segment:
Groups in 6th Segment:
Additional notes on joining/exiting order:
Joining order not known
Segment Length: 2 1/2 weeks

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:
Chinese vegetable vendors.
Nonviolent responses of opponent:
Not known
Campaigner violence:
None known

Repressive Violence:
None known

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:
5 points out of 6 points

Survival:
1 point out of 1 points

Growth:
2 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:
The Tibetan boycott participants did not manage to completely shut down all Chinese vegetable shops, but they were successful in attaining vegetables at reasonable prices and implementing a system by which they could keep getting them. Therefore, the campaign receives a 5 success rating.

Tibetans in Nangchen County, Qinghai province, China/Tibet, bought vegetables from Chinese vendors until early 2011, when the prices began to increase dramatically. In Chinese-owned vegetable shops, the price of 1 kg of apples increased from 2 yuan to 8 yuan, and the prices of other staple foods, such as cabbage, onions, and potatoes, also increased. The price increases put financial strain on Tibetans.

Shortly before Chinese New Year in early February, Tibetans from a community organization tried to negotiate with the vendors, but the vendors refused to lower the prices. Tibetans then appealed to local police, who refused to intervene.

Tibetan men and women convened at a meeting to decide on a course of action to address the price increases. After debate and discussion, the community men and women decided to stage a complete boycott of Chinese vegetable vendors. One participant claimed that the boycotts used in the Indian independence movement inspired the action. When approached by the group, Tibetan businessmen in Nangchen agreed to import vegetables and other food products from Xining, the capital of Qinghai province (which is around 965 kilometers from Nangchen), and sell them in Nangchen at “affordable” rates.

By April 2011, the majority of Tibetans in Nangchen were reported to be participating in the boycott. Tibetans in Jyekundo, another county in Qinghai, opened nine Tibetan-run and owned vegetable shops. The boycott seemed to be successful, because the Chinese vendors lodged a complaint with police as well. They informed police that they were experiencing a lack of business. The police again refused to intervene. However, they warned the boycotting Tibetans that if the boycott became associated with “the Dalai Lama or Tibetan independence,” they would take action against the boycotts. Police officers and their families were also forbidden from taking part in the boycott.

One Tibetan reported that the community wished to see the Chinese stores close and that people felt the Chinese vendors were taking advantage of the community.

The boycott and new shops continued successfully through late May 2011, when reports emerged that Tibetans in neighboring Dzado, and Surmang counties had joined the boycott of Chinese-owned vegetable shops. These boycotts were initiated after debates held by the Tibetan community in response to similarly high prices for staple foods in these counties. Tibetan businessmen in these counties joined the Nangchen businessmen in importing food from Xining.

The boycotts were thus transformed into something new: an economy run by Tibetans, for Tibetans, which has successfully
continued until at least July 2012, which is the last report the researcher was able to find. There are no further records of boycotts or protest against Chinese vendors.

Research Notes

Sources:


Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:
Lekey Leidecker, 18/11/2012