

# Toxic recycling



Reaction paper: Toxic recycling: The article toxic recycling by Elizabeth Grossman highlights the health hazard posed by electronic waste in the US and in the world. Electronic waste contains mercury, cadmium, lead and barium which cause harm to animals, plants and human life. The existence of these heavy metals in electronic waste has resulted into the recycling process whereby electronic sales have grown fast in the past and according to 2004 there were over 400 recycling plants in the US.

It is evident that given the health hazards and environmental degradation that electronic waste cause recycling is a good solution to this problem. As new electronic products are introduced into the market older products are discarded by consumers resulting into increased electronic waste each year. With this increase in waste each year the recycling industry is expected to grow and the article highlights this growth by stating that in 2004 the recycling firms made over 10 million and employed over 1, 000 inmates. Recycling however should be undertaken under proper conditions to avoid the release of heavy metals as dust into the environment, the article highlights that the recycling process undertaken by UNICOR using inmates as labour is undertaken under unhealthy conditions, inmates do not use equipments that are in line with OSHA standards, also they eat lunch in areas contaminated with heavy metals. The recycling firms therefore do not take into consideration the health of inmates and prison officers.

With the recycling industry growing fast laws and regulations should be put in place in order to protect the environment and individuals who work in these recycling firms, the environmental agencies and occupational safety and health administration should inspect the recycling firms regularly to ensure that they follow set standards and those that violate these standards

should pay heavy fines.

Warfare to welfare:

The article from warfare to welfare by William Hartung and Jennifer Washburn discusses Lockheed Martin a company that is the largest weapon manufacturer, according to the article the company strategy by 2000 is to privatize social welfare by forming divisions in the company that will undertake welfare programs in the US, these programs include the distribution of food stamps and cash assistants.

It is evident that in the year 2000 the company's stock prices were declining and the company was in a financial crisis given that it had requested the pentagon to offer an \$855 million loan to pay for mergers. According to the report the average household pays over \$200 per year in tax to Lockheed Martin and privatisation of the public service sector will increase the tax level and also the government will no longer offer these services.

The article highlights that Lockheed Martin has in the past hired workers who previously held positions as pentagon officials, this is a strategy to influence decision makers in the awarding of contracts, therefore it is clear that some of top officials in government have a stake in the company and the privatisation of welfare operations may negatively affect the efficiency and effectiveness of services offered.

It is therefore clear that the strategy of this company is to expand its operations into social welfare services. These are services that should be offered by the government and privatisation of such services will not be as efficient and effective, the reason for this is that the company's aim is to make profit and not improve the lives of the individuals, public goods and services should be provided by the government and not private firms.

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Therefore the company should not be allowed to offer public services given that this is the role of the government.

References:

Elizabeth Grossman, Toxic Recycling, The Nation, November 21, 2005.

William Hartung and Jennifer Washburn, From Warfare to Welfare, The Nation, March 2, 1998.