

# Free essay about corporate environmental moral responsibility and forced exchange...

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## **Philosophy**

### Introduction

Thesis Statement: Businesses should agree on the nature of their responsibilities to the environment to ensure that they practice sustainability practices and reduce the effects of Global Climate Change.

The attempt to specify the influence of the nature and force of business to the environment has faced a critical conceptual framework due to the inadequate agreement on the specific nature of environmental responsibilities expected of businesses. It is of great importance for businesses to agree on the nature of their responsibilities to the environment to ensure that they practice sustainability practices and reduce the effects of Global Climate Change (GCC).

The following are some of the most significant and critical questions that theorists have to address as they attempt to draw a parallel between businesses and their relationship to the environment. To begin with, theorists ought to agree on the true definition of the environment and the sources and forces of responsibility to the environment. This essay aims at providing a factual background on the issue of global climate change and uses the case as a foundational basis against the position of Bowie in relation to that of Arnold and Bustos.

Humans are a significant component of the environment and there are important differences between them and other environmental “ agents. “ These differences are both qualitative and quantitative. Quantitatively because humans have the responsibility to acknowledge the consequences and scope of their unique capacity to influence and shape their world in

order to satisfy their interests and desires. On the other hand they differ qualitatively because, they similarly have to recognize their capacity to reflectively assess their activities and to therefore choose those that are most environmentally sustainable.

The critical question therefore is where businesses fit in environmental sustainability. The activities and choices that businesses engage in have a clear impact on the environment. Just as individuals have responsibilities to the environment so do businesses. The theories of Corporate Social Responsibility clearly examine the account of business' responsibility to the environment. Do businesses have an obligation to protect the environment? This is the question that the three theorists, Bowie, Arnold and Bustos tackle as they attempt to understand the moral obligation and social responsibilities of businesses to the environment.

## **Bowie and his views on Corporate Environmental Responsibility**

In his article, " Morality, Money, and Motor Cars", Norman Bowie plays the devil's advocate and explains that corporations only have the sole responsibility of responding to the needs of consumer demand. He defends Friedman's view that corporate bodies are not specifically obligated by the law to take part in environmental protection above what has been stipulated. Although he does not consider the implications of his argument to the issue of Global Climate Change as is the case in Bustos and Arnold's arguments, extrapolation points towards as climate change catastrophe if all businesses are to adopt his theories. He, therefore, notes two important qualifications to his theory that businesses should first of all refrain from lobbying against the

wishes of people and should also hold in consumer education awareness on the environment.

Basing his reaction to Friedman's views, Bowie observes that all businesses are in essence obligated to obey the law and abstain from negligent behavior. He believes that no businesses have the right to harm the environment unless when faced with an overriding and compelling moral reason to do so. This he illustrates with an example of the automobile business and explains that consumers can only go so far to ensure their safety depending on their economic capabilities and that only few of them are willing to pay for ultra-safe cars. With the example, he explains that safety measures are often costly and limiting, but should never be allowed to prevent the normal functioning of valid businesses that provide essential services. He further explains that often consumers reject green products due to their high prices and yet they are the very individuals who determine the environmental laws. However, due to such consumer preferences, businesses cannot be expected to close down and fail to provide economically friendly products. As a result, they have no special obligations of protecting the environment above the law.

## **Bustos and Arnold's views on Business and Environmental Ethics**

Keith Bustos and Denis Arnold on the other hand reject Bowie's views and argue that businesses are instead expected to have a special moral obligation to environmental sustainability and act above the law to ensure that Global Climate Change (GCC) is curtailed. Focusing specifically on the roles of business organizations in electricity and transportation generation

sectors and their relationship to GCC, the two provide valid arguments against the case raised by Bowie on the moral obligation of businesses to the environment. The first three arguments are based on consumer concerns while the other two are founded on significant moral concerns. Their analysis explains Bowie's views in the sense that most of the Manufacturing Companies (MNCs) operate in nations that lack democratic institutions and hence explaining the little recourse from consumers.

As a result, for example, the preferences of citizens in the United States of America harm other individuals who are non-citizens. In their second objection on the roles of consumers, they explain that it is unreasonable to defend consumers as Bowie highlights and argue that they have limited understanding on the causes of global warming and the fact that MNC's play a critical role in environmental destruction. Their third objection on consumer choices explains that their preferences are never satisfied by businesses as is the case in their sentiments and effective choice or non-choice of renewable energy forms and the use of hybrid mini-vans. According to their argument, Bowie is wrong to place the blame on consumers and instead elucidate that businesses are in essence the primary producers who have the choice of ensuring their services and products are completely environmentally sustainable. The fourth objection follows on to explain that such choices and preference have a potential of harming others and further increasing the effects of GCC. Finally, their arguments also explain that if Bowie's views are to be adapted, the future generations are at a huge risk of succumbing to environmental unsustainability.

## **Forced Exchanges on Corporate Responsibility**

The American government in 2001, for instance, litigated the Emissions Cap, a policy on the reduction of carbon emissions by MNC's. According to the policy, all MNC's were expected to reduce their emissions by at least 10 percent. Through such government policies, different companies have been able to experience a gradual improvement in their moral obligation towards the environment. The American Food Industry is one such sector that has been positively as well as negatively affected by forced exchanges.

### **Role of forced exchanges in the American Food industry**

Restaurants in America have had to reconsider their operations in line with environmentally sustainable measures imposed on them. Businesses in the sector have for instance switched to food provision to customers in more environmental friendly ways with limited transportation largely due to the same policies that were imposed on petroleum industries that supply the gasoline needed in the transport industry.

After the Emissions Cap, oil businesses that declined to fulfill their minimal duties of reducing their emissions were penalized as was the case for Exxon Mobile that was given an imposed tax on all their carbon emissions. The British Petroleum on the other hand was able to smoothly switch in accordance with the cap as was noted in Foreign Affairs, when Lord Browne, the Group Chief Executive indicated that the company was able to reach the 10 percent reduction target that was below its 1990 levels without incurring a huge loss of expenditure. This is particularly because the bulk of their reduction came from the elimination of wastes and leaks. BP together with

the Royal Dutch and Shell are some of the companies that have been positively impacted with the changes and are now assuming responsibility for their role on the global environment. Their actions have a huge significance to other numerous industries like the Food sector as indicated, and hence a huge reduction in the net carbon emissions from the different sectors combined.

Conclusion

## **Bibliography**

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