

Opinion on globalization



I believe that globalization and the ability to do business worldwide almost instantaneously benefits me as an individual. However the larger picture is not quite such a pretty picture. Personally, I benefit by being able to purchase goods online that are often not available to Canadians in retail locations. I shop on sites such as Ebay and Amazon regularly. I have purchased textbooks for my classes from American and sometimes worldwide sellers. While I may benefit buy lower prices and being able to acquire goods I would not otherwise acquire, the result is that Canadian companies no longer have my business.

So consumers like me enjoy the endless availability of products worldwide the consequences of this international trade is not simply more products and cheaper prices. If all consumers were aware of how their products were made many of us would object. Corporations continually exploit cheap labour and take advantage of the environment internationally. Wal-Mart for example sells Kathie Lee Gifford's brand of clothing that was manufactured in Honduras where the women were abused and raped on a regular basis being paid poorly and treated inhumanely. Bakan, 68) It is only until consumers became aware of these conditions and demanded change by boycotting the company's products. All too often though consumers do not become aware of these conditions and the situation is not improved.

However, I do wonder about the situation of the people who take jobs in sweat shops like the one described above. Often poverty forces these people into taking jobs with poor pay and unsatisfactory working conditions. If the alternative is no job at all, is a bad job really that bad?

If we force companies to either: improve working conditions and pay better wages- will the end prices increase as a result? Will consumers be willing to pay these higher prices? If the manufacturing plant is shut down how will the local people survive? Will another manufacturing company with a lower moral standard jump in and continue to exploit? Sadly I think that there will always be people willing to take poor jobs, and there will always be a company looking to maximize profit while minimizing costs.

When discussing globalization on national level I think more in terms of economics and environment. A specific case comes to mind. The Ok Tedi mine in Papua New Guinea (PNG) an Australian mining company set up a copper mine in PNG. The PNG government required a dam to help catch the copper mines tailing (excavated dirt, and pollution) however under pressure from the mine which brought in a significant portion of the country's GDP (32% of exports) the mine was allowed to continue operation without constructing the dam. The result was an environmental catastrophe.

The pollution that spilled into the local river caused huge floods, forced indigenous people to relocate, and depleted fish populations. The Australian company said that since the PNG allowed them to continue without the dam they were not at fault and were only doing what they were permitted to do. The PNG government takes the stand that it was necessary to permit the mine to continue operations because the mine helped expand PNG's economy in such a significant way. In the case of PNG I think the country was best left on its own.

Foreign investment caused nothing but harm to the environment and the local people. The exploitation of the environment and the host country's people has more harm than good. Yet I'll contradict my argument by continuing to purchase goods that are likely made from exploited production processes. On a small scale globalization is wonderful, yet the larger picture paints a much darker and depressing picture. Bibliography Bakan, J. (2004). *The Corporation*. New York: Free Press. OK Tedi Mine [http://www. oktedi. com/](http://www.oktedi.com/)