
Sweatshops: Big Business Versus Small Morals

We all love nice cheap clothes that look good, they last maybe a few months at most before going out of fashion or breaking and then we just buy more. But do we ever question where our clothes come from and how they were made? Well according to an article done by Cornell University 80% of clothing in America comes from sweatshops. Sweatshops that use child-labor and on average these workers will make \$200 USD a year if they even get paid because in a lot of situations workers are paid with a place to sleep and some food, so yes a lot of your favourite brands and companies are using factories with slave-like conditions.

So why do so many companies use sweatshops? Well, it all comes down to the same thing that everybody wants in today's society, money. Sweatshops are so cheap according to MR online it costs almost nothing for a business to use sweatshops compared to how much they make from selling their products. And it would cost quote 'dimes and nickels' if we increased wages in sweatshops as currently there are children working 16-hour shifts with half the minimum wage as their pay. It's not just the big companies to blame though, they are only trying to fit the needs of the consumer after all, yes due to our consumer habits of not wanting to pay for more expensive clothes companies need to adapt to make their clothes cheaper. Another problem is fast fashion can change quite quickly and companies need cheap and easy ways to quickly be able to produce new clothes as a lot of people will wear something a few times and throw it out as it goes out of fashion and they go and buy something just as cheap again further fuelling the use of sweatshops. If only we knew that we were funding horrible, slave-like conditions.

"So just how bad are sweatshops?" You might ask. Well, bad. Firstly there is shockingly widespread use of child labor all over Asia, did you know that 22 million children die in a year due to poor conditions in sweatshops. Some of these poor conditions include: getting punished for a lack of work or getting sick usually by being whipped or having oiled rags forced into their mouths and some nights being locked in the sweatshops and being forced to work through the rest of the night until their quota is completed. This doesn't just happen to children, it also happens to women as 85% of sweatshop workers are young women between the ages of 15-25 who are often forced to take pregnancy pills to prevent them getting pregnant and go on maternity leave which even if they do somehow get pregnant they will have to keep working to support their family as their wages are so low. They can not afford to stop working as they would starve and their jobs are so replaceable that if they stopped working they would be replaced in no time. "well the alternatives to sweatshops are far worse at least they are getting paid" is a common argument for sweatshops? That's the problem though, with nowhere else to go people are forced to work in horrible conditions for pennies saying it's better than their alternatives is not a good argument as sweatshops are still horrible and don't pay much more, but what solutions are there.

So what are the solutions then, well you can start by doing research in the companies we buy from and where they get their products made, and if they are unethical in their practices take your business elsewhere. If enough people do this surely companies will realize this trend and change how they produce their products. "But that would be bad for the economy supporting a business based on ethics instead of price and quality", well you can still take into consideration quality and price, there are plenty of companies that have high quality and well-priced items

whilst also being ethical and if you care more about the economy than the human quality of life then you need to take a long hard look at yourself. We can also increase the wages of sweatshops, as I said in my first point it would cost barely anything, maybe only 50p more for those cheap jeans from New Look (known sweatshop users) could change someone's life.

We have many choices in life, from what we want to do when we grow up, to whether or not we want to support business with little to no morals. As consumers we can influence what businesses do, from fashion to how they make their products if businesses realize people are no longer buying their cheaply made clothes/products and instead were taking their business to places such as Boden, a UK based business which is dedicated to ethically sourcing their clothes and are against fast fashion making their clothes last longer, other companies might start taking notes and also start being more ethical, of course, this choice would not be out of the good of their heart but rather to keep relevant and profitable it's still better than nothing. Remember it's not just the business that needs to change, we also must make a change, we must reject fast fashion and buy better quality items.

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