

BUSINESS, SOCIETY & ETHICS

Defending Sweatshops

As you read the material for our next class, keep the questions below in mind. To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages. Keep in mind that there are two basic kinds of information that you need to look for in the reading:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible conclusion about an issue, rather than another.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.

Reading

- Ian Maitland, "The Great Non-Debate Over International Sweatshops".

Questions

1. What are the specific charges made by critics against sweatshops?
2. Maitland argues that "it is ethically acceptable to pay market wage rates [and provide market-level labor standards] in developing countries" (p. 264). His argument for this position is supported by the following three claims:
 - A. There is nothing wrong with the present wages and conditions of sweatshops in developing countries,
 - B. Sweatshops do not increase poverty and inequality within developing countries, and
 - C. Sweatshops do not profit from repression by the governments of developing countries.

What is the justification for each of these three claims?

3. Maitland also suggests that "it may be ethically unacceptable to pay wages [and provide labor standards] that exceed market levels" (p. 264). What is his argument for this claim (on pages 260–263)?