

Modern slavery

Decide for yourself



What is Consumerism? We live in a consumer society that continuously encourages us to purchase goods and services in ever-greater amounts ... even when we don't really need them. Consumerism is a major cause of environmental degradation and tends to increase the disparity between the rich and the poor. Buying something is not a personal affair. For example, consider the mobile phone you bought from your local shop, its battery, its screen, its software chip and other parts came from different suppliers and scores of workers spread all over the world. Nearly everything you own follows a similar, complex path often referred to as globalisation. When closely monitored, globalisation has the power to bring millions of people out of poverty. But when left unchecked, globalisation can fuel the ugliest trade known to humanity – modern slavery.



Get more information about globalisation from www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Globalization

Sweatshops are workplaces where workers are subject to extreme exploitation, including the absence of a living wage or benefits, poor working conditions, and verbal and physical abuse. Without an adequate wage sweatshop workers are never able to save enough money to improve their lives. They are trapped in an awful cycle of exploitation. Those in favour of sweatshops often argue that even though sweatshops are bad, they at least give people jobs they wouldn't have had otherwise. Whichever way it is portrayed, this is still an abuse and an exploitation of human misery to maximise profits.



Child Labour The International Labour Organization (ILO) has estimated that 250 million children, between the ages of five and fourteen, work in developing countries. Many of these children are forced to work. They are denied an education and a normal childhood. Some are confined and beaten while others are denied the right to leave the workplace and go home to their families. Some are even abducted and forced to work.

What can we do? We can hit back at companies which profit from these practices by hitting them where it hurts most: their profits. We can try to shift our spending away from problem companies to responsible ones. We can support organisations that are working

against sweatshops and child labour. When you visit a retail store ask about whether their products were manufactured without sweatshops or child labour. Taking part in well organized boycotts may cause a company to change the working conditions in a factory, instead of simply closing it down.

Informed action is the best way to act. Visit www.veganpeace.com/sweatshops/sweatshops_and_child_labor.htm for more information and links to other sites about this issue.

More specifically you can check out the environmental, ethical and social record of companies and their products on these websites: www.ethicalconsumer.org and www.greenamerica.org.