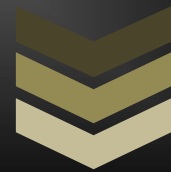


Made In China: Ethical dilemmas in the production of goods in China



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Made In China

Introduction

If one takes a look around their home, they are aware that the items that occupy space are all very unique. Some items are small while others are much larger. One item may be very soft and plush, while others are hard and firm. These items are not only at home, many flood office locations where work is conducted, and are also in schools where children laugh, learn, and play. Although they are all very different majority of the items have one thing in common, they were made in China.

China is home to many factories across the vast country that produces many items that are exported to numerous countries in the world each day. These items that are produced easily boost the economies of not only China, but also each country that purchase these exports. A very large underlying issue is the added problems that the productions of these items have on the entire globe. Many of these problems become ethical dilemmas for the country that truly affects the entire world. The pollution that is caused within their country, labor issues and abuse of labor laws, the gap between the rich and poor, as well as the political oppression of the people who live their all plays a major role on the development of this country.

Often referred to as the People's Republic of China, China is a country located on the continent of Asia bordering fourteen other countries and four seas. It is the fourth largest country in the world and is home to two of the largest and most populated cities in the world, Shanghai and Beijing. With approximately 1.3 Billion people who call China their home, the country is the most populated country in the world and despite the efforts of the government to initiate a "one child" policy, the population is still growing. With this very large population many often blame China for its assistance in many of the global issues occurring across the

world such as pollution of the environment, overpopulation, a growing gap between rich and poor, and political oppression of the people. Many often shift the blame on China and not realize that many of the items that are exported out of the country have been applied to many people's lives as necessities instead of luxuries. People feel that they need these items to survive and the need of people has driven the economy of this country up but has caused many global issues to form.

Pollution

Pollution is the introduction of contaminants that causes harm to physical systems or living organisms. There are several forms of pollution such as air pollution the introduction of chemicals and biological materials that cause harm to humans and other living organisms. Primary pollutants caused by the air are carbon monoxide from car exhausts and sulfur dioxide from the combustion of coal. Water pollution is the contamination of bodies of water by pollutants being discharged in them. China is suffering severely from both of these pollutions.

As China continues to grow not only in population, but also as a world economic powerhouse they are taking a huge toll on the environment as well. According to World Bank, 16 of the world's top 20 most polluted cities are in China with the number one city, Linfen City being in Shanxi Province, China. From air pollution to water pollution, China ranks on the lists of cities with highest pollution problems partially due to this growth in population. If they do not react to the problems being caused by this region, they are doomed for many more problems with public health problems and unrest of the people to follow.

The growth of China is a major cause of many of the pollution problems. Home of thousands of factories that burn coal, the air pollution produced by the pollutants formed from

these factories have a major effect on the air pollution problem in China (Bradsher & Barboza, 2006). Sulfur dioxide, a pollutant formed by the combustion of coal, is an immediate threat to the health of dwellers living in China and is reportedly contributing to approximately 400, 000 premature deaths a year. It is often a strong lead cause in acid rain that poisons bodies of water, forests, and crops which citizens eat on a daily basis. Coal is the primary source of electricity for China. It is burned daily to power large factories, heat homes, and cook meals making it a necessity in China that is not going to commence anytime soon and is projected to grow larger. With new coal-fired power plants opening every week to 10 days that is big enough to power households in Dallas, TX or San Diego, CA this problem needs a solution to not only save the country but also the world from hazardous air pollutants (Bradsher & Barboza, 2006). Although these coal burning plants are a large contribution to the pollution problems in China, many can be attributed to the growth in population and many striving to live a more westernized lifestyle. There has also been an increase in China's citizens purchasing automobiles which releases emissions into the environment as well.

Water pollution is also a major problem in China. The Yangtze and the Yellow River are two of the largest and longest rivers in China. They are used for many purposes such as bathing, washing clothes and items, drinking, and dumping of hazardous chemicals from different factories. The pollution of these rivers has tremendously grown over the years causing for much needed action to be taken by governmental officials. The need for many products made in China at the numerous factories account for a larger portion of pollution in China. According to an article in the New York Times, industry and manufacturing made up 70 percent of the discharge into the river with a portion coming from household waste and other sources (A third of C, 2008).

Labor Issues

For many years China has been under strong scrutiny for their labor issues pertaining to work hours, pay, child labor, and work conditions. With their numerous factories in the region and the ability to provide low cost manufacturing for the entire world, they have opened the doors to many labor problems that have affected the entire region and world.

Sweatshops in China are often described as traps where workers are mistreated by the factory owner and ethics of the workers are commonly violated (Daniel Viederman, 2011). Many of the workers are worked long hours with pay that is very low compared to the minimum wages in other countries. Workers are often exposed to hazardous chemicals and dangerous machinery, and are restricted from organizing in unions to make changes in where they work. It has reported that sweatshop workers are beginning to commit suicide because of the stress that they endure from working in these facilities.

The tipping point in the many labor related issues may be in comparison with civil unrest that has taken place in the country. Workers are beginning to realize that they deserve more than what they are getting paid and should be treated more fairly. A large protest that took place at the Honda and Toyota plants caused damage to the factories and have caused for many of the factories to start looking for less expensive locations to build new factories. In 2008 China reconstructed their Labor Laws contract to ensure that they are being respected by all citizens.

The westernized way of life can easily be at the forefront of these problems in China with many people wanting these different luxuries and our need to have them at an inexpensive price. Just recently Apple, a company who produces technologically advanced items such as the iPod, iPhone, iPad, and computers admitted that they have identified 11 children

working in factories that produced these products (Kloer, 2010). Although Apple does not condone such behavior by the factories that manufacture their product, they released reports stating that many of them do not abide by the labor laws. This can in fact be related to our demand for Apple products and our desire to not have to pay much for the items.

Overpopulation

Overpopulation is when a population group outnumbers the capacity of the habitat it is expected to dwell in. With approximately 1.3 billion people in China and this number growing annually, China faces serious problems relating to overpopulation in the future. Population problems in China have caused large portions of the land and resources to be depleted much faster than in other regions of the world. To assist in curving this problem government initiated a one child per family policy that praised citizens who abided by this policy and punished those who didn't by taxing them 50% of their income (Li, 1995). Due to a cultural preference of having male infants, many girls have been aborted to assist families in abiding with the one child policy. This has increased tension within the world causing world leaders to speak out on the disapproval of this policy. The Chinese government has had to relax policies to include the "daughter-only-household" policy, which allows rural couples having a daughter first to be allowed to have a second child (Li, 1995).

Gap between Rich and Poor

Another issue in China is that there is a growing gap between the rich and the poor living in China. According to World Bank, close to 500 million Chinese still lives on less than \$2 per day. That figure is very alarming when there are roughly 1.3 billion people in China. This gap has caused many problems to occur within the region such as social unrest and many protests throughout the country. Many of the people living in China feel that they are not represented

well by the government. A large part of this gap is due to the growth in China's economy from the different coal plants, factories, and technology that is produced within the country. Despite the protests, China is addressing the concerns of their people by limiting terms of country leaders to 5 years preventing leaders to be in charge for decades. Although the economic growth within the country has caused a gap, over the past ten years the growth has also assisted with improving living standards of the citizens as well as providing jobs.

Conclusion

A problem that China has when it relates to politics is that they do not have a multiparty system in the government and do not want to have several political parties. By them only having one party, the people in China do not have a voice on what happens in the country they live in. Decisions are almost always bias to the view of the leaders in office. This is a problem because people cannot vote for change as we can in America. If we do not like the views of one party in the U.S. we can opt to vote the opposite party into office where as in China they do not have that option.

Since China has grown into an economic powerhouse in the world and has taken control of a huge part of the economy they have a strong influence on what happens in the world. They must utilize this power to the good of humanity not just several people in charge. They must first take a stand against global warming and pollution that happens in their backyards. Many of the problems dealing with global warming are correlated directly with the pollution they produce by burning coal across their entire region. They must utilize their intelligence to create more efficient, effective, and earth conscious ways to produce energy to fuel the homes of their people. Chinese government can start by issuing tax cuts to people who assist in preserving energy and saving the environment as well as launching strong campaigns about global warming.

China must be more intertwined with the workings of each of its factories to ensure that each one is following the laws set by the government. They must work to shut down plants that are not performing under the law to set an example for other nations that they are doing the right thing and to show what could happen to other factories if they do not abide. The labor laws are not only the sole responsibility of China because the products being produced are usually outsourced from companies outside of China. It is imperative that the designers of these products know and understand where these products are being made and the process that they are being made under to assist the Chinese government in exploiting the factories that disobey the law. We as consumers who purchase the products must also begin to take a stand against what we buy. We must learn to look beyond the Made in China label and see where these companies that we are raving fanatics of have their products manufactured and if they are not in compliance we must protest and stop buying the products. This peaceful demonstration of abstaining from purchasing a product will do more damage than anything.

Overpopulation is an issue in China that does deplete the environment in China. China cannot allow their actions on limiting one child per family turn into genocide. There are reports that since males are more favorable in the region girls are often aborted during the fertility cycle.

The gap between the rich and poor is an issue that has grown but the government is working to ensure that it does not grow into a bigger problem. It is imperative that the Chinese government work diligently to find solutions to problems that rise. They must work to ensure that everyone is treated equal despite their income. China has held onto a caste system that still ranks a citizen based on social factors. Although this is something that is embedded in their culture, they must also understand that ethics are important and that everyone deserves the same amount of representation from the government.

Many of the issues in China are directly correlated with western nations wanting the manufactured goods from China. It is imperative that we all realize that when the earth becomes polluted and global warming peaks, we will all have to feel the wrath and problems that will be issued by Mother Nature. We must assist China in starting campaigns to find ways to end pollution by showing them other ways to get energy. We must learn where our products are being made and if laws are being broken by those parties we must express our opposition to those factories. We can also seek alternate methods for manufacturing products and ensure that laws are not being broke. Although China is big and powerful, the choices to assist this country in their global issues fall in the hands of the world.

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