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Working Paper for the UNIS-UN Student Conference

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INTRODUCTION

On March 3rd and 4th, 1977, the first UNIS-UN Conference was held in the General Assembly Hall of the United Nations Headquarters in New York City. The topic of the conference was "A New International Economic Order" and the Working Paper consisted of eleven articles. It was created by fourteen contributing editors under the guidance of Sylvia Gordon, the first UNIS-UN faculty advisor and driving force behind the conference's inception.

Since 1977, the annual UNIS-UN conference has given hundreds of students the opportunity to assemble each year to discuss issues of contemporary global significance, covering a wide range of topics, from the environment to gender to global health. This year's conference subject, "The Role of the Corporation in Today's World," will investigate the pervasive influence of this fundamental modern-day institution.

Corporations play an important role in today's world: making products that are relied on, providing jobs, supporting our world's economic structure. But there are ill effects as well: corporations often demonstrate little or no social conscience or responsibility, and yet have many of the same rights as individuals, and much more power. Is there a balance to be struck?

The articles compiled in this working paper, written entirely by members of the UNIS-UN Committee, investigate diverse aspects of the topic in an attempt to provide an overview of the effect corporations have on the environment, agriculture, media, healthcare, education, labor, the food industry, and global development.Though this Working Paper does not even come close to addressing all aspects of "The Role of the Corporation in Today's World," it is our hope that it will prepare participants for this year's conference and impart an understanding of how corporations penetrate many aspects of our lives, our world.

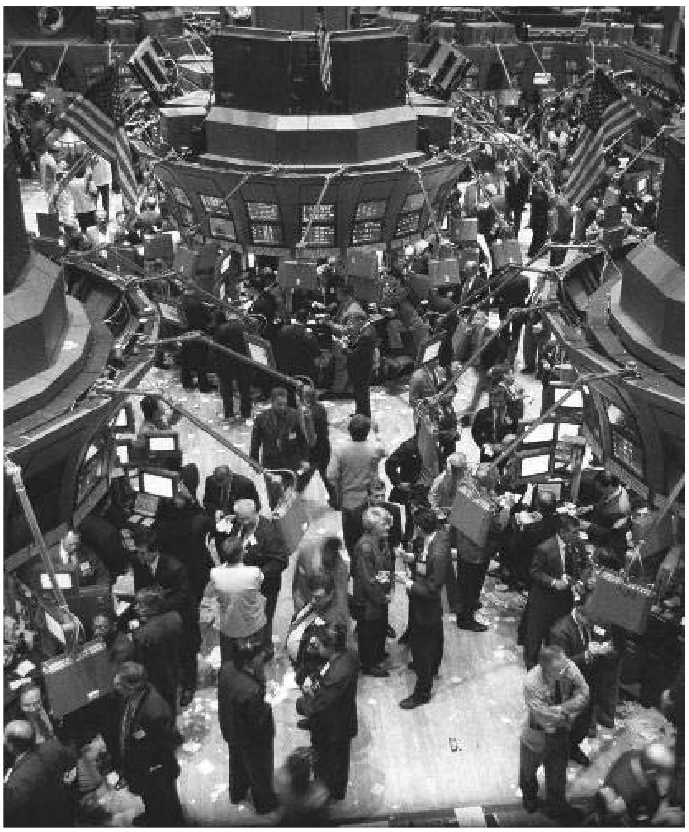
30 YEARS OF UNIS-UN

1976 - 2006

1977 New International Economic Order
1978 The Law of the Sea
1979 Development Strategies and the Needs of Children in Celebration of the International Year of the Child
1980 Energy, Development and the Environment
1981 Food and Development
1982 Populations and Development
1983 Disarmament
1984 The Communication Revolution: Freedom or Control
1985 Rights and Responsibilities of Youth
1986 Men and Women: Tradition and Change
1987 The Cost of War – The Price of Peace
1988 The Environment: A Global Crisis – The Need for Change
1989 Human Rights
1990 Education for Survival
1991 A New World Order: The Opportunity for Change
1992 Environment and Development: A Common Ground
1993 Ethnic Struggles: Identity and Survival
1994 International Responsibility: Power and Politics
1995 Women in Society: A Natural Balance, an Unequal World
1996 Children of the World: Struggles of the Generation
1997 Technology and Communications in the 21st Century: The Impact on Society
1998 Civil Conflicts: Global Consequences and Concerns
1999 Facing the New Millennium: A Search for Global Ethics
2000 A Changing World: Examining Global Interdependence and Inequalities
2001 25 Years of UNIS-UN: Problems and Progress over the Past Quarter Century
2002 Prejudice: How Racism and Bigotry Scar our World
2003 Youth at Risk: The Future in our Hands
2004 Modern Mass Media: The Influence of Information
2005 Global Health: Rights and Responsibilities in the 21st Century
2006 30 Years of UNIS-UN: The Role of the Corporation in Today's World

SECTION 1: WHAT IS A CORPORATION?

The corporation is one of the foremost institutions of our time. It is defined as a legal entity with rights and privileges similar to those of an individual. As business organizations, corporations pursue the central goal of generating profit. Legislation allows corporations to own property, hire employees, lend or borrow funds, and charge other individuals or enterprises in much the same way as an individual might.



The extent to which legal rights similar to those of an individual may be claimed by corporations is a point of contention, as is the extent to which corporations are responsible for their actions. Under law, people working for or running corporations are not liable for debts or damages incurred by that entity. Corporations are also able to remain operational indefinitely. For example, the Stora Kopparberg mining community in Falun, Sweden, is over six hundred years old—the oldest corporation in the world.

Different corporate models developed in different parts of the world—Japan, the United States, European nations, and other regions all formed their own distinctive companies. No longer contained by borders, many corporations are now multi-national, with broad reach and thus more power than ever.

It is important to note that while corporations are an undeniably crucial component of today's world, there are aspects of these organizations which still need improving.Today, corporations are introducing new business trends, outsourcing or contracting jobs, downsizing workforces, and participating in an increasingly globalized world economy. These changes should be made with an eye to sustainability and without compromising the welfare of the people of the world.

SECTION 2: ENVIRONMENT

The Destruction of Habitats

All over the world, human and animal habitats are destroyed by corporations. Corporate industries such as mining, fossil fuel extraction operations, pipeline construction, commercial logging, and large-scale agricultural ventures all contribute to the devastation.

The most common type of construction undertaken by multinational companies is the building of pipelines. Pipelines destroy the land and property of people living on or near its path. They present an additional danger in the event of natural disasters: earthquakes might cause pipeline-breakage and thus oil spills, damaging and contaminating the surrounding land.

Well known oil companies such as Shell have built pipelines through Bolivia's Chiquitano dry tropical forest, one of the few remaining forests of this type in the world. Shell also continues to construct oil-pipelines in the Niger Delta region, threatening the region's mangrove forests and other important ecosystems.

In June of 2001, an oil spill in Ogdobo, Nigeria compromised the only source of water for 150,000 people of the region (Friends of the Earth International). Pipeline construction is ongoing: the World Bank supported proposals by ExxonMobil and Chevron to build a 1,070-kilometer Chad-Cameroon pipeline through rainforests. Currently, a group of corporations including Occidental and REPSOL-YPF (one of Spain's largest oil companies) have plans to build a five-hundred kilometer pipeline through Ecuador. If this plan is successful, the pipeline will cut through eleven fragile environmental areas.

Some corporations endanger habitats through environmentally-damaging practices. BHP Billiton, an Australian mining corporation, dumped eighty thousand tons of waste into rivers in Papua New Guinea, damaging neighboring rainforests, home to many endangered species.

Asia Pulp and Paper (APP), one of the largest paper companies in the world, was responsible for the deforestation of large tracts of Indonesian rainforest. Over the past decade, APP has cleared over 280,000 hectares of rainforest and plans to cut another 300,000 in the next five years. (Corporate Impacts) The decimation of the Indonesian region and the island of Sumatra has destroyed the habitats of many endangered species.

The activities of McDonald's have also put habitats at risk. McDonald's contributes funds for deforestation so that farms can support grazing animals. This destroys the habitats of many animals, as well as the homes of indigenous people. Twenty-four percent of mammals and twelve percent of birds are now endangered in this area. (Status and Trends) The cutting down of trees also affects water and soil quality. When heavy rain falls on deforested land there is nothing to anchor the soil, causing the erosion of topsoil and the contamination of nearby bodies of water.

The construction of ports, necessary to import and export products and supplies, presents a threat to marine habitats. In order to accommodate large container ships, ports must be expanded, often causing major damage to the coastal ecosystem.

Oil spills also damage aquatic environments, affecting fish, seals, and even some land animals severely. In 1989, eleven million gallons of Alaskan crude oil spilled from the ruptured hull of an Exxon-Valdez oil tanker in Prince William Sound. The initial cleanup of the disaster took close to three years, and the effects on wildlife in the region were devastating. (Explore North)

Activities such as mining, the building of pipelines, and deforestation account for nearly 40% of global loss of ecosystems. (People and Planet) However, there are no laws against the destruction of habitats. Without any such laws , major corporations will continue to profit and thrive at the expense of the environment and its inhabitants.

Water Pollution

Water pollution, an ongoing problem exacerbated by corporations, causes an imbalance in the marine ecosystem and compromises or prevents the survival of new and evolving species. Water pollution may be caused by industry, agriculture, or residential waste and is divided into two categories: pollution caused by point and non-point sources. Pollution by a point source is caused by something in or surrounding the body of water, such as an oil spill from a super tanker. Pollution caused by non-point sources is indirect; for example, when chemical fertilizers or pesticides applied to crops then wash into water pathways. Both of these types of water pollution are caused by corporations, and while both harm ecosystems, point source contamination can be effectively reduced.

Corporations involved in oil drilling are the main culprits of point-source contamination: with every million tons of oil produced, about one ton of this quantity enters water pathways through accidents during transportation by ship. Oil is a solvent that does not dissolve in water, rather floats on top, so it may be cleaned up, but not without damaging the ecosystem.

Non-point source contamination is often

caused by the introduction of chemical nutrients containing phosphorus or nitrogen into waterways. For example, in 2003, Bayer AG released .6 thousand metric tons of phosphorus into water; in 2004, it released .8 thousand metric tons. (Bayer Annual Report 2004) These substances wash off agricultural fields in rainfall, flowing into rivers, lakes, bays and other bodies of water and causing an excessive growth of algae and other aquatic plants. This over-enrichment of an aquatic ecosystem is known as eutrophication and often results in the increased growth of certain forms of marine life which gradually blocks streams, diminishes oxygen levels, prevents sunlight's penetration into the body of water, and disrupts the ecosystem's delicate balance.

Chief sources of water pollution include factories, chemical plants, and factory farms—mostly corporation-owned and operated. Water pollution is often difficult to monitor as limitations restrict governments from examining private property, homes, or farmland. Through indirect and direct means, corporations are responsible for most of the hazardous pollutants released into the earth's waters.

The Economics of Greenhouse Gases

When the earth's atmosphere is exposed to light from the sun, some of the light reflects off the earth's surface and back out into space. In the process, the reflected light is converted into infrared radiation in the form of heat. As time passes, the amount of energy emitted from the sun to the earth's surface roughly balances with the amount of heat energy that is reflected back into space. This balance of energy exchange is what allows the earth's surface to remain at a constant temperature. (National Energy Information Center)

However, sometimes gases collect above the earth's surface, allowing light to enter the atmosphere but trapping heat inside. These gases are known as greenhouse gases. Many gases that demonstrate "greenhouse" properties can be found in nature, in the form of water vapor, carbon dioxide, and methane. Recent investigations and environmental studies have proven that excess amounts of these gases are being made by industries across the world, leading to potentially devastating environmental changes such as global warming.

In 1997, the Kyoto Protocol was negotiated by over 160 nations; it addressed the threat posed by greenhouse gases and became an amendment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The thirty-six industrialized nations that ratified the protocol pledged to reduce their emission of six greenhouse gases (including carbon dioxide), or to participate in emissions-trading if a country's gas emissions should increase. The protocol requires that all ratifying nations reduce their greenhouse emissions below their 1990 levels between 2008 and 2012. Countries with greenhouse gas levels over those allotted by the treaty may use emissions-trading to purchase additional rights from producers in other countries.

The United States, although not one of the thirty-six original ratifying nations, is responsible for a fifth of the world's greenhouse gases and is currently nineteen percent over the Protocol's limits. The European Union was expected to have lowered its levels eight percent below 1990 levels but is currently still emitting six percent more greenhouse gases than it was in 1990.(World Bank)

Russia's electricity monopoly, the corporation Unified Energy Systems, is responsible for two percent of the earth's human-generated carbon dioxide and is the world's largest corporate producer of greenhouse gases, generating almost as many as are emitted by all of Britain. However, due to the post-Soviet eco-

nomic collapse in the 1990's, Russian carbon dioxide emissions are lower than would otherwise be expected. In 2003 they were thirty-two percent lower than the 1990 levels. Now in 2006, they are up to forty-three percent lower than their 1990 levels. Since they are so far below the benchmark, European, Canadian and Japanese companies in need of emissions credits have turned their attention towards Russia.

The first deal with Unified Energy was made with Denmark in June 2005. Denmark agreed to pay for the corporation to replace coal-fired boilers in eastern Siberia, enabling the units to burn more-efficient natural gas. Denmark is also negotiating with Unified Energy to upgrade a natural gas plant generator that is predicted to save 210,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions. In return, Denmark is looking to obtain 1.2 million carbon credits (one credit is equal to one ton of reduced carbon dioxide) to help Denmark reach its target under the Kyoto agreement.

Russia seems to have found a way to turn its misfortune of the 1990's into long-lasting profit. Andrew E. Kramer of the *New York Times* writes that "Russia and other Eastern European countries, which are among the world's largest producers of greenhouse gases, are poised to earn hundreds of millions of dollars through trading their rights to release carbon dioxide into the air." Unified Energy Systems is looking to earn one billion dollars thanks to the emission-trading provision in the Kyoto Protocol. Other companies have begun to look towards the emissions trading market. Japan's Toyota Corporation is also involved in paying for plant upgrades.

Russia's main obstacle is the US. When President George Bush abandoned the Kyoto Protocol in 2001 under the pretense that the cost would be too great for the American economy, it caused a bump in the road for Russia's economic come-back: without the support of the world's largest economy, the Kyoto Protocol's future is uncertain. While Unified Energy has made clear its strong advocacy for the Kyoto Protocol, United States corporations like Exxon Mobil have offered resistance to the agreement. Russia and its corporations may be unable to make a profit off of the world's efforts to minimize harmful pollution.

However, pollution credit projects continue to be planned, and if successful, economist specialists predict that Russia could reduce world greenhouse emissions by two to three billion tons of carbon dioxide by 2012, earning anywhere from twenty billion to sixty billion dollars in the process. Russia and its corporations could be the golden ticket to reducing global environmental deterioration.

Case Study: Chevron Corporation

The Chevron Corporation, after its acquisition of Texaco Incorporation in 2001 and Unocal Corporation in 2005, became Chevron-Texaco Corporation. With its headquarters in San Ramon, California, the Chevron-Texaco Corporation is the second largest energy company in the United States, in contact with over 180 countries worldwide.

This major corporation in today's environment has developed different methods of obtaining sources of energy and has attempted to develop more productive and innocuous fuels. Currently, Chevron is experimenting with fuel cells and has invested funds in nano-technology, a field involving the design and production of electronic devices from molecules. Chevron is attempting to produce fuel cells that use wind or solar power as a substitute for fossil fuel, while encouraging the production of diamond fragments, called higher diamondoids in electronic devices.

These advancements in environmental technology are due to the colossal size Chevron has reached since its merger with Texas Incorporation. Even though the corporation is attempting to develop safer and more secure sources of energy, there has been much criticism of its novel environmental policies. Although Chevron is currently using the "Will You Join Us?" advertising campaign, which focuses on educating consumers about the wasteful use of energy, many lawsuits have proven otherwise.

Beginning in 2000, Chevron paid a six million dollar fine for violation of the Clean Air Act in California. It was stated that Chevron polluted the air around factories and refineries with smog.

Chevron has also caused many outbursts in nations across the globe. In the Niger Delta in 2002, the Chevron-Texaco Corporation was criticized by women in the region where large Chevron-Texaco refineries are located. The refineries were said to have destroyed the ecosystem as well as habitats and settlements in neighboring vicinities. In the same year, citizens of Ecuador, who claimed that Chevron's facilities and workplaces were also damaging the Ecuadorian Amazon have now established an organization taking action against the toxic contamination that has occurred in the region.

Sources have revealed that even before Chevron bought out Texaco, there were reports of accidental damage in refineries located in Richmond, California. The deadliest accident occurred in 1999, when part of a refinery exploded, leaving the surrounding area polluted and many employees and nearby residents sick and injured. In the California area, the corporation has been accused of dumping excess toxic waste into multiple bodies of water. Unocal, one of Chevron-Texaco's subsidiaries, was recently sued by Latino and African-American communities in California for polluting their neighborhoods.

In addition, Chevron has been accused of violating the human rights of employees. In its Nigerian factories, the corporation has allegedly exercised violence against many protesters. In San Roman, Peru, Chevron-Texaco has also faced sexual harassment lawsuits from many of their female employees. For example, in 1993, Chevron faced a suit of age discrimination after firing many employees, most of whom were above the age of forty.

Despite all these issues with Chevron, the corporation still remains a powerful body as it continues to assist local government officials with funding and sponsorship opportunities. Although the corporation does maintain the right to provide funding for any activities with the purpose of energy conservation, the extent of its influence remains a controversial issue.

SECTION 3: AGRICULTURE

Grain and Vegetable Farming Industry

In the modern world, humans depend on grain and vegetable industries to satisfy their nutritional needs. The cultivation of these necessary food items is crucial to the development of societies around the world. At this point, corporations are now developing alternative methods of cultivation in order to contribute to the grain and vegetable farming industries.

In the United States, barley, soybeans, rice, tomatoes, alfalfa, and oats are some of the major grains and vegetables cultivated. The production and distribution of grains and vegetables has even overtaken the agricultural revenue of coffee, one of the most desired products in the world.

Corporations play a role in importing and exporting the majority of grain and vegetables throughout nations. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, produce is imported from other countries such as Mexico and South America, and is not grown on many farms in the United States.

In the past, major civilizations found cereal grains in many different forms. For example, maize in South and Central America and rice and millet in the Far East were some popular types of grain found in the world. Through observation, people have used the past as a successful experiment, and have built on society's foundations. Now, almost every country produces grain.

Although the use of grain has been the basis for civilization, the processes that some farms use to cultivate vegetables and grains are inadequate. Many use pesticides to stop insect infestations, which reduce the quality of the final products. However, at the moment, scientists at the United States Biological Research Unit are being sponsored by several corporations to investigate new technologies that prevent the loss of grain and grain-product quality. Alternative methods to stop insect infestations on farms are in the beginning stages of development.

The goal of improving grain and vegetable industries involves the political arena as well. Political leaders of many countries have vouched for

the increase in grain production, while some have not supported the new and available technology. Executives of major corporations such as McDonald's and Wal-Mart, have also endorsed these goals but have failed to follow through.

Because corporations have been unable to successfully address the issue of grain and vegetable cultivation, more than thirty million people have died of malnutrition and starvation every year. (World Press) In addition, the price of natural food continues to grow, inevitably forcing people to rely on genetically altered products.

At the moment, efforts are being made to improve the grain and vegetable industries around the world. Some corporations are sponsoring organizations to create alternative ways of food cultivation in order to maintain the quality of grains and vegetables. Cost-efficient ways are gradually progressing so that production and distribution of these foods allow customers who are less fortunate to receive a sufficient amount of grains and vegetables.

Pesticide Use

Pesticides are chemicals that are used globally to defend crops from the destructive tendencies of weeds, insects, and small animals. Although these chemicals are effective in preventing pests from harming crops, they are detrimental to the health of the crop itself and its consumers. Many problems may result from the usage of pesticides, including birth defects in children, pollution of the environment, contamination of ground water, and poisoning fertile soils, therefore posing a threat to the future of crop production.

Few corporations are actively reducing their pesticide usage; indeed, they are often encouraged to apply these chemicals. Over the years, the World Bank has initiated various agriculture-related projects, often involving pesticides like DDT. In 1989, a ninety-nine million dollar loan for the Amazon Basin Malaria Control Project was approved to limit the outbreak of malaria in Brazil. The loan resulted in the spraying of over three thousand tons of 75% DDT, which is illegal in Brazil. (World Bank: Pesticides and Civil Societies)

Several major corporations such as Bayer, Dow, DuPont, Monsanto, and Syngenta, have used pesticides in dangerous amounts in order to enhance their crop production. Bayer, a producer of some of the most toxic pesticides in the world, has been a factor in several high-profile pesticide-related incidents. For example, a toxin developed to kill corn pests caused severe allergic reactions in humans. DDT dumped into the Palos Verdes Peninsula in southern California rendered local fish inedible; it also contains components which cause eggshells to thin, decreasing bird population survival rates. With its purchase of Aventis Crop Science, Bayer has become one of the biggest agrochemical companies in the world, and potentially one of the most hazardous.

Dow, another large chemical company, was responsible for the production of the lethal pesticide Agent Orange (used during the Vietnam War) as well as DBCP, a pesticide still shipped to developing nations, even though it is now known to cause male sterility. This fact, concealed by the company, was uncovered in a study showing that twenty to twenty-five percent of the male workers on banana plantations in Costa Rica using the pesticide were sterile. (Beyondpesticides.org)

Monsanto is the world’s largest manufacturer of pesticides. A leak of dioxins (toxic byproducts) from one of the Monsanto plants in Missouri resulted in the forced relocation of thousands of people and birth defects in children. Another corporation, DuPont, has channeled dangerous pesticides into developing countries. One of its fungicides, Benlate, caused birth defects as well as damaging crops in several countries

and was taken off the market in 2001. (Mindfully.org)

Syngenta is the largest agrochemical company in the world. In 1986, one of its Swiss factories caught fire, burning insecticides and pesticides and washing them into the Rhine River, creating a "biologically dead" zone for nearly three hundred miles. Syngenta has also been accused of having conducted tests of pesticide inhalation on children and used unlawful tactics to discourage farmers from reporting the damage to crops caused by one of its herbicides.

Although many corporations claim that pesticides are the only way to prevent damage to crops, an alternate method with minimal pesticide usage, known as Integrated Pest Management (IPM), is available. IPM methods include engaging the genetic modification of crops, the use of natural predators and parasites, and different crop housing facilities. Small amounts of pesticides may be used as a last resort.

The use of pesticides for crop protection, while profitable in the short term, presents the long-term risk of contaminating the food supply and environment. Pests are also capable of developing pesticide-resistance; to remain effective, the quantity of pesticides used must be increased, causing further damage to land and consumers alike.

Beef and Dairy Industries

In recent years, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and other farming organizations have leaned towards supporting wealthy agricultural conglomerates as opposed to small-scale farms.

Beef and dairy industries are supported in many countries by subsidizing farmers, providing grants, and purchasing surplus crops when market prices fall to a low. It is the responsibility of the government to export the necessary crops at lower costs, or distribute the produce to the nation's government controlled organizations, such as the established "National School Lunch Program." (Mother Jones Magazine) Using this system, fluctuation of prices in the market have little effect on a country's source of food production, thus protecting income, jobs and the self-sufficiency of the agricultural sector of the economy.

In 2001, the USDA spent a total of $350 million on surplus beef and cheese for schools, "more than double the $161 million spent on all fruits and vegetables, canned or frozen." (Yale Daily News) Agricultural organizations have made it a point to examine corporate influence in providing for the beef and dairy industries.

As it turns out, wealthy agribusiness conglomerates are able to influence government policies through lobbying and campaign contributions that elicit favorable views from political representatives. Agribusiness industries have more than doubled their campaign contributions to federal candidates since 1990, dispensing a total of $59,317,269 to the 2000 presidential race and $45,559,127 to 2004's federal elections. (Agribusiness)

Laws encourage these practice. With Political Action Committees (PACs) for example, money can be directly donated to political candidates. Agribusinesses are also able to contribute huge sums in support of political parties and candidates. Currently, the dairy industry as a whole has contributed $1,939,308, in addition to $3,477,644 donated by livestock and poultry industries. (The American Enterprise)

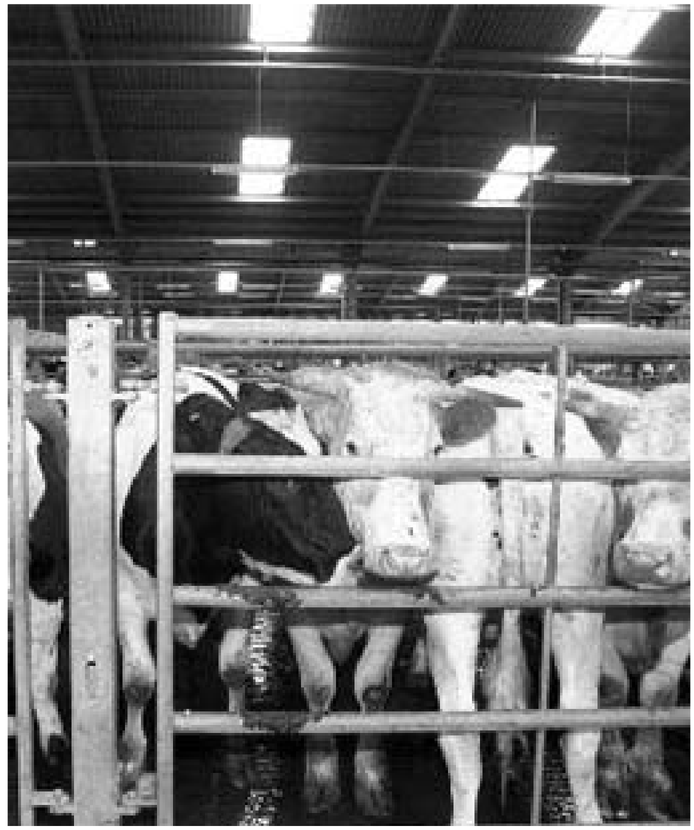
Furthermore, large agricultural corporations have exerted government-sanctioned control over prices in order to reap benefits at the expense of consumers, taxpayers, and smaller farms. In the Chicago mercantile exchange, the largest milk co-operatives in the United States collectively bargain on behalf of all other dairy farms to obtain equitable milk pricing. Unfortunately, although this method seems reliable and efficient, co-operatives abuse their responsibility by collaborating with dairy processors to maintain low prices, thereby reducing corporate costs. This is an insidious form of price-fixing conducted via complex procedures and agreements.

Furthermore, there is no means of corporate restraint involving the beef and dairy industries. Corporations specifically purchase domestic agricultural products significantly below the cost of production and import low-cost goods in order to create the impression of over-production. These efforts accordingly lower market prices and yield profits for corporations in the form of farm subsidies.

In May 2003, Dairy Farmers of America (DFA) sold over one million pounds of cheese to the USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) surplus program. In the same week, DFA, in a joint venture with New Zealand giant Fonterra, sent 1,061,748 pounds of powdered milk to the CCC from Portales, New Mexico. Within this short period, DFA and Fonterra acquired over two million dollars from United States taxpayers, thereby further contributing to the illusion that dairy farmers produce more than market demand. (Agribusiness) With corporations that manufacture beef products, the USDA has been particularly lenient in regulating conduct and ensuring accountability for any incidents that have and might occur.

In the summer of 2002, the beef-packing giant, ConAgra Food Corporation, was forced to recall millions of pounds of ground beef by the USDA. Laboratory tests confirmed that the beef had been contaminated with E.Coli, a common bacteria used in mapping genome sequences. (World Daily Exporters) Consumption of the tainted meat before it was recalled from the market caused the death of an Ohio woman, and thirty-five others fell sick. Through investigation, the reason for the delay in recall became clear: the USDA had applied its aggressive "See No Evil" non-interference policy to handle the situation.

In one instance, John Munsell, a businessman and whistle-blower for the agricultural community informed the USDA of the contamination after discovering the E.coli bacteria in an order of hamburger meat. Instead of investigating ConAgra, the USDA closed down Mr. Munsell's plant for four months and launched an investigation of his operation. Based on this incident, it seems that powerful agribusiness corporations do not wish for regulation. Instead, as with the dispute with ConAgra, they have begun to lobby for "self-regulation under the guise of regulation so as to reassure people that the USDA seal means something." (Progressive News)



Peter Albers, owner and operator of the large dairy business, Heritage Dairy, near Dixon, California, was the beneficiary of a state program that provided him with a tax-exempt, low interest loan, originally intended to help small businesses fight pollution. In addition, he received 1.5 million dollars completely tax-free. In exchange, he "installed a system with no alarm, no back-up pumps, and no redundancy in containment to prevent or contain accidental spills from the waste manure lagoons."

As a result, when a pump failed at one of his liquid manure lagoons in November 2003, the lagoon overflowed and propelled 1.3 million gallons of liquid manure into adjacent irrigation channels and into watersheds. Since no alarms were activated by the leakage, the spill was not detected until the following morning. By then, the environmental destruction wreaked by the deluge of animal waste was considerable.(Cato Institute)

Heritage Dairy is not the only large dairy business to use this particular state program. The Los

Angeles Times revealed that "over the past four years, nearly seventy million dollars in state bond money designated for pollution control has helped finance big dairies."(Sierra Club) The original intent of these loans was to provide dairy owners with environmentally safe methods of disposing of potentially dangerous waste. However, in many cases, the funds are being put toward expanding facilities as opposed to environmental protection.

Case Study: Monsanto Company

In the past decade, the field of biotechnology has grown rapidly. Biotechnology is the use of biological substances to perform specific industrial or manufacturing processes. Plants like the "super tomato" known as the "Flavr Savr" and the more recent "golden rice," which helps prevent anemia and blindness, have emerged from this industry. Corporations, especially the St. Louis-based Monsanto, dominate the biotech industry, of which genetic modification is a component. Though this modern technology began with the hope of making better tasting and hardier crops with longer shelf lives, the goals of the industry have expanded. What if crops could be manipulated to have a greater yield, to grow more quickly, to thrive in arid areas? In short, the goal is to increase not only plants' quality, but also their quantity in the hope of reducing world hunger. However, many genetically manufactured organisms may be hazardous to human beings and actually cause more harm than good.

Monsanto recently created genetically modified cotton known as Bt cotton. This cotton demonstrated—in tests run by Monsanto—that it yielded more cotton than the traditional seed. During the 2002 cotton season in India, many farmers replaced their traditional seed with the Bt seed. The official report from the Government of the State of Andhra Pradesh, India, noted the following: "The net income from Bt varieties was five times less than the yield from local non-Bt varieties. In Southern Telangana, the income from Monsanto's Bt crop was nearly seven times less than what was obtained from the indigenous non-Bt cotton varieties, demonstrating the resounding failure of the Monsanto variety." (GM and Food Hunger)

Monsanto's crop cost more than the traditional seed to cultivate, yielded poorer quality cotton, and failed to benefit those who farmed it. Monsanto was criticized: the Indian Genetic Engineering Approval

Committee (GEAC) demanded to know why the field-trial data for Bt cotton had been kept secret despite inquires about the study. The GEAC also demanded compensation for the farmers who had trusted the inaccurate Monsanto studies and had sustained tremendous losses as a result of planting the Bt crop.

Another Monsanto product is an herbicide known as "Roundup," a weed killer developed more than thirty years ago and popular throughout the world. To accompany this weed killer, Monsanto produced genetically modified crops, dubbed "Roundup Ready," which are resistant to weed killers (such as Roundup) and so may be freely sprayed to no ill-effect. The United States Department of Agriculture has released statistics stating that eighty percent of the US soybeans and over thirty percent of US cotton is "Roundup Ready." However, a new problem with the Roundup products has arisen: weeds are developing resistance to the world's most popular weed killer. A first case was reported in 1996 in Australia, where the ryegrass weed was growing in grain and sorghum fields. Similar cases were later reported in South Africa in 2001. Since then, this problem has spread throughout the US to states such as New Jersey, Maryland, Kentucky, Iowa, Illinois and Missouri. An expert on weed resistance at the University of Western Australia commented that, "Farmers are planting too many Roundup Ready crops." (Organic Consumers

Association) As this product is heavily relied on in the US and used throughout the world, resistance to the weed killer presents a grave threat.

Roundup herbicide also has other ill-effects: it was banned in Denmark in 2003, after a study by the Denmark and Greenland Geological Institution (DGGI) showed that glyphosate, an ingredient in the herbicide, was polluting Denmark's drinking water. The institution reported, "When we spray glyphosate on the fields…it has been shown that it is washed down into the upper ground water…This is very surprising, because we had previously believed that bacteria in the soil broke down the glyphosate before it reached the ground water." (Third World Network)

In 2002, a jury in Alabama found Monsanto guilty of knowingly contaminating the city of Anniston through the unsafe disposal of the toxic chemical polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB). PCB is used in electrical equipment and was banned in the US after tests showed that the chemical caused individuals to develop liver damage and cancer. After years of exposure to PCB poisoning and pollution from a nearby Monsanto chemical plant, Anniston was forced to close down neighborhoods which were completely uninhabitable. Residents of Anniston are now suing Monsanto for knowingly putting their lives at risk; many individuals have dangerously high levels of PCB in their blood.

While the biotech industry has the potential to one day solve the problem of world hunger, the power that corporations such as Monsanto have should be strictly limited and monitored. Monsanto has hit many bumps in the road, including Bt cotton, Roundup herbicide and Roundup Ready crops, and PCB pollution. Monsanto plays a powerful role in today's world and will continue to do so in the future; while it has the potential to be beneficial, it also has the potential to inflict great harm.

SECTION 4: MEDIA

Corporate Influence on the Music Industry

For each song played on the radio, the percentage of profit that reaches the specific artist is unaccounted for. The injustices that vocal performers face have been highlighted as a result of multiple class-action suits and the formation of the Recording Artists Coalition. (RAC) The immensely powerful trade group, The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), has recently been challenging musicians who support the RAC, declaring that their contracts are not guaranteed. Because of corporations such as the RIAA, thousands of artists who have sold millions of albums and generated billions in revenue have found themselves destroyed by the industry and the copyright laws set forth by corporations.

Many new recording artists lack prudence in decision making due to a desire for success. The five major record conglomerates, Time Warner, Universal, EMI/Virgin, Bertelsmann, and Sony, sign thousands of new artists eager to experience the thrill of the business.

Most of the major-label corporate agreements secure a contract of at least six albums from a new artist. This is a requirement that may later entail an indefinite period of work. In retaliation, California State Senator Kevin Murray prepared a bill which limited contracts to seven years. Unfortunately, agreements such as these have not been ratified due to the stigma of trying to counter the influence of the corporation in the music industry.

Another major injustice in the music world is the increasing amount of unpaid royalties. Don Egel, a music industry lawyer who describes industry accounting practices as "intentionally fraudulent," approximates that artist royalties are underpaid by ten to forty percent. (RAC) Royalties are almost always distributed in a manner that is favorable to the corporation and are only paid after the musician provides for recording costs and other expenditures.

Recording companies have thus far been able to underpay artists because of the ambiguity and complexity of the system. However, recent unions such as the RAC are currently fighting for greater clarity in contracts. "Like all other corporations, the music industry has gotten greedier," says rock veteran Henley, RAC founder, "It's about profit, profit, and more profit that always comes at a cost of principles."(USA Today)

Although many artists tied to contracts by large corporations may suffer a loss of royalties, long-term contracts are justifiable because very few records of the many released are profitable. Industry studies show that less than five percent of artists signed to a record deal deliver a hit song, and for every hit that is produced, there is a reported loss of $6.3 million. (USA Today) Opponents of the recording artists' unions fear that the business will deteriorate and leave some states at an economic disadvantage.

Another drawback for recording artists is limited or no access to healthcare and pension benefits. At the moment, many record companies are being sued by artists for pension benefits. Sam Moore, the legendary soul musician, is suing his company, Atlantic, for not covering any cost of his healthcare for the past forty years. The RAC is currently negotiating with music labels and hopes to increase access to health insurance for many artists who have been denied the right by the corporations.

Musicians and members of the media have begun to fight against corporations, and aim to rectify a corrupt system that has caused many music legends to die destitute. Hopefully, with the cooperation of numerous influential artists, changes will be made to decrease corporate influence on the music world. Although this effort seems unrealistic because the music industry is made up of large corporations that also suffer great profit losses, the media is attempting to change their infrastructure to suit the needs of artists and not of the demanding corporations.

Public and Private Media

Media are the means of dissemination of fact, opinion, and entertainment to the public. They include television, radio, newspapers, magazines, movies, and most recently, the internet. Some forms of media are publicly owned, while others are privately owned by corporations.

In today's world, a trend of "mega mergers," the consolidation of media outlets in the hands of few corporations, has developed. As these companies increase in size and decrease in number, the diversity and depth of the media coverage becomes limited in scope. Media corporations must ensure the profit gain of their investors in order to attract further investment. Because of this, a conflict of interest arises regarding the practice of responsible journalism. Through advertising, the predominant means of funding for most private media, corporations paying to have their ads shown gain a measure of control over media content: if ratings are not high, corporations may remove their ads. This encourages private media to rely on sensationalism to attract viewers.

Public media rely on donations from individuals, non-profit organizations, state subsidies, corporate grants, and/or national funding. In some cases the funds are supplemented by direct donations from corporations, in which case these corporations may be allowed a limited amount of advertising; however, the advertiser's influence on the information disseminated is minute. In contrast to the commercial, mainstream bent of corporate media, public media tends to cater to a broader range of topics. However, publicly owned media is not flawless: severe government controls may result in compromising free speech and ideas and the utilization of public media outlets as instruments of propaganda.

It may be concluded that both the corporate controlled media and publicly controlled media have their advantages and disadvantages. In the hands of a totalitarian regime, public media may be restricted by

the government; however, in many countries of the world the public media are trusted sources of information unhindered by a profit-goal.

Publicly controlled media differ greatly from the commercialism exercised by corporate controlled media. Because large multinational corporations control corporate media, there is a tendency toward decline in the diversity and depth of the information distributed. Funding largely by advertising increases the subjectivity and superficiality of the information brought to the public.

Case Study: ClearChannel Corporation

Clear Channel Communications is a corporation that currently owns over 1,200 radio stations in the country and operates divisions in sixty-five countries around the world. Clear Channel was established in 1972 as a small broadcasting company, and expanded as a television network. By 1997, Clear Channel became a leading corporation in outdoor advertising and globally, one of the largest live entertainment centers. In the twenty-first century, Clear Channel stands as the nation's largest radio owner and a dominant corporate entity in the media industry. (Media Access Project)

In 1996, the Telecommunications Act allowed Clear Channel Communications to restrict ownership of television networks. This act did not increase competition but instead, allowed corporations such as Clear Channel to consolidate and create large monopolies. Due to this act, Clear Channel went from owning a total of 173 radio stations in 1997 to 1,200 stations in 2000. (Clear Channel Communications) This dramatic leap concerned many, because the intention of the act was to stimulate competition, rather than encourage increased corporate control of the media.

Clear Channel also owns over thirty television stations, including ABC, CBS, FOX, and NBC, in states from New York to California. In order to manage these stations from Clear Channel's headquarters in Texas, the corporation has devised a basic uniform format that each station follows, usually appealing to a general audience versus the specific audience of a local community.

Local news and media stations are responsible for reporting relevant information to the community and to present it in a way that appeals to its audience. The problem for many communities is that Clear Channel limits their ability to present diverse news stories.

Sources have also found fewer represented viewpoints on radio and television stations, as Clear Channel exclusively broadcasts its own opinions on the air. Evidence in support of this was demonstrated when radio personality Howard Stern was fired from the company. Clear Channel claimed to be preventing indecent material from being broadcasted. A *New York Times* columnist has reportedly discovered some ties between the Clear Channel Communications and the White House, but Clear Channel states that it "works with groups across the political spectrum," and does not favor one specific viewpoint. (Clear Channel)

In 2003, Clear Channel radio stations sponsored rallies in cities across the nation, including Atlanta and Cincinnati. Thousands of people participated and many protesters issued statements that ridiculed France, the Dixie Chicks, and those against the Gulf War in Iraq. Clear Channel denied sponsoring pro-war rallies and instead dubbed the rallies "patriotic." (Clear Channel Controversy)

Clear Channel radio stations have also decreased diversity in the music broadcasted. Although the corporation has improved in the variety of formats it uses, playlists often overlap. The pay-for-

play system, an arrangement whereby promoters pay stations to broadcast music of those artists they represent, is a method of controlling the formats broadcast.

However, while the corporation stated that the practice would be discontinued in 2003, the pay-for-play option has remained in use. This system prevents a balanced play list and proves that endorsement is the only factor needed for ideas to be broadcast throughout the local community and an entire nation.

Earlier this year, a statement on the radio declared that the tactic of massive consolidation used by Clear Channel was creating “a loss of localism, less competition, fewer viewpoints and less diversity.” (Future of Music)

In the place of a rich and balanced media network, the public is left with an industry filled with power struggles where large corporations threaten the diversity of information. This ultimately reduces the ability of the populace to make balanced judgements about the world.

SECTION 5: EDUCATION

Corporate Sponsorship of Schools

Because of inadequate government funding, both on the state and federal level, public schools, universities, and colleges across the United States are in desperate need of financial help, especially those schools that educate predominantly working-class and minority students. Therefore, many of these educational institutions are turning to corporations and corporate philanthropists for financial support. The sponsorship of schools by corporations is a relatively recent phenomenon which seems to have emerged mostly in the United States, and is the result of both a lack of government funding and the desire of corporations to integrate themselves further into today’s society, especially among the youth.

Much of today’s educational sponsorship is not purely philanthropic; many of the corporations that sponsor education hope to receive a return on their investment. In most cases, it includes generating profit through advertising in schools. A growing number of inadequately funded public school districts are signing contracts with corporations that give these companies permission to advertise on school premises. For example, the American Passage Media Corporation has installed billboards in high school locker rooms where its messages reach nearly three million students. These billboards, or "gym boards," display a variety of commercial products such as tampons. Lifetime Learning Systems provides free textbook covers which expose sixteen million students to advertising paid for by corporations such as Nike, McDonald's and Hershey’s chocolate.

In other cases, corporations hope to train future employees. In New York, American Express has financed four high schools where they have introduced a program called “Academies of Travel and Tourism.” As part of a curriculum that has been introduced and developed by American Express, students learn about the world, geography and foreign cultures. This program prepares students for jobs in the tourism industry.

Other corporations have a more subtle approach: they hope that by donating to such an important cause as education, they will be recognized as “good guys” by the general public who will in turn be encouraged to buy their products.

At the same time, those schools that depend on corporate support often have to comply (to varying degrees) with the wishes of their sponsors and are becoming increasingly subject to the corporate principles of accountability, efficiency, and productivity. This focus on finance has resulted in the decrease in the number of teachers, the erosion of the role of teachers' unions, and the reorganization of large urban schools. This can lead to the disempowerment of parents, students and teachers as well as an overall deterioration in the quality of education. Educational policies that align themselves with corporate ideas of maximum output profitability with minimum input of investment are causing the reorganization of public schools and colleges. Schools that are forced (through lack of public funding) to resort to corporate sponsorship often find themselves having to give up some of their values.

This form of educational sponsorship is not to be confused with that of corporate philanthropists such as Bill Gates who use their personal fortunes to benefit various causes. According to the *New York Times*, “Bill Gates has offered $1 billion for scholarship funds to economically disfranchised students of color,” and unlike the corporations who sponsor educational establishments, he does not expect anything in return.

Corporate sponsorship is having an increasingly large influence on today's educational system, and unless the government makes radical changes in its budget to benefit schools in the US, it will probably continue to do so. We have yet to see how it will affect future society.

Corporate Marketing in Schools

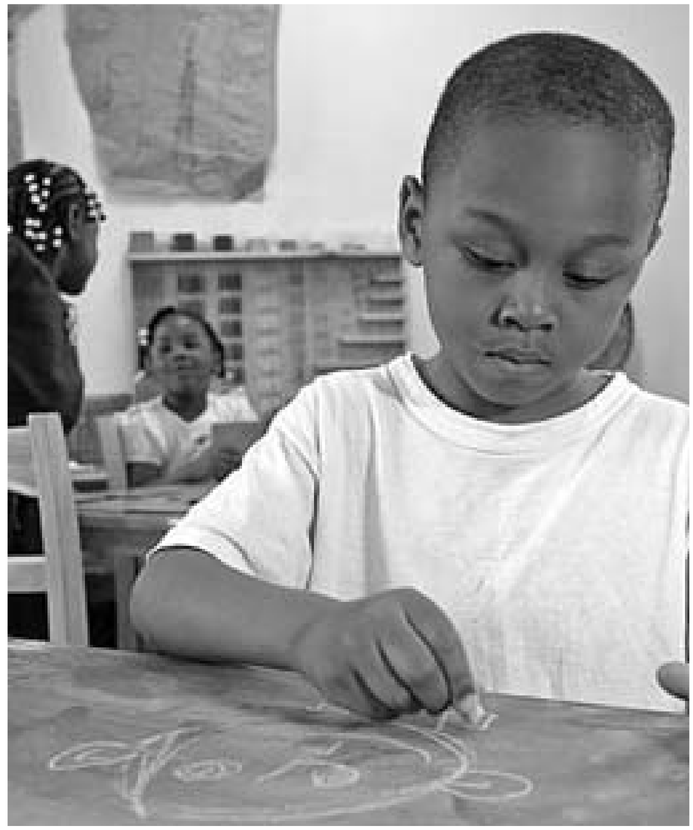
Commercialism and in-school advertising have been on the rise for many years, and according to a government report released in 2000, corporate influence in schools has flourished. As stated by a report in the *New York Times* in September of 2000, "In-school marketing has become a growing industry and some marketing professionals are increasingly targeting children in schools." (Corpwatch)

Presently, well known corporations such as Coca-Cola and Pepsi are signing contracts with school districts so that both corporations and educational institutions can benefit. "Both educators and corporate managers are attending conferences to learn how to increase revenue from in-school marketing." (Corpwatch)

There are several motives behind schools' joining forces with major corporations that are causing many to question the extent of corporate influence on educational systems. Schools seek additional revenue because of their limited budgets and large expenses. By establishing relationships with major corporations, schools gain capital with the use of in-school advertising, and as a result, do not have to raise local taxes. Currently, approximately ten percent of school funding is provided by the federal government while the remaining ninety percent is dependent upon state and local taxes. (NOW)

The debate over school funding and in-school commercialism has caused conflict between the government and prominent educational systems. The restrictions involved when corporate assistance is accepted by school boards leaves schools obliged to advertise specific corporate products in order to comply with a simple contract. The agreement established also encourages "brand loyalty" in schools where the board of education favors specific products.

However, corporate involvement in in-school marketing do allow both local and national businesses the chance to invest in the educational system. Incentive programs, in addition to contracts, have also



proven to increase profits in multiple school districts. Free educational media also allows students to progress in the world of technology.

According to a report by the Government Accounting Office, more commonly known as the GAO, corporations use several methods to market their products, the most common means being direct sales. Additionally, other smaller corporate entities use the technique of advertising through educational sources, which a majority of public schools use free of charge. Many companies have also used the broadcast media and other forms of technology through computer monitors in school laboratories .

Indirect advertising is also employed through the distribution of company-sponsored educational material, as well as promotional and staff development programs. Currently, the effects of corporate in-school marketing can be easily seen in the school environment. Typically there are soft drink machines in lounges, scoreboards with company logos, and even advertising billboards. (NOW)

Anti-Sweatshop Codes

Students at colleges and universities across the United States have spoken out against corporations using sweatshop labor by developing anti-sweatshop codes that boycott the purchase of university apparel and other supplies from companies known to use sweatshops. Sweatshops are factories where workers are forced to endure dire working conditions, including long hours, low wages, exposure to health and safety hazards, and often physical and verbal abuse. Human rights regulations are largely disregarded and often violated. Many multinational corporations utilize sweatshop labor in developing countries as a means of low cost production. The need for foreign investment in developing countries keeps production costs down and fuels the proliferation of sweatshops everywhere.

Duke University was the first to pass an anti-sweatshop code in March 1998; since then many others have followed suit. These codes call for the disclosure by corporations of the names and locations of the factories where their products are manufactured, exposing any possible sweatshop activity. While most anti-sweatshop codes refer specifically to school uniforms and merchandise sold in school bookstores, the Los Angeles Unified School District adopted an anti-sweatshop code in 2004 that expanded this list to include even desks. The code requires that suppliers not only reveal the locations of factories but also guarantee that factory workers are paid decent wages. In New York, twenty school districts have adopted sweatshop free policies; in 2001 the City Council passed a resolution requiring that all city uniforms be purchased under the regulations of the anti-sweatshop codes.

Corporations have not expressed concerns about these anti-sweatshop codes. The Vice President of Communications at the Russell Corporation, Nancy Young, explains, “We have been dealing with this issue on college campuses for some time. We don't see it as a problem because we aren't going to have to change anything.” It is estimated that if every single college and university in the United States adopted an anti-sweatshop code, the result would be a loss of about 500-600 million dollars—a miniscule amount compared to the multi-billion dollar budgets of large companies such as Disney or Nike. (Corpwatch) Nike's factory workers in Vietnam and China receive extremely low wages though the company can well afford to pay its employees more. Another large corporation known to utilize sweatshops is Wal-Mart, whose factory workers were paid as low as $0.13 an hour in China. (Canadian Labor Congress) It is unclear just how poor the working conditions are, as Wal-Mart refuses to disclose the names or locations of its sweatshops.

The GAP, another corporation that uses sweatshops, has six factories on the tiny Micronesian island of Saipan, where it has been discovered that workers are subjected to physical abuse and dangerous working conditions. Workers at GAP sweatshops in Russia are paid as little as $0.11 an hour. (Canadian Labor Congress) While its merchandise labels state “Made in the USA,” the GAP does not comply with the regulations set out by the US labor standards. Corporations are financially impervious to efforts to end the use of sweatshops through anti-sweatshop codes; it is their images that are battered by such campaigns.

The problem is that many corporations are not held responsible for their violation of human rights through sweatshop labor because they use smaller firms to manufacture the goods for them. Because corporations demand low prices for the manufacture of merchandise, the smaller manufacturing companies compensate for this by cutting factory workers' wages. These tiny companies are often able to avoid the scrutiny that corporations are subject to. This set-up means that if poor working conditions are exposed, corporations are able to distance themselves and deny being aware of the conditions under which their merchandise is manufactured.

The recent outburst against sweatshops within colleges and universities has initiated a trend of holding corporations accountable to their consumers for their actions, forcing them to ensure the humane manufacture of their products. By boycotting the purchase of products from corporations that use sweatshops, these consumers have an influence (albeit a limited one) on these corporations, rewarding ethical corporations with patronage.

Case Study: Channel One Network

Channel One Network is a hard-line advertising medium owned by Primedia that belongs to Kohlberg, Kravis & Roberts (KKR). The corporation manages investments and corporate takeovers. Channel One is an aggressive marketing enterprise that donates schools satellite links, wiring, VCRs, and television sets in exchange for a daily twelve-minute broadcast of their program, in order to "enhance" a student's learning environment. Each school that broadcasts Channel One programs must agree to a contract that requires broadcasting in eighty percent of the classrooms on ninety percent of school days. This contract is automatically renewed after three years. (Corpwatch)

In a school year, the policies instituted by Channel One enforce broadcasting for a period of six days. Unfortunately, schools do not have control over the equipment while screening these programs. Teachers cannot change the channel or end the program, let alone adjust the volume, so that there is a "captive audience" for potential advertisers. (Education Reporter) The influence of Channel One in education systems is gradually increasing, as twelve thousand American schools now sponsor this television network.

According to Channel One's contract with education systems, ten minutes of its show is dedicated to current events. Hoynes and Miller conducted a study of thirty-six shows, with ninety-one news stories and 177 on-camera sources. The study revealed, however, that only fifty-eight percent of the program displayed recent news. Of this coverage, only twenty percent addressed current social, political, economic and cultural stories while the remaining eighty percent focused on sports and weather segments.

Currently, Channel One is focusing its efforts on commercial advertising for material goods. Many of these advertisements promote violent school atmospheres. Because school attendance is compulsory in most educational institutions, students are forced to watch these advertisements, eventually discarding their opinions or risking exposure to inappropriate content. For every thirty seconds of advertising, Channel One receives up to $195,000. This commercial revenue is collected from tax payers. (Education Reporter)

The nature of news stories shown on Channel One forces students to anticipate commercials. Research noted that, "the implicit message is that students' relationship to the economy is solely as consumers." (Corpwatch) Because of these enthralling advertisements, students voiced that often they do not remember the news content of the broadcast. This encourages materialistic attitudes which can be harmful considering that Channel One is mostly screened in schools located in low-income communities, where less revenue is spent on academic materials and education.

Many communities have attempted to resist the influence of Channel One and have repealed their contracts. Nearly every national educational group

across the country has opposed the demands of Channel One Network, including the American Association of School Administrators, the National Association of State Boards of Education, and the National School Boards Association. Students and parents have also formed resistance groups and have tried to spread the message of corporate influence, by organizing board meetings, newsletters, walk-outs, and other forms of protest.

The tie between the economy and a large corporation such as Channel One is the strongest yet made. As the *New York Times* stated, "the clearest legacy of Channel One is that it has bonded public education with the economy in ways that could hardly be imagined a decade ago." (Education Reporter) Channel One promotes its programs in order to cultivate teenage consumers. They have successfully enlarged the economic potential of the corporate world by remaining in contact with educational institutions.

SECTION 6: HEALTH

Global Healthcare

In developed and developing nations, many communities suffer due to the lack of available medical treatment and drugs. Companies such as Bristol Myers, Merck, and Pfizer strictly control the availability of medication to the general public. The issue of great concern in the global healthcare network remains the limited resources available to developing nations. If no progress is made, many technological and pharmaceutical innovations will be put out of reach for these countries.

Even though the intent of pharmaceutical corporations is to fight chronic diseases and aid in preventive medicine, their interests are centered toward profit and revenue collection. Developing countries, considered underprivileged, are neglected by corporations because their status does not qualify them as mainstream consumers.

Corporations' lack of morals and ethics has encouraged many to declare this struggle in healthcare as the "apartheid of pharmacology." (Le Monde) People without the means to purchase or even gain access to pharmaceuticals are helpless and vulnerable. For example, the situation with HIV in poverty-stricken areas of Africa is devastating, as people begin to lose hope where they witness the deaths of thousands. As AIDS medication and testing increase in costs, fewer citizens can afford to receive the care and treatment needed. Even some developed nations such as the United States, where circumstances allow more people to receive medication, there are still those who are ignored by corporations due to economic status.

Another reason for the lack of positive corporate influence on healthcare is the corporation's duty to the company itself and its powerful shareholders to make profits. Therefore, there is a constant attempt to suit the needs of the company, to the detriment of public health. In the recent case of Vioxx, a drug produced by Merck, it was learned that the medication was not removed from the pharmaceutical market because of its success as a reducer of osteoarthritic symptoms, even though its dangers were known to the corporation. Only when Merck was put on trial was it publicly revealed that the drug increased the risk of heart attack and stroke, and that the corporation was intentionally negligent in not pulling the drug off the market.

Neglect and profits at all costs—unscrupulous behavior by corporations has had unhappy results. Through the use of patents, drug companies have been able to keep their drug prices high while blocking competition from other companies and other drugs. Human well-being and consequent economic development has been impeded in poor countries, as HIV and other diseases grow, unchecked and unaided by the medicines the developed world has to offer. Recently former President Bill Clinton negotiated with certain drug companies to try to deliver affordable medicines where they are needed. If countries are not helped, the threat of spreading disease can affect the developed world as well, as disease does not stop at any border.

Healthcare and Advertising

Medications are an undeniable reality of today's world—however, in pursuit of profit, corporations which manufacture and purvey them may distort the need for or abilities of their products through advertisements. Corporations may emphasize the benefits of their medications while briefly mentioning the many dangerous side effects that could arise. Others deliberately deceive and misinform their consumers in order reap the benefits of positive press and monetary profits.

As Marcia Angell describes in her article, “The Truth About Drug Companies: How They Deceive Us and What To Do About It,” the primary concern of most drug companies is to obtain the most benefits possible from advertising. According to Angell, top pharmaceutical companies spend 250% more on advertising than they do on research. Smaller companies, universities, and research institutions distribute more than one third of the medication that is advertised by drug companies. (Mother Jones) These medications, however, are sold on the market at inflated prices. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) for example, sold the rights to its product Taxol to Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. for twenty times the manufacturing cost. (Corpwatch)

Drug companies flaunt their products’ positive aspects in their advertisements: Zoloft, for example, a prescription drug for anxiety and depression, is depicted as a small pill, jumping and smiling. These commercials and printed ads conveniently lessen the importance of the potential side effects such as sexual dysfunction, dizziness, fatigue, nausea, and insomnia in their fine-print disclaimers. Rapidly spoken television commercials and radio ads discourage the careful consideration of the medication’s risks.

Healthcare advertisements target potential consumers (patients) directly, encouraging them to ask their doctors about medications—though the ones being touted may not be the most appropriate for their condition. Some corporations are looking to change this: Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. was the first company to renounce this practice. The company claims that in the future it will advertise its products exclusively to doctors and release advertisements specifically for consumers, some including information about programs to help those who cannot afford adequate supplies of medication.

According to Brian Henry, the spokesperson of Bristol-Myers Squibb, doctors and patients have said that healthcare advertising does not reveal the truth behind the product. In the new policy, Bristol-Myers promises to clearly state the “pros” and “cons” of its drugs in a way that may be understood by the layperson.

Healthcare companies also target healthcare providers—doctors, healthcare corporations, and hospitals—by distributing free samples of their new drugs. These samples may be used to test a patient’s short-term reaction to a specific medication, or may serve as a transitional supply of medication before a prescription is obtained. However, the distribution of free samples may encourage doctors to prescribe that drug more frequently. Drug companies usually only distribute samples of the latest and most expensive drug on the market—after a patient uses the sample up, it is rare that the doctor will shift the patient to similar but less expensive drugs.

Merck & Co.’s pain reliever, Vioxx, is an example of a “brand-name” drug of which samples were distributed. Patients were thus encouraged to try out the medication, though other more inexpensive drugs might have been just as effective. Research has shown, in fact, that taking Vioxx increased patients’ risk of heart attack and stroke. After complications such as these were reported by patients and the research was made public, Vioxx was removed from the market.

Advertising for healthcare products should emphasize the need for consulting a doctor before taking medications. Some healthcare companies such as Johnson and Johnson are moving in the right direction: their birth control product, Ortho Evra, is featured in an advertisement in which a woman and her doctor are having a conversation about the side effects of the product. With these types of advertisements in today’s media, the truth about drugs will become more apparent to patients.

The Influence of "Big Pharma"

The pharmaceutical industry in today's world operates in a rapidly changing environment, including improved technology and media, variations in health insurance coverage, pressure from non governmental organizations and public governments, and the law and regulation control. These pressures have resulted in intensified competition and industry consolidations. However, in spite of complications involving global healthcare, there has been overall growth as consumer demand for insurance coverage has increased. In 2002, the pharmaceutical goods were sold for more than 11.5 billion dollars. (EU Business)

Due to the numerous factors in play that constantly affect growth in the healthcare industry, pharmaceutical companies have had to make compromises between research investment and gaining profits from industrial development. In addition, they have suffered from price reductions on products and are experiencing difficulty in finding individuals for experimental trials, impeding manufacturing. Within these changes, pharmaceutical corporations have been accused of ignoring Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), a prominent organization that influences health and safety policies. The responsibilities for pharmaceutical companies include improving medical costs for developing countries, providing adequate insurance coverage, increasing research and development for new and emerging diseases, and establishing a global safety network through a partnership with government and other agencies.

As pressure has increased, corporations have introduced new strategies such as discounts on medication, free circulation of medication in developing regions, and funding for treatments for diseases. Industries can reduce prices without affecting their profit by adapting a systematic approach to cut costs.

The World Health Organization has recently published a report entitled, "Priority Medicines for Europe and the World," which recognizes several "pharmaceutical gaps," or diseases and health related topics that require more attention from pharmaceutical firms. Some gaps that were identified included diseases posing a threat to public health in the future, neglected diseases, and diseases that require better prevention methods. In the twenty-first century, key diseases include influenza, HIV/AIDS, Alzheimer's, diabetes, cancer, and malaria. Linking pharmaceutical gaps is a key step towards progress in developing nations, and in establishing a global partnership with corporations in the field of public health.

Many of the healthcare goals developed by the United Nations require not only public action by government, but also partnership with the corporate sector. Because corporations are beginning to contribute to healthcare, in the last five years antiretroviral drugs for AIDS, newer antibiotics, and chemotherapy drugs for tuberculosis have become less expensive and more readily available to third-world countries. Only sustained dialogue and partnership between governments and corporations can improve healthcare in developed and developing nations. Pharmaceuticals need to focus on the main goal: to provide affordable health care without exploitation.

Case Study: Pfizer Incorporated

Pfizer, the largest pharmaceutical corporation worldwide, invents, tests, and manufactures some of the most widely used drugs: Zoloft, Norvasc, Viagra, Zithromax. One of the most important medications manufactured by Pfizer is Diflucan (fluconazole), an antifungal drug used as part of a treatment regimen for AIDS patients. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates for 2005, 40.3 million people worldwide are currently living with HIV/AIDS; there is clearly a great demand for Diflucan. However, the brand-name drug is sold by Pfizer at around twenty dollars per pill, to be taken weekly. This price is even more exorbitant when it is taken into account that most HIV/AIDS cases occur in the poorest parts of the world; according to WHO, sixty percent of all HIV/AIDS cases are in sub-Saharan Africa, an impoverished region that is home to only ten percent of the world's population. According to Oxfam, Pfizer's market value is greater than "the combined national incomes of the eighteen biggest economies in sub-Saharan Africa." (Oxfam)

The World Trade Organization's (WTO) Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) governs "intellectual property rights" worldwide, overseeing and regulating the extent to which patents, copyrights, etc. are enforced and protected. While safeguarding intellectual property can be beneficial, in the case of HIV/AIDS medications it keeps drugs from being made affordable: corporations such as Pfizer are able to cling to the

patents on their drugs, preventing other corporations, governments, and NGOs from manufacturing and distributing a cheaper, more widely-distributed, generic version. Because of this, the availability of drugs around the world is uneven: rich people can afford them and find them readily available, poor people find that the medications are neither affordable nor available.

Pfizer's unwillingness to grant licenses to governments to produce generic versions of the drug Diflucan for their people, is what places the drug's purchase price out of reach of patients in poor countries. According to Oxfam, the TRIPS agreement allows for some flexibility, but under pressure from powerful governments such as the US and corporations such as Pfizer, the enforcement of "intellectual property rights" is globally uniform with few, if any, exceptions made for poorer countries.

Pfizer's response to the dire need for HIV/AIDS medications (of which it produces three, including Diflucan) has been limited to drug donations, a trend becoming more apparent with the increase of public pressure on pharmaceutical corporations. In an interview with *The Guardian*, CEO Hank McKinnell outlined Pfizer's contribution to fighting the HIV/AIDS epidemic: "Diflucan is now donated [by Pfizer] in twenty-two countries, more than four million doses have been supplied, eighteen thousand healthcare professionals have been trained in the use of the drug and nine hundred clinics can now dispense it in sub-Saharan Africa." (Guardian.co.uk) Oxfam argues that such a practice, while exhibiting good will, is unsustainable. Drugs must be made affordable enough to allow patients in developing nations to purchase them themselves.

Pfizer not only has no interest in seeing TRIPS laws relaxed, it actively seeks to support patent protection through aggressive lobbying (its CEO is the chairman of the most powerful industry lobby in the US, the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America) and close ties with government and policy-makers. Oxfam points out that Pfizer has been "a driving force in putting intellectual property on the trade agenda and therefore was instrumental in the eventual adoption of TRIPS." (Oxfam)

It is clear that some change is necessary: people in poor countries should not be forced to rely on the benevolence of wealthy corporations for access to critical, life-saving drugs; this will only serve to preserve or increase the disparity in the world, ensuring that poor nations remain in a position of dependence. Corporations such as Pfizer have the power to serve millions of people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide by modifying the TRIPS agreement's patent protections and allowing the manufacture and retail of affordable generic drug-equivalents in developing countries.

SECTION 7 : WORKFORCE

Corporations and Human Rights

With a growing global economy, large corporations have presented themselves in the working lives of citizens all over the world by providing job opportunities. According to regulations, corporations do have responsibilities towards their employees. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and The International Labor Organization (ILO) both specify guidelines for employment to ensure that the freedom, dignity, security and overall livelihood of employees are protected. (International Labor Organization) According to articles twenty-three and twenty-four of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work. Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.” (United Nations)

Unfortunately, these rights are not respected by corporations. UNICEF reports that of the 246 million children engaged in child labor, seventy percent of these children work in hazardous conditions. (UNICEF) Although some of these children work in domestic or family companies where large corporations play minor roles, others are indirectly employed and sustained by the world’s largest corporations.

In 2004, Human Rights Watch reported on such a case, where local corporations involved in the production and distribution of Coca-Cola were found buying sugar plantations that were employing child laborers. According to Michael Bochenek, counsel to Human Rights Watch Children’s Rights Division, in order for Coca-Cola to become “serious about avoiding complicity in the issue of hazardous child labor, the company should recognize its responsibility to ensure that respect for human rights extends down the supply chain.” (Corpwatch)

There are from five thousand to thirty thousand children in El Salvador as young as eight years old, working in sugar plantations where they are exposed to the most hazardous working conditions involved in agriculture. (Corpwatch)

The practices of corporations have also called attention to the poor wages and working conditions for employees who are of an appropriate working age. Similar human rights violations exist under the system of indirect employment. “Companies like Nike and Reebok…distance themselves through subcontracting, benefiting from low production costs without any direct lines of responsibility.”(Corpwatch) However, these subcontractors, who hold large contracts with corporations seem to share common practices which violate both international and national labor laws.

Of the four major subcontractors investigated by the International Labor Organization, each violated the issues of wage, overtime, health, and safety standards. (Asia Monitor Resource Center) An average worker put in a twelve hour day, not including factory overtime. In addition, workers were given only two to four days off per month, paid general and over time wages below the legal amount, fined for failure to work overtime, and denied the proper protective gear and health measures, causing exposure to fumes, heat and potentially dangerous machinery.

In addition, some countries do not enforce labor laws as strictly as others. Nike and Reebok made strategic choices to shift factory production to China, “when political authoritarianism and repression of the workers’ movement was at its height.” (Corpwatch)

The outsourcing of jobs from industrialized countries to developing nations has become a major endeavor by corporations. According to Patrick Dixon, outsourcing has been praised as "cost-effective, efficient, productive and strategic—but also condemned as evil, money-grabbing, destructive, ruthless, and exploiting the poor." (Dixon) When accomplished strategically, opening jobs to outside manufacturers can lower costs by sixty percent while still allowing laborers a decent living standard in their country where daily costs are lower. Dixon says, "An IT professional in India may be far better off in terms of lifestyle, even though paid only a third of the US salary." Moreover, outsourcing of labor helps "tackle one of the greatest moral challenges of our time, which is the growing gap between richest and poorest nations." (Dixon)

However, the problem remains that more than 230,000 jobs are being lost each year in the United States, as a result of outsourcing. (International Labor Organization) A major controversy has emerged: people argue that corporations are taking cost reduction too far and damaging economic stability. In the 1990s, for example, investigations into Nike Inc. plants across Asia revealed various human rights violations, including poor working conditions, child labor, and underpayment. This scandal has increased awareness of corporate responsibility and effected a loss of corporate prestige in mis-conduct cases.

If we restrict corporate influence, it is possible to avoid violating human rights. Nike, for example, has improved its facilities and is striving to enforce labor laws, codes of conduct, and most importantly the rights of workers. In the modern world of growing corporations, it is becoming a priority for developed nations to scrutinize the conduct of various corporations and for developing nations to establish concrete labor laws; only then will we be able to eliminate the abuse of human rights.

The "Living Wage" Campaign

The term "living wage" refers to the hourly wage that a person would need to be paid in order to maintain a basic standard of living. With no supplementary money, the individual earning a living wage should be able to meet housing, food, utilities, transportation, health care, and a certain amount of recreational expenses. Corporations in different countries

are not bound to follow a living wage minimum, and in the United States only a minimum wage, and not a living wage, is established by the federal government.

Municipalities and local governments have passed laws for minimum wage to be higher than the federal level, but often these regulations apply only to certain businesses, for example those under government contract. There are many labor unions and community action groups that support both national and international living wage movements, such as the union known as ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now), an organization of low- and moderate- income families working collectively for social justice and the development of stronger communities.

The main drawback faced by living wage campaigns is the corporate influence. Corporations tend to resist paying living wages; this is not to say that every corporation completely disregards the well-being of its employees, but essentially corporations are in business for profit and paying a living wage, though ethically commendable, decreases those profits. When large corporations compete with one another, driving prices down to attract customers, the result of a search for the lowest manufacturing costs is often low salaries for workers.

Stan Cox conducted personal research in Salina, Kansas, by taking his daughter and son to a

Wal-Mart in their neighborhood where they recorded the prices of products they deemed necessary. He found that a person working full-time in this same Wal-Mart chain did not earn enough to buy the essential items needed to care for a family of two children. Cox reported that "the Wal-Mart wage failed even at Wal-Mart prices, even with the ten percent employee discount, and even with employer-assisted health insurance."

Living wage campaigns address this issue, targeting corporations that are not adequately compensating their employees. These campaigns try to help citizens achieve a state of security by fighting against corporate exploitation.

Unions and Corporations

A labor union is defined by Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary as "an organization of workers formed for the purpose of advancing its members' interests in respect to wages and working conditions." Since the beginning of the industrialized era in the late nineteenth century, labor unions have promoted the rights of workers throughout the developed world by organizing strikes, lawsuits, and other such forms of peaceful protest in order to improve workers' benefits. The American Railway Union, led by powerful socialist Eugene V. Debs, fought for the rights of railway workers; the American Federation of Labor struggled for the rights of craftsmen and other more skilled workers.

Today unions exist for almost all industries, as well as for teachers, doctors, and writers. Unionized workers receive a number of different benefits, including higher wages (the average American union worker receives twenty-eight percent more pay than his non-union counterpart), retirement pension (seventy percent of union workers compared to sixteen percent of non-union workers), and health insurance (eighty-six percent of union workers compared to less than sixty percent of non-union workers. (AFL-CIO)

However, the benefits unionized workers receive do not come from the union itself, but from the company that employs the worker. Such benefits hugely reduce a corporation's profits, creating a clash of interest between the corporation and the unions. The strong unionization in the modern world has recently been countered by the rise of corporations, which stop at nothing to keep their profits as high as possible.

With profits in mind, many large corporations have been disregarding the efforts of labor unions, while others have actively fought against unions to prevent their success.

The most severe case of retaliation against unions has been presented by the Coca Cola Company, which has gone as far as allegedly committing violent crimes to prevent their workers from effectively unionizing. Between 1989 and 2002, the company allegedly planned and carried out the murders of eight union leaders at their Colombian bottling plants with the help of a few easily bribed paramilitary thugs. They also kidnapped and tortured countless other union organizers in Colombia, forcing the unionists' families to go into hiding to avoid being killed.

As a result, unionizing against Coca-Cola has evolved into a perilous game of Russian roulette. Many of the company's unionized employees were forced to flee after the murder of Isidro Segundo Gil in 1996, for fear of being attacked or kidnapped. Coca-Cola was then able to hire new workers and pay them only a third of the original wages because there was no union to protect them. Surprisingly, these events were scarcely publicized and Coca-Cola essentially got away with these horrific crimes. Despite a few scattered lawsuits and angry letters, the Coca-Cola Company continues to thrive without directly dealing with labor unions.

Although many oppress their workers, not all corporations retaliate violently against unions. Wal-Mart, which is now the world's largest corporation, categorically opposes unions. Any attempt by an employee to join or form any kind of organized resistance is immediately countered by "teams of union-busters." (Wal-Mart: The World's Biggest Corporation) In 2000, one employee, Sydney Smith, who cut meat at a Wal-Mart Supercenter in Jacksonville, Florida, took a stand with a few of his fellow meat-cutters. He joined the union of the United Food and Commercial Workers. Within eleven days, Wal-Mart eliminated the meat-cutting departments at every one of their locations, replacing them with pre-sliced and pre-packaged meat. In response to his actions, Sydney Smith was promptly fired. Other meat-cutters involved in the attempt to unionize were also treated aggressively by Wal-Mart officials.

Despite Wal-Mart's all-American image, the large majority of the products it sells are made in

China or other developing countries. Conditions in Wal-Mart's Chinese factories are bad and workers' wages are worse—thirteen cents an hour, instead of China's minimum wage of thirty-one cents an hour. These low wages force the Chinese workers, many of whom are women and children, to live in tiny shacks or overcrowded company dorms.

For many years, these abominable conditions went unnoticed, but in late 2004 the Chinese government put pressure on Wal-Mart to allow unionized labor. The corporation yielded. However, independent unions are illegal in post-communist China, and it is therefore now up to the All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) to improve the workers' living standards. Sadly, the ACFTU has not proven successful at improving workers' rights in the past, so in all likelihood, the workers will continue to be underpaid and overworked.

Although Coca Cola and Wal-Mart are two of the most striking examples of corporate resistance to unions, they are not the only ones. McDonald's, BP, and Nike are just a few of the countless corporations which continue to oppress the workforce by resisting labor unions. Hopefully, with the help of governments and the United Nations, unions will be catalysts for

The Outsourcing of Labor

Outsourcing, according to the American Heritage Dictionary, is "the procuring of services or products from an outside supplier or manufacturer in order to cut costs." Outsourcing is a relatively old phenomenon—the reallocation of a company's labor-load from one country to another has been happening since long before the Information Technology (IT) revolution.

From the corporate point of view, the reasons for outsourcing are quite obvious. Cheaper labor in foreign countries enables a corporation to produce products at lesser cost, which in turn allows for larger profit margins. The downside for corporations? When labor is outsourced to foreign countries the products need to be imported back into the country of origin, adding transportation costs and tariffs to the overall cost of production. From a corporate perspective, this is one of the main arguments against outsourcing of jobs.

However, as globalization increases, this argument becomes less valid. Falling transportation costs combined with ever-expanding free-trade areas (for example, the North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA]) and internationally decreasing tariffs render corporations more mobile than ever before—mobile in the sense that a corporation's labor force in one country may be easily laid off in favor of yet cheaper labor from another, and in the sense that most industries can easily produce products in country "A" while selling them in country "B."

In the IT industry, transportation costs and tariffs are non-existent. When a piece of software is created it is sent to a factory to be burned onto CDs or sold to the consumer base via the company's server. This means that there are virtually no fiscal deterrents to the outsourcing of labor in the IT industry. Indeed, "thirty percent of all new Information Technology (IT) work for U.S. companies is now done abroad." (Corpwatch)

The strong points for labor outsourcing include the introduction of technology and entrepreneurial talent to various countries. It also has the potential to stimulate country exports from country "A," since new job creation in country "B" will potentially increase that country's consumption of products from country "A." The argument most often cited against outsourcing is the loss of jobs for qualified people in richer countries.

Financially, the negative effects of controlled outsourcing for a corporation are minimal, especially

with today's vast digital network. The issue of whether outsourcing is good or bad is an ethical quandary: Is it wrong to exploit a country's lack of development when it may help that country in the long run?

Case Study: Wal-Mart Stores Incorporated

With ultra-low prices, a total of over five thousand stores and subsidiaries (including Wal-Mart Discount Stores, Wal-Mart Supercenters, Sam's Clubs, and Neighborhood Markets), in ten countries, a thriving retail website, and the title of world's largest retailer, Wal-Mart is the largest and one of the most successful corporations in the world. It employs more people than any other corporation in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. While the Wal-Mart business model may pay off in terms of profit, its employees are unlikely to reap the benefit, recent studies indicate.

Though it generated ten billion dollars in net income for fiscal year 2005, Wal-Mart's detractors point out that its 1.3 million workers are not adequately compensated. The most recent wage increase was by forty-three cents per hour for full-time "associates"—a .7% increase once inflation was taken into account, according to the activist organization Wal-Mart Watch. Full-time Wal-Mart employees work thirty-four hours a week and now earn $10.11 per hour on average or $17,874.48 a year—below the poverty level defined as $19,350, for a family of four.(Wal-Mart Facts.com)

Wal-Mart's low wages affect more than its own employees. In November 2005, the *New York Times* reported economists' findings that "the arrival of a Wal-Mart led to a reduction of 0.5 percent to 0.8 percent in average earnings per worker [and] that Wal-Mart reduced take-home pay for retail workers by $4.7 billion annually." Wal-Mart stores, almost always set up in low- to medium- income communities, are staffed by poorer individuals—those who have no choice but to work long hours for low wages—often women or minorities. Because of their low incomes, these Wal-Mart employees are almost guaranteed to shop at the store. By keeping wages low, Wal-Mart (though perhaps unintentionally) is assured of patronage and makes sure that the poor stay poor.

Wal-Mart fails its employees with regard to providing healthcare, covering only forty-eight percent of its US workforce, or 620,000 employees. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation & Health Research

and Educational Trust, sixty-eight percent of workers in large companies receive healthcare coverage. Part-time employees must work at Wal-Mart for two years before being eligible for Wal-Mart's healthcare plan and do not qualify for family healthcare. Full-time workers face about a six-month waiting time before receiving health insurance, far above the national average for the retail industry. (Wal-Mart Watch) A recently uncovered Wal-Mart memo stated that forty-six percent of its employees' children are without healthcare insurance or rely on Medicaid.

Wal-Mart employees may be dissuaded from opting for health insurance altogether. Coverage for a full-time employee would require the average payment of nine percent of earnings before any compensation. Family coverage would take an average of twenty-seven percent of an employee's earnings before reimbursement by health insurance. (Wal-Mart Watch) A 2004 analysis conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation showed that even with healthcare coverage, Wal-Mart's employees pay a higher percentage of healthcare costs on average than those employed at other large firms. In a speech in 2005, Wal-Mart President and CEO Lee Scott noted that public healthcare—Medicaid—is in some cases not only a viable option but also a "better value" for Wal-Mart employees than the corporation's healthcare program. (Wake-up Wal-Mart)

Wal-Mart is currently facing several court cases, including the largest class-action lawsuit in history, Betty Dukes v. Wal-Mart Stores, involving 1.6 million past and present female employees of the corporation who charge their employer with sex-discrimination. In March 2005, Wal-Mart settled federal charges that it had knowingly used illegal immigrants for store-cleaning, with the payment of eleven million dollars. CNN has reported cases involving locking up of overnight workers in Wal-Mart stores and the underpayment and overworking of janitors. (CNN)

Wal-Mart may also have an ill-effect overseas. In China, where many Wal-Mart products are made, workers clock up to 130 hours of labor a week for around 16.5 cents per hour. (National Labor Committee)

Wal-Mart has a strict "no unions" policy, leaving employees without voice or power. A report published in 2004 by the (US) Democratic Staff of the Committee on Education and the Workforce entitled "Everyday Low Wages: The Hidden Price We All Pay for Wal-Mart" highlights cases of illegal firing and/or the use of scare tactics to intimidate employees attempting to unionize.

Most recently, states have been trying to force Wal-Mart to assume the costs of providing healthcare for its employees: Maryland has enacted a law dictating that eight percent of any large company's payroll must be spent on healthcare coverage, and Democrats in other states are attempting to pass similar laws.

While Wal-Mart's reputation as a low-cost mega-store is appealing to consumers, the corporation's employees do not fare as well. With increasing public disapproval of Wal-Mart's practices and several campaigns lobbying against the corporation, it seems as though Wal-Mart may be forced to change tactics, moving beyond the superficial remodeling of its image to address the root of the situation: the treatment of its workforce.

SECTION 8 : FOOD

The Fast-food Effect

The responsibility for increasing sales and profit in the domain of consumption is placed in the hands of the fast-food industry and its major corporate contributors. In 2000, United States consumers alone spent $110 billion on fast-food. (Mohave County WIC) Although we are aware of the corporation's power to manipulate consumers, fast-food chains pressure their employees as well. As a result, many fast-food corporations have endured multiple boycotts, protests, and lawsuits based on the wages or treatment of its employees.

A recent example was initiated by the "Coalition of Immokalee Workers" which in 2000 protested against the fast-food giant Taco Bell for mistreating farm workers and paying meager salaries. Conversely, this caused an abrupt decrease in Taco Bell's profits.

In the case of fast-food corporations, a sudden raise in salaries or a like change may lead to ramifications in price standards. A sudden loss may result in an increase in prices and services for the consumer.

Fast-food corporations also affect consumers' health. The food produced is of small nutritional

value, due to the speed at which the food is processed. Fast-food corporations deep-fry their food products to provide an overall tastier but unhealthier selection. The oil used contains fats-levels that can be extremely detrimental to health, and the overall increase in calories and carbohydrate levels allows for weight gain and possible heart damage. Unfortunately, the poor quality of fast food is masked by the false advertising controlled by the corporation.

The widely known and distributed documentary *Super Size Me* (2004), featuring the director Morgan Spurlock, followed the effects of consuming McDonald's' fast-food. Spurlock experienced multiple harmful side-effects including chest and gastrointestinal pains, a damaged liver, as well as a great deal of weight gain. Through the bad publicity generated by the film, McDonald's stopped producing "super-sized" offerings on its menu.

Corporations control almost one-third of the fast-food market. In the twenty-first century, we are currently examining the effects of this which include health risks, exploitative advertising and marketing, environmental destruction, and the overall reduction of food and restaurant diversity in communities. The question remains as to whether fast-food restaurants can remove themselves from corporate control and seek to improve conditions for their workers and food for their consumers.

Food Preservatives

As consumers, we rarely come into contact with produce free from additives. Additives are natural or synthetic materials added to food products to serve a specific purpose, whether to heighten colors, ward off insects, increase shelf-life, or improve appearances. Preservatives such as nitrates and sulfates can be found in unusual places, from dried fruits and juices to beers and wines. In corporations' attempts to create long-lasting, fresh looking food, natural products are passed over in favor of cheaper alternatives containing preservatives. Demand for foreign products causes companies to resort to additives such as synthetic antioxidant and antimicrobacterials to inhibit mold and bacteria growth during lengthy transportation periods.

But should all preservatives be viewed negatively? In the United States, only foods containing substances approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) may be sold to the public for consumption, and rules are in place to prevent corporations from deceiving unsuspecting customers. No preservative may be used to alter the appearance of food; sulfide-based preservatives are therefore banned from meat as sulfides give it a false red color, making it appear fresher. All packaging must legally state all preservatives contained within the food.

Omitting food preservatives could cause safety issues. Bread would develop mold too quickly (often before the consumer could purchase it) and items such as salad oil would rapidly turn rancid, even if kept in ideal storage conditions. antioxidant, found in most preservatives, can actually be beneficial to the consumer, protecting amino acids from damage and preventing foods from turning brown or going rancid. Nitrate preservatives are used in flavorings and color fixation, supplying the consumer with appealing-looking foods.

However, preservatives often have negative side-effects. Sodium nitrate has been found to react with amines in certain foods creating carcinogenic compounds. Sulfur-based preservatives often destroy nutrients within foods. Many people have allergies to additives commonly used by corporations, and asthma, migraines, stomachache, and hyperactivity are common side effects. A study carried out in 1976 showed that by eliminating foods with synthetic colorings and flavorings and chemical antioxidant, children's mental capacities may be significantly increased.

Between 1976 and 1983 a variety of preservatives were removed from school lunches in New York City. As a result, scores on the standardized California Achievement Tests increased by sixteen percent. It seems that children are greatly affected by food preservatives, which are considered a contributing factor to Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). Preservatives, widely used by food corporations, are in most of the foods we consume. Though they serve to increase the hardiness of all kinds of foods, thus increasing profits, additives pose certain health risks.

Case Study: The Coca-Cola Company

When Coca-Cola was introduced to the market, one bottle of Coke was sold for five cents. Now it is sold for more than two dollars. (The Chronicle of Coca Cola) Initially, small pharmacies sold about nine glasses of Coca-Cola a day. Since its creation in 1886 by Dr. John Stith Pemberton in Atlanta, Georgia, Coca-Cola has become a household name and is one of the leading corporations in the fast- food industry.

Coca-Cola announced its stance as a corporation in 1892. The company spread throughout the United States, and by 1920, bottling companies were established in Cuba, Panama, Canada, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Guam, and France. During World War II, Coca-Cola sustained its prices by shipping three million bottles of the soda per month to American troops, and the company strengthened its image as a symbol of integrity.

However, this global corporation has been frequently criticized. In the Kerala State of India, Coca-Cola has been recently accused of destroying paddy fields, handing out fake fertilizers at bottling plants and causing drought in the rural region of Plachimada. According to G. Rajmohan, Chairman of the Kerala State Pollution Control Board, the bottling plant did not maintain a proper waste system and "toxic products from the plant were affecting drinking water in nearby villages." (Asia Times Online) Coca-Cola is said to have distributed toxic cadmium sludge to villagers who believed the product was proper fertilizer.

A similar episode occurred in 2001 in the Palakkad district. A few months after a twenty-five million dollar bottling plant was established in the region, locals noticed that their wells were quickly drying up. In 2003, the water in the wells was deemed unsuitable for consumption. This declaration was followed by subsequent tests conducted at the University of Exeter in England. Reports confirmed that the water contained cadmium, a substance that can cause kidney damage, sever anemia in children, and lead to mental derangement.

Similar water shortages have occurred in other areas of India. Over fifty villages in Rajasthan and Maharashtra have struggled to survive with a lack of water resources. These incidents are particularly detrimental to India, where labor revolves around agriculture. In addition, an investigation carried out by the Indian parliament found that Coca-Cola and Pepsi contain pesticide residues. The drinks were found to contain a high level of DDT that sometimes exceeded the EU standards by thirty times. (India Resource)

In Colombia, the company has been accused of sustaining current labor practices by using violence, torture, and even murder to silence union leaders. In 1996, a Coca-Cola employee and union leader, Isidro Gil, was shot at the age of twenty-eight. This was followed by the kidnapping of another union member and the burning of a building housing the union's offices. Workers in this union were forced to quit the organization and eventually flee the county. Many were handed forms issued by the plant, delivering orders to destroy the union.Workers were to be replaced by new employees, paid only $130 per month, while the previous workers were paid $380 per month. Panamco, Coca-Cola's main bottling company in Latin America, is also being sued by the United States for torturing and killing union leaders in Colombia and hiring right-wing paramilitaries to carry out these actions. (India Resource)

In developing nations, Coca-Cola has even used methods that convince mothers that beverages such as Coca-Cola are a better source of nutrition as opposed to milk. As a result, more newborns suffer from malnutrition. Based on these case studies, Coca-Cola has clearly grown into a stereotypical corporation in which monetary and financial concerns take precedence over human interests.

SECTION 9 : GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was established in 1994 as a means of regulating trade and investment among the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

NAFTA has sparked intense controversy over the past ten years. Among other things, the trade agreement limits the inspection of meat, reducing government control over the industry. The goal of free trade agreements is, not surprisingly, to lessen trade restrictions. NAFTA accomplished this with the removal of all non-tariff barriers on agricultural trade between Mexico and the United States and the elimination of many tariffs.

Corporations in the Americas support NAFTA, recognizing that lower tariffs will decrease the cost of transporting products across borders and allow them to take advantage of cheaper labor available in countries outside their own. As a result, labor unions in both Canada and the United States oppose NAFTA, fearing that lower labor costs in Mexico will shift jobs out of North America. Economists predict that NAFTA will encourage United States-based companies to build factories in Canada and produce goods destined primarily for the Canadian market.

One of the most controversial aspects of NAFTA is the fact that it includes many new corporate investment rights and corporate protections that grant corporations an unprecedented amount of power. Under the agreement, corporations have the right to sue the national government of a NAFTA country in secret arbitration tribunals if a government decision negatively affects them. If the corporation wins this trial, the taxpayers of this NAFTA nation must compensate the corporation. This tribunal does not follow due process, as is guaranteed in national courts. With trials carried out by international arbitration bodies, the public is not allowed to participate.

NAFTA has been strongly opposed in Mexico because heavy agricultural subsidies for United States farmers have forced many Mexican farmers out of business. As a result, poverty has dramatically increased in Mexico, wages have decreased by nearly twenty percent, and illegal immigration into the United States has increased. NAFTA's unpopularity in Mexico was demonstrated by a protest-uprising among Zapatista revolutionaries.

Economically, NAFTA has been successful. Canadian manufacturers export more than half of their total production to the United States, while Mexico exports approximately eleven percent, double what it did pre-NAFTA. Since 1994, 2.3 million jobs have been created in Canada, representing a 7.5% increase.

It must be noted that NAFTA has had significant successes since its implementation. All three nations' economies have experienced growth and are more closely linked than ever before. Canada and Mexico have benefitted from liberalized trade with the largest economy in the world, while the United States has benefited from unhindered access to the two countries' markets and products.

Oil Corporations and Developing Economies

Many oil corporations enter developing countries in pursuit of profit, privatizing the nation's oil resources and thereby controlling the wealth that exploitation of the resource generates.

The privatization of oil resources by foreign corporations (often from the United States) in a developing country creates jobs for the people who live there and boosts the country' economy by attracting investors. Corporations are able to invest heavily, importing machinery and supplies for the drilling and refining processes that would be financially out of a developing nation's reach.

On the other hand, the privatization of a developing nation's oil resources takes control away from the host government and channels profits into the corporate world instead of back into the country to fund further development. In addition, the presence of such corporations may disturb the way of life of the countries' citizens, sometimes forcing them to move. One such incident occurred with the indigenous Aborigines of Australia.

The discovery of oil is often leads to increased turmoil in the region. In disputed territories such as the Western Sahara and Kashmir, the control of oil resources is partially responsible for instability in the region.

Some claim that the United States' war on Iraq was begun out of American interest in Iraqi oil. According to BBC and Newsnight, plans for a war on Iraq were begun with the help of American Oil consultants well before the September 11th terrorist attacks on the United States of America. A final plan, finalized shortly after the invasion of Baghdad, was to privatize Iraqi oil fields in an attempt to increase production and generate revenue. Within weeks of the invasion, British Petroleum (BP) had fully-fledged teams of engineers on how to run Iraqi oil fields. Today, at least ten major oil companies, including Chevron, BP, ConocoPhillips, Valero Energy, Marathon Oil, Total of France, Sinochem of China, a Japanese company from the Mitsubishi group, and Shell have won contracts to privatize Iraqi Basra Light Crude Oil production. The corporation that will oversee the reconstruction of Iraq's oil industry will be one closely associated with U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney: Halliburton.

The money made by oil corporations through the privatization of oil resources in a developing nation only slightly benefits that country's government, making it harder for them to provide for their people or fund development initiatives. Instead, profits stream into the corporations, benefitting executives . Currently, oil is the basis upon which the global economy stands. The few locals in the countries who do benefit are the wealthiest few percent. In general, citizens of a developing nation have no say in whether corporations can or cannot exploit oil in their country.

Corporations and the Iraq War

In the months following September 11th, 2001, United States President George W. Bush made the decision to wage a "war on terror," beginning in Iraq. It has become increasingly clear that what was started under the guise of a war for freedom was in reality a campaign benefitting large numbers of multi-million dollar corporations.

As of May 2003, it was made clear that the liberation and reconstruction of Iraq would be accomplished through the establishment of a "free-trade area," (FTAA) encompassing the United States and twenty-two Middle Eastern nations. Among the corporations involved in this scheme were DynCorp and the Research Triangle Institute.

According to DynCorp's mission statement, the company actively participated in the Iraq war by helping to "keep military personnel safe and ready, help protect American diplomats and key foreign leaders, and train police and military in countries that are critical to U.S. interests." (DYN Corp) The Research Triangle Institute, by contrast, was intended to "foster social and political stability by helping to meet the basic needs of Iraqi citizens and by developing and implementing mechanisms and institutions for citizens to participate in local government."(RTI International) At this time, it is unclear what the accomplishments of these two influential corporations really were.

The United States has awarded billions of dollars in contracts for the political and economic reconstruction of Iraq. Many financial analysts calculate that more than two hundred billion dollars will be contributed toward this cause over the next few years. (RTI) Whether or not these corporations have succeeded in fulfilling their prescribed duties in Iraq can be determined: the increasing death toll, civil unrest, and ongoing and even heightening conflict in the nation all indicate that the system is not working and may in fact be harming Iraq's people. The poultry company Tyson, for example, is putting many local companies and small farms out of business, leaving many jobless.

Perhaps the most exploitative corporation employed by the United States to assist in Iraq is Halliburton. In April of 2003, the company was given a seven billion dollar two-year contract to extinguish oil fires and analyze the oil industry in Iraq (EIA) Formerly headed by Vice President Dick Cheney, Halliburton's primary responsibility is to supply fuel to various regions in Iraq: every morning, trucks meet at the Kuwait-Iraq border to transport gasoline from refineries located in Kuwait into Iraq. Halliburton representatives note that employees in Iraq "have responded to civil uprisings within twenty-four hours to provide fuel to the public. [The corporation's] role has become instrumental in normalizing relationships between Iraqi authorities, the population and coalition forces."(Corpwatch)

There is an uncanny correlation between Halliburton's stock prices, its revenues from Iraq, and the number of casualties in Iraq. Halliburton's revenues have increased by approximately 11.25 billion dollars, yielding a twenty-one point increase in its stock market price from 2002 to 2005.(Halliburton)

Suspicions arising from this trend were reinforced by investigations conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigations and the United States Department of Justice.

Given all the charges pressed against corporations such as Halliburton, it is a wonder that corporate activity is still embraced within the nation as "part of the war effort." (Corpwatch) It is evident that corporations are both serving in and profiting from the war on Iraq.

Case Study: Halliburton Company

Halliburton is a multinational corporation that provides goods and services to the oil and gas industries and employs over 100,000 workers in more than 120 nations. Its success is largely due to its integration of several oil and gas-related industries, including research and development, the provision of energy services and equipment, engineering firms, and construction and maintenance divisions. The company became a household name in the United States during the presidential elections of 2000 when the former CEO of Halliburton, Dick Cheney, appeared alongside George W. Bush as the Republican Party's vice presidential candidate.

Since its inception in 1919, Halliburton has greatly expanded. The corporation's acquisition of the company Brown and Root in the 1960s caused its engineering and construction divisions to flourish. In 1998, Halliburton acquired Dresser Industries and its subsidiary M.W. Kellogg which allowed it to associate itself with the oil industry, providing project management, petroleum refining, and petrochemical processing services. Among other things, Halliburton currently operates under US government service contracts, providing logistics management for various military operations.

Halliburton states that its vision is an environment where business is conducted safely, and environmental damages are minimal. It supports this vision by advertising that health, safety and the environment are crucial factors in its operating procedures, and that the maintenance of high standards results in overall higher quality products for its customers.

Critics of the corporation have accused Halliburton of involvement in several questionable business schemes. September 2000 brought the actions of Halliburton's engineering branch, Kellogg Brown and Root, operating in the Balkans, into question. The General Accounting Office discovered that Army officials continued to pay billions of dollars for logistical and engineering aid provided by Kellogg Brown and Root without attempting to lower costs or search for more efficient support providers. On a separate occasion, the United States Securities and Exchange Commission launched a formal investigation to determine whether Halliburton had artificially inflated revenue by over $230 million over a four-year period. (Washington Post) In 1999, Halliburton's allocation of funds to offshore tax havens allowed it to receive a suspicious $85 million tax refund. (Common Dreams)

Halliburton has also been involved with nations such as Iran and Libya. Under the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act of 1996, corporations were prevented from dealing with these nations. Halliburton, however, continued to do business, supplying machinery that could be used to detonate nuclear weapons; Halliburton was fined millions of dollars for shipping six pulse neutron generators to Libya. In 1997, the Department of Commerce made allegations that Halliburton Energy Services had violated the US Export Administration Act, but the charges were lifted after the arrangement of a substantial settlement.

The powerful bond Halliburton maintains with the Bush administration is considered corrupt by many critics. Since September 11, 2001, the US government has contracted over $2.2 billion to Halliburton and its subsidiaries. (Common Dreams) Generous subsidies have also been granted to Halliburton for its pipeline constructions outside of the US.

Its critics claim that Halliburton's already substantial political influence increased when Cheney was elected Vice President of the US. Cheney became chairman and chief executive officer of Halliburton in 1995. The advent of the Persian Gulf War allowed him to expand Halliburton's global and domestic contracts. His work at Halliburton was well-rewarded: after retiring from his position, Cheney received massive payments. Critics were appalled and considered it to be an obvious attempt by Halliburton to gain the support of the new presidential administration.

Halliburton epitomizes the power of corporations in the modern, capitalist world. It employs a huge workforce and conducts business in more than fifty percent of all nations world-wide. (Halliburton) Its economic capabilities and resources are substantially greater than the individual capacities of many developing nations.

Halliburton's large size allows it to reduce production costs. It can develop and provide products that would otherwise be unavailable to the growing oil-related machinery and services industry. Yet there are negative aspects to Halliburton's large size. Internal corruption can go unnoticed for a long period of time, and profit-maximizing goals can overshadow concerns for safety, legality, and most importantly, morality.

CONCLUSION

In tackling “The Role of the Corporation” UNIS-UN has on numerous occasions been accused of being “against” corporations. We, however, prefer to think of our stance not as anti-corporation but rather pro-people: where corporations help people, we support them; where they harm people, we condemn them. We feel strongly that corporations should serve their communities, whether on a local or global scale: working toward environmental sustainability; championing human rights; respecting the law; remaining accountable to consumers, investors, and workers; and never allowing the pursuit of profit to overshadow ethical obligations. UNIS-UNers are, however, realists, and we understand that very few corporations meet our high standards. However, just because things are the way they are does not mean we must accept them: we believe that with increased awareness, the exchange of ideas, creativity, and hard work, change is not only possible but inevitable.

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