Chapter 9

Discussion Questions.

1. Proponents of increasing the minimum wage, such as the late Senator Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts, feel such a measure would help the nation’s working poor and low-income families get out of poverty. Opponents, who include members of the business community and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, argue that increasing the minimum wage would put an unnecessary stress on medium-size and small businesses and would not decrease poverty. Should helping those living in poverty and unable to make a liveable wage be defined as, “an unnecessary stress on business?”
2. The global recession that began in December 2007 has been described as, “one of the most difficult financial and economic episodes in modern history” by U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernake. Millions of people around the globe have either lost their jobs and/or have had hours and benefits cut. Millions globally have also lost a large portion of their retirement funds and in most cases have also lost significant equity in their homes. Meanwhile as been reported in the media, Chief Executor Officers (CEOs) of the world’s largest companies continue to receive extravagant bonuses even though their company profits have plummeted and many of their employees have been laid off or fired due to the “bottom line.” Is this ethical? Why or why not? Should anything be done about this (e.g., should the federal government step in and regulate pay)?
3. Globalization is a process whereby goods, information, people, communication, and forms of culture move across national boundaries. Should globalization of the workplace be of concern to American workers? Why?
4. Employment discrimination based on race, religion, sex, national origin, age and disability is prohibited. Under current federal law, discrimination based on sexual orientation is not. Should sexual orientation be added to the list? Why or why not?
5. Some researchers believe that people in other countries will work for lower wages and therefore they do the jobs American workers wouldn’t want since the wages are so low. Have a discussion with the class regarding this issue.
6. Have a discussion with the class regarding unemployment. Should benefits be extended for those that are unemployed to help them financially? What would be a good “cutoff” time?