

## Challenges to Cadbury Company Business Ethics in Britain vs. in São Tomé

Some might say alcoholism is one of the reasons we eat chocolate today. Kind of a bold statement, but one man's perspective of alcoholism DID happen to spur a few well-timed business decisions that led to two hundred and fifty MILLION bars of milk chocolate being made and sold every year by a British company named Cadbury. We may be more familiar with a brand named Hershey in the United States, but Hershey may never have happened without the impetus of the British imperialist chocolate movement led by a man named George Cadbury.

Cadbury believed that drinking chocolate, an ancient practice that originated in the Mayan and Aztec communities of Central America, was likely a better beverage than alcohol. Drinking chocolate was perhaps healthier, and people enjoyed it after he introduced the drink at his coffee and tea house in Birmingham, England. Twenty-five years later, Cadbury started selling chocolate that could be eaten, and more people began consuming his tasty treat derived from cacao beans. Eventually, George's sons took over the family business, and the demand for chocolate grew greater and greater.

Interestingly, George Cadbury had the opportunity to create a lifestyle that reflected a dramatic departure from the the cramped, soot-filled streets of nineteenth-century industrialized London. Yay! Employees enjoyed green grass, sports fields, and even a swimming pool! People who worked at Cadbury's revolutionary new factory benefitted from time off on Saturdays and a dearth of bars around the neighborhood. In the words of Cadbury himself, "Why should industrial areas be dirty and depressing? Why shouldn't the worker enjoy country air and occupations without being separated from his work? And if the country is a good place to live in,

why not work in?” (<http://robbospgehistory.blogspot.com/2011/02/industrial-revolution-history-of.html>)

While these improvements in the quality of life were unheard of in the manufacturing industry, there were some inconsistencies highlighted the media in later years. It was revealed to the public that even though Cadbury was a leader in the global Progressive labor movement, the cacao beans that were used to make their chocolate came from farms operated by slaves on an island off the west coast of Africa. This colonial enclave was a Portuguese-run plantation economy long involved in the propagation of the Atlantic slave trade. No, Cadbury did not directly enslave these people himself. No, Cadbury did not invent the slave trade in San Tomé and Príncipe. Even if his involvement did not create the system of oppression that farmed his cacao beans, he was propagating the system nonetheless. How could Cadbury be considered a proponent of quality living and community awareness when the company was oppressing and exploiting innocent laborers on another continent for the benefit of chocolate-eaters in Europe? Economically speaking, it may be difficult to change a centuries-old economic system overnight, and therein lies the ethical challenges that the Cadbury company faced. Agriculturally speaking, cacao beans grow in certain climates— climates that were dominated by the powerful imperialist forces enforcing slavery and exploitation of native and indigenous peoples.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the magazine Vanity Fair published an article discussing the inequities of Cadbury’s laborers and the laborers in San Tomé and Príncipe. Overseas, Cadbury’s remote laborers did not enjoy swimming pools, community meetings about health benefits, or sports fields. Instead, their greatest benefit was likely a railway system instituted for the sake of cost-effective transport of cacao beans. A transport system may have

eventually helped to transform the economic systems on the island years later, but little was done to improve the quality of life for Cadbury's laborers outside England or Europe. The differences between the economy of England and the economy of a former Portuguese slave colony were the root of Cadbury's unfair production practices, and the public outrage that followed the article in Vanity Fair ignited controversy. Activists and citizens of England, people who may have been consumers of chocolate, were not willing to endorse a company that engaged in hidden unfair labor practices. What happened after the fallout has perhaps become a model for the rest of the world. Exposing the questionable overseas production of a company allows consumers to make a choice, or to vote with their dollars. The expectation that everyone deserves a healthy, safe, and freedom-driven lifestyle is a concept that is still in question in other places in the world, both then and today. For example, this controversy was happening in England long before the United States finally abolished slavery with the Thirteenth Amendment to the country's constitution in 1865.

3 media sources

1. <http://robbospgehistory.blogspot.com/2011/02/industrial-revolution-history-of.html>
2. photo from above listed blog



3. Photo from above listed blog



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