Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Economic Issues

by Thomas R. Swartz and Frank Bonello
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It was a pleasure to review Professors Swartz and Bonello’s eighth edition of Taking Sides - Clashing Views on Controversial Economic Issues. This is an excellent readings book. The material is very well organized and presented in a clear and concise manner. The book centers around nineteen issues divided into three parts; Part 1 - Microeconomic Issues, Part 2 - Macroeconomic Issues, and Part 3 - The World Around Us, which deals with issues like global warming, pollution as well as various international issues. The issues are all current and topical issues that the average citizen sees in the papers and on the news everyday. This makes the book a more valuable resource for more than just students, especially since the book begins with a brief section by the authors which explains the different philosophical views of the various schools of thought in economics. Covered are the positions of the free market economists, the liberal economists, the mainstream critics, and the radical reform economists. This provides the necessary background for the readings selections.

Each of the issues is presented with "Yes" and "No" positions. The discussion of each issue is preceded by a one or two page contents section in which Swartz and Bonello explain the issue, its relevance and a brief history on the issue. The position of each author is very clearly stated in one sentence at the beginning of the section. A "Postscript" section follows the "Yes" - "No" readings selections which summarize the positions of each author and cites other articles concerning the issue which makes the book valuable to students doing research papers or to anyone who wants to further examine an issue.

The authors of these readings selections are from all walks of life - business leaders, medical professionals, journalists, people from various areas of government and academia, as well as economists. This exposes the reader to viewpoints of professionals other than economists. It also results in a book consisting of readings selections that are written in everyday English, making the selections very readable and understandable to anyone. An additional plus is that each of the three parts is preceded by a "contents" section, showing the reader where to find various economic publications, statistics, organizations, and other resources on the Internet. This is good for the beginning economics student as well as for more advanced students since it is a good starting point for students doing research papers. I would also recommend the book to be used in the economics telecourses in conjunction with the texts. Since the positions on economic issues are presented so clearly by Swartz and Bonello, a layman would also find this an interesting book.