

***Dan – grade 12
Corporate Employment Practices
Hoosick Falls Central HS
Hoosick Falls, New York
December 12, 2005***

In the modern age of powerful corporations, one rises above all. The very epitome, the pinnacle of new American business stratagem. That company is Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart utilizes ruthless and immoral employment tactics and violates workers rights at every opportunity. All in order to reap immense benefit that causes the already gargantuan Wal-Mart to grow even bigger. Wal-Mart provides a new model of doing business and because of the profit generated by these practices other American industry will be forced to adopt them in order to compete. The end result will cause the rich to become richer, the poor to become poorer, and we step backward through time as lower class America is forced into a new low of modern day peonage.

Wal-Mart claims to be “pro-associate,” but actions speak louder than words and their actions create startling adversity for their employees. One such common practice is neglecting to pay workers for over-time. Stores are purposely understaffed, then employees are forced to pick up the workload and do far beyond what one shift can encompass. Then they aren’t paid for any extra time spent. There are lawsuits taking place in 27 states for these types of violations. The first of these lawsuits began in Oregon; the charge being systematic coercion of employees to work unpaid over-time hours. The biggest ‘pro-associate’ company in the world must love their employees so much they never want them to leave!

Another of Wal-Mart’s practices is paying bare minimum wage. Many single parents work at Wal-Mart, not earning enough to support their families. What’s more is that these same families seek out government aid for healthcare because what the company provides, is an exorbitant cost to employees meager paychecks. Take Jennifer McLaughlin of Paris, Texas, for example. She earns only \$16,800 a year with a healthcare plan that would cost up to \$2,844 a year. Workers at Wal-Mart would fight for better wages but since the company *cares* so much,

they take every necessary precaution (and some unnecessary ones too) to terminate any and all unionization efforts before they really begin. They send ambassadors from the corporation to speak about the “dangers” of unions. Also they begin to pay extra special attention to any employee exhibiting union sympathy or interest. Truthfully, Wal-Mart is overwhelmingly anti-union. The corporation has set up a well-timed immune response to dissident cells, thereby quelling any potential union growth. Were Wal-Mart workers allowed to organize, they could fight for better wages and more fair working conditions, at the very least getting paid for the hours worked.

It is impossible to deny the effectiveness of Wal-Mart as a business competitor. It is these tactics that have carried the company to the top of the retail world. The money Wal-Mart generates should go back to the employees. Stores remain understaffed and ‘associates’ remain underpaid. Taking steps to rectify these misgivings will satiate workers, preventing numerous lawsuits that settle for millions of dollars. For instance, \$11 million to resolve charges concerning immigrant labor, and cases in New Mexico and Colorado for \$50 million over business practices including unpaid overtime and deleting hours from records. This is money that would benefit everyone by going directly toward employees, rather than toward lawsuits. The least Wal-Mart owes to its ‘associates’ is a standard living wage, affordable healthcare, and pay for hours worked. We must not embrace these moral injustices thrust upon the hapless workers by power-mongering juggernauts like Wal-Mart.