

# ISSUES AND ACTIONS

*November 2004*



## **WAL-MART: WHAT'S WRONG WITH IT?**



The short answer to that question is “a lot is wrong with Wal-Mart!” The complete answer would take volumes to explain, but here are a few hints at the major issues emanating from this popular bargain store.

1. Because of its status as the world’s largest retailer and also the world’s largest company-bigger than Exxon, Mobil, General Motors, and General Electric - and its ability to sell in three months what number two retailer, Home Depot, sells in a year, Wal-Mart is able to continually force its suppliers to lower prices. There is a clear policy for its suppliers: on basic products that do not change, the price Wal-Mart will pay must drop each year – or they can no longer be marketed through Wal-Mart.
2. In order to lower their prices, Wal-Mart suppliers are forced to seek cheaper and cheaper labor and material sources, thus forcing layoffs of American workers and outsourcing products from overseas...thus rapidly accelerating the loss of jobs and further tipping the balance of trade in America.
3. Another huge issue is Wal-Mart’s treatment of its employees. There are legions of stories documenting Wal-Mart’s shoddy history of keeping their employees at low wages, denying benefits and promotions. Their guilt in all this is highlighted by their extensive promotions shown through TV ads lauding their wonderful treatment of employees and their families.

It is hard to resist the temptation of Wal-Mart’s low prices. For further motivation, you may find it helpful to go to [www.fastcompany.com/magazine/77walmart.html](http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/77walmart.html) or just do a Wal-Mart search on the internet. A wealth of information is out there for the taking!

*Please send questions to Sister Carolyn Whited*

**FAIR TRADE PRODUCTS:** “Where to purchase Fair Trade products” was a question we received from last month’s “Issues and Actions.” The following are places that have been confirmed by some of our members: Trader Joes, Peets Coffee, Starbucks, and Borders Bookstore Cafes. Fair Trade products are carried in some Albertsons and Safeway stores. Supermarkets vary in each geographical location. Enclosed is a Supermarket Report Card that might be helpful to you. In many cases it means we will need to take an advocate role by asking store managers to provide fair trade products as another option. You can also locate distributors by going to:

**Catholic Relief Service at [www.catholicrelief.org/fairtrade/coffee/order.cfm](http://www.catholicrelief.org/fairtrade/coffee/order.cfm)**

**Global Exchange at [www.globalexchange.org](http://www.globalexchange.org)**

**Equal Exchange at [www.equalexchange.com](http://www.equalexchange.com)**

**Fair Trade Certified means:**

Forced and exploitative child labor is prohibited

Guaranteed set prices that provide a living wage

Sustainable farming is promoted

**The choices we make can help change the lives of the world’s poorest people – not with a handout, but with what they justly have earned.**



**PREPARING FOR THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS**



**GIVE FAIR TRADE COFFEE AND CHOCOLATES FOR CHRISTMAS GIFTS WITH AN EXPLANATION OF “WHY FAIR TRADE?”**



**ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS GIFTS WEBSITES: [www.altgifta.org](http://www.altgifta.org), [www.heifer.org](http://www.heifer.org), [www.simpleliving.org](http://www.simpleliving.org), [www.buynothingchristmas.org](http://www.buynothingchristmas.org), [www.catholicrelief.org/work](http://www.catholicrelief.org/work)**

