

## 2 WAL-MART PROBLEM CONTINUED

This perceived necessity to revitalize a floundering, already high-rent mall with a shoddy workers' rights record is flawed. In reality, this Wal-Mart-sponsored consumer "revival" will hurt workers and local business.

The harm that Wal-Mart causes has been well documented. Eureka was cited for our struggle against Wal-Mart in 1999, as one example of successful resistance in the film, *The High Cost of Low Prices*. *The High Cost of Low Prices*, a Wal-Mart documentary, ties together the facts, published studies, and personal experiences from affected communities. A published study on the movie's website shows that Wal-Mart actually reduced the take-home pay of retail workers by \$4.7 BILLION dollars annually. For those hoping that Wal-Mart will bring diversity and good jobs this should be a wake-up call. Wal-Mart has a strategy for increasing its consumer base by destroying local businesses and taking away money and jobs, by temporarily selling items below cost till the competition goes out of business. Humboldt doesn't need Wal-Mart to take jobs away and take our money from our community.

In 2012 Humboldt County is experiencing mass unemployment (almost 11% unemployment rate as of August), 16 years of NAFTA, exportation of once-local jobs, and a loss of lumber jobs. The boarded up shops and homes of Scotia and Rio Dell illustrate the devastation caused by Pacific Lumber Corporation's false promises of jobs and economic opportunity in exchange for letting them continue unsustainable resource extraction that would inevitably leave our communities destitute. This is the same process that Wal-Mart and other mega corporations are trying to replicate: to extract profit from a community. We must look back at previous experiences with Wal-Mart and

the weakening economic power of working people to understand what the most appropriate course of action is today. Workers have been suffering a coordinated and successful attack by the upper class. The attack has been cultural, ideological, and political. Now the richest individuals and corporations in the country do not pay taxes, and some are even subsidized by tax payers. Meanwhile, unions in the USA have been running like businesses discouraging independent workers action.

Workers' power in Humboldt County has been losing ground for generations. Just two generations ago, most working class jobs were union and many workers owned their homes. Now low wage jobs are standard. If someone has a job where the boss doesn't actively demean and disrespect them, that is considered an okay job; rather than requiring decent pay, benefits and respect for a job to be considered okay.

The last time that Wal-Mart tried to get into Eureka, they poured in money to manipulate local politics, filed law suits, and used PR strategies. In 1999, Wal-Mart was stopped by Eureka voters. Wal-Mart Corp. created a "Citizen Initiative" known as Measure "J" which called for rezoning of to the balloon track for commercial purposes, instead of going through the zoning commission - 60% of the voters said No. The telemarketing frenzy by Wal-Mart urging people to vote for the measure was more than unwellcome. It had inspired disgust and a call for action.

Measure "T" was put forth in the community in 2006. This initiative sought to ban non-Humboldt County corporations from contributing to Humboldt County political campaigns. When put to vote, it passed with flying colors (55% of the vote).ii Measure "T" was later put down by the court—by an injunction issued by federal "high court" in September 2008. That same year of economic collapse and bank bailouts was a year of blaming working people for an economic crisis that the super wealthy had caused. United Auto workers were blamed for having pensions and benefits by the politicians and the media, rather than the banks whose fraudulent lending practices and speculative profiteering had caused a melt-down, for which they demanded trillions in bail out. Just as recently as 2010 Wisconsin, public workers were blamed for a budget short

fall created by tax cuts to the rich. This is a systematic attack on working people, further concentrating wealth in the hands of the few. It is no exaggeration to say we the people are being robbed by the rich and the government they control. No working person is unaffected by this attack by the rich.

Wal-Mart has a well-documented disdain and disregard for workers' rights. A glaring example is what happened to the first union formed at a Wal-Mart in North America, in Jonquiere, a little Canadian town in northern Quebec. In May, 2005. 190 employees needed a voice because "there was injustice at the company and it did not respect its workforce". After a battle which inspired and appalled the rest of Canada, workers both pro-union and not, lost their jobs, the store closed, union organizers said they were threatened with violence, and Wal-Mart has moved out of their town for good. Organizing with your friends at work and in the community is the only way to reverse the process of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. We as workers, students, unemployed and allies, need to get organized in the community to defend against these attacks on workers. Getting Wal-Mart out of Eureka is part of defending ourselves and fighting for a better situation.

We started a campaign against Wal-Mart in August of 2011. We had a flash mob to kick off the campaign in September. Afterwards, the police surrounded an organizers house and intimidated people who had been involved. This is a big bad corporation and it doesn't mess around. They will try to get what they want by any means necessary. They have a history of threatening labor organizers with violence. iiiThe recent story of Wal-Mart's Mexican bribery scandal should come as no surprise. Many long time locals remember Wal-Mart's local electoral efforts—we know less about their national lobbying. The Reason New York City doesn't have a Wal-Mart is that there is a strong union movement there. Workers will not tolerate Wal-Mart treating workers badly and causing the living conditions and job prospects to deteriorate for all workers in their community. We know an injury to one is an injury to all. You, the reader, can be a part of this change. Talk with co-workers outside of the workplace about how Wal-Mart is going to hurt workers. Such as the fact that for every two poverty wage jobs that are created another three are destroyed. Talk about how organizing on the job and in the community can stop Wal-Mart and improve all workers lives. Picket with friends, have a flash mob at the mall, call a meeting to talk about ways of fighting Wal-Mart and also strengthening

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