

COLUMN LEFT

The Leeches on Public Assistance

BY ALON BARLEVY, PH.D., PRESIDENT,
HUBERT HUMPHREY DEMOCRATIC CLUB

In spite of their new “compassionate conservatism” moniker, Republicans are ubiquitous for their desire to slash social programs that help the poor and needy. Republicans do not see help for the less fortunate as an investment, but rather a waste of money. Republicans think that people living on public assistance are doing it by choice, with no desire to get off public assistance. Republicans consider such people leeches who are living off of society. Democrats, on the other hand, see such help as an investment in the future of people who have found themselves in serious trouble and are trying to better their lives.

On what at first seems to be an unrelated topic, Republicans are against government regulation of businesses. The Republican Party would like to return to the days of *laisse faire*, in which the government allows businesses to do anything they wish in a “free market.” Democrats see things differently. Democrats understand that individual consumers and individual employees are effectively powerless against large powerful conglomerates.

The two issues come together with Wal Mart. In a new documentary by Robert Greenwald, *Wal-Mart, the High Cost of Low Prices*, the company’s business practices are exposed. The documentary shows how Wal-Mart underpays its employees (who, oddly, Wal-Mart refers

to as “associates”) and overcharges them for the cost of their health insurance. Wal-Mart actually encourages their employees to seek public assistance for their health-care needs.

The implications are great!! This means that Wal-Mart is the true leech that finances the growth and operations of its business off of public assistance. The taxpayers are effectively subsidizing Wal-Mart’s low prices. Whereas other stores have to factor the cost of employee health insurance into their merchandise, Wal-Mart does not. Wal-Mart shifts the burden to the taxpayers.

More recently, Wal-Mart announced that it will only hire healthy people! After a few years working for Wal-Mart, those employees will no longer be as healthy, as they will not be able to afford to take good care of themselves. No problem, just hire more healthy people!

Wal-Mart aggressively uses union-busting tactics to prevent its employees from fighting for their rights. Last spring, when it could not prevent a store in Canada from being unionized, Wal-Mart opted to shut down the store rather than set a precedent.

The Hubert Humphrey Democratic Club (HHDC) will be showing a free screening of the movie on Monday, November 21, at 7:00 p.m. in Cerritos Park East. Unlike Fox News, the HHDC

is truly fair and balanced. The HHDC invited Wal-Mart officials to speak after the movie, so they could give their side. After two weeks of indecision, Wal-Mart eventually declined the offer.

Come see what Wal-Mart does not want you to see.

Text of Article

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Alon Barlevy, PhD.
President, Hubert Humphrey Democratic Club

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