POINTS OF VIEW

“Some well-meaning critics believe that Wal-Mart Stores today, because of our size, should, in fact, play the role that is believed that General Motors played after World War II. And that is to establish this post-World War middle class that the country is so proud of....The facts are that retail does not perform that role in this economy.”
—Wal-Mart CEO H. Lee Scott

“This is one of our nation’s great companies....The story of Wal-Mart exemplifies some of the very best qualities in our country—hard work, the spirit of enterprise, fair dealing and integrity.”
—Vice President Dick Cheney

“It is extremely troubling when the vice president...praises a company that pays low wages and benefits, discriminates on the basis of gender, locks its own workers into stores at night, busts unions and violates child-labor laws.”
—Rep. George Miller (D., Calif.)

“It’s time for Wal-Mart to understand that their company practices run counter to the very values that make this country great—fairness, opportunity and equality.”
—Sen. Edward Kennedy (D., Mass.)

FACTS

In 2004, Wal-Mart audited all of the 7,600 factories that supply products to it. Of those, 106 were banned from doing business with Wal-Mart primarily because of child-labor violations.

Vermont has the fewest Wal-Mart stores—four. Texas has the most—401. For Alaskan shoppers, Wal-Mart offers the ‘Alaska Bush Shopper’ program, which sends a plane filled with its goods to remote Alaskan communities.

Wal-Mart says its computer database holds more than 570 terabytes of information, more than all of the Internet’s fixed pages. The database allowed Wal-Mart to fill Florida stores with strawberry Pop-Tarts after it predicted Hurricane Ivan would spur demand for the toaster pastries.

Wal-Mart became the largest grocery chain in 2002. Its supermarket revenue is larger than that of Safeway and Albertson’s combined. Wal-Mart says its grocery prices are about 20% lower than other supermarkets.

The family of Wal-Mart founder Sam Walton has a combined fortune estimated at $90 billion. In 2005, Bill Gates was worth $46 billion; Warren Buffett, $44 billion; and Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince, $20 billion.

A Wal-Mart cheer ends: ‘What’s that spell? Wal-Mart! Who’s No. 1? The customer! Always’ Mr. Walton invented the cheer after seeing tennis-ball-factory workers in Korea do a company cheer along with their morning calisthenics.