

ALAN PHELPS

Answers up Wal-Mart's sleeve

In these dark economic times, when millions of Americans are out of work, when homeless people line the streets of our cities, when the foul grip of poverty threatens to strangle the population, some sort of action must be taken.

Wal-Mart has the answer: Roll up the sleeves.

A commercial running on TV throughout the country right now shows dedicated Wal-Mart employees dutifully rolling up their sleeves to "roll back prices."

The TV spot makes it sound as though Wal-Mart has seen the terrible state in which our nation languishes and it is going to get to work!

My roommate works at Wal-Mart in Grand Island. He said Wal-Mart workers actually are required to roll up their sleeves. Apparently, everyone in the store from the managers on down is going for that casual, rolling-up-the-sleeves look.

I asked him if he thought he worked harder with his sleeves rolled up. He said he almost always worked with his sleeves up anyway because it was more comfortable.

Why didn't George Bush think of this? Wal-Mart is one of the few retail chains that actually had decent Christmas sales in these recessionary times, and it seems as though it's because of this innovative sleeve device.

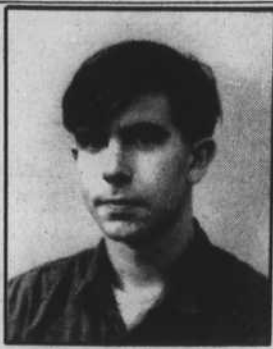
But will rolling up sleeves really solve anything? In an effort to find out, I called the most knowledgeable person on campus — the university operator.

The university operator I talked to said the plan "might" work. Later in the conversation, she changed her mind and said it would "probably" work.

Satisfied that the Wal-Mart policy was not just a bunch of hot air, I set out to find what Wal-Mart competitors are doing to retaliate.

While there are no Wal-Marts in town, the Omaha store casts a shadow on the department stores of Lincoln. Besides, I knew that if Lincolniters saw on their televisions what the boys next door were doing, they would wonder why their local outlets weren't doing the same.

A Target manager here in Lincoln said his store workers weren't going to roll up their sleeves, at least not in the literal sense. But he did say they had a new dress code over there. Employees can wear short sleeves



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now, which may allow them to work a bit harder.

I suppose this has to do with underarm perspiration and the unsightly stains it causes.

While I had the Target guy on the phone, I asked him what he thought about the people who pronounce the store's name as if it were a French word. He said he liked it.

One of Wal-Mart's main rivals in this part of the country is ShopKo. There are two ShopKos in Lincoln, and yet I haven't seen Karen, the ShopKo commercial lady, informing the public about any sleeve change at the stores.

The ShopKo person I got ahold of wouldn't make any comments. She thought I should call headquarters in Green Bay, Wis.

Sure, this could be explained away as some company policy. But maybe they are scared — scared that Wal-Mart's little sleeve-rolling exercise could put the competition out of business.

I used to work at a ShopKo. I haven't been in one for a while, but when I was there, ShopKo employees wore ugly orange jackets. Wal-Mart workers, on the other hand, wear smart blue vests. At Wal-Mart, it is easy to see whether employees actually have

rolled up their sleeves. But at ShopKo, it's difficult to see anyone's shirt through that horrific orange polyester.

Perhaps the ShopKo lady was hush-hush because they're rolling up their sleeves in secret. When the time comes, ShopKo employees will throw down their smocks and the world will see sleeves rolled up past the elbows.

The store manager at Richman Gordman said his store had no plans to require employees to roll up sleeves. When I told him that Target employees could wear short sleeves now, he said Richman Gordman never had any restriction on sleeve length, although the store made its workers wear dress shirts, ties and slacks.

He said he wouldn't have a problem if any particular employee felt the need to roll up the sleeves of a dress shirt.

"I do it occasionally myself," he said.

That's the kind of attitude we need more of in this country. I wonder if Lee Iacocca ever rolls up his sleeves.

To get a more national perspective, I called the K-Mart national customer service line. The operator I spoke with, Kara, claimed at first that she didn't know what I was talking about.

But I didn't let her off so easily. Demanding to know what, if any, changes K-Mart planned for its sleeve policy, I repeated my question and told her about the Wal-Mart commercial.

"I haven't seen the commercial," Kara said. "I don't have any idea about that."

Likely story. My guess is K-Mart employees probably are rolling up sleeves in back rooms, perhaps, in an effort to throw Wal-Mart off-track.

As with ShopKo, K-Mart employees are set to emerge soon, sleeves rolled clear the hell up. Sleeves rolled up way past their shoulders. Or maybe they're just ripping the things off entirely. Who needs 'em, anyway. They just get in the way of America's recovery.

There's a sleeve race afoot in the nation's discount retail chains. Sure, Wal-Mart is the only major store to go public so far, but there will be more. Oh, yes. There will be more.

Take that, Japan.

Phelps is a sophomore news-editorial major, the Daily Nebraskan opinion page editor and a columnist.

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Baldwin should get needed funds, support

I think that Scott Baldwin's medical and legal expenses should be paid, plus his family should be brought here expenses-paid by the university athletic department. That is the least the university can do for him. People fail to realize that Scott was and still is a part of this university, and it is partly because of pressure from athletics that pushed him to his breaking point.

When Scott played football for us, and made touchdowns helping our team win, we supported him. It wouldn't be right if we didn't support him. Yes, if that means paying his medical bills, we should. I don't think that by paying his medical bills, the athletic department is feeling sorry

for him. Nor do I think that they are applauding his actions. I think they are doing the right thing by helping one of their own.

To the young lady who stated "Baldwin shouldn't get fees paid," (DN, March 10), you are an ignorant, close-minded person. I doubt if you know Gina or Scott. Your letter was a cheap chance to be in the paper. If you watch the news and read the Daily Nebraskan every day, not just on Mondays, you would know that Gina's medical expenses are being paid, and yes, we care. Scott doesn't need to be behind bars; he needs mental help. If he can't afford it, how do you think he will get help? Exactly how much and what kind of rehabilitation

(state funded) do you think Scott should receive?

As far as Omaha, I don't think Scott will be walking the streets, and the people don't have to be afraid.

I support Scott Baldwin. I support the athletic department's decision to pay his fees. By leaving him in jail, that adds to his problems. Paying for his medical expenses and getting him the help he needs solves his problem.

Thank you, athletic department. I'm glad to know you care about him enough to do so.

Hope Burtley
sophomore
journalism

More coverage could lessen political apathy

I really have been surprised at how little coverage the Daily Nebraskan has given to this year's presidential campaign. Being a college newspaper that speaks to an educated public, I would think that it would be a perfect opportunity to help battle the political apathy that has been screwing up our election system recently. Voting is way down, especially among the college age group. Many people who turn 18 don't even bother to get registered, and those who do may not ever make it to the polls for many different reasons. I've heard some people say that they don't feel that their vote matters just because they are in the younger age group, a result of being conditioned to think they are too young and inexperienced to have a valid opinion. A vote is a vote, and the more of them there are, the more accurately the population (everyone from young children to senior citizens) will be represented. Another excuse I've heard around campus is

that Nebraska is not the home state of many people, and that makes it difficult to get involved in politics. Perhaps no one knows about absentee ballots because it never has been widely advertised as an option, but it is a very good one. The main reason, though, for the lack of crowds at the voting booth is undereducation about the candidates. Here is where the Daily Nebraskan should be doing its part.

Mark Baldrige said in one of his articles not too long ago that the Daily Nebraskan is the fifth-largest newspaper in the state. A paper with that much circulation has a responsibility to its readers. Even with space, budget and time restrictions, I would think it would be possible to have maybe a running series of profiles of the candidates and their stands on issues. The more people know about who is running for the presidency, the easier it is for them to make a decision about who they like and don't like. Without any information, the common atti-

tude is that all politicians are the same anyway, so why does it matter which one is up there? Freedom of the press originally was guaranteed so that people could be informed as to the working of their government, and so that we could know all our options when it comes to changing it. Now are we willing to just let our politicians slide by with a winning smile and a clever TV ad? It also would be helpful to a lot of people to know their options when it comes to voting — Kinds of questions like where to get registered, how to get an absentee ballot and how to find out what district you are in are all questions that many people have, but they lack the motivation or the time to get them answered. Maybe if it was offered to them, they would be able to do something with it.

Jennifer Nelson
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