

WAL*MARTWATCH

1730 M Street NW, Suite 601
Washington DC 20036
202 557 7440 Phone
202 557 7499 Fax
info@walmartwatch.com

October 23, 2006

Mr. Charlie Rose
731 Lexington Avenue
New York, NY 10022
Sent via Fax to (212) 940-1909

Dear Mr. Rose,

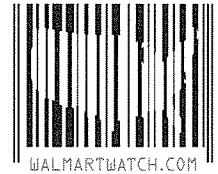
An article in today's New York Times (Barbaro, "Interview and Then Dinner Crowd PBS' Comfort Zone") questions your decision to host an event tonight honoring Lee Scott, the CEO of Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. who appeared as a guest on your show this summer. In the story, the PBS ombudsman urges you not to attend the event, and tells the Times that "you have an obligation not to do anything that could be seen by viewers as even a possible conflict of interest, or as diminishing the integrity or credibility of public broadcasting." Our organization, Wal-Mart Watch, shares these same concerns and we respectfully urge to reconsider your involvement with tonight's event.

While it is true that Wal-Mart appears to have made some positive steps in the right direction, your attendance and status as an objective journalist would suggest to the public that more measurable steps have been taken than is actually the case. Real, quantifiable achievements should be a prerequisite for a favorable review and we worry that not only is this recognition premature, but that your attendance sends an inaccurate message. As a respected journalist, we would encourage you to weigh promises-made with promises-kept before participating in a tribute.

While it is commendable that Mr. Scott has vowed to improve Wal-Mart environmental practices, these pledges were made a year ago. Wal-Mart has introduced changes to packaging and carbon emissions, but elsewhere it has yet to introduce benchmarks, timelines and commit to independent validation. Since Wal-Mart has a history of failing to match its words with deeds, as outlined in the memo we sent to you and to the other co-hosts of this event, we find your attendance at this event ill-advised.

The guest list for tonight's event suggests that the co-hosts and attendees may be motivated more by business interests than by environmental sustainability. Forty percent of all DVDs sold in the U.S. are sold in Wal-Mart stores and it is not surprising that the corporate media would host a party honoring Wal-Mart's top executive. Nor is it surprising that the Eagles will be performing here and elsewhere for Wal-Mart, as they are about to announce an exclusive marketing deal with the company.





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Wal-Mart's public relations offensive is now under added scrutiny, as several embarrassing incidents have exposed their attempts to influence media coverage. Recent stories in the New York Times (Barbaro & Strom, "Conservatives Help Wal-Mart, and Vice Versa," 9/8/06) and St. Petersburg Times (Adair, "Corporate Spin Can Come in Disguise," 9/10/06) suggested a quid pro quo between think tanks that publish favorable opinion pieces about Wal-Mart and the large contributions they receive from the Walton family. And The Wall Street Journal has written about Wal-Mart's lack of transparency when dealing with bloggers (Zimmerman, "Wal-Mart Enlists Bloggers To Combat Negative News," 3/7/06).

And more recently, the head of Wal-Mart's public relations firm publicly apologized for hiring a Washington Post photographer to work on a blog that heaped praise on the company (Covert, "Wal-Mart PR Firm's CEO Admits 'Error' In Blog Controversy," Dow Jones Newswires). The backlash against Wal-Mart has been intense and has raised doubts about the integrity of online reporting. Please do not allow this event to cast doubt on your own journalistic integrity.

In your July interview with Mr. Scott, you asked him difficult questions about Wal-Mart and the environment which he adroitly side-stepped. Should you choose to attend this event, notwithstanding our strong recommendation that you not do so, we urge you to use this forum to press for the answers you never received.

Yours Sincerely,

Andrew Grossman
Executive Director
Wal-Mart Watch

