



The Retail Revolution: How Wal-Mart Created a Brave New World of Business

Nelson Lichtenstein

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The definitive account of how a small Ozarks company upended the world of business and what that change means

Wal-Mart, the world's largest company, roared out of the rural South to change the way business is done. Deploying computer-age technology, Reagan-era politics, and Protestant evangelism, Sam Walton's firm became a byword for cheap goods and low-paid workers, famed for the ruthless efficiency of its global network of stores and factories. But the revolution has gone further: Sam's protégés have created a new economic order which puts thousands of manufacturers, indeed whole regions, in thrall to a retail royalty. Like the Pennsylvania Railroad and General Motors in their heyday, Wal-Mart sets the commercial model for a huge swath of the global economy.

In this lively, probing investigation, historian Nelson Lichtenstein deepens and expands our knowledge of the merchandising giant. He shows that Wal-Mart's rise was closely linked to the cultural and religious values of Bible Belt America as well as to the imperial politics, deregulatory economics, and laissez-faire globalization of Ronald Reagan and his heirs. He explains how the company's success has transformed American politics, and he anticipates a day of reckoning, when challenges to the Wal-Mart way, at home and abroad, are likely to change the far-flung empire.

Insightful, original, and steeped in the culture of retail life, *The Retail Revolution* draws on first hand reporting from coastal China to rural Arkansas to give a fresh and necessary understanding of the phenomenon that has transformed international commerce.

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