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You Can't Put Your Rights on Layaway at Wal-Mart®

by splatt

Regardless of how you feel about the Wal-Mart® Corporation, you've got to respect the fact that they've created a niche market and made it profitable. In a capitalist society, all of us are free to look around, determine a need, provide goods or services for that specific need, and if we're lucky maybe even pull down a modest profit as long as folks are willing to pay the asking price. If you price an item too high, like gasoline, people will adjust their budgets accordingly and buy less gasoline. When the price is good, and people have the money to spend, people will always buy more. It's basic hunter-gatherer theology; If I can get 3 wildebeests for the price of 1, I'm gonna buy all three wildebeests and use that money I save to buy a new trailer to haul all that extra fur back to my cave. I may not eat all the meat, and I may never use that trailer ever again, but who cares? It was all "free."

Wal-Mart® monitors demographics, the art of over-anal-yzing everything, and somebody at Wal-Mart® noticed that the motorcycle industry has begun to blossom in recent years. 13 straight years of record growth, thanks to states WITHOUT mandatory helmet laws, thank you. So when big hearted motorcyclists flocked to the new Wal-Mart® Supercenter stores to score gifts and goodies for the holiday toy run season, those Bikers were quickly captivated and held mesmerized by Wal-Mart®'s new motorcycle department.

Have you seen the new motorcycle department in the Wal-Mart® Supercenter stores? Pretty cute. It's like bein' at a little 10x10 booth at your favorite swap meet. Oil filters, gloves, license plate frames, batteries, tire patch kits, goggles, tool bags (with studs) and even ride bells for good luck! I could swear I even saw a leather vest there! Half helmets by Bell®, of course, and even Mobile 1® synthetic oil for both, V-Twins and my metric ridin' buddies, at a "competitive price." I didn't see any pasties, yet! They'll probably do pasties online only. Of course, the Bell® "Bandito" shorty helmet is completely OUT OF STOCK. Hmmm. I wonder why folks seem to like those little tiny helmets? Is it because it's like wearing nothing? Or is it the; "Classic low profile styling, plush washable comfort liner, removable tinted visor, DOT approved." Yeah, right. Remind your thoracic to explain that to the S.U.V. that just pulled a right turn in front of you. Remember, there's no such thing as a DOT approved helmet, the DOT doesn't approve helmets. Get the proper training and you'll have a far better chance of accident avoidance in the first place. But I digress.

Allow me to regress. I wrote a long time ago about the big popular hangout with the Club Peacock crowd, the Apathy DinerT. Open 24/7, where apathy is a dish served up cold by an uncaring "enthusiast" wearing stylish new Silly G® leathers...you know the type, a guy/gal who doesn't really like to ride, but thinks he/she can buy all the attitude with a credit card, be an instant BikerT by noon, get all the attention and accolades for being a bad-ass with minimal effort and a wardrobe change, but leave all the complicated discrimination, profiling, tickets, citations and fighting for rider's rights to the rest of us. They'll ungraciously accept the fruits of our labor, such as the recent change in California's apehanger law or lanesharing or pushing motorcycle awareness month, but I've yet to hear a single one of them say "thank you" to US for makin' those things happen.

They ride around on \$40,000 steeds but can't afford the dues to join an MRO? I can't pretty up my frustration much more than that. Some of you attack me for being so "in your face" with the L.A.M.E. crowd, (Look At Me, Everybody!) but believe me, I live in the yup capitol of the world and I've tried the "nice" approach and it flat out don't work. They really just don't care about your rights and they have no intention of fighting for their own. I saw a listing on eBay® that sums it up nicely; "For Sale, WWII French Army Rifle. Never fired, dropped only once." In keeping with my new year's resolution of reinstituting humility and shame in lieu of more new laws, if you're a spade, I'm calling you a spade to your face. Throw a hissy fit and call me names if it makes you feel better about yourself, but I have no respect for people's opinions if they aren't in the ring, thanklessly fighting for the rights of others. In other words, thanks for nothin'.

The problem with apathy is that it's a silent killer, one that will quietly knock off all the little motorcycle shops where I spend my money, one by one. I worry for those little mom and pop shops, and I especially worry for our closest friends and most ardent supporters in the rider's rights movement; the ABATE Business Members. Wal-Mart® usually leaves a

wake of tattered mom & pop businesses behind when the corporation moves a store to the other side of town (Usually, completely tax free in a building the city is hoaxed into paying for) and when Wal-Mart® starts sellin' those good luck bells, you can safely assume the battle is half over. Add Wal-Mart®'s foray into motorcycle parts to the equation already scribbled on the blackboard by the EnvironMental Protection Agency, the EPA, and you quickly see the rigor mortis of apathy setting into the dormant tissue of a sport which is largely out of touch with reality. I guess the appeal of riding is that element of escapism, but if you squint your eyes just right, you'll see an entire industry kissin' it's own @\$\$ goodbye, and amazingly, incredulously, nobody seems to care.

Sure, a few of the mom and pop shops seem to get it, but the preponderance of modern riders certainly don't seem to care. The manufacturers and the aftermarket, and that seemingly innocuous not for profit industry council trade group foundation type thing based out of California that represents the manufacturers, really doesn't get it. Neville Chamberlain (WWII, England/Germany, Peace For Our Time) would beam with pride at offering up a white "letter of guidance" flag to the EPA's crusade against 'horrific' motorcycle emissions. The industry appears more than willing to roll over and assume the omega dog position. Not on my watch. I refuse to squat and piddle for an agency that's supposed to be working for me, and at best does everything it can to create mindless impediments to my pursuit of happiness. And that "industry council" based out of California, you know who I mean, the ones you'd think would be most interested?

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