

Corporate Welfare

Sandra Elaiissen-Cantwell

An email from U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders asks the question, “How does it happen ...that the wealthiest man in the history of the world, Jeff Bezos, is also one of the largest welfare recipients in America?”

Many of us have heard grapevine comments about Bezos – his enormous wealth and how it continues to grow in spite of the pittance he pays his employees. Many of us have seriously considered ending our contact with Amazon, the source of his fortune, only to “fall at the first hurdle” when we need something that isn’t available elsewhere, or mall shopping has become an onerous task.

It’s much simpler to refrain from shopping for substandard goods at Walmart and or cheap but unhealthy food at MacDonal’d’s and Burger King. Like Bezos, the Walton family that owns Walmart is enormously moneyed as is McDonald’s major stockholder John W. Rogers.

What do Bezos et al. have in common with many other hugely profitable corporations in the United States? It is the fact that Amazon workers are being paid so little that they need to apply for public assistance and live on “food stamps, Medicaid, and public housing.” They simply cannot survive on Amazon wages, while we are carefree making our purchases often daily with an Amazon click, enriching Bezos by \$260 million each day.

Over half of McDonald’s employees working in their eateries have to apply for “some kind of public assistance.” Indeed, their workers are encouraged to sign up for public assistance! Is this not shameful in a country priding itself on fairness and independence - a caring society? And who is paying for such assistance, which subsidizes the wealth of such as Bezos daily? Why it’s you and I, the middle class.

There is legislation afoot to end such corporate welfare and provide either living wages to the workers, or require these corporations to provide for all the public assistance the workers require to withstand the immorality and inconstancy of the American economy. Please do support Sander’s legislative bill when it is presented to Congress. Our own Congress people should be obliged to support it and we should be certain that they understand the election consequences if they do not.