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UFCW Squares Off Against Whole Foods

Monday
August 31
1:19 pm

Whole Foods CEO John Mackey reignited an old feud with the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) with an Aug 11 op/ed denouncing Obama's healthcare plan and [denying](#) every American's right to healthcare. Mackey is a vehement opponent of unionization.

Last week, the UFCW and the Change to Win federation joined the widening boycott against Whole Foods to protest Mackey's remarks. UFCW has launched a campaign called [Mackey's Gotta Go](#). Change to Win represents [6 million workers](#) and its investment division controls a billion dollars in assets.

Whatever sales Whole Foods loses during the boycott pale compared to the damage that bad publicity can do to its brand. Whole Foods markets itself as a socially conscious alternative to corporate supermarkets. The aura of social responsibility makes it easier for many consumers to stomach the chain's high prices.

Since the boycott, ultra-conservative pundit Michelle Malkin has started bragging about shopping there. "Golden raspberries from [@wholefoods](#). Yum! <http://twitpic.com/esln5>," she crowed on Aug 21. Malkin is reinforcing a competing image of Whole Foods as a decadent outlet for pampered yuppies.

This something of a grudge match for UFCW, which has tried to organize Whole Foods against stiff corporate opposition. In 2002 workers in a Wisconsin Whole Foods voted to join the [UFCW](#). But Whole Foods effectively refused to negotiate the first contract. Instead, the company stalled and delayed [negotiations](#) until workers voted to decertify the union.

Mackey has [compared unions to herpes](#). Ironically, says he doesn't like them because they contribute to an [adversarial](#) relationship management and labor.

Whole Foods is a founding partner of an anti-union group called the The Committee for a Level Playing Field, which seeks to gut the [Employee Free Choice Act](#).

The group markets itself as a "third way" in the EFCA fight which means that they want to eliminate [the two key components](#) of the Act, majority sign up and first contract arbitration, as opposed to defeating it all together. Arbitration would have prevented Whole Foods from running out the clock on the UFCW in 2002.

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