



NEWS FROM

Teamsters Local Union 117

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WORKERS PICKET UNFI OVER INTIMIDATION TACTICS, FAILURE TO BARGAIN

Warehouse Workers, Drivers Raise Informational Pickets at Major Natural Foods Distributor

(Auburn, WA) – Drivers and warehouse workers, employed at United Natural Foods Inc. (UNFI), commenced a Just Practicing picket at 11:30AM this morning at UNFI's distribution center in Auburn to protest the company's intimidation tactics and its failure to bargain in good faith.

"The success of this company was built off our backs. But rather than treating us with respect, UNFI is spending hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars to intimidate us into accepting a substandard proposal," said Robert Jurey, a 13-year warehouse worker at UNFI.

UNFI has erected security fences, hired guards, and brought replacement workers into the warehouse to serve as a secondary workforce.

"My co-workers and I are now forced to work alongside desperate people who are hungry for our jobs. We're not on strike, yet they're pitting worker against worker," Jurey said.

On September 11, Local 117 filed Unfair Labor Practice charges with the National Labor Relations Board, contending that the company violated federal labor law when it refused to negotiate over mandatory subjects of bargaining and reassigned bargaining unit work. Those charges have been amended to include allegations of surveillance, intimidation and retaliation.

"UNFI enjoys one of the widest profit margins of any major grocery distributor, yet it refuses to engage in meaningful negotiations about providing workers their fair share of company profits," said Tracey A. Thompson, Secretary-Treasurer of Teamsters Local 117. "If not for the productivity of warehouse and distribution employees," said Thompson, "UNFI would not be making these unprecedented profits."

Despite an 83% increase in revenues over the last five years, UNFI compensates its employees at a rate of 25% less than the compensation paid to the major unionized grocery warehouse and distribution workers in the Puget Sound region.

"By providing substandard wages and benefits to its employees, UNFI is seeking an unfair advantage over its competition," Thompson added.

On October 5, Union members at UNFI voted in overwhelming numbers to reject the company's latest contract proposal. Local 117 and the company last met on Thursday, October 18, with the assistance

of a federal mediator, but talks broke down when UNFI failed to meaningfully respond to the Union's proposal. No further negotiations have been scheduled.

The contract for Union members at UNFI expired on February 29, 2012; an extension agreement expired at the end of August.

UNFI supplies organic and specialty foods to major supermarkets throughout the Puget Sound area, including Whole Foods, Safeway, Fred Meyer, PCC, and the Metropolitan Market. Teamsters Local 117 represents 168 drivers and warehouse workers at the company's distribution center in Auburn.