

Columbus, Ohio • Apr 26, 2012 • 61° Drizzle

The Columbus Dispatch

Fanatical or frugal? Corporation is called to task

By **Terry Mikesell**

The Columbus Dispatch Thursday April 26, 2012 8:15 AM

Is Koch Industries a conglomerate willing to do anything to turn a profit — or simply a company concerned about the nation's economic future?

It depends on your source of information.

Filmmaker Robert Greenwald has created *Koch Brothers Exposed* (2012), to be presented on Tuesday in the Drexel Theatre by the Columbus Film Council and the *Columbus Free Press*. Greenwald had a lengthy career in mainstream movies, producing or directing feature and TV films and miniseries such as *The Burning Bed* (1984), *Hear No Evil* (1993) and *A Woman of Independent Means* (1995).

In the past decade, his Brave New Films has turned to making advocacy documentaries, including *Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism* (2004), *Walmart: The High Cost of Low Price* (2005) and *Rethink Afghanistan* (2009).

Koch Industries is a privately held corporation based in Wichita, Kan., with interests in fields as diverse as energy, petrochemicals, textiles and pulp and paper. CEO Charles Koch and his brother, David, the executive vice president, are listed by *Forbes* as the world's 12th and 13th richest billionaires, with a net worth of \$25 billion each.

They are politically active, *Forbes* reported; Charles founded the conservative Cato Institute in 1976.

Susan Halpern, executive director of the Columbus Film Council, hasn't seen *Koch Brothers Exposed* but she has seen other works by Greenwald. His films have a definite point of view, she said.

"He's clearly populist. He's clearly rooting for the little guy. He's clearly not for the 1 percent (in wealth). He's clearly speaking as a proponent for working-class America.

"He likes to look at . . . the bare-bones foundation of the issues, which makes him a good documentary maker."

In the trailer, Greenwald accuses the Koch brothers of operating pollution-spewing companies that damage the health of residents, working to dismantle public schools, restricting voting rights, contributing to legislators who want to cut environmental regulations and advocating cuts in Social Security.

“Clearly, he’s not going to show them (the Koch brothers) kissing puppies,” Halpern said.

Koch Industries has aggressively fought back by posting a lengthy defense on its website, calling Greenwald a “fringe filmmaker” and accusing him of “serial dishonesty.” The company claims that its employees have faced death threats.

In March 2011, Charles Koch wrote an op-ed piece for *The Wall Street Journal* about his company’s position: that government spending, regulation and subsidizing of inefficient industries is threatening the economic health of the nation.