

Whoops!

Many of us didn't know there was an active labor dispute at the Argent and several other SF hotels.



But now we do.

Here's what's up:

- Local 2 is not on strike (anymore)...
- But they haven't had a contract for six months...
- And union reps have been pleading for a boycott of all the hotels they represent¹, urging (and assisting) conference planners to “move...event[s] immediately”².

So how did we end up here?

- Ask conference planning council to answer this obvious question!

What else to do:

- Ask *Who is responsible*, and *Who is implicated*?
- Relocate your panel to a nearby cafe, pub, or Yerba Buena Gardens. (Post your changes at the registration desk.)
- Boycott the Argent; attend panels in alternative spaces.
- Pick up a sign and picket in solidarity with Hotel workers!

This flyer was paid for by Speech and Communication Studies grad students at San Francisco State University.

¹ Argent Hotel, Crowne Plaza Union Square, Four Seasons, Fairmont, Grand Hyatt Union Square, Hilton San Francisco, Holiday Inn Civic Center, Holiday Inn Express, Holiday Inn Fisherman's Wharf, Hyatt Regency Embarcadero Center, Mark Hopkins Inter-Continental, Omni Hotel, Sheraton Palace, Westin St. Francis

² <http://www.unitehere2.org>

Both sides return to bargaining table in hotel dispute

Union workers have been without a contract for six months

San Francisco Chronicle

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Tuesday, February 15, 2005

The union representing workers at 14 San Francisco hotels returned to the bargaining table with management Monday, but the two sides remain at loggerheads in a labor dispute that has dragged on since the last contract expired Aug. 14.

The union, Unite Here Local 2, made a counterproposal for wage increases Monday, which the employers accepted for consideration.

The two sides are at odds over health care coverage, wages and the length of the next agreement, among other matters. A two-week strike against four hotels began Sept. 29, after which the 10 other hotels in the group locked out their workers.

Employees at all 14 were locked out until Nov. 20 when the sides agreed to a 60-day cooling-off period and workers returned. That has expired, and negotiations have resumed with neither a strike nor a lockout appearing imminent.

That's not to say all is calm. Local 2 said it will escalate its efforts to persuade visitors to boycott the hotels, but management says a boycott hurts both owners and workers.

The boycott effort is concentrated in a telephone bank where members call meeting planners and others booking hotel space and ask them to use hotels not

affected by the labor dispute. Management says the boycott has not had a significant effect, but there's cause for concern.

"It is disappointing to us that they would take that tactic, that would hurt the No. 1 industry in San Francisco," said Steve Trent, managing director of the Grand Hyatt San Francisco and a spokesman for the San Francisco Multi-Employers Group, which represents the 14 hotels. "It doesn't do anybody any good. It hurts our employees and it hurts the city of San Francisco," he said Monday.

Opposition to boycott

Patricia Breslin, executive director of the trade association, Hotel Council of San Francisco, added, "If there are no guests, there are no jobs. The boycott could hurt the same individuals that the union says it is trying to help -- the employees."

Mike Casey, the president of Local 2, acknowledged "it is not pleasant" making such phone calls, but said it is necessary "for long-term security and protecting what we have."

He added that only economic pressure will bring resolution and a contract.

"When they (employers) reach the conclusion that the cost of fighting exceeds the cost of settlement, that's when we will settle, and they haven't reached that conclusion yet," Casey said Monday.

One group the union contacted was the American Conservatory Theater, which holds a fund-raiser each autumn. It was to be at the Fairmont, one of the 14 in the dispute, in October during a two-week strike at the Fairmont and three other hotels.

ACT moves fund-raiser

But even before ACT was contacted, it had decided to move the event, said Jeff Malloy, ACT general manager.

"We deal with so many unions that it was an easy decision to make," said Malloy, who moved the event for 300 people to the Regency Center, a special-events facility.

The union Monday submitted a counterproposal on wages for the workers, who on average earn about \$26,000 a year. It seeks a 50-cent increase in hourly wages in the first year of a two-year contract and a 45-cent hourly increase in the second year for non-tipped workers. It asks that tipped workers get a 30-cent increase in both years.

Management, without any other comment, said it will consider the proposal.

Health insurance an issue

One of the most contentious subjects on the negotiating table is the owners' proposal to increase the eligibility requirement for medical care.

Union hotel workers currently qualify for health insurance by working 18 hours per month. The employers want to raise the requirement to 45 hours.

"That would eliminate medical benefits for hundreds of banquet servers and extras," Casey said.

Barbara French, a spokeswoman for the hotels, said a review of payment records shows that 155 banquet extras would probably not meet the 45-hour threshold.

After the negotiations at the Grand Hyatt on Monday, Local 2 members walked to the St. Francis for an afternoon demonstration and some Valentine's Day street theater: It centered on an ice sculpture that was meant to evoke the "cold-hearted" contract proposal from the Multi-Employer Group.



Chronicle / John O'Hara

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