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Hilton Hotel Workers on Strike

(April 7, 2010, San Francisco) - Hotel workers at the Hilton San Francisco walked off the job this morning, announcing a three-day strike in support of their efforts to negotiate a contract with the giant 1900 room hotel. Approximately 850 workers are participating in the strike, which began at 4:00 a.m. Wednesday, and will last until the first shift on Saturday morning. The striking workers are members of Unite Here Local 2, and include room cleaners, dishwashers, cooks, bellpersons, food servers, and others.

The work stoppage comes nearly eight months after contracts covering Hilton workers as well as eight thousand other San Francisco hotel workers expired. On January 5, during a demonstration that included 140 arrests in non-violent civil disobedience, workers at the Hilton called on customers to boycott their hotel. Despite mounting pressure from hotel workers, the Hilton Corporation has continued to press for a contract that would slash health coverage and retirement benefits, and would increase workloads.

“For months now we’ve been sending the message that we’re not going to let this company squeeze us any harder,” said Ringo Mak, a twenty-year food server at the Hilton. “By walking out today, we’re showing Hilton just how committed we are, and we’re reminding customers that they should find another hotel to stay.”

The Hilton San Francisco is owned and operated by the Blackstone Group [NYSE: BX], which bought the Hilton Hotel chain in 2006 for \$26 billion. Blackstone manages approximately \$100 billion in assets, including Hilton, and recently reported having about \$28 billion in available cash.

In addition to the Hilton, six other San Francisco hotels are under worker-called boycotts: the Grand Hyatt, Hyatt Fisherman’s Wharf, W Hotel, Westin St. Francis, Palace Hotel, and Le Meridien. Members of Unite Here Local 2 continue to communicate with customers of these hotels urging them to move their business elsewhere. The Hilton strike is the fourth such strike since November.

Unite Here! Local 2 is the union of hotel and food service workers in San Francisco and San Mateo Counties. It represents about 12,000 workers in the hospitality industry. For more information, visit www.unitehere2.org.