

Build rank and file strike committees

For a nationwide hotel walkout!

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More than 7,700 workers are currently on strike at 23 Marriott International hotels in Detroit, Boston, Oakland, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose and in Hawaii. Hundreds of other housekeepers, doormen, cooks and other hotel workers are continuing their six-week strike at the Cambria Chicago Magnificent Mile hotel, owned by Choice Hotels International.

The hotel strikes are part of a rising tide of working-class opposition over long-stagnating wages, the erosion of health and pensions benefits and increasingly dangerous and overburdened workloads. Nearly 40,000 patient care workers are currently on strike at University of California medical centers across the state. Beginning with the wave of teacher strikes earlier this year, the number of major walkouts has tripled since 2017 and there are struggles brewing at UPS and in the steel and auto industry.

All workers are facing the same battle. Ten years after the bailout of the Wall Street banks and a year after Trump's corporate tax cuts, the super-rich are making more money. Their giant fortunes have come at the expense of the working class. Real wages have fallen for more than a decade and a worker today is making about the same as a worker did in 1978, 40 years ago!

Hotel workers, like all workers, are fighting for a livable wage in order to pay for the rising cost of housing, healthcare, transportation, education and other basic necessities. The workforce, which includes large numbers of immigrant and single mother workers, is being exploited more than ever with relentless speedup, job overloading and harassment.

Marriott is the largest and most profitable hotel corporation in the world. In 2016, it acquired Starwood Hotels and Resorts for \$13 billion and now owns more than 6,500 properties worldwide. Workers, however,

are told that a decent wage or healthcare benefits are unaffordable. The Marriott family, it must be noted, has a net worth of over \$7 billion.

The main obstacle to waging a real fight is the union itself. UNITE HERE has only called a partial strike at Marriott and the rest of the hotel industry is humming along because UNITE HERE is keeping tens of thousands of members on the job. The union has organized only token picketing allowing Marriott to use strikebreakers to keep operations going. In Chicago and Seattle, the union has signed individual deals and sent workers back to work even though thousands of their brothers and sisters are still walking the picket line.

The Socialist Equality Party urges hotel workers to take the conduct of this struggle into their own hands by electing rank-and-file strike committees, democratically controlled and answerable to workers themselves. These committees should elect representatives to monitor all negotiations and report the details to all workers. No contract should be voted on until workers have two full weeks to study and discuss it.

At the same time, these committees should poll all workers and outline real demands to fight for, including a 40 percent across the board wage increase, fully funded year-round healthcare and pension benefits, and workers control over job assignment and conditions, in order to fight speedup, job overloading and harassment, including sexual harassment.

These strike committees should reach out to all hotel workers to prepare a nationwide strike to fight for these demands, and call on hotel, resort and casino workers nationally and internationally to join them in common struggle against the global corporations. With the holiday season approaching, workers have enormous leverage. Such a strike by hotel workers would be the

spearhead for a united struggle by teachers, UPS workers, steel, auto, Amazon and other workers, building a general strike to fight for the social rights of the working class.

Far from organizing such a struggle, UNITE HERE is helping Marriott starve workers into submission by paying poverty level strike benefits of \$60 a day. Why is UNITE HERE President Donald Taylor continuing to make \$1,000 a day from his \$362,034 annual salary? Strike pay should immediately be raised to a worker's standard daily wage. To pay for this we would recommend that the salaries of Taylor and the other top 50 union executives be reduced to a worker's wage and the union's \$150 million in assets, including its \$20 million New York City headquarters, be used to sustain strikers for as long as it takes.

Since the beginning of the strike, workers have been kept in the dark about the progress of negotiations. In many cases, the union suddenly announces a deal and pushes it through without giving workers any time to study and discuss it.

In Chicago, UNITE HERE claims workers won a victory. But workers did not receive the raises they were fighting for and year-round healthcare is reportedly guaranteed only to workers who work one hour a week every month. Given the nature of the business, this would disqualify many hotel workers frequently laid off months at a time during the off-peak season.

Far from mobilizing broader support for the strike and appealing to all workers to stop the use of scab labor, UNITE HERE has brought in officials from the Teamsters and other unions who are selling out workers at UPS and other companies. They have also paraded Democratic Party politicians before workers who are trying to hustle votes for the November 6 elections.

But the Democrats are no less enemies of the working class than Trump and the Republicans. The Democrats' own candidate for Illinois governor, JB Pritzker, is a multi-billionaire whose family owns the Hyatt hotel chain, their riches coming from the exploitation of generations of hotel workers. The Obama administration, as well, carried out the largest transfer of wealth from the bottom layers of society to the top in history, all the while deporting record numbers of immigrants.

The real allies of striking hotel workers are the

millions of other workers coming into struggle to defend their livelihoods and families. Everything must be done to expand the strike to include all sections of the working class, including the thousands of UPS workers, Amazon workers, teachers, and auto workers, who have already shown their willingness to strike.

An industrial counter-offensive by the working class must be combined with a new political strategy. The Socialist Equality Party is fighting to build a mass movement of the working class whose aim is to establish a workers government and socialism. This includes the transformation of the giant hotel and resort chains into public enterprises, collectively owned and democratically controlled by the working class itself.



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