

Monterey Bay *Bulletin*

Labor Contracts Update

Travelodge Boycott Facts

The owner. Kilsoo Seo lives and owns a video store in Bethel, Alaska. Seo purchased the Monterey Bay Travelodge, under the business name SNKF, Inc., in April 2002. Seo recently purchased a \$1 million house in the new Seaside Highlands development in Seaside, California.

The workers. 12 housekeepers and 1 maintenance worker are employed by the Monterey Bay Travelodge and are members of UNITE HERE Local 483. They are all Latino. 10 live in Seaside, 2 in Marina, and 1 in Castroville.

The workers' families. The Travelodge workers have 19 children.

The union. UNITE HERE Local 483, founded in 1937, represents over 1,600 hospitality employees on the Monterey Bay.

The contract. The union contract, which included full employer-funding of the employee health insurance plan, expired on December 1, 2003.

The owner's actions. Seo stopped negotiations with the union on July 29, 2004. Through his attorney, the Littler Mendelson law firm, Seo then issued his "last and best" offer, demanding the end of his employees' health and pension plans, an hourly wage freeze at \$8.84, reduction in time off, and the extension of the workday by 30 minutes unpaid (lunch period). On October 1, Seo instituted these terms without agreement by Local 483.

The conflict. The first of dozens of weekly picket-line demonstrations at the Travelodge, organized by Local 483, began on July 29, 2004. Over 1,000 people have participated in these public actions supporting the Travelodge workers.

The current situation. Seo has refused to talk with the union about his actions. 13 workers and their 19 children are now without health insurance. The Travelodge workers have called for a boycott of the Monterey Bay Travelodge.

Union Launches

BOYCOTT Monterey Bay Travelodge Website

www.BoycottMontereyBayTravelodge.info

On December 3, following its November 18 call for a boycott of the Monterey Bay Travelodge, UNITE HERE Local 483 launched a website for travelers, travel planners, and interested community members with current and ongoing information about the boycott at www.BoycottMontereyBayTravelodge.info.

"We urge everybody not to stay at the Monterey Bay Travelodge until the owner signs a fair contract," said Juana Enriquez, Travelodge housekeeper and chief shop steward for UNITE HERE Local 483. The hotel's owner, Kilsoo Seo of Bethel, Alaska, has eliminated all contributions to the employee health insurance and pension plans, while freezing hourly wages at \$8.84 for his 13 unionized employees. The 19 children of these workers at

the Travelodge are now without health insurance. "We hope this website will let many people all over the world know about our struggle here in Monterey," added Ms. Enriquez.

The Monterey Bay Travelodge contract with its 13 Latino housekeeping and maintenance workers expired on December 1, 2003, and is the only unsettled contract of 15 unionized hotels on the Monterey Bay with UNITE HERE Local 483. Contract negotiations between Local 483 and the Travelodge continued through July, at which point Mr. Seo issued his "last and best" offer, demanding the end of his employees' health and pension plans. The first of dozens of weekly community rallies in support of the workers at the hotel, which have drawn over

1,000 participants, began on July 29.

The website includes special reports for travelers about the



The Boycott Monterey Bay Travelodge website was launched on December 3, 2004 by UNITE HERE Local 483.

frequency and size of protests, as well as a report on recent crimes at the hotel. Viewers can also find links to news articles about the conflict and community organizations in support of the Travelodge workers.

Travelodge Settles with Federal Agency over Union Charges

The Monterey Bay Travelodge in November entered into a settlement agreement with the National Labor Relations Board to resolve pending unfair labor practice charges.

On October 28, 2004, the Regional Office of the National Labor Relations Board announced that it would prosecute a Government complaint against the Travelodge, unless the Travelodge agreed to set-

tle. The Regional Office found merit in the following charges brought by UNITE HERE Local 483: a) that the Travelodge had unlawfully forbidden pro-union workers from handing out union literature; and b) that the Travelodge had maintained illegal rules in its Employee Handbook that restricted workers' ability to discuss union organizing.

Although the Travelodge

refused to admit that it violated the law, the settlement requires it to refrain from such conduct in the future, to change its Employee Handbook, and to post a federal notice in the workplace for two months assuring workers of their rights.

"This shows that the Travelodge is not above the law," said Leonard O'Neill, Secretary-Treasurer of UNITE HERE Local 483 of the settlement.