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STRIKING HOTEL WORKERS TARGET YANKEES OUTSIDE RITZ-CARLTON

By Chris Triunfo

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BOSTON, OCT. 5, 2018...Striking hotel workers from UNITE HERE Local 26 gathered at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Friday to oppose New York Yankees players who were seen walking through a picket line at the hotel the day before.

Most of the New York baseball team is staying at the hotel in anticipation of their first game against the Red Sox in the American League Division Series.

The workers went on strike Wednesday after six months of contract discussions ended without an agreement. The union represents an estimated 1,500 Marriott International employees including housekeepers, bartenders and doormen, according to the union.

Workers are pushing for more protections as the industry undergoes major changes, mainly driven by technology, and is calling on companies to protect worker hours, provide more secure schedules, and improve sexual harassment protections.

"We have a simple demand. One job should be enough to live, to raise your family and to retire with dignity," said Local 26 President Brian Lang. "So far, Marriott has been tone-deaf, and we have made a very difficult decision and sacrificed a lot to go out and strike."

That decision marks the city's first major hotel strike in modern history. The workers span seven Marriott hotels across the city, and with the strike heading into the holiday weekend, some guests were informed that they would not receive room service or house cleaning, according to the union.

Marriott said its hotels will remain open but did not say if it would bring in replacement workers. Meanwhile, outside the Ritz-Carlton's doors Friday, workers held signs that read, "Yankees = Scabs."



Striking hotel workers gathered at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Friday to oppose the New York Yankees. [Photo: Chris Triunfo / SHNS]

"The Yankees have branded themselves as the team of corporate greed. I hope the Red Sox kick their ass," said Lang.

Major League Baseball players all belong to the Major League Players Association. The players' union spokesman advocates for the hotel workers. In a statement, the Players Association said that "...these workers have been trying to negotiate a fair contract for more than six months. They deserve to be heard and deserve our support."

Joining the striking workers was Democratic candidate for governor Jay Gonzalez. He cited the rally as one of the reasons why he's running for governor.

"People shouldn't have to work multiple jobs to be able to make a living and I'm gonna stand with these workers to stand up for a living wage, for fair benefits," Gonzalez told the News Service. "The reason I'm running for governor is to fight for all the little guys out there. I've been standing with lots of different unions that have been getting squeezed recently."

Since June, more than 1,200 National Grid gas workers have been locked out after failed negotiations with National Grid.

Recently, House Speaker Robert DeLeo said he wants Gov. Charlie Baker's administration to say how much the lockout is costing the state, including the cost of providing health benefits to workers who lost their coverage because of the lockout. Administration officials said they'd review the speaker's request.

According to Lang, the hotel industry has made record profits in recent years. Data from Marriott International shows that its net income more than doubled between 2013 and 2017 to \$1.37 billion.

"Marriott is the largest, richest hotel company in the world and they've just come off five years of record profits in Boston," said Lang, who once worked as a bellman at the Sheraton Boston. "Those profits are the result of work that the members of Local 26 do day in and day out, serving the needs of the guests."

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