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Space Needle Instructs Workers How to “Live Lean”

Worker Calls Company’s Training “Insulting”

SEATTLE--Just weeks after workers turned to the Seattle City Council in their fight for raises and respect at the Space Needle, the company announced it would offer a webinar on how to “live on less.”

The webinar announcement--emailed to Space Needle workers and posted on employee bulletin boards--stated: “At some point in life, many people find themselves in a position to live on less—whether by choice or by circumstance. Regardless of the reason, it is possible to find ways to live on less while still enjoying your life.”

“Four years ago, my wage was enough to live on in Seattle comfortably,” said elevator operator Michael Hall, who has worked at the Space Needle for seven and a half years. “I wasn’t living paycheck to paycheck. Since then, I’ve had to move back in with my parents outside of the city. Now I commute two hours each way to and from work.”

Space Needle workers recently sought outside support in their ongoing fight for raises, delivering a photo petition featuring a majority of workers to the Seattle City Council on January 20. The company has offered workers just one raise in the last four and a half years—an increase of \$0.35 an hour two years ago.

Hall said the Space Needle’s response to workers’ call for raises was “insulting.”

The announcement of the “living on less” webinar also coincided with a ruling from the National Labor Relations Board on January 30th that the Space Needle polled, coerced, and intimidated its employees, and illegally failed to recall two pro-union workers. Space Needle management has stated that they intend to continue an already long and costly legal process by appealing the judgment for the second time.

The Space Needle is owned by the Wright Family, descendants of the founders of both the Howard S. Wright Construction Company and PACCAR, Inc. Owner Howard S. Wright III recently served as the co-chair of Mayor Ed Murray’s Economic Inequality Advisory Committee, which worked to pass a \$15 minimum wage ordinance for the City of Seattle. The first staggered wage increase resulting from that

law will occur in April of this year, though some Seattle employers have already opted to implement the wage increase in full.

The cost of living in the greater Seattle metropolitan region has increased 8.4% from June 2010 to December 2014 while the Washington State minimum wage has gone up \$0.92 since 2010.

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UNITE HERE Local 8, the hospitality union of the Pacific Northwest, represents nearly 5,000 workers in hospitality and foodservice throughout Washington and Oregon, including SkyCity restaurant employees, banquet servers, elevator operators, greeters, and other workers at the Space Needle. For more information, please visit our website at: <http://www.unitehere8.org>

Space Needle workers are available for comment and webinar materials can also be made available to the press. Please contact Abby Lawlor at 206-963-6458, abby@unitehere.org.