

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SPACE NEEDLE OFFERS “POISON CANDY” TO WORKERS

Labor dispute continues as mediation fails to address key issues

SEATTLE—Space Needle workers walked away Thursday from a month-long effort at mediation with their employer, frustrated but ready to continue fighting for raises, protections against subcontracting, and union rights.

“I was optimistic about returning to mediation,” said cook Andy Roos. “But it’s frustrating to be so close and not see willingness from the company to compromise on key issues. The Space Needle offered raises with strings attached. We are not willing to give in on subcontracting protections or the ability to talk to our union representative in the break room, like we’ve always been able to do. We’ve fought too long to settle for anything less than what we deserve.”

The labor dispute at Seattle’s most famous landmark began over three years ago, when Space Needle management unilaterally terminated the company’s union contract with UNITE HERE Local 8.

In early 2015, management was found to have committed five violations of federal labor law in the years since the contract was terminated. Space Needle workers have gone well over 1,000 days without raises as the cost of living in Seattle continues to climb.

“On my current wages, there’s no way I can afford to live in Seattle, let alone support my family and go back to school,” said valet cashier Veronica Chernichenko. “With rents going up and my pay staying the same, it feels impossible to make things work.”

After almost forty hours of mediation over the past weeks, including late into the night Thursday, Space Needle management showed little sign of movement on key issues.

“We will continue to pursue all avenues to get what’s needed for workers,” said Local 8 President Erik Van Rossum, a former Space Needle employee. “Raises, job security, and union rights are all absolute necessities. Any further negotiation with the company must start from a place of mutual understanding on those points. Our members are too smart to fall for the Space Needle’s poison candy. Raises will not matter if people’s jobs are contracted out.”

“That said, the company can give raises tomorrow—no conversation needed,” said Van Rossum. The Space Needle has had authorization from the union to implement raises since 2013, but has chosen not to do so, opting instead to hire new, temporary non-union workers at higher starting rates.

Space Needle workers continue to gain support from politicians and other civic leaders in Seattle who are concerned with the impact of such a prominent labor dispute on the City's progressive reputation.

A rally for workers and their supporters is planned for June 19th at 9:30am at the base of the Space Needle.

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UNITE HERE Local 8, the hospitality union of the Pacific Northwest, represents nearly 5,000 workers in hospitality and food service throughout Washington and Oregon, including SkyCity restaurant employees, banquet servers, elevator operators, greeters and other workers at the Space Needle.