Macalester College  
Social Responsibility Committee  
March 19, 2012

Present: Terry Boychuk, Lloyd Cledwyn, Daylanne English, Laurie Hamre, Brian Lindeman, Leah Plummer, Doriyush Ubaydi and David Wheaton.

Guests: Jonathon McJunkin, Josie Ahrens and Leewana Thomas

The MPIRG representatives presented a revised copy of the November (see below) report calling for boycotting of and a commitment of no future investment in HEI properties. The revised proposal calls for a community wide policy which mandates any person using college funding or under the name of the college will not stay in boycotted properties, but when possible, in a union hotel. The students stated they expect this would be a mandated and no tolerance policy. MCSG Resolution 003.11-12, Hotel Travel Boycott, was introduced (see below). The resolution states MSG will avoid boycotted hotel properties when a choice is available. In addition they pledged to use the union website to view boycotted properties. Finally the resolution encouraged SRC and the College to adopt the same policy.

Terry B mentioned he had been working with the student group to help them refine and revise a plan that was workable. MPIRG sent individual letters to departments, faculty and staff seeking support of the proposal. This was confusing to faculty and staff, as MPIRG must go through SRC for recommendation/adoption of a proposal on this topic.

A concern was noted that it would be virtually impossible to monitor a mandated or no tolerance policy around travel and accommodations. The College does not have a centralized travel agency working with Mac faculty and staff, rather every department makes arrangements, submitting charges to the College. Student Government may have a better chance to make this work, but this still would be difficult to administer/monitor.

Meeting was adjourned

**MCSG Resolution:**
Hotel Travel Boycott  
Session: 2011-©-2012  
Number: 003  
Author: Brett Srader  
Sponsor: MPIRG’s Economic Justice Taskforce

**WHEREAS:**  
As individuals and a group who travel representing Macalester College, we would like to express support for a proposal that would uphold Macalester’s standards of integrity and social responsibility.

**WHEREAS:**  
We recognize that when hotel properties are under boycott it means that workers are underpaid, overworked and are often threatened with illegal anti-©-union intimidation.

**WHEREAS:**  
We acknowledge that we have the ability to help create fair and just conditions for hotel workers. We can do this by ensuring that the labor practices we are supporting when we travel as a part of Macalester are in line with our institution’s ethical standards.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** by the Macalester College Student Government that:  
1. Macalester College Student Government commits to avoiding boycotted hotel properties
when given a choice
and, whenever possible, staying in unionized hotels when we travel representing Macalester College.

2. Macalester College Student Government will use the following links to determine what hotels are under boycott as well as those that are recognized as unionized.

3. Macalester College Student Government encourages the Social Responsibility Committee (SRC) and Macalester Administration to adopt the same policy. This proposal was officially endorsed by MCSG on Tuesday March 6, 2012.

This proposal is also endorsed by:
Adelante
Prof Paul Dosh, Associate Professor of Political Science and Chair of the Latin American Studies Department
Prof Leola Johnson, Associate Professor and Chair of Media and Cultural Studies Department
Biology Department

Travel Policy Proposal
By Minnesota Public Interest Research Group (MPIRG)’s Economic Justice Taskforce
Presented by Leewana Thomas ’14, Josie Ahrens ’14, and Jonathan McJunkin ’14
Macalester College’s Social Responsibility Committee
March 19, 2012

Description of the Issue:
This proposal is an amended continuation of the HEI proposal brought before the SRC originally on November 30, 2011. As we explained in that proposal, and will outline again here, the hotel housekeeping industry is one of the most exploitative industries in the United States. This is because workers in hotel chains such as HEI Hotels and Resorts, Inc. and Hyatt Hotel and Resorts are underpaid, overworked, and face intense illegal anti-union campaigns and intimidation. HEI and Hyatt are notorious in the industry for leading the race to the bottom and setting an especially low bar for the treatment of their workers. This is why many of their hotels are placed on the union UNITE HERE’s boycott list. Currently there is a national movement bringing together students and workers to fight back against these hotels’ illegal and unethically practices. Much of this movement is focused on moving university and college endowment money away from HEI hotels. We want Macalester to join this movement for justice. However, because Macalester is not currently invested in HEI and has said privately that it has no plans to invest in them in the future, we would like to use our consumer power to pressure these hotels to change their practices. As will be outlined below, we propose a college wide travel policy which boycotts boycotted hotels and encourages the patronage of unionized hotels when given the choice.

Relationship to Macalester:
Macalester prides itself on being a socially responsible and ethical institution. When issues concerning college policies have arisen in the past, the administration has been cooperative in altering those policies. Macalester’s recent Bottled Water Ban is a perfect example of the college’s ability to strengthen its commitment to institutionalizing socially responsible practices on a larger scale. And just as the college promotes academic excellence and ethical behavior in its students, the students demand administrative excellence and ethical behavior. Students and administrators holding each other accountable as ethical members of the larger community has given Macalester a positive reputation as a college whose student body and administration both value justice. Boycotted hotel properties are not socially responsible or ethical; therefore their practices contradict Macalester’s commitment to responsible and ethical actions and polices. When student groups, teams, or professors travel, Macalester pays for their hotel stays,
possibly at HEI owned hotels or other boycotted properties such as Hyatt properties. When students pay tuition and alumni donate, they are doing so in the hopes that the money will be spent to improve Macalester College and keep it moving forward, not spent reinforcing unethical business practices in boycotted hotels. When Macalester takes a stand on this issue it will join other prestigious universities who are saying no more to unethical and illegal treatment of workers in boycotted hotels. Last year, Brown University, University of Pennsylvania, and Yale University all publicly stated that they have no future plans to reinvest in HEI. Over the past few months, Swarthmore College, Vanderbilt University, and Cornell University also released similar statements. And most recently Princeton University spoke out against HEI and stated they also will not reinvest. Macalester markets itself as a mini-Ivy, so it is time we stood with our peers and took a stand against these boycotted hotels that engage in unethical business practices. Tuition dollars and student organization funds should not be used to patronize sweatshop hotels. A public boycott of boycotted properties would be the most powerful statement Macalester could make against both HEI and Hyatt’s unethical and illegal business practices. The Action Section below will outline a way Macalester can successfully avoid supporting hotels that engage in unjust practices.

Statement of Relevant Facts:
UNITE HERE, the hotel union in the United States, boycotts hotel properties because they violate workers’ basic human rights. Hotel housekeeping is a physically strenuous job under any circumstances, but these boycotted properties have singled themselves out with sweatshop like working conditions. Hotel housekeepers around the country face an injury rate of 10.4%, almost double the injury rate for other workers (5.6%). Extreme workloads due to insufficient staffing directly cause greater physical strain on the housekeepers as they try to compensate for the larger workload. This results in injuries such as pulled tendons, pinched nerves, carpal tunnel, and back pain. The two umbrella companies that UNITE HERE focuses its boycotts on are HEI and Hyatt. There are also two specific hotels, the Congress Hotel in Chicago, and the Columbia Sussex Hotel in Anchorage. Here is the link to the UNITE HERE website outlining why we should boycott certain properties: http://www.hotelworkersrising.org/HotelGuide/abouttheboycotts.php

The following are examples of why these hotels are on the boycott list:
HEI Hotels

● HEI housekeepers are forced to clean too many rooms in allotted time periods, so many do not take rest breaks or lunch time. In San Francisco, where most of HEI’s competitor hotels are union, housekeepers clean 13 rooms per day. In Arlington, Virginia, where fewer competitors are union, housekeepers must clean as many as 32 rooms per day. Some housekeepers do not take their rest breaks or lunch time because they are afraid of intimidation from management or of being fired if they do not finish their assignment. This lack of rest time exacerbates the injuries caused by the already physically straining work demands.

● In the past three years, HEI has had to settle multiple charges with the National Labor Relations Board. In October 2011, “a California State Labor Commission hearing officer found the Embassy Suites in Irvine guilty of denying rest breaks to seven workers and ordered the hotel pay them $36,000. HEI has now settled or been held liable on 32 wage and hour administrative complaints for a total of $99,999 at the Embassy Suites Irvine.

● HEI has cut inventories of basic cleaning supplies and materials. This prompted the
HEI Student Petition workers at the Long Beach Hilton to offer to raise the funds themselves to buy supplies. As one of the fastest growing hotel management companies, HEI can afford to supply its workers with materials. HEI threatened employees with losing their employment if they continued to participate in union activity and illegally interrogated employees about union activity, according to the Office of General Counsel of the NLRB. Ferdi Lazo, an engineer at the
Sheraton Crystal City describes his experience with HEI’s intentional anti-union campaign: "I was fired from HEI for union organizing. I could have walked away and given up the fight, but I knew things could be better. I traveled the country and told my story to students. Together, with my coworkers and the students, we fought hard. HEI offered me $50,000 if I would agree to never come back to the Hotel. I denied their offer and kept fighting. I won my job back and collected a $24,800 settlement.”

**Hyatt Hotels**

- Hyatt uses subcontracting to destroy good jobs and exploit immigrant workers. On August 31, 2009, Hyatt fired its entire housekeeping staff at three non-union hotels, replacing women who had worked at Hyatt for decades with workers from a temporary agency. They then required that the fired workers train their replacements, who now earn minimum wage and clean up to 30 rooms per day. Few if any of the subcontracted workers receive health insurance.

- Hyatt housekeepers suffer worse abuse than at any other hotels in the country. A study published in the American Journal of Industrial Medicine examined a total of 50 hotel properties from 5 different hotel companies. It concluded that Hyatt housekeepers had the highest injury rate of all housekeepers studied when compared by hotel company.

- Hyatt dehumanizes their workers and has ignored allegations of sexual harassment. In late September, the Hyatt Regency in Santa Clara, California, fired two housekeepers, sisters Marta and Lorena Reyes. These middle-aged mothers were featured on a “digitally-created collage of bikini-clad “Hyatt Housekeepers” on a company bulletin board. Humiliated by their depiction, Marta removed her image and that of her sister. Soon after, both sisters were fired. The sisters have filed a formal complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. In subsequent sexual harassment trainings, management denied that it had objectified women’s bodies or engaged in any damaging act.

- Hyatt has refused to remain neutral as non-union hotel workers organize. In Indianapolis, San Antonio, Scottsdale, Santa Clara, San Francisco and Long Beach, Hyatt has refused calls from workers who want the choice to join a union without employer intimidation. Workers in non-union properties report “disrespect from their management, low wages, unaffordable health insurance and high room quotas for room cleaners.

- Hyatt turned heat lamps on striking workers during a brutal heat wave. On July 21, 2011, a strike began at the Park Hyatt Chicago. On the same day, an excessive heat warning was issued by the National Weather Service, with heat index readings climbing above 100 degrees in downtown Chicago. Hyatt management responded to the striking workers by turning heat lamps on in the awning above the striking workers for about an hour, until reports issued to the press. The following day, Hyatt released a public statement admitting management was responsible for turning heat lamps on striking workers. Hotel workers are filing charges with the government against Hyatt.

Proposed Action:

In response to the illegal and unethical actions of boycotted hotels such as HEI and Hyatt, we propose Macalester take the following action. We ask:

The college to implement a community wide policy which mandates that any person traveling under the college’s name with college funding will not stay in boycotted properties with the recommendation to stay, whenever possible, in a union hotel. We expect this policy to mandate a zero tolerance policy for staying at boycotted properties and to strongly recommend staying at union properties when provided with a choice.

The way in which we would implement this policy would be by providing a link on Macalester’s website to UNITE HERE’s list of boycotted hotels:
http://www.hotelworkersrising.org/HotelGuide/boycott_list.php. This will allow students or professors making travel arrangements to easily check whether their planned hotel(s) are under boycott.

The website would also highly recommend staying in a union hotel and provide a link to the UNITE HERE union hotel guide, where an individual can enter his or her desired location and find union hotels in the area: http://www.hotelworkersrising.org/HotelGuide/. We are in conversation with administrators in Campus Programs and Campus Life about having this information available on the Macalester website, specifically on the web page that lists lodging in the Twin Cities. They feel that this would be easy to implement.

http://www.macalester.edu/about/maps/accommodations/index.html There are also a few other ways in which this policy can be implemented around campus. One way would be through the Travel Approval and Funding Request form student organizations and groups must fill out to receive travel funding from the college. The form should include a question as to whether or not the overnight accommodation (if it is a hotel) is under boycott. The links to the boycotted hotel list and the union hotel guide would be provided in the form for students to easily use. Since students have to apply for funding for travel in advance through this form, this provides an easy outlet for the implementation of this policy. The second way would be student presentations about the policy to the Staff Advisory Council. These presentations would be given by MPIRG’ Economic Justice Taskforce members, or other concerned students who are well versed in the travel policy. In these presentations we would instruct the staff about how to use the website and the importance of this policy. We also ask this policy extend to speakers or other important figures the college, specifically Campus Programs, provides lodgings for in the Twin Cities.

And finally in addition, we ask that Macalester College send letters to HEI and Hyatt, and to the Columbia Essex and Congress Hotels explaining our boycott policy and how our decision not to patronize their hotels is a reaction to their unfair, illegal, and unethical labor practices.

Potential Obstacles and Considered Alternatives:
Though this proposal is practical, straightforward and in line with Macalester’s values, it is not without its potential obstacles to implementation, which we have thoroughly considered. It is possible that this policy will lead to some inconveniences while traveling and making lodging arrangements. If the initially chosen hotel is on the boycott list, travelers may have to choose a new hotel. However, we are confident that this process will be smooth and streamlined, and that such conflicts will not occur often. In the implementation of this policy, links to both the boycott list and the directory of union hotels will be inserted in the form for student travel fund requests, and both links will be posted on a convenient page on the Macalester website that explains the policy and is easily accessible to faculty making travel plans. In addition to making the change easy, this plan in practice will likely not lead to many drastic changes in hotel accommodation. Though the list is dynamic, there are currently 44 properties that are on the boycott list or on strike. None of them are in the state of Minnesota. To contrast, there are three union hotels in St. Paul and 13 in Minneapolis, representing a range of locations and levels of accommodation from a Holiday in Express to the Graves 601, Minneapolis’s only AAA Four Diamond luxury hotel. This case study of the Twin Cities, where Macalester spends a large portion of its money housing guests of the college, shows that as a general rule it will be very easy for the college to avoid boycotted hotels and patronize union hotels without undue inconvenience or any added cost (in fact, boycotted hotels tend overwhelmingly towards high-end luxury brands like Hyatt). There are two potential areas of exceptions to this policy. The first is if a conference books a faculty member or student in a room in a boycotted hotel. Though this is unlikely to occur with any significant frequency given the relatively small number of boycotted hotels, the college would unfortunately need to relax this policy in that instance. The second potential concern is safety--it has been indicated to us that there may, at times, be safety concerns if hotel accommodations are moved from a boycott hotel to a non-boycott hotel that is further away from the event site, due to extra travel responsibility for the student. Though in extenuating circumstances, we would be willing to allow an exception for this reason, we respectfully contend that this concern is largely unfounded. We must hold in mind that our students are adults who live in an urban area while at school, and most of them are familiar with the use of public transportation and are comfortable traveling on it. In addition, due to the low number of boycotted hotels and the fact that staying in union hotels is not a mandate
of the proposal, it should not be difficult to switch from a boycott hotel to an alternative hotel that is an equivalent distance from the event site the student is traveling to attend.

Conclusion
Last semester, we presented a similar proposal to the Social Responsibility Committee that proposed the boycott be considered along with a statement by the college that in the future they would not invest in HEI funds. As Macalester is currently not invested in HEI and has no plans to invest, such a statement would have been purely symbolic, and for this reason and in order to not set a precedent of making statements about hypothetical actions the SRC chose to deny the proposal. We considered these concerns, and concluded that although Macalester is not directly invested in HEI or Hyatt, the college is not free from responsibility. The present proposal is a product of that consideration.

This new plan, solely focused on a boycott of hotels with proven poor labor practices, with letters informing the companies behind such practices of our purposes, retains the same symbolic power of the earlier proposal. It allows us to stand with our institutional values and promote good labor practices, while at the same time placing us in solidarity with a student movement at respected universities across the nation to divest from HEI, an enabler of poor and illegal labor practices and race to the bottom. It is also a practical, tangible change in current college policy, not just potential future college policy—it will be an unequivocal statement that Macalester College will not use its funds to promote labor abuses, much the same way it does not use its funds to promote the unsustainable and irresponsible use of bottled water. In short, this proposal will put our practices in line with our values, and represents a practical, logical and easy