



**Action of the 2007-2008 American Sociological Association Council
By Unanimous Vote of those Responding
June 27, 2008**

Present by Vote: Margaret Andersen, Judith D. Auerbach, Patricia Hill Collins, Dalton Conley, Marjorie DeVault, Bonnie Thornton Dill, Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Arne L. Kalleberg, , Douglas McAdam, Mary E. Pattillo, Mary Romero, Frances Fox Piven, Clara Rodriguez, Rubén Rumbaut, Marc Schneiberg, Gay W. Seidman, Donald Tomaskovic-Devey,

Absent from Vote: Michèle Lamont, Robin Stryker

ASA Executive Officer Sally T. Hillsman provided the background information by email.

Background

A labor issue has arisen with regard to food service at the convention center in Boston for some of the 2008 Annual Meeting activities. After consultation with the President and President-elect, I write to ask for your vote on a statement on this issue (presented below) that reflects the Association's long-standing public support of fair labor practices and the welfare of workers.

There are no labor issues about 2008 Annual Meeting hotel-based activities because all hotels are in compliance and hotels are where the majority of meeting activities occur. All the Boston hotels reached agreement with Local 26 earlier this year, so there are no labor concerns with the hotel facilities that are providing meeting space and guest rooms for the Annual Meeting. The on-going labor dispute involves only the food service in the convention center facilities (not the ASA use of convention center space) for the Annual Meeting in Boston.

For Boston this year, the only labor issue of concern is that UNITE HERE Local 26, the Boston Hotel and Foodservice Workers Union, is currently in a labor dispute with Aramark at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center and the Hynes Convention Center. In mid-May the union sent a letter to all groups scheduled to meet in Boston this summer, advising them that the labor contract for all food and beverage employees at these two properties had expired.

On June 3rd, the Aramark foodservice employees at these two facilities voted (294 to 7) in favor of a strike and boycott authorization, which allows the negotiating committee to call for a strike or boycott at any time. ASA received another letter from the union in mid-June, and the campaign coordinator followed up a week later with a voicemail message indicating a desire to talk about the implications of the contract dispute.

ASA is using two exhibit halls at the Hynes Convention Center for registration, the employment service, exhibits, and poster sessions. While the space in the convention center is not at issue, there is some small food service connected with the convention center activities, so any service disruption that might occur would be minimal.

If no settlement regarding Aramark foodservice employees has been reached by the ASA meeting dates and picketing occurs at the Hynes, it will be at the outside entrance on Boylston Street. This is not the entrance that ASA meeting attendees will use to access the registration and exhibit areas, though it is the departure point for those attendees going on ASA-sponsored tours. Primary access to ASA exhibit halls is via the third floor of the Sheraton Boston hotel; secondary access would be through the entrance inside the Prudential Plaza. Picketing is not permissible inside the hotel or the plaza.

Yesterday, the Local 26 campaign coordinator informed ASA staff that union members have gone back to work after a three-day strike, and they are waiting to see what the next steps in the negotiations will be. It is uncertain that any progress will be made on a contract between now and the start of the ASA Annual Meeting, especially because Aramark began firing members of the negotiating committee after Aramark's the last offer was turned down. Two provisions that Aramark put on the table in that offer were that Aramark would decide who gets health insurance coverage, and that the pay raise would be 10 cents an hour per year for the next five years. It is easy to understand why the union would turn down that offer.

UNITE HERE is now asking for users of the convention center to boycott food use in the convention centers. If ASA makes a commitment not to use food services from Aramark, the official and sole caterer for the Hynes Convention Center, the UNITE HERE campaign coordinator said there would be no pickets at the Hynes during the ASA Annual Meeting.

The Executive Office is preparing to confirm ASA's intention to sign no food service contracts with Aramark. The ASA Officers support for this decision. This action does mean that there will be no concession stands open in the exhibit halls to encourage traffic flow or snacks at poster sessions to encourage attendance. If having a water service for the exhibit halls becomes problematic without an Aramark contract, Meeting Services staff will look at options for

setting up water stations near the hall entrances in the Sheraton to service attendees and staff working in the halls.

Council Motion: In accordance with previous actions by the American Sociological Association (ASA) in support of fair labor practices and the welfare of workers, the ASA Council urges that the Aramark Company operating at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center and the Hynes Convention Center negotiate with UNITE HERE Local 26, the Boston Hotel and Foodservice Workers Union, to provide fair wages, health and other coverage, and engage in no retaliation against union negotiators. The ASA Council affirms the Association's intention to sign no food service contracts with Aramark unless the contract issues are settled before our Annual Meeting. The ASA is holding its 103rd Annual Meeting in Boston, July 31 - August 4, 2008, with a meeting theme of "The Worlds of Work." As a professional and scholarly association, we are deeply concerned about the welfare of hotel, convention center, and foodservice workers who are often people of color and women, and about ensuring fair labor practices in communities to which we regularly return to hold our meetings. ASA anticipates that its 103rd Annual Meeting in Boston will meet or exceed attendance at its 102nd meeting in New York City of 6,025 members and other national and international participants.

By unanimous vote