



Back on the job

Delta Chelsea hotel recalls workers suspended for wearing AIDS ribbons, union pins

By **BRETT CLARKSON, TORONTO SUN**

A group of Delta Chelsea workers who had been suspended by the downtown hotel for wearing union pins and red ribbons in support of the AIDS conference were back at work yesterday.

Hotel management recalled the 45 suspended workers yesterday after their protests against the hotel attracted media attention and the support of delegates attending the conference.

The workers were allowed to wear their pins and ribbons yesterday, union spokesman Andrea Calver said.

The hotel workers -- mainly housekeeping staff, the union said -- were disciplined for wearing a pin that read "Hotel Workers Rising" and "Lifting One Another Above the Poverty Line" with a red ribbon fastened to it.

'INCREASING THE SKILL'

"Hotel Workers Rising is about increasing the skill in hotel jobs," said Calver, an organizer with UNITE HERE Local 75, which represents 6,000 workers in about 40

hotels in Toronto.

"It's about more training, more promotional opportunities, better pay, pensions, everything that would make a job middle-class standard."

The red ribbons were worn to support the AIDS conference, which the union sponsored, and also because many immigrant hotel workers, from poor, AIDS-ravaged countries, have a personal connection to the disease, Calver said.

Lawyer Stephen Shamie, the spokesman for the hotel, said the button had "nothing to do with AIDS at all" and said the union was using the AIDS conference to push its own agenda.

Shamie said the hotel disallowed the buttons because workers had already been wearing the official AIDS conference button, which the hotel had encouraged.

NO CONTRACT

As a result, two buttons on one uniform was deemed by management to look unprofessional. The union was told this on the Friday before the conference started, he said.

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Calver said the same pins and ribbons were distributed to these other hotels, including the Hilton and Sheraton Centre hotels downtown.

Calver said while employees in other hotels across the city were allowed to wear their pins and ribbons, only the Delta Chelsea took issue with them.

