

Airlift Protest



Demonstrators outside Bird Air office in Oakland's Leamington Hotel

Cambodia Operation Denounced

About 200 demonstrators milled and chanted at the Leamington Hotel in downtown Oakland yesterday to protest the Cambodian airlift operated by the hotel's owner and his Bird Air airline.

"Bring down the bird," they shouted. "Bird Air earns its pay—Hired gun for the CIA!"

"Decent jobs — yes! Mercenaries—no!"

After 45 minutes of chants and a brief series of speeches demanding that the United States end the war in Indochina, the demonstrators entered the Leamington. Their intent was to carry what they called the "clear word to Mr. Bird" to end the airlift in Cambodia by Bird Air civilian crews flying U.S. Air Force C-130 Hercules transports.

But when the crowd tried to leave the lobby and go to the third-floor office of Bird and Sons Co.—the Oakland headquarters of William H. Bird's hotel, shopping center and airline conglomerate — Oakland police barred the way.

After promising they would be back during a bigger rally on March 29, the demonstrators left as a force of Oakland police on motorcycles arrived with a roar outside.

"Hey, Al, you're late," shouted one of the marchers to a motorcycle cop across the street.

"Al" and the other cops laughed and the last of the demonstrators disappeared.

The third-floor office of Bird and Sons was locked during and after the demonstration.