

Mobilize the working class behind Verizon strikers!

Socialist Equality Party
9 August 2011

This statement will be distributed by supporters of the Socialist Equality Party to striking Verizon telecommunications workers in the Northeast United States. Click here to download it in pdf format. Contact the SEP to become involved in the campaign today.

The Socialist Equality Party calls for the broadest possible popular support for the 45,000 striking Verizon workers. The resistance of Verizon workers must be linked to a growing struggle in the US and internationally against the corporate-driven impoverishment of the working class.

This is a decisive battle. The walkout coincides with the 30th anniversary of the PATCO air traffic controllers' strike. The capitulation of the AFL-CIO to Reagan's firing of 13,000 PATCO strikers in 1981 opened up the floodgates for a three-decade war against the jobs and living standards of the working class.

Today, Verizon and other major corporations are using the economic crisis and the threat of unemployment to destroy whatever social rights workers have retained. The corporate and financial aristocracy, having accumulated vast amounts of wealth over the last three decades, has declared that decent wages, health care and retirement benefits are no longer affordable.

As its executives pull in millions and the company tallies billions in profits, Verizon is insisting that workers accept the destruction of pensions and sharply increased contributions for health care benefits, tying wages to productivity and other performance targets, the destruction of job security and the increased casualization of the workforce.

Conditions of work are to be returned to what they were in the 1930s. Workers will have absolutely no

rights and benefits, their very livelihoods completely dependent on the whim of management.

This same impoverishment is being imposed by companies throughout the country, including auto workers in current contract negotiations. Meanwhile, politicians of both parties are seizing on the economic crisis as an opportunity to slash trillions of dollars in cuts to health care, retirement programs, and public education. If the ruling class has its way, the vast majority of the population will live in dire poverty, while a tiny minority increases its wealth enormously.

Verizon has very consciously provoked this strike in the midst of the greatest unemployment crisis since the Great Depression in order to blackmail workers into agreeing to everything. They are doing so with the active collaboration of the Obama administration, which has rejected any measures to relieve unemployment and social suffering. This is not an error but a deliberate policy to bolster the corporate campaign to drive down wages and benefits.

Workers should be under no illusion that this will be a short struggle. Verizon has prepared for it by recruiting management and other replacement workers to keep operations going.

In carrying out this attack, Verizon is relying on the Communications Workers of America (CWA) and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) to isolate the strikers, wear workers out with little or no strike pay, and inevitably accept sweeping concessions.

The CWA and IBEW have collaborated in the destruction of tens of thousands of jobs, including a reduction in the Verizon workforce from 87,000 to 45,000 since 2000. In that year, the CWA split the ranks of striking workers and ordered the majority back to work in the New York-New England region before

signing an agreement to boost the company's productivity and competitive position.

If it is to be successful, the strike must be taken out of the hands of the pro-corporate CWA and IBEW through the formation of rank-and-file committees, which must make an urgent appeal to all sections of the working class.

The struggle requires the fullest mobilization of the working class in the US and internationally, beginning with the 135,000 nonunion Verizon wireless workers and other telecommunication workers to stop the strikebreaking operation and shut the corporation down until all of the demands of the workers are met. The struggle must be extended to all telecommunication workers, public and private sector workers facing a similar attack, and the unemployed.

The CWA and IBEW are opposed to any serious struggle because this would place the Verizon workers in a direct confrontation with the Obama administration, which is an instrument of the corporations and the Wall Street banks.

Verizon workers must reject the collaboration with the Democratic Party—which no less than the Republicans insists that the working class must pay for the crisis of the capitalist system and the enrichment of the financial elite.

The defense of basic social rights—for decent-paying and secure jobs, health care benefits and a comfortable retirement—places the working class in a direct struggle against the capitalist system, which subordinates the needs of society to the profit interests of the wealthy few.

The Socialist Equality Party calls on workers to reject all demands for concessions and economic sacrifices. It is not a question of what must be given up, but the necessary organizational and political strategy to oppose all cuts.

We call for the confiscation of the ill-gotten wealth of the bankers and corporate executives. To meet the basic needs of the working class, taxes on the wealthy must be increased, including a 90 percent tax on all incomes over \$500,000.

To end the dictatorship of the banks and a tiny handful of corporate executives, the telecommunications industry must be transformed into a public utility, democratically owned and controlled by the working class. Capitalism—that is, the unlimited

plundering of society to serve the interests of the wealthy—must be replaced with the socialist reorganization of the entire economy to meet social need, not private profit.

We call on all Verizon workers who want to take forward this struggle to contact the *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Party today.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact