

CWA silent after Verizon worker run down by New York City cop

Nick Barrickman**11 May 2016**

Two days after a striking Verizon worker was run down by a uniformed New York City police lieutenant escorting strikebreakers through a picket line, the Communications Workers of America (CWA) is largely remaining silent on the violent attack, which has also gone unreported in the corporate-controlled media.

A call placed by the WSWS to CWA Local 1109 in Brooklyn, New York revealed that the injured worker, James Smith, was currently still in the hospital and set to undergo further tests of his injuries. "He's not doing too good," said a union spokesperson at Local 1109 of Smith's injuries.

On Monday morning picketers were protesting at the City View Inn in the New York City borough of Queens, where Verizon was housing strikebreakers reportedly from Kentucky. After a lengthy and angry standoff, the NYPD decided to evacuate the scabs from the hotel and loaded them up in police vans and unmarked vehicles, driven by the cops themselves. As one vehicle sped through the picket line it struck the parked car that James was in before continuing without stopping. Strikers have reported that the driver was a police lieutenant from the 108th Precinct in Long Island City.

The incident has shed light on the strikebreaking operation being coordinated by Mayor Bill de Blasio who has dispatched hundreds of police on behalf of Verizon to spy on strikers, escort scabs and herd striking workers behind metal barricades, regularly used against protesters in the city. The incident exposes the phony claims of support by Democrats, from Hillary Clinton to Bernie Sanders, and reveals the anti-working class character of the unions' alliance with the Democrats.

The government-backed strikebreaking underscores the criminal character of the isolation of the month-long strike by the CWA, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) and the rest of the AFL-CIO and Change to Win unions.

The WSWS also called the national and district offices of the CWA inquiring what action it planned regarding the NYPD's violence against workers. The national office

would not speak to the WSWS while a spokesperson named "Pete" at the district office advised WSWS reporters that it "would not be a good idea" to pursue the matter.

In a teleconference with striking workers Monday night CWA District 2-13 Vice President Edward Mooney did not say a word about the incident. Instead he tried to sow complacency telling workers that Verizon "could not replace 39,000 striking workers" and that all they had to do is hang on "one day longer than the company."

Asked about the company's strikebreaking operation, Mooney said, "I know that it is concerning," but he tried to reassure workers by saying the CWA was working with city governments and police departments in major urban centers.

Striking Verizon workers in New York City denounced the attack, which was a chilling reminder of the violence used against workers in previous strikes, including the 1989 murder of striking NYNEX worker Edward "Gerry" Horgan.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a Verizon worker in Virginia told the WSWS *Verizon Strike Newsletter*, "We would never have known about this if not for your web site." The worker said immediately after reading the WSWS article he contacted his local union executive board but was informed that they knew nothing about it.

"What's the deal here, when these incidents happen, no one's informed? Why aren't they trying to contact every major media outlet they can find about this?" he asked, noting that it appeared that the union was trying to preserve its relations with the Democratic Party.

"What this correlates to is the death of Gerry [Horgan] in 1989, where the daughter of a manager drove through the picket line and ran him over. Was anyone ever punished for that? No. Did the company make payments to his family? Who knows," he said.

"This whole thing is a debacle, I'm seriously considering not going on the picket line anymore, I'm sick of us not knowing what's going on, I was at this [teleconference] call last night; I'm sick and tired of Mooney cursing out the company and calling them cowards, I've heard it before, I

hear it every week. Where's the resolution?" he added.

One Verizon striker, who also wished to remain anonymous, said, "We are really concerned about strikebreakers, and we have to be careful. There was an incident recently where a scab was threatening a striker with a machete. You know a lot of these guys are from the South, and you don't know if they might have a knife or a gun on them.

"I've also heard that the scabs are getting paid double what we used to get. They call us greedy, but they are getting double. This is ridiculous. You can tell the company just thinks about this as a game, that they are trying to break us."

George Bloom, an inside technician with 18 years of experience, asked about the use of scabs, stated, "I think Verizon is testing the will of the membership, and that is why they provoked a strike and took away our health care. You see that the company is always threatening to replace us. Corporate America has the upper hand right now."

Martin, a field technician, said, "I think the company did something similar last strike. They were hiring off-duty cops to help move the scabs around.

"It is clear this strike isn't getting mainstream attention. I remember we had a big march to in Manhattan to Wall Street, and there might have been a few thousand people there. I saw a Channel 7 van at the rally, but all the headlines didn't show us. When I looked it just said 'Verizon strikers sabotage Verizon network.' They probably wouldn't have covered us at all if Sanders hadn't come to a picket line.

"When we are out here you can tell a lot of people support us, but when I am at the picket line near Wall Street it is not like that. You see that a lot fewer people are sympathetic to us, and they are the ones with all the money.

"All these companies are outsourcing, and it is hurting the middle class. You see that they are squeezing the workers, and that is what they want. I hear that Verizon turned down a million dollar deal with New York State to install FIOS in rural areas, and it is all because that would create jobs. Their main concern is busting us.

"The ability to communicate with people around the world is something everyone should have. Now because of what the companies are doing, I'm not sure who will be able to afford these products."

When a WSWS reporter pointed out that the union was keeping the strike isolated, Martin agreed, adding, "I see places like in Greece they all go out together, but here it is different. In the last strike [in 2011] we marched with the Occupy Wall Street protesters, but when we went back to work that stopped."

A Verizon striker with 20 years speaking about the striker who was hit by a van said, "I saw the video on Facebook.

The cops did not call the ambulance right away. This company makes more than a billion dollar profits a month. That is after the \$20 million salaries that the executives get.

"This strike is going nowhere. Verizon acts like the strike doesn't affect them. Both Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders came to the picket lines, but what good does that do us. I would like to see transnational unity between workers.

Bryan, with 20 years at the company, said, "It was a police officer who drove the vehicle protecting corporate interests. Other companies such as Con Ed, whose contract is expiring, is looking at what happens with this strike. This new CEO is very aggressive against the workers."

The WSWS *Verizon Strike Newsletter* also spoke with striking workers in Pennsylvania.

"It boils down to job security," Don who has worked 16 years for Verizon said at a picket line in Mechanicsburg. "Verizon wants to push call centers overseas. No reason why they have to lay off our staff, and then force employees to travel over 30 miles. They are now pushing for 85 miles."

Another picketing worker interjected, "If we take what they are offering, we are going to lose money because health care benefits are going to go up. They are saying a pay increase, but then they aren't telling us how much health care is going to cost. They also want us to travel up to 100 miles."

Don also talked about the toothless picket strategy. "Verizon Corporate filed a court injunction to only allow a maximum of six people in front of the property. We were supposed to go out to the highway and picket, but then they allowed us to do it here [in front of the Verizon Wireless store]."



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact