New picket line assault on Verizon strikers in Massachusetts

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In the wake of a violent attack on a Verizon picket earlier this week in Queens, New York there has been another incident involving a strikebreaker and a picketing worker.

Forty-seven-year-old Joseph Rooney of Roslindale, Massachusetts was hit by a scab Thursday, who plowed into a Verizon picket line in Westborough. According to press reports, as police were escorting strikebreakers' vehicles through the picket line, one accelerated, catching Rooney on the hood of his pick-up truck. The driver then stopped short, sending Rooney flying off the hood. He was taken to a local hospital with what are described as non-life-threatening injuries.

Police arrested the driver of the truck on two counts of assault and battery with a dangerous weapon, one count of driving under the influence of alcohol and operating a motor vehicle without a license. He was identified as George Pulling, age 55, of Naples, Florida. Police said it was his fourth DUI offense. He had been staying with other strikebreakers at a hotel being picketed by striking Verizon workers, members of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 2325. Pulling also struck a cop with the mirror of his truck.

The assault on Rooney follows an incident Monday where a van driven by a New York Police Department (NYPD) lieutenant struck a striking Verizon worker in Queens who had been picketing a hotel housing scab replacements.

Roger Young, executive vice president of Communications Workers of America Local 1101, told the *World Socialist Web Site* that the injured worker, James Smith, a 18-year Verizon veteran, has been released from Mt. Sinai hospital but is having a lot of trouble walking and is in "a great deal of pain."

Police have refused to charge the officer who struck the picket, but the incident has been used by the Obama administration as the basis for an injunction barring picketing New York City hotels housing strikebreakers. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) filed a court petition claiming the picketing violated the ban on secondary boycotts contained in the National Labor Relation Act. The petition reportedly names officials of CWA Local 1101.

The CWA remained silent on the attack in Queens for three days. After WSWS reports of the attack on the picket line in Queens were widely circulated by strikers, on Thursday the CWA finally broke its silence on the attack in Queens, posting a brief account on its blog in the form of an article reposted from International Socialist Organization's socialistworker.org. The article makes no criticism of the union's isolation of the strike and its relationship with the Democratic Party, which is backing Verizon's strikebreaking operation.

The long delay angered strikers, who correctly understood that the silence of the CWA only encouraged further violence against pickets.

Verizon's strikebreaking in New York City is being carried out with the backing of the city's Democratic Mayor Bill de Blasio. Hundreds of police have been mobilized against strikers with workers penned behind barricades while scabs are escorted across their picket lines.

A striking worker, a veteran of the 1989 NYNEX strike and the 2000 and 2011 strikes against Verizon, and a supporter of the *World Socialist Web Site*, spoke to the WSWS *Verizon Strike Newsletter* about the broader significance of the recent attacks on Verizon pickets.

"Through its silence the CWA is inviting more

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repressive measures from the state against its members. Immediately on the heels of the attack by the NYPD a federal judge issued a restraining order barring CWA from picketing hotels where out-of-town scabs stay.

"In Massachusetts police were assisting strikebreakers to violate picket lines when one scab suddenly accelerated his vehicle running over a picketer. A policeman was also struck. The scab was arrested and charged with DUI and assault. In view of recent developments I wonder if the scab would have been arrested had he not also hit a cop.

"Ann Donnelly, the federal judge issuing the injunction in New York, was appointed by Obama. She was recommended for her position by Senator Charles Schumer, a supposed progressive Democrat who has been a strong advocate of expanding the militarized police state and spy apparatus under the guise of waging the so-called 'global war on terror.' It is becoming clear the militarized police force will be used to suppress labor struggles in the US.

"Similar forces are at work in France, where following the recent terrorist attacks in Paris the government has given the police new powers, which are being used directly against striking or protesting workers.

"Bill de Blasio, who was a regular figure at the 2011 strike before he was elected mayor, has avoided mentioning the strike or appearing at rallies. At a recent rally in Manhattan I saw cops, who are overseen by the de Blasio administration, carrying military grade weapons standing in a park a few yards away. Their presence was clearly meant to intimidate and send a message.

"At nearly every picket line and rally I have attended police barricades are in place to keep strikers penned up and impotent with respect to preventing the movement of scabs in and out of the locations being picketed. My own view is that these pens are humiliating. They are an affront to us as supposedly free citizens."

Referring to the CWA and IBEW's collaboration in the suppression of strikers, he continued, "In addition to the physical confines of the police barricades, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by a current head of the CWA national union as part of the back to work agreement between CWA and Verizon is in effect a gag order on strikers. Under the terms of this MOU, the company is allowed to fire, and the union has agreed not to protect, strikers who use words deemed 'hate speech' by the company. The agreement also limits the activities of the so-called 'flying squads.'

"To enforce this Verizon has issued all of its strikebreakers with cellphones to video infractions. An app on the phone sends the video directly to Verizon security.

"Many of us theorize that because Verizon spends a lot on advertising media are reluctant to report on anything which reflects negatively on Verizon. There may be a small bit of truth to this, but I submit it is because news of the Verizon strike would encourage workers across the country to make demands too. That is the last thing the corporations who control media want. It is in their interest to suppress news of our struggle to keep it from spreading. That is why the *World Socialist Web Site* is so important.

"The CWA and the Democrats fear spreading labor unrest. For the CWA leadership it would conflict with their business model of managing us. For the Democrats, widespread labor unrest would not only create a nightmare for them in this year's elections. It would expose their role as the handmaidens of the Wall Street aristocracy, the same aristocracy that drives Verizon's unending demand for greater profits via increased productivity on our backs."

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