

“It will come to us next”

Auto and transit workers support Verizon strikers

A WSWS reporting team
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As the strike by 39,000 workers at Verizon in the US enters its second month, management is escalating its attack on workers. Two strikers were hit and injured by scab vehicles crossing picket lines this week: one in Queens, New York and one in Westborough, Massachusetts.

The Communication Workers of America (CWA) and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) are continuing to isolate the strike. The unions have not issued a statement on either incident despite their flagrant and unprovoked character. Nor have they made any effort to mobilize broader sections of the working class to support the Verizon workers.

Meanwhile, workers told the WSWS *Verizon Strike Newsletter* that a letter being widely circulated among Verizon workers on social media from a wireless employee alleges management plans to lock out strikers sometime after June 15. While the WSWS cannot verify the authenticity of the letter, if true it would represent a major escalation of strikebreaking.

The attacks on pickets highlight the strikebreaking role of the Democratic Party, with which both the CWA and IBEW are aligned. In New York City, Democratic Mayor Bill De Blasio has mobilized hundreds of police to escort scabs across Verizon workers picket lines while keeping workers penned behind metal barricades. The worker injured in Queens was struck by a van driven by a uniformed police lieutenant.

The *Verizon Strike Newsletter* is fighting to mobilize support for the striking Verizon workers from other sections of the working class to break through the media blackout and the sabotage of the unions. The WSWS spoke to New York City transit workers this

week and Fiat Chrysler workers in the Midwest.

As they rushed between their trains on brief breaks at the Stillwell station terminal in Coney Island, subway workers expressed support for the Verizon workers and the need for workers to rally behind the strike.

Ron Jones said, “They should get what they deserve. I support what they are doing. We need it, too. It should be all people, not only union but regular working people, act together.”

Niasha, an operator for three years, said, “They are trying to get fair wages, health insurance and retirement. Their strike benefits everybody. But it is like the unions are waiting and watching to see what everybody is going to do. They can come out and support each other.”

Valerie Hawkins, a train operator for two years, added, “I want everybody to have what they deserve and work for. That is why I support their strike. I see them with their signs near where I live. I would support all workers uniting. I agree that we need a workers’ party.”

Subway operator Jay Parker said, “They have to get what they need. Workers have a right to strike. I side with the workers. Jobs are being outsourced and need to be protected.”

A conductor who preferred not to give his name complained, “We are locked into the Taylor Law that makes it illegal to strike. The union likes all the corporations. It is corruption. Money that gets transferred from the government for the workers does not all get to us. But I don’t see it changing. The elite will always be the elite.”

Ben Demucci, a New York City transit train operator, told the WSWS, “I was a Verizon worker until I was

laid off in 2006. They said it was because of absences, but they were getting people for anything. They were looking for anyone to fire. They let a couple of thousand people go in 2006.”

Dexter Moore related his experience with Verizon and his support for the strikers: “I used to be a Verizon worker. I walked away because of the job uncertainty and what they would do every contract time. I believe they were very unfair when they took my pension away after I had worked there for 15 years, and done such good work for them.

“I heard from a current field tech that they are trying to limit pensions and take away health care benefits. Verizon is one of many companies making billions who are trying to take away the livelihood of working people who are on the front lines. Verizon strikers should have the support of all workers because it will come to us next.”

D. Smith, another transit train operator, said, “I think what they are doing is a good thing. It is good for all workers. It is standing up to management. They should be joined by all workers. However, in most cases it has been the union that is responsible for isolating strikes. They are in cahoots with management.”

The WSWS also distributed a newsletter containing a report on the Verizon strike to Fiat Chrysler workers at the Warren Stamping auto plant outside of Detroit. Many workers expressed concern that they were getting no information on the attacks on Verizon workers from the United Auto Workers or the corporate media.

One veteran worker said, “The public in general should stand behind them. That would have a positive influence.”

He related the attack on Verizon workers to the poisoning of Flint residents and the ongoing struggle by Detroit teachers, who carried out a two-day “sickout” protest last week over threats by the Detroit Schools emergency manager that they would not receive pay over the summer months. “We have a similar situation here with Flint and the school system in Detroit. The state created the deficit, and now they are trying to blame the teachers and the people of Detroit by cutting their pay and taking the system over.”

Another Warren Truck worker added, “What’s happening at Verizon is like the Detroit schools. They want to move the older workers out and bring in temps.”

He was angry that the UAW was not keeping workers informed of the situation at Verizon, but was not surprised. Speaking about the recent contract struggle in auto he said, “I voted ‘no’ on our contract. I didn’t like the pay scale. Eight years is too long to get to top pay.”

Another worker added, “I know what Verizon workers are going through. I worked at American Axle,” he remarked, referring to the strike in 2009 that saw the UAW impose massive concessions and job cuts.



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