No contract, No work!

Stop the CWA-IBEW sabotage of Verizon strike!

The WSWS Verizon Strike Newsletter
31 May 2016

The WSWS Verizon Strike Newsletter *urges Verizon and other workers to download and print this statement, share it on social media, send it to your co-workers and sign the* petition *being circulated by rank-and-file workers.*

There is growing opposition from workers to the attempt by the CWA to force Verizon strikers back to work without seeing a full contract and having the right to vote on it.

In an effort to appease the anger of workers, the CWA released a 10-page summary of a supposed tentative agreement, plus more than 100 pages of memoranda of understanding. It has also announced a few local union meetings and teleconferences on Tuesday and Wednesday, with some voting taking place immediately and others, at least in New York City, going on until June 7.

However the unions try to spin it, workers still do not have the contract in their hands—if there is a contract at all. The "voting" is a fraud, since it will have no impact on the end of the strike. This is a blatant violation of the most basic democratic procedures and due process that workers cannot accept!

There is a simple explanation as to why Shelton, Mooney & Co. do not want workers to have a chance to read and vote on any agreement. While they try to paint the deal in the most favorable manner, what little information is contained in the summary shows it is a complete capitulation to the demands of the telecom giant.

After agreeing to precedent-setting health care concessions in 2011-12, the CWA and IBEW accepted hundreds of millions more in givebacks by further shifting medical costs onto workers and their families. The chart contained in the summary shows across-the-board increases in every category, from monthly premiums and annual deductibles to co-pays for doctor and emergency room visits.

There are increases in prescription drugs and crushing fees for workers who do not sign onto "preferred lists" of cut-rate drugs. Tens of thousands of retirees will also see higher out-of-pocket costs and greater restrictions, which will have the effect of shortening their lives and saving the company millions more.

As the *New York Times* wrote, Verizon "achieved at least one clear victory in the new contracts: hundreds of millions of dollars in health care cost savings."

The summary includes derisory wage increases that average 2.5 percent a year, barely above the rate of inflation, especially for workers living in major metropolitan areas. Overtime is also capped. Pensions will be essentially frozen with an insulting one percent annual increase.

The claim that the unions won "job security" is equally bogus. There will be new rules regarding transferring customer inquiries between call centers that will allow the company to cut jobs. The deal will facilitate a restructuring of the company and the elimination of thousands of jobs. The agreement, one analyst told *Fortune*, was a "prelude to the company exiting the wireline telecommunications business" that "gives Verizon four years basically to get rid of the unit."

While the CWA claims it has eliminated the hated Quality Assurance Review, the deal will set up a joint labor-management body in which the CWA and IBEW will help impose speedup and victimize their own members.

© World Socialist Web Site

Like the rest of corporate America, Verizon's aim is to force older, higher-paid workers to "voluntarily" take retirement packages by subjecting them to impossible work conditions, long-distance work assignments and other forms of harassment. These workers, or at least a portion of them, will be replaced with lower-paid workers who will still have to pay dues to the CWA and IBEW.

It is evident that Verizon has achieved the most important changes it was seeking. The unions are trumpeting the fact that the company has supposedly backed down on other measures, but this is part of a well-orchestrated operation to help sell the deal.

This much is absolutely clear: Workers must have the full contract with plenty of time to study it before a re turn to work!

Verizon, the CWA and the IBEW know if workers return to work then a resumption of strike action will be much more difficult. This is why the agreement was announced over the Memorial Day weekend, when workers were not on the picket line and had less opportunity to discuss the deal and prepare opposition.

The return to work also comes the very day that unemployment benefits are scheduled to kick in for tens of thousands of workers in New York and other states. Strike benefits from the CWA Defense Fund are also scheduled to increase to $400 a week. Shelton and the rest of the union executives know any lessening of the economic pressure on workers will make the rank and file all the more determined to beat back the company's concession demands.

It certainly cannot be said that the unions did not plan their sabotage carefully!

The WSWS *Verizon Strike Newsletter* urges workers to attend meetings, talk to your fellow workers, share information on social media to raise and organize around the following demands:

1. No return to work until workers have a chance to study and discuss a full contract! Workers must have facts, not phony highlights and talking points.

2. Picket lines must go back up and the strike continued pending a democratic vote on a full contract.

3. Absolutely no concessions will be accepted. It is not a question of what workers will give up, but what must be done to secure the right of all workers to a quality job, health care and a pension.

To organize a serious struggle, the WSWS calls on workers to form rank-and-file committees, independent of the unions.

Through its actions, the unions have once again demonstrated that in the fight of workers against the corporations, the organizations that claim to represent them are on the other side of the barricades. The CWA and IBEW do not unite workers—they divide them. They do not fight to improve the living standards of workers, but help management impose its cost-cutting measures. They do not fight strikebreaking and court injunctions, but support the same big-business politicians, from President Obama to New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, who are helping Verizon break the strike.

AT&T West workers in California, Nevada and Hawaii, who have been working without a contract since early April, are anxious to join the fight with Verizon workers. The CWA has been working desperately to prevent a joint struggle on both US coasts, going so far as to sabotage a strike by San Diego workers last week, which the CWA acknowledges was "just hours" from spreading throughout the state.

Tens of millions of workers want to fight. Teachers, airline workers, postal workers, retail workers at Macy's and the giant supermarket chains are working with expired contracts and many have authorized strikes. The allies of Verizon workers are not the Democratic Party politicians, but the working class in the US and internationally who are facing the same fight.

Regardless of what happens over the next two days, the infrastructure of rank-and-file resistance must be built up to carry forward the struggle!

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site