

# France's New Anti-capitalist Party hails CWA sellout of Verizon strike

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France's New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) has applauded as a “victory” the recent sellout of the seven-week Verizon strike by the Communications Workers of America (CWA) and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) unions in the United States.

On June 1, the NPA's *Révolution Permanente* web site published an article titled “A real shock for the unions: 40,000 US workers force the telecom giant to give in.” Claiming that “the strikers' demands are being satisfied,” the NPA declared that the “agreement in principle” reached by the unions to shut down the strike had met most of workers' demands, including on wages, health insurance and “labor flexibility.” The NPA writers added, “Faced with the tenacity of the striking workers and the danger of even greater losses in profits, management decided to give into their demands.”

The NPA's assertion that Verizon gave in to the strikers is a political lie. After endorsing in a closed-door deal with management and the Obama administration, the CWA and IBEW rapidly moved to shut down the strike, without revealing the full details of the supposed contract or allowing workers to vote on it. Hundreds of Verizon workers signed a petition initiated by the WSWs *Verizon Strike Newsletter*, which opposed the CWA's attempt to end the strike without revealing the contract.

The WSWs analysed the contract “summary” and related documents presented by the CWA, showing that the agreement is a betrayal of the strike. The unions agreed to higher health care costs amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars in increased profits for management, and facilitating the restructuring of Verizon and the slashing of thousands of jobs.

The unions organized the struggle in a way that

violated basic norms of working class solidarity. As the WSWs explained, “After keeping workers on the job eight months after the August 1 contract expiration date, the unions called a strike on short notice under conditions where management's strikebreaking plans were well prepared. They left Verizon workers isolated, keeping 16,000 AT&T West workers in California, Nevada and Hawaii on the job past their contract deadline. Meanwhile, the CWA and IBEW were silent as police and scabs carried out violent assaults on pickets.”

A veteran Verizon worker told the WSWs, “For months the CWA was telling us we faced losing everything. Now they are calling it a victory because the very worst didn't happen. The main thing the company wanted was to shift medical costs onto the shoulders of workers, which is exactly what they did. The 1,300 workers the unions boasted the company is adding could be laid off within a year as far as I can see. Meanwhile, the CWA has been very active on social media attacking anyone who raises any questions about their claims.”

In its article, *Révolution permanente* calls this outcome an “encouraging victory for the US workers movement.”

The NPA's falsification of Verizon strike and its attempt to cover up trade union betrayals testifies to its deep hostility to the working class. Playing an active role within the union bureaucracy, middle-class pseudo left groups like the NPA in France and the International Socialist Organization (ISO) in the United States are trying to counter and disorient rising social anger in the working class. In doing so, they function as direct instruments of the ruling class, overseeing attacks on workers.

These organizations have been staggered, however,

by a rising international movement of political opposition in the working class. After eight years of the deepest capitalist crisis since the Great Depression, there is rising interest and support for socialism in the United States, particularly among working class youth, while in France and Belgium, a strike movement has erupted against government austerity policies. Workers and youth in France have been protesting over three months against the regressive labour law of President François Hollande's Socialist Party (PS) government.

The NPA, which in 2012 called for a vote for Hollande and thus helped bring to power the social-democratic Socialist Party (PS) government that is imposing austerity in France, is deeply complicit in the PS reactionary agenda. Its trade union wing, the Solidaires bureaucracy, works closely with the Stalinist CGT (General Labour Confederation) union, which has made clear that it will negotiate passage of some version of the reactionary labour law with the PS government.

This international movement of the working class, which in France emerged in direct conflict with the PS government, has terrified the pseudo left forces that for decades have worked as political allies of the PS, the Democratic Party in the United States, and similar parties of capitalist governments internationally. Escalating militancy in the American working class, which European pseudo left groups like the NPA wrote off as a revolutionary force decades ago, has only stoked their fears.

The entry of the American working class into struggle has again pointed to the class gulf separating pseudo left groups like the NPA from the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), which publishes the WSWs.

From the beginning, the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in the United States intervened in the Verizon struggle to provide a political leadership to the strike. Opposing pseudo-left groups' attempts to subordinate workers' struggles to the corrupt union bureaucracies and the Democratic Party, the SEP called on workers to form rank-and-file committees independent of the unions in order to organise the struggle. It insisted that the critical issue was establishing the political independence of the working class and a struggle of the working class for socialism.

The WSWs *Verizon Strike Newsletter* was circulated

and recirculated between thousands of strikers and looked at as the only publication that gave workers a voice and provided a strategy to break the isolation of the struggle. Hundreds of workers also took part in online discussions hosted by the WSWs.

The fact that the NPA tried to paint the CWA-IBEW betrayal in "left" colors is a warning to the working class entering into political struggles in France and internationally. While tacitly supporting austerity measures and sellout of strikes, the pseudo left forces in fact play the central role in preventing workers' struggles from developing outside the control of the union bureaucracies and rallying broader sections of the working class in a struggle for socialism and for political power.

By cynically implying that the outcome of the Verizon strike was a victory that has strengthened the workers, the NPA is preparing to cover up attempts by the CGT and other unions to shut down strikes and opposition against the labour law and austerity of the PS government and the European Union.

The central question confronting the working class is the building of the revolutionary party based on Marxist program to provide a political leadership to the working class. It requires mobilizing the working class on an international scale independently from the unions and their pseudo-left allies. This is the main task advanced by the ICFI and the WSWs.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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