

Breaking: CWA planning to shut down AT&T strike Wednesday, without any gains for workers

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In an act of treachery against its own membership, the Communications Workers of America (CWA) bargaining unit for the Southeastern US intends to send striking AT&T workers back to work tomorrow morning, according to exclusive footage taken today by a WSWS correspondent.

Just prior to a press conference scheduled for 1 p.m. Eastern, CWA Local 3204 President Ed Barlow approached picketing workers in downtown Atlanta, instructing them to gather around for an important announcement “for their ears only.” In the video, Barlow addresses the strikers saying, “So y’all been hearing the rumor that we’re going back to work tomorrow. Yes? From what I’ve been told, we are.”

He said that the return to work was imminent, but that he would tell the press that nothing had changed. He then added jubilantly, “Let’s party y’all.”

The purported reason for ending the strike before even a week has passed is that AT&T has resumed good-faith negotiations. As evidence of this “good faith” Barlow said that a higher-ranking company official has now been sent to the bargaining table. Previously, CWA officials claimed that AT&T’s negotiators did not have any authority from the company to make a compromise and arrive at a new contract, and so AT&T was allegedly bargaining in bad faith. The CWA contract for the unit expired on August 3.

In addition to Barlow’s statement, a striking AT&T worker in Jacksonville, Florida, told another WSWS reporter that rumors of a return to work at 10 a.m. tomorrow were circulating among workers.

The plan to call off the strike confirms that the CWA is preparing the telecom workers it nominally

represents for a concessions contract that will ensure large profits for AT&T and the continued flow of dues payments to privileged union bureaucrats.

From the outset, the CWA muzzled the strike action, insisting that the pickets had nothing to do with pay, benefits or other contract terms important to workers. Rather, the picketing only opposed the “unfair labor practice” of negotiating in bad faith. As the *World Socialist Web Site* warned, this limitation of the strike was intended to pave the way for a quick return to work without a single substantive issue moving in the workers’ favor.

In the broader political context, the CWA’s plan to shut down the strike aims to isolate telecom workers from their class allies in other industries with upcoming contract deadlines, most notably in the auto sector at GM, Ford and Fiat Chrysler.

Workers must reject any return to work on such terms. Rank-and-file committees, elected from the most trusted workers, should immediately establish their own pickets, independent of the union, and establish their own demands.



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