

Reject CWA-IBEW betrayal! Continue and expand the strike!

Socialist Equality Party
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Verizon workers should reject and oppose the attempt by the CWA and the IBEW to end their strike. It is the first step in selling out all the demands of the workers and imposing a disastrous defeat.

Rank-and-file Verizon strikers should defy the orders of the two unions. Instead of abandoning the strike and surrendering to the corporation, they should form independent rank-and-file committees to expand the strike through mass picketing at every Verizon location, appealing for support from Verizon Wireless workers and from the working class as a whole.

There is an enormous desire among millions of workers for a fight against the giant corporations and billionaires who are slashing the jobs, wages and benefits of the working class while they feast on government bailouts, tax cuts and ever-greater profits. The Verizon strike is being called off because the unions fear that it will become the focus of a mass movement against the corporations, the Obama administration and both parties of big business.

The calling off of the Verizon strike is one more example of the utter uselessness of the unions and their fundamental hostility to the interests of their own membership. They have called off the strike at precisely the point where it is beginning to have an impact on the operations of Verizon. Their aim is to create a mood of discouragement among workers and a feeling that nothing can be done to oppose the rotten agreement that will eventually be reached.

The timing is not accidental. After two weeks, Verizon strikers in the CWA become eligible for strike pay. Union leaders like Larry Cohen rake in six-figure salaries, but they begrudge paying out even the inadequate strike benefits that the rank-and-file workers themselves paid for through many years of union dues.

The unions are claiming that a return to work is justified because the company is now prepared to “seriously bargain.” This is a fraud. The company has not retreated on any of its demands. It is committed to imposing huge concessions on workers in the form of cuts to pensions and health care and the elimination of job security.

Verizon management released a statement on Saturday in which it stated, “We remain committed to our objectives” and that the company would work with the unions “to negotiate the major issues regarding benefits, cost structure, work flexibility and job security.”

The CWA itself acknowledged in a statement that “the major issues remain to be discussed,” only saying that they have been “focused and narrowed.”

The company, with the backing of the government, is using the disastrous economic situation as an opportunity to drastically reduce the living standards of its workforce. In the two weeks of the strike, it has mobilized the courts, the police and the Obama administration to back its campaign, which has included injunctions limiting pickets and an FBI investigation into unsubstantiated charges of “sabotage.” Dozens of workers have been hurt on the picket lines, many have been suspended, and several have been arrested.

Verizon workers have shown great determination. From the beginning, however, the unions worked to create the conditions for implementing the demands of the company. Their only substantive disagreement with Verizon relates to their desire to broaden their dues base, particularly by gaining access to wireless workers.

The CWA and IBEW did nothing to oppose the strikebreaking tactics of the company, insisting that

workers obey all strikebreaking injunctions. The AFL-CIO completely isolated the Verizon workers, doing nothing to mobilize broader support in the working class.

Perhaps the clearest indication of intentions of the CWA and IBEW is that they called off the strike without any agreement from the company to reverse punitive actions it has taken against many workers, including suspensions. The abandonment of these workers foreshadows the abandonment of all the strikers once they are sent back to work having gained nothing from two weeks on the picket line.

The Socialist Equality Party calls on workers to oppose this rotten sellout. We call for:

1. The formation of rank-and-file committees independent of and in opposition to the unions. These committees, controlled democratically by the workers, must be tasked with organizing resistance to the betrayal of the strike, beginning with defiance of the back-to-work order by the CWA and IBEW.

2. Rejection of all the concession demands of the company. The basic right of workers to a decent-paying job with health care and a pension must be preserved, expanded and extended to all workers. Punitive actions against all Verizon workers, including suspensions and criminal charges, must be withdrawn.

3. The mobilization of all sections of the working class behind the Verizon strikers as part of a united struggle against the dictates of the corporations and the government.

If the struggle is to succeed, the industrial strategy to mobilize the working class must be linked to a political fight against the capitalist two-party system. What is happening to Verizon workers is part of a broader offensive by the corporate and financial elite. As the economy enters a new recession, the ruling class is escalating its attack—through budget cuts at the federal, state and local levels, and through layoffs and wage-cutting by companies like Verizon.

This attack on the working class is now being led by the Obama administration. Indeed, Verizon is basing its attack on health care benefits for workers on the new taxes imposed on so-called “Cadillac” plans introduced as part of Obama’s health care overhaul. Obama’s “reform” was in fact an opening shot in a wholesale attack on health care progress, which is now being followed up with trillions of dollars in cuts to social

programs.

A central factor in the treacherous role of the unions is their political alliance with the Democratic Party, one of the two parties of the corporate ruling class. Both the CWA and IBEW, together with the AFL-CIO, are supporting and preparing to campaign for a president who has implemented attacks on the working class that go far beyond any previous administration.

The Socialist Equality Party is spearheading the fight for the independent industrial and political mobilization of the working class on the basis of a socialist program.

The SEP and our daily publication, the *World Socialist Web Site*, are organizing opposition to the sellout by the unions. We urge all workers who want to carry out a struggle to contact us today. Write to sep@socialistequality.com or call (248) 264-3735.

To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>