

CWA's response to Verizon's (Good Friday) Holiday Message

After reading Verizon's Good Friday message, it would appear that the leadership of CWA and IBEW is just dead set on denying its members Verizon's generosity. Can the Union's be so heartless?

Well, nothing can be further from the truth. The Unions are willing and even anxious to help reduce Verizon's so-called "surplus" by financially assisting those who, for whatever reason, wish to leave the payroll. However, we cannot agree to leave 15% of the work groups out of this special offer. Nor, can we agree to assist Verizon in its attempt to eliminate such a large number of employees while the Company continues to contract work in violation of our contract.

Over the past month CWA and IBEW met several times with Verizon to discuss what appears to the Unions as a "headcount reduction scheme". In fact, confirming the Unions' suspicion, Verizon's spokesperson told the Unions "even if we brought all contracted work back in house, we still need to cut 12,000 employees".

CWA and IBEW met with Verizon with the hopes of finding a way to accomplish three things:

1. **Reduce the amount of outside contracting** by bringing that work back to the core employees, and thereby reducing the surplus,
2. Finding a way to **safeguard the jobs of those hired after 8/3/03**, and
3. Offering **all employees** the best opportunity to leave the payroll with an expectation of financial security.

It was the Unions that proposed raising or eliminating the 30-year cap on calculating the IPP/ISP payments (Verizon's final proposal raised the cap to 40 years) and providing the additional bonus (\$40,000) to all employees accepting the IPP/ISP, not just those hired before August 2003 as Verizon's original proposal called for.

At the final meeting between the Unions and Verizon, the Company representatives sat there empty handed and closed mouth when it came to addressing alternative ways to reduce their (real or inflated) surplus. When the Unions raised concerns about the potential for increased contracting with a reduced employee base, they were met with silence. When the Unions raised concerns about increased customer complaints over long intervals for service repairs and installation, we were met with silence. When the Union raised concerns about offering a "one-time" enhanced voluntary leave package to only 85% of the unionized work groups, they were met with silence.

Verizon claims that its \$23 billion investment in FiOS was to "lay the foundation for future success and employment." How does eliminating 12,000 jobs translate into future employment? It is this and similar confusing statements that have left the Unions wondering what is truly going on here. CWA and IBEW entered these

discussions in earnest; trying to find a way to relieve a declared surplus. The Unions' proposals were intended to provide financial incentives to employees who wished to leave the payroll, especially more senior employees. This, we believed, would help secure employment opportunities for less senior employees. The Unions also proposed ways to insure future job security by eliminating dependence on contract labor. Verizon was not interested in any work returning to core employees.

The whole-sale elimination of 12,000 jobs, as proposed by Verizon, appears to leave one key element in a prosperous company out of the equation - the customer. Only by increasing the number of satisfied customers will our jobs truly remain secure today and in the future.

CWA remains open to improvements in the IPP/ISP and Pension Plan. But, Verizon must demonstrate its intention to secure future employment for its employees and not just make empty statements about it.