

## **New Haven Register**

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### **Union President Blames AT&T For Stalled Talks**

By Luther Turmelle North Bureau Chief

The president of Local 1298 of the Communications Workers of America said AT&T officials are responsible for contract talks having stalled between the union and the company.

William Henderson said Thursday that the company is using a "divide and conquer" strategy by only agreeing to bargain with unionized workers in one region of the country at a time. "They're a big enough company; they should be able to bargain at more than one table at a time," Henderson said.

But Walt Sharp, an AT&T spokesman, said that Henderson is misrepresenting the way the company bargains with its unionized workers. "These are separate contracts and, as such, there are separate bargaining teams, both for the union and for the company," Sharp said.

Henderson's comments came after AT&T officials announced Wednesday that CWA members in Texas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Kansas and Arkansas have ratified the tentative agreement that the union reached with the company last month. It is the fifth agreement that AT&T has reached this year with either the CWA or the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, which also represents the company's land-line employees.

"We're not going to accept something just because the people in Texas accepted it," Henderson said. "There are different issues here." Henderson said the company has been inflexible in its negotiations with the bargaining team of Local 1298 of Hamden, and has challenged the union to strike if it doesn't like the way the contract talks have been going. "We're going to do everything possible not to go out on strike because if we did, they would have replacement workers up here in a minute," he said. "We're not going to do something that adds stress to the lives of our members."

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