

CWAers Protest AT&T Job Cuts, Outsourcing

October 25, 2004

CWA members set up informational picket lines in more than a dozen communities to protest new layoffs announced by AT&T and to remind the public that the company is determined to abandon customers, communities and workers.

AT&T notified CWA on Oct. 19 that it would lay off more than 1,500 workers from locations across the country. This layoff announcement came just a few weeks after AT&T said it will close customer service centers in Charleston, W.Va., Hawaii and Puerto Rico, eliminating nearly 400 jobs, and will cut another 130 jobs at the customer center in Fairhaven, Mass.

In Minneapolis, CWA Sec.-Treas. Barbara J. Easterling joined CWA members on the picket line, along with AFL-CIO President John Sweeney. Demonstrations also were held in Dallas, Atlanta, Kansas City, Mo., Orlando, Fla., and other locations.

"Most of the recent jobs being outsourced are held by workers who are already educated, highly skilled and trained for what we were told were the jobs of the 21st century," Easterling said. "Americans who recognize the threat that outsourcing poses to our jobs and standard of living should outsource George Bush to Texas," she said.

In radio ads that aired in 13 cities, CWA told customers that AT&T was cutting the service that customers want by eliminating jobs and sending work overseas. The ad can be heard on <http://www.cwa-comtech.org>

Ralph Maly, CWA vice president for communications and technologies, said the continued downsizing, along with AT&T's announcement in July that it will abandon the residential consumer market, is part "of a long line of missteps the company has made." AT&T overpaid in acquiring its cable operation, then sold that, along with its wireless operation, without ever providing the bundled service packages that customers clearly preferred, he said.

Now, AT&T is jeopardizing the existing network by outsourcing technical work to less experienced contractors. "This is a national security issue, too," Maly said, because currently, "military, federal and state governments, hospitals and other institutions rely on AT&T's network to carry voice and data transmissions that are secure. How safe can AT&T's nationwide network be in the hands of subcontractors, based overseas, with no loyalty to AT&T or to the United States," he asked.

