

CWA@Cable

MOBILIZING THE CABLE INDUSTRY

Springfield Leads the Way

By Tim Schieffer, President Local 6312

On March 14th, our 67 cable workers at AT&T Broadband in Springfield, MO became the first of the newly organized bargaining units at AT&T Broadband to reach agreement on a contract. "This contract represents 17 months of hard work by a lot of people — 8 months of organizing and 9 months of bargaining," says CWA Rep. Bill Wildoner. "The cable workers, the Local officers and the labor community in Springfield all worked together on this one. If they hadn't we would still be at the table." Wildoner led the bargaining team that included Broadband System Tech Freddie Hill and myself. The guys at Broadband deserve the credit.

They had to stand up to a lot of pressure on the job. I'm proud of them and I'm very proud of all the members in our local that supported them. I am especially proud of Freddie Hill. Freddie gave up a supervisor's job because he didn't like the way they ran things. He helped lead this campaign from start to finish. "I was thrilled to death when the contract was ratified. We were all shaking hands and hugging. It was a lot of work but it felt great and it was worth it." Freddie Hill said.

In the middle of bargaining the company told us that the system was being sold to New York based Mediacom. That didn't



Springfield cable workers show support for bargaining.

slow us down at all. Now that we have a contract we are focusing our efforts on the Mediacom. On April 9th, Wildoner, Freddie, myself and a bunch of the cable guys attended the city's Cable Advisory Board Meeting that is considering the transfer of the franchise.

We made it quite clear that quality service and hometown jobs are different sides of the same coin. Mediacom has not yet agreed to honor the contract but we will continue to attend the public hearing and talk to our friends on the city council.

Adelphia Contract Extended

By CWA Rep Steve Miller

On March 2, 2001, we reached an agreement with Adelphia on a new contract for our cable members in Utica, New York. The struggle with this employer has been ongoing since they purchased the Utica cable system from Herron Communications in October 1999. From the very first day they took over operations of this system, Adelphia refused to recognize and honor the last year on the existing contract. We filed charges and the matter is still in litigation. However, the new contract appears to have laid the groundwork to settle the ULP charges we pursued.

I cannot say enough about the bargaining team I worked with on this contract, Jim Curtacci, President of Local 1126 and an Adelphia Technician, Local Executive board member Dick Ryan and Chief Steward Ed Layton. Adelphia came to the bargaining table determined to shred our contract. The arrogance of their chief negotiator was truly unbelievable as he



Adelphia workers in Utica.

stated that he wasn't ashamed to tell us he was there to take away our hard-earned benefits. They wanted nothing less than to two tier our wages, reduce sick day accrual, cut our vacation time in half and holidays by a third, and replace our CWA-ITU pension plan with lump sum cash grants. The membership and the bargaining committee rose to the challenge. Jim, Dick and Ed repeatedly told Adelphia that there was no way they would stand by and allow

Adelphia to wipe out twenty-five years of collective bargaining gains without a fight. The members sent the same message everyday on the job.

Late on Friday, March 2, with the aid of a Federal Mediator, Adelphia finally got the message. They agreed to adopt the current contract under the same terms and conditions as it had originally been bargained for a period of one year. This includes six weeks vacation, 12 holidays,

a company funded pension plan plus employer contributions to the 401(k). The 2% wage increase is retroactive to the expiration date of December 20, 2000.

The membership ratified this agreement on the evening it was reached by a vote of 42 to 2. The best contract in the cable industry has been preserved. (CWA has 6 other contracts with Comcast).

CWA@CABLE IS WRITTEN FOR AND BY CABLE INDUSTRY WORKERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY WHO ARE JOINING TOGETHER UNDER THE CWA (COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS OF AMERICA) TO IMPROVE THEIR CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT, INCOMES AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CWA, CABLE WORKERS AND THEIR INDUSTRY, CONTACT PATRICK HUNT, CWA, 501 THIRD ST., NW, WASHINGTON, DC 20001, TELEPHONE 202-434-1181.

AT&T Broadband & CWA Reach Agreement on National Contract Language

After more than 18 months of intensive organizing and bargaining for cable systems at the local level, CWA has secured national contract language for represented Broadband employees. The National Template, as it is being called, will be the language for much of the contract but local issues including wages, promotions, transfers and lay-offs will still be bargained at the local level. As this article is being written, CWA-represented employees have ratified the new contract language at AT&T Broadband in Gillette and Casper, WY and Montrose, CO. Contracts have already been ratified by the Broadband workers in Ocean City, MD and Springfield, MO.

Workers from around the country were excited by these new



Workers from Casper WY ratified a first contract.

developments but none were more excited than Ed Channel. "This is what we had hoped for when we organized. We knew that one little system out in the middle of Wyoming didn't have much power, but every time

workers choose CWA we got stronger. It took 16 months but it was worth it. It was tough but with this national template no cable worker will ever have to wait this long for an agreement."

Broadband workers in Oakland ratify 3 year agreement

By Kathy Kinchius,
President Local 9415

On April 12th, our Broadband workers in Oakland, CA voted overwhelmingly to ratify a new 3 year contract. The agreement included the workers in the Short Term Incentive Plan, provided stock options and participation in the Stock Purchase Plan, increased standby pay, provided a signing bonus and raised the top wages to \$23.19 an hour. Wages will increase 3.75% in the second and again in the third year of the agreement.

What To Do When Your System Is Sold

Taking Our Case to the City Council

By Tim Skinner, President Local 6311

In Missouri

On April 3rd, I addressed a special meeting of the Hannibal City Council and asked them to reconsider the transfer of the cable franchise from AT&T to U.S. Cable. I was accompanied to the meeting by 25 other unionists from Hannibal. Some were CWA members and some were from other unions but they all shared our concern about having a cable system that provides good jobs and quality service to the community.

Earlier I had written to our State Representative and our Lieutenant Governor and explained the problems we were having with Broadband. When I addressed the City Council, I shared their response and asked the council to take action to protect the community. I explained that the city had the right to establish strong customer service standards and to enforce them. I then offered amendments to the transfer agreement and closed by saying "The only intention behind these proposed amendments is to protect the jobs of our local cable employees through this transition period and to insure the quality cable TV service the citizens of Hannibal deserve."

The City Council responded to our concerns by tabling the motion to transfer the franchise. They have since approved the transfer but I feel that our point has been made. The workers commitment to quality and to the community should be met by community support for their concerns.

And in Iowa

Josh Andrews is a Systems Tech in Iowa. He helped lead the organizing drive at the cable system in Clinton (and other communities) and serves as a member of the bargaining team. Below are his remarks before the Camanche City Council.

Mr. Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Council, I would like to say thank you for the opportunity to voice mine, and my co-workers' opinion's tonight.

First of all, I would like to provide you with some background information on our current situation. My name is Josh Andrews, I am a lifelong resident of Camanche, and I am currently employed by AT&T Broadband. I have worked for the Cable Company for six

MediaOne Workers in Florida Choose CWA

On April 4th, the 106 technical workers in Hialeah, FL selected the Communications Workers as their union. By a vote of 69-33 in an election supervised by the National Labor Relations Board, the workers sent a strong message to management that they want a voice in the workplace. The workers could have waited until June 15th when the election would have occurred under the Neutrality Consent Election (NCE) procedure, but went ahead now because they felt it was time.

On June 15th, all AT&T Broadband workers at MediaOne will be covered by the NCE. This mean that if the workers want CWA the election will be held within 7 days after the union requests it and the company will be neutral throughout the election.

years. The company currently employs thirty-one people, three of which are Camanche residents. A good number of employees have been there for quite some time including some who have been there for over twenty years. Last April, we elected the Communications Workers of America as our Union. Since that time, we have been struggling to reach an agreement on our first contract.

As I'm sure you are all aware, the management at the Cable Company is changing again, but we the employees, are still here. We are committed to this as well as all of the communities we serve, and to providing quality cable service to these communities.

In July 1999, AT&T took over for TCI, and everyone thought that things would be better for the employees as well as for the customers. Things were in fact better for a while, but then the money seemed to dry up, and we have since been struggling to make sure that the people get the quality service they are paying for every month.

We don't know much about Mediacom as a company, but we do know a lot about this cable system.

We all want to keep our jobs, and before the city transfers the franchise, we want some assurances from the city and from Mediacom that we will all still have jobs, and that the people of this community will continue to receive quality cable service when the system changes names once again.

Thanks again for this opportunity.