

## LRR FOCUS: GLOBAL SOLIDARITY TRIPS SPRINT

Leaders of CWA, working with and through the Postal, Telegraph, and Telephone International (PTTI), have denounced the La Conexion firings at international conferences, raised the alarm on the information superhighway, and pushed the story in the world's media outlets. The result? From the top brass to the rank and file, union members all over the world have heard about the firings at La Conexion.

In Brazil, union representatives from 22 countries throughout the Americas demonstrated at Sprint offices. They demand that Sprint reinstate La Conexion's workers, and that Sprint adopt an International Code of Conduct in Labor Relations, guaranteeing the right to organize. In Nicaragua, where Sprint is a bidder on telephone services, 14 unions assembled to stage a similar protest, and ran an ad in Nicaragua's leading newspaper urging the public to "Say NO to Sprint in Nicaragua."

The alliance between U.S. workers and the telecommunications workers of Deutsche Telekom is exploring another strategy: using management-to-management pressure to monkeywrench William Esrey's plans for global conquest.

Sprint is courting German telephone titan Deutsche Telekom in order to consummate a \$4.2 billion joint venture. However, German telecommunications workers are demanding that European labor standards be upheld in the deal. Their union, Deutsche Postgewerkschaft (DPG), has particular clout in this situation. DPG controls several seats on Deutsche Telekom's board, which, through a public buy out, will eventually be made up of 50 percent company employees. According to Rolf Johanning, DPG's Director of International Affairs, "We have very good relationships with Deutsche Telekom, and now that companies like Sprint are coming to Europe with bad records on labor relations, we're taking the necessary actions to build international labor solidarity."

DPG's pressure on Sprint to conform to internationally recognized labor standards includes a specific focus on La Conexion's workers. In an August 3, 1994 letter to Sprint, DPG president Kurt van Haaren called on the company to reverse its decision to close La Conexion, and "to put [La Conexion] into operation, and to re-employ all [La Conexion] workers." To drive home its point, DPG members of the Deutsche Telekom board obtained the passage of "Principles of Conduct of Deutsche Telekom AG in Global Telecommunications Partnerships." Among the principles:

- "Special emphasis is placed on Deutsche Telekom's responsibilities to society, as well as on its responsibilities to its employees of both sexes."
- "In global partnerships, Deutsche Telekom recognizes the duly elected representatives of its male and female employees, including labor unions."

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- "Deutsche Telekom makes an effort to see that its business principles are adopted and put into practice by its global partners. This includes assuring that employer-employee relations customary to Germany are recognized and complied with in all business sectors... in which Deutsche Telekom AG operates jointly with its global partners and their enterprises in Germany."

The international labor mobilization sparked by PTTI and CWA is making Sprint's actions at one U.S. small operation a liability all over the world. Like the Germans, French unions have asked their employer, France Telecom, to hold up a deal with Sprint pending an agreement on the right to organize. From Sao Paulo to Paris, from Managua to Munich, telecommunications workers continue to fight for La Conexion's workers. As Rolf Johanning puts it, "We sent the labor rules of Deutsche Telekom to Sprint, so they know what they have to respect when they come to Europe. And Sprint needs to respect the rules not only in Europe, but all over the world." ■



*CWA officials, California politicians and German delegate from Telecom Union.*

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