



International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers #2327

TELEPHONE DIVISION

Representing Maine Telephone Workers for Over 30 Years

Peter McLaughlin, Business Manager

Jennifer Nappi, Assistant Business Manager

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February 3, 2005

Distinguished Members of the Citizens' Trade Policy Commission

RE: The effect of Free Trade and the Expansion thereof on
Jobs and the economy of Maine

Dear Commission Members:

Representing IBEW Local 2327, I will testify as to the effects and challenges our local has encountered due to Free Trade.

Verizon Communications employs approximately 1,200 people in the State of Maine, represented by two different unions: IBEW and CWA. Approximately 800 of these jobs are Customer Service related jobs. In 1999, in order to maintain operator service jobs in the state, we were forced to accept a lower pay and pensions for operators hired after that date.

When we were in contract negotiations in 2003, one of our major concerns was that Verizon was already positioned to move all of our operator service jobs and most of our service rep jobs to India if we were to strike. This put us at an extreme disadvantage in trying to negotiate a fair contract for our members.

As new technology is developed, our ability to keep these jobs in the United States is severely diminished due to the current trade deals. Verizon Communications has a center in India that handles most of our residential DSL tech and product support. These jobs are highly skilled and highly technical and would be high paying jobs if maintained in the U.S.

As you can see, free trade has been a bad deal for our members, from permanent job losses, wage and benefit concessions, to an unfair playing field at the bargaining table.

As a newly established citizens' commission, I ask you to help us correct the current injustices and prevent future injustices of U.S. trade policies.

Free trade, as we know it, is neither free nor fair.

Respectfully,

James R. Gibson, Jr.
Vice President