

FIGHTING FOR THE

GREEN NEW DEAL

At a recent Campaign for Jobs Action Committee meeting, Steve Morse brought up an important perspective on the Green New Deal. We asked Steve to share his insight on the Green New Deal and the value the “Green” economy brings to Local 104.

WRITTEN BY 104 MEMBER STEVE MORSE

By now, we’ve heard about the Green New Deal. But what would it mean – what does it mean - for us as 104 members?

Let’s think about our commitment to our children and grandchildren in two ways. For those of us who are parents, we work hard not only for ourselves, but also for our children to thrive. We know that through our union, we have favorable wages, benefits and conditions compared to most workers, even as we may struggle to make ends meet. Journey-level workers and apprentices depend on hours of work for a weekly paycheck, and hope the check keeps coming next month, next year and beyond. Retired members like myself also depend on the hours worked by active members to keep our pensions alive and healthy.

The second way is our desire to leave the next generations a just society and a habitat in good shape. I want this for my 8-year old grandson, as you do for your children and grandchildren. If we are not parents, we may have nieces and nephews or other young people we care about.

Can we have both these things? Can we promote both union jobs and a sustainable world? The Green New Deal, which is a Congressional resolution and not yet legislation, is a strategy to do that. Sections 4G – K of the Green New Deal has language that addresses many of Labor’s issues: high-quality union jobs that pay prevailing wages; vocational training; wage and benefit parity for workers affected by the transition; family-sustaining wages; retirement security; the right of all workers to organize; workplace health and safety; anti-discrimination; and more.

The Green New Deal is an ambitious plan: a mobilization of our country in a new direction, with a potential redirection greater than anything seen in 75 years, since the New Deal of the 1930s and the mobilization of the country in World War II to defeat fascism.

In California right now, Local 104 members are already seeing the benefit of a state that is turning towards the “green economy.” Two significant government initiatives we’ve benefited from are Title 24 energy standards and Proposition 39 public school energy retrofit work.

If you are an active member, chances are you’ve had work on Title 24 projects in the commercial market, doing both new construction and tenant improvements that require new high-efficiency HVAC systems. Those systems also get tested and balanced by a Local 104 member!

Proposition 39 was passed in 2012 as a statewide ballot initiative to close a tax loophole for out-of-state corporations. The money collected (over \$1.7 billion thus far) has been allocated to public schools to exclusively do energy retrofit work. If you have worked on a school recently, there’s a chance it was on a Prop 39-funded project!

Winning over folks to be supportive of the Green New Deal isn’t a cakewalk, and there are powerful corporations and special interests within the fossil fuel industry in opposition. In addition, some other Building Trades Unions are more challenged to figure out how they fit into the green energy market, when traditionally their work has been based around the fossil fuel sector. However, I’m optimistic that if we recognize the value to our Union of the Green New Deal, and speak positively about it, others will begin to come around in support.

To see the Green New Deal come to fruition, it will take a diverse and unified alliance, including young folks, climate justice advocates, labor unions, and everyone who is concerned with the climate crisis we are facing. We need to think big when it comes to protecting both the planet’s future and the future of Local 104. Through the Green New Deal, both can thrive! ¡Sí, se puede! We can do it!