



Q&A: SOME TOUGH QUESTIONS ABOUT THE GREEN NEW DEAL

Few ideas have provoked more discussion than the GREEN NEW DEAL (GND). Basically, the GND states that (1) we need to take urgent action on climate now in order to jump start the transition to 100% renewable energy by 2030 and completely de-carbonize by 2050; and (2) we need intentionally to use the transition to address economic justice (create high quality union jobs/redress income inequality) and social justice.

The GND is not a policy proposal; it is a set of principles that will guide the drafting of policies. Labor needs to be actively engaged and at the table for the drafting of the actual proposals.

Trade unionists have been asking some TOUGH questions about the GND. Here are some examples -- and a few quick responses that don't aim to provide complete answers, but to highlight the top lines of more detailed answers that need to be developed.

Q. 100% renewable energy in 10 years is unrealistic - and whatever the timeline, how are you going to fuel airplanes? The trucking industry?

A. Climate science and the Paris agreement say 100% renewable energy is necessary by 2050 -- but we've got to jump-start the process now. *The Green New Deal proposes a ten-year emergency program to begin that process, not to finish it completely.* Creating the technology to electrify airplanes and trucking is part of that jump-start. The reality is that planes are often grounded and transportation disrupted currently by extreme weather events caused by climate change, so we need to address the root cause of the problem. And the GND recognizes that while reductions in some areas may not currently be technically feasible, every effort needs to be made to find solutions. Our country has made huge technological advances in the past, from putting a man on the moon to creating jet planes and computers - led by government investment. The GND builds on that experience; it will jump-start necessary technological advances in electrification from renewables; upgrading and modernizing the grid; accelerating electrification of cars, buses, trucks, and even planes; in regenerative agriculture; and in many other fields.

Q. Why should anyone believe that this plan would provide protection to workers in the energy industry? There is plenty of evidence that workers whose jobs are "transitioned" out of existence in manufacturing industries due to trade, technology, etc. are basically disposed of with little more than unemployment benefits and "job training" for low paying jobs or no jobs at all. Why should anyone believe this will be any different?

A. Past proposals for a transition for clean energy have all too often ignored their impact on working people. Workers and their unions need to be at the table to insist that future changes not be at the expense of workers and communities. The Labor Network for Sustainability and many of its partner unions and allies are fighting to ensure that workers are protected in the GND. The architects of the GND are actively seeking input from unions and working people on how to ensure that the transition of our economy provides shared prosperity and expands labor rights and protections for the new jobs that are created. *If labor does not come to the table to fight for the needs and concerns of workers, others will make the decisions without us.*

The GND will create millions of new jobs building the climate-safe economy and most of them will be in the high-wage manufacturing and construction sectors. Fossil fuel-dependent jobs are being eliminated right now not by climate policy but because renewable energy is becoming cheaper than gas, oil, and coal. The GND provides an alternative to throwing them on the scrap heap -- protecting workers and communities whose jobs are affected and providing jobs building the new economy. And it includes labor rights and standards to make them living wage union jobs. The GND is sometimes criticized for being "too radical" -- but that is just what will make it different from the phony "transitioning" of so many past programs.

Q. Throwing everything but the kitchen sink into this GND pie-in-the-sky plan will prevent anything from getting done - especially the infrastructure improvements we need. Why are you messing everything up with what some refer to as a "socialist government takeover" plan?

A. The GND proposes a giant infrastructure plan to rebuild our whole national infrastructure on a climate-safe basis. Polls show that it has massive public support. Notwithstanding President Trump's tweets, he, the Republican Senate, and the Republican right are blocking any program whose purpose is to fix our infrastructure rather than just give it away to wealthy investors. By combining the support for infrastructure with the support for climate protection, the GND can produce the political support needed to rebuild our infrastructure. Far from being a "socialist government takeover," it is rescuing our democracy from the rightwing stranglehold that is keeping the government from doing what the people want.

If you have questions or comments, please contact LNS at info@labor4sustainability.org.