



News of how working people are fighting for a planet that is sustainable -- environmentally, economically, and socially. If you like what we are doing and want to connect, please sign up for our newsletter and other information on the Labor Network for Sustainability website ([Sign up here!](#)). You are welcome to repost anything in this newsletter to spread the word!



Help us build a powerful national organization for workers and communities to confront climate change. Membership is open to anyone interested and who endorses our [mission and principles](#).

**Become a Member**

## Fossil Fuel Divestment - Labor Can Lead



Help us build a union divestment network: by taking our [quick survey](#) on what your union is already doing and whether you would like to take part.

Also don't miss a new article by Nancy Romer titled "[How New York Won Divestment from Fossil Fuels](#)" detailing the recent victory in

which Mayor Bill de Blasio announced that New York City will divest the \$5

billion of its pension funds presently invested in fossil fuel stocks.

The survey, Nancy's article as well as the recently released "[Guide for Trade Unionists: Should Your Union's Pension Fund Divest from Fossil Fuels?](#)" can be found on the [Divest/Invest Resource Hub](#) along with other materials designed to make the move to divest easier for your union.

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## Just Transition Forum

Several LNS staff members and leaders were in Jackson Mississippi on February 26-28 for a national *Just Transition Forum* convened by the Building Equity and Alignment for Impact Initiative. This 3-day Forum, the product of months of organizing and outreach, was intended to build alignment on Just Transition principles and practice among grassroots environmental justice groups, national grassroots networks, national environmental NGO's, philanthropists, and labor.

LNS Board Member Ananda Lee Tan (Climate Justice Alliance) was the coordinator of the event. LNS's Michael Leon Guerrero and Joe Uehlein served on the planning committee, along with Jon Forster of AFSCME DC 37, New York City and a member of the Labor Network for Sustainability's "Labor Convergence on Climate" steering committee (CSC). LNS recruited several of the labor participants to the planning committee and to the forum, and will continue to participate in follow up and next steps. Other LNS folks besides Ananda, Joe and Jon who were among the 200-person gathering in Jackson included Becky Glass (LNS staff), Ajamu Dillahunt, (CSC member, Black Workers for Justice and APWU retiree, North Carolina), Brooke Anderson, (CSC member and Climate Workers, CA), and Nancy Romer (Professional Staff Congress, New York City).



As part of the event, participants held a march and rally to express support for Mississippi public workers, who were facing a bill in the state legislature that would have further restricted the rights of public workers. (The bill failed.)

Just Transition Forum participants held a march and rally to express support for Mississippi public workers, who were facing a bill (defeated the same day) that would have further restricted the rights of public workers. *LNS Labor Convergence on Climate Steering Committee member Jon Forster, AFSCME DC 37, addresses the rally at the Mississippi State Capitol.*

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# **An updated Labor Rights Resolution for Environmentalists**

We've received a lot of good feedback on our "Labor Rights Resolution for Environmentalists." We've incorporated it in this updated version. It has been passed by the board of the Labor Network for Sustainability and we hope other environmental and climate organizations will consider and pass it as well.

## **We support**

the rights of workers to organize into unions free of coercion, intimidation and harassment, and to bargain collectively with their employers. This is the law of the land as embodied in the National Labor Relations Act.

## **We reject**

all efforts to weaken our national labor laws and union security laws and provisions. And we reject all efforts to undermine rules and regulations designed to protect working people, and our environment.

## **We further support**

local content requirements (domestic content), project labor agreements, the use of union labor, union apprenticeships, and well defined ladders out of poverty.

## **We support:**

Build local, shop local, eat local.

## **We will work**

with labor to resist all trade agreements that do not contain strong protections for working people and the environment.

## **We pledge**

to work together for job creation in a climate-friendly economy and to fight together for full employment in an economy that uses union labor.

Too many green energy capitalists hold anti-union positions.

## **We oppose**

those green energy capitalists who hold anti-union positions and will work to help them see the wisdom of cultivating a high quality, well trained, union workforce.

## **Together,**

we, with our partners and allies, place people and planet first.

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# A Just Transition for Appalachia - Is There a Way?



Thirty thousand coal mining jobs have been lost since 2011. In central Appalachia, seven thousand miners lost their jobs from 2015 to 2016. The US Energy Information Administration expects central Appalachia's coal output to decline nearly sixty percent by 2035, mostly due to competition from other fuels. The EPA predicts that coal, which until recently provided half of U.S. energy, will

decrease to 30 percent by 2030.

President Donald Trump has promised to revive coal industry employment. On the campaign trail he told a crowd of miners that they will be "working [their] asses off" after he takes office. But few experts agree. Nick Carter of the Kentucky Coal Association says he "would not expect to see a lot of growth because of the Trump presidency." United Mine Workers president Cecil Roberts says the reality of climate change and necessity of reducing carbon emissions will force coal producers to work with environmental regulations even under Republican leadership.

The decline of the Appalachian coal industry creates two related problems. The thousands of miners who have already lost their jobs and the thousands more who face layoffs regardless of Trump's dubious promises need a livelihood. And communities devastated by the decline of the coal industry need a strategy to establish new jobs and a new economic base. Two recent studies suggest strategies for each.

## A Lesson from German Miners?

In "[A Superfund for Workers: How to Promote a Just Transition and Break Out of the Jobs vs. Environment Trap](#)" LNS's Jeremy Brecher presented a plan to protect workers whose livelihood might be threatened by the on-going decline of coal and other fossil fuel jobs.

A recent article, "[Just Transitions for the Miners: Labor Environmentalism in the Ruhr and Appalachian Coalfields](#)" by Judson Abraham presents an in-depth account of how unions and government worked together to ensure such a just transition for Germany's hard coal miners.

In 1998, Germany committed to reducing carbon emissions by 40% by 2020 and 80% by 2050, with renewables producing 60 percent of electricity by 2050 and 100% by the end of the century. A quarter to a third of Germany's energy is now produced by renewables.

*IG Bergbau, Chemie, Energie* (IG BCE) accepts strong environmental policy, including a transition away from coal, when it is "tailored to the needs of coal communities, implemented gradually, and accompanied with guarantees of job security for working miners." In 2007 IG BCE supported legislation mandating the closure of Germany's eight remaining underground coal mines by 2018



without forced layoffs and and guaranteed security. The plan allocated thirty billion Euros to keep the mines going until 2018 to protect Germany's remaining hard coal mining jobs. The deal allows miners who have worked for at least twenty-five years to retire as early as age forty-nine, at which point they may receive a monthly stipend until they qualify for a pension and guarantees younger and less experienced miners replacement jobs.

The government has provided hundreds of millions of Euros since the late 1960s to offset impacted miners' earnings losses, work retraining, and moving expenses. German workers' militancy has thus produced a system of industrial democracy and cooperation that facilitates labor environmentalism in Germany's ongoing transition away from coal.

According to Abraham, the coal miners union effectively prevented Germany's energy transition from severely harming their members in Saarland and Ruhr's underground mines. "These underground miners won a just transition" because their union fought for "a degree of democratic industrial planning," "centralized institutions and practices allowing democratic unions to negotiate industrial policy alongside government and business," and "a consolidated, quasi-public coal industry."

Abraham makes clear that the context of coal mining in Germany and the U.S. is different in many ways. But as the crisis in coal country continues - Trump notwithstanding - this study provides a starting point for planning for a just transition for American coal miners as well.

German lessons, anyone?

### A Jobs Plan for Coal Country



Eastern Kentucky in the Appalachian coal belt was long a center of coal mining and a stronghold of the United Mineworkers of America. The region has been economically devastated by the shift of the coal industry to Wyoming and other western states; the falling cost of natural gas and other competing fuels; the exhaustion

of accessible coal deposits; and the growing opposition to the negative health and environmental effects of mining, transporting, and burning coal. In 2013 the 54 counties of Appalachian Kentucky had only 8,614 remaining coal miners, and the remaining coal jobs were expected to steadily diminish over the coming years. Eastern Kentucky had 50,953 unemployed workers, many of them formerly coal miners. Its unemployment rate was 10.3% compared to 7.4% for the country as a whole.

Is there anything the hard-hit workers of Eastern Kentucky can do to provide an alternative to its dying coal industry? A report by the Labor Network for Sustainability, ["Employment after coal: Creating new jobs in Eastern Kentucky"](#) answers with a resounding yes.

Produced for the Labor Network for Sustainability by economist Dr. Frank

Ackerman of Synapse Energy Economics, it develops a plan that will create enough new jobs to replace half of Eastern Kentucky's remaining coal jobs and bring its unemployment rate down to the national average by 2030.

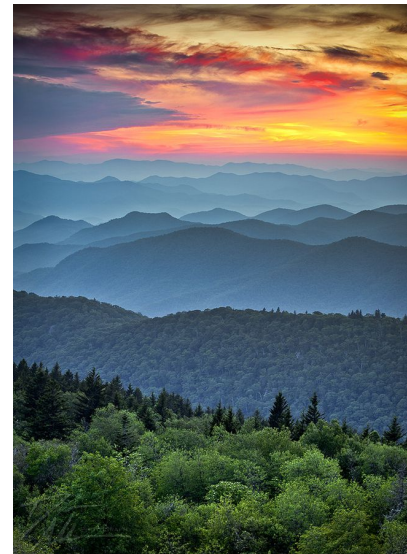
When economists analyze developing countries, they often identify three potential sources of job growth. First is "import substitution," in which jobs are created by doing work locally instead of buying products abroad. Second is "export promotion," in which jobs are created by producing goods and services that are sold abroad. Third is "foreign aid," in which assistance from outside helps create jobs in the country. To identify the potential for new jobs, Dr. Ackerman applied a similar approach to Eastern Kentucky. He identified two "import substitution" sectors, three "export" sectors, and one "foreign aid" sector and estimated the potential for growth in each.

The first "import substitution" measure is to stop buying so much electricity from outside the region by expanding energy efficiency measures, with the creation of 1220 jobs and with a net saving of more than \$100 million by 2030 to residential consumers. The second is to create an estimated 2,681 jobs by growing locally some of the food that is currently imported from outside the region. The third is to create 4,733 jobs by expanding medical facilities so that residents won't have to leave the region so often for healthcare.

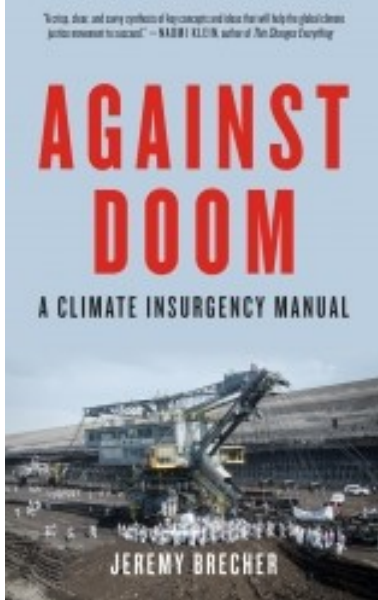
An obvious "export" opportunity is to use Eastern Kentucky's abundant forests to expand jobs in logging, sawmills, and other wood products occupations. The report proposes such an expansion on a scale that will not conflict with sustainable forest growth, producing 7,706 jobs. Another is to create 7,904 jobs by attracting tourists. "Eco-tourism" and "agri-tourism" would be particularly compatible with plans to sustainably develop the region's forests and farms.

Finally, remediating the environmental damage done by the coal industry is a national responsibility. Some funding has already come into Eastern Kentucky for this purpose, and more would result from the Power Plus plan that was proposed by the Obama administration. Expansion of such "foreign aid" would create at least 426 jobs in Eastern Kentucky.

Together the proposals for these six sectors would produce 24,671 jobs in Appalachian Kentucky by 2030. That's more than enough to replace half of current jobs in coal mining and to reduce the unemployment rate to the national average.



A linkable version to the section above can be found on the LNS website [Here](#)



LNS policy director Jeremy Brecher was recently interviewed by David Wilk of WritersCast about his book *Against Doom: A Climate Insurgency Manual*

[Hear the interview](#)

The entire Climate Insurgency Trilogy can be found [Here](#)

Wilks Says,

Millions of our fellow citizens do understand the danger to human life and our natural environment by human caused climate change. So many of us are searching for ways to make a real impact on the future through concrete actions. The scale and scope of what we face, and the impediments we face daily to rational thought and action are daunting and sometimes overwhelming.

We need tools - both to understand what is happening in our world, and to help us act positively to make change and to oppose those who seek to diminish and undermine our efforts.

Jeremy Brecher is a long time organizer and thinker about social change. He has been involved in environmental issues for almost thirty years. He puts much of what he has learned into *Against Doom*, this short but powerful book that I can recommend to any and all of us who want to join the global movement for change. What he calls "climate insurgency" is a strategy for using people power to realize our common interest in protecting the climate. It uses mass, global, nonviolent action to challenge the legitimacy of public and corporate officials who are perpetrating climate destruction. This may be our best hope for saving the planet and human civilization, while at the same time helping change that civilization for the better.

*Against Doom: A Climate Insurgency Manual* provides guidance in how we can put this strategy into action and succeed. It's an essential read now. Listen to my optimistic conversation with Jeremy and go buy this book!

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## British Ford Workers Say: Go Electric to Save our Jobs!

The British union Unite is issuing a plan to secure the future of two threatened Ford auto plants by



switching them to electric vehicles. The union says, "These sites must be repurposed for new electric models or battery technology." The proposal is part of a strategy for the UK auto industry, which supports 800,000 jobs. It will ask the government to help the shift to electric vehicles by supporting research and development, training, and investment.



[Read More Here](#)

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## **LNS videos: Workers Speak Out on Climate, Jobs, and Justice**

LNS has produced 17 2-3 minute video interviews with workers participating in last year's People's Climate March. You can view and download them on Youtube [Here](#). They can make excellent conversation-starters for an informal discussion or union meeting.

**Here are some examples:**

### "Climate is What Houses Us"

Audrey Collins is a vice-president of the Communication Workers of America local 2045 in Newport News, VA; she has worked for Verizon for 23 years. She says:

*"The climate is important for our future, for our children, and their children, and without it we don't have anything."*



### "If We Do Not Take Care of Our Planet Then We Are All Doomed"

Margaret Moore is a registered nurse at Prince George's Hospital Center in Cheverly, MD and a member of SEIU 1199. She says:

*"I'm a cardiac nurse. What affects my patients affects me. When you look at people*





*who have asthma, who suffer from poor air quality, "this is all part of climate change and it is all part of my job."*

### "If We Want Justice on our Jobs We Have to Fight for Justice in Our Communities"

The Fruit of Labor Singing Ensemble from North Carolina, is the cultural arm of Black Workers for Justice. They describe the role of their music in the struggle for environmental justice - and illustrate it with a rousing song.



### "The Attack on Climate is an Attack on Workers"

Workers at the Environmental Protection Agency protect Americans' health and environment, but they are under attack by corporations that want a free hand to destroy the climate and the environment. Doug Meyer of the American Federation of Government Employees tells how the union is fighting to protect both their members' jobs and our country's environment.



### "Making our Future Green will Protect our Members' Interests"

How can workers get their employers to introduce worker-friendly and climate-friendly technologies? Railroad worker Fritz Edler of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen tells how his union helped design, fought for, and won new technology for diesel engines -- improving workers' jobs while reducing carbon emissions.



### **Meet the Video Makers**

The video series was shot and produced by Bob



Finkelstein, a veteran Philadelphia videographer and video editor who specializes in producing short engaging videos for the web. He says, "My videos tell stories concisely, both visually and verbally." We certainly think that's true for the videos he has made for LNS.

[Read more about Bob and his work](#)

[Visit his Youtube Channel for examples of his work](#)

Special thanks also to Ben Riesman, who co-produced the series and recruited Bob to work on it.

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We need your support to accomplish the work ahead. Your individual contributions will provide LNS with the resources we need for bold, independent action that will be necessary to accomplish our goals.

**DONATE**

Donate today to [Labor Network for Sustainability](#) and help us build a future that works for all of us.

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