

California Labor Bucks the Green New Deal

by Marcia Merry Baker

June 30—As of June, the end of the fiscal year for most state and local governments, several localities and states have fallen in line to enact various crazed versions of the Green New Deal, while it is currently and rightly blocked at the Federal level by the Trump Administration. Nine states, and several prominent cities, have set goals, ranging from 2030 to 2050, by which carbon dioxide emissions are supposed to be lessened or eliminated—sketching spacey plans to de-energize the economy. The latest to join in this bedlam is New York, whose state legislature on June 18-19 passed the “Climate Community Protection Act” (CCPA). It asserts the goal of achieving 100% so-called clean electricity by 2040 and specifies such measures as creating a “market-based limit on transportation emissions.” The other states with new



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Pat Guinn, Governor of Illinois (left) and Eric Garcetti, Mayor of Los Angeles.

“Green New Deal” actions are: California, Colorado, Hawaii (2015), Maine, New Jersey, New Mexico and Washington.

Against this green frenzy comes a critical show of opposition from California labor unions, whose impact is all the more significant, given that California has been home to the most extreme green mindset. Moreover, California has been out front in asserting states’ rights to contest Federal authority over energy, “pollution,” and the like, taking off in this direction during the governorship of Arnold Schwarzenegger (2003-2011).

At the Democratic Party’s statewide convention in San Francisco on June 1, members of the state Building and Construction Trades Council—representing over 400,000 workers—staged a protest action. Its President, Robbie Hunter, called



Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor of California (2003-2011).

it the “Blue Collar Revolution.” The action took place at the opening of the event, during which some 5,000 attendees, including 14 presidential candidates, were present. In the convention’s election for a new state chairman, another labor leader—Rusty Hicks—won decisively by 57%. Hicks is the head of the Los Angeles Labor Federation.

The momentum for the Building Trades’ action in San Francisco comes out of Southern California. In Los Angeles, unions protested forcefully this spring against Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti’s launching of his “Green New Deal” for Los Angeles. Union protesters demonstrated outside his announcement event with chants and placards demanding: “Garcetti’s Gotta Go!”

The Los Angeles Green New Deal calls for every building in the city to be “emissions free” by 2050. By 2036, the city is to have 80% of its energy supply from renewable sources. Garcetti declared that the shifts involved will result in thousands of new jobs through installing “carbon free” technologies. Among the presumed measures: in-state oil production will be cut. The five gas-fired power plants in the Los Angeles basin will be shut. California has already shut down one of its two nuclear power stations—which ironically are non-CO₂ emitting, renewable energy.

Skilled trades’ leaders are speaking out against the whole Green New Deal outlook, as well as Garcetti’s LA version. At the time of the Democratic Party state convention, *Politico* ran comments from several of these figures. The Business Manager of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) in Los Angeles, Brian D’Arcy, said, “I’m getting hate mail and blowback from our workers, saying the Democratic Party is doing nothing for us.” Paul Valdez, described as a “third-generation building trades worker from Thousand Oaks,” told *Politico*, “[Garcetti’s] got the big corporations with him, and



Calif. Building & Construction Trades
Robbie Hunter, President, State Building and Construction Trades Council of California.

he’s not thinking of the effects on the common people. If they start taking away our jobs, who’s going to pay our bills?”

Robbie Hunter denounced the national Green New Deal for endangering jobs involved in the Southern California oil sector. He said, “All it does is do what the Democratic Party seems to be very good at lately—which is export our jobs, while doing nothing for the end game, which is the environmental.”

Build Projects, Not Poverty

Hunter has spoken out for infrastructure and jobs—often in the name of “climate,” and labor lobbyists in Sacramento are pushing for building projects. In

March, Hunter issued a [guest commentary](#) in *calmatters.org*, headlined, “Don’t Leave California’s Climate Goals Stuck in Traffic.” He called for building statewide high-speed rail and modern mass transit. He made the point:

Having built most of California’s utility-scale solar and wind generation, we who work in the building and construction trades think it’s time to get real about our ambitious climate goals. If Californians want to hit their greenhouse gas goals, we’re going to have to create clean mass transit options.

And he listed the benefits of high-speed rail:

Our airports and freeways are at capacity, and our population is careening towards 40 million and beyond. If we don’t build the high-speed rail, we are going to have to spend more than \$120 billion to build thousands of miles of additional freeways to accommodate the state’s ever-proliferating drivers. And that’s real.

In Sacramento, labor constituencies have been going toe to toe with the Green New Deal opposition

over projects for modern transportation and energy production. One fight was over expanding the required buffer area around new gas and oil wells (on non-Federal land). Whereas, for example, Los Angeles County requires a 300-foot setback, a new proposal—CA AB345 (19R) in the state Assembly, would increase this to a 2,500-foot buffer zone. This would limit wells and other energy production activity. The bill, sponsored by Assemblyman Al Muratsuchi (Los Angeles area), was stalled out in late May after union workers staged a mass protest at the hearing on it, held by the Assembly’s Committee on Natural Resources. The defeated bill was described as “overreach” by lobbyist Scott Wetch, representing the IBEW, who told *Politico*, “We have to respond accordingly.”

Another fight in Sacramento, has been over whether to build a new hydro-power dam, near the Joshua Tree National Park. The dam has been strongly opposed by a green front of groups claiming to represent consumers and environmentalists. Labor lobbied for constructing the dam—for reasons of clean energy, jobs and public benefit, but the bill to back it was defeated. On this, IBEW’s Wetch told *Politico*:

We have environmental credentials that I’ll defend anytime. But when it no longer becomes a discussion of smart public policy and how you get to your stated goals, but just one politician after another trying to out pander one another to claim they’re greener than the next guy, that’s when you run into extreme problems.

Get ‘Real’ with Big Infrastructure

Nationally, the lowlife media are trying hard to spin the California labor revolt as a Democratic Party “fracturing” problem, which they either praise, de-



Calif. State Assembly
Albert Muratsuchi, California State Assembly
Member (D-66th AD).

nounce or try to minimize. On June 6, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) leadership foolishly passed a resolution endorsing the Green New Deal at their Minneapolis international executive board meeting—the first union to do so. Hailing the SEIU initiative, some green Democratic Party voices declared, who needs industry anyway! But the economy and future are not party issues, and the green onslaught is having deadly consequences in terms of energy, jobs, and the cultural degradation of peoples’ thinking, especially the young.

In this context, the union activation against the Green New Deal in California is internationally significant in the drive to redirect the United States onto a course of economic development, with big infrastructure at the core of the effort—projects for high-speed rail, nuclear power, and large-scale water management—all to restore and raise the productive base of the nation. This is how to create a massive number of new jobs.

Such an approach is implicit in the recent agreement by President Donald Trump and Mexico’s President Andrés Manuel López Obrador to collaborate on economic development in the Northern Triangle countries (El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras) and southern Mexico, to end the desperate search for livelihood. It is at the heart of the new global Silk Road—the “Belt and Road Initiative”—which awaits U.S. participation with China, Russia and the other major powers, in both U.S. infrastructure-building, and joint third-country projects.

Most of all, it is urgent to “get real” about raising productivity in the U.S. by collaborating with other major powers, to succeed in space exploration, as Trump’s recent [Moon-Mars commitment](#) so boldly put forward.

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