

NOTES - GREEN-UNION CO-OPS

Liz Ryder: Keep in mind the notion of the ideal N.O. we would like to help build: quality jobs for the poorest people here; no boom-&-bust.

Speakers: Carla Din, Omar Freilla, Richard Dines, Art Lou Hahn, Chad, & Barry – all from labour unions in the N.O. area.

Carla Din: is with the Apollo Alliance, & previously with the USWA.

Their goal: drive alternative energy policy; have a way to address the drop in manufacturing jobs (lost million jobs in recent years).

Working toward greater energy indep. By:

-Creating high-tech quality union jobs in modern energy tech's.

Apollo Alliance:

Made up of 23 major labour unions: IBEW, AFL-CIO, etc; envir'al gp's & progr. Bus'es.

See their 10-point list of priorities, now to 4:

www.apolloalliance.org.

There have been an incr'ng number of \$1 B weather disasters.

There are huge impacts of climate change on the labor force: agric., commercial fishing, public health, tourism, firefighting.

Part of this is re-tooling existing sectors. Where are emissions occurring?:

--electricity genera'n from fossil fuels: 33% of emissions.

--transp'n: 28%

--ind'ry: 19%

--Ag: 8%

--commercial: 6%

--residential: 5%

Labor is part of the solution:

-HVAC, duct systems: Sheet Metal Workers

-Mass transit: Transit Employees

-Green building: Iron workers

etc. etc.

Calif: there has been a law recently passed to reduce fossil fuel emissions.

Solutions: Nat'l Green Jobs Act: authorizes \$125 million for labor/industry energy partnership training & pathways out of poverty programs.

One of the most imp't things to do: increase energy efficiency. Then altern energy can cover a higher %age of the remaining need.

New business:

Maple Ridge Wind Farm.

Much of the solar solar tech'gy & products are still coming from Germany.

Guess-timate of green job numbers (totally depe't on state reg's etc.): she prefers not to give one.

Omar Freilla, Green WC's, NYC.

We exist to start up wc's which are green businesses. It comes out of the needs in our own comm'ty in the So Bronx: to create jobs where they're very much needed. It's about envir'al justice in our communities.

What are the envir'al prob's we have? We started w/ this Q. One big problem: waste. There are no longer any landfills in NY; has to be transferred elsewhere. We started with building supplies, recycling them.

We have passed a tipping point; many more people are talking about the envir'al problems. The waste issue is not sexy (like solar, windfarms, etc.) It's very real, & it's a significant source of much of our envir'al destruction. We this as a huge opportunity for creating jobs, & in particular in creating wc's. They started Rebuilders' Source, their first wc.

The building waste tfr station: handles 5 people for 5-10 tons/day of trash. In Rebuilders' Source, they will hire 5 people who are handling 1 ton /year. This is 500 times more jobs. There have been discussions w/ labour people about the possibility that these job eventually become unionized. We are not in the same place; more conversation needs to happen.

The stages they went thru

-4.5 years ago: Green WC's got started.

-The first 2 years: were just dedicated to doing the business planning.

-They raised about \$900,000 in 1.5 years in order to make it happen. While raising the money, they started to recruit workers. Only opened the co-op a couple of years ago.

Their initial outreach to labour unions was around: direct ben't to the co-op: taking advantage of health ben'ts offered by the union. There is a ben't from the unions to get from a co-op: this is a co-op that's pushing the envelope, helping to shape what the industry is doing.

To obtain the stuff: they get it mainly from commercial store that did not want to keep it; also from residential & commercial. They are getting the stuff from the rich, & selling it to the poor at about half-price. The co-op has been renting a truck, but has a goal to buy & run a green vehicle.

They are able to pay \$17/ hour – flat wage. The money came from them fund-raising, with help from ICA. A likely next co-op will be for de-construction: going into the home & pulling things out.

Of the \$900,000, \$500K came from 2 places: \$250 K from a private person (foundation), which caused others to come in. There is also state funding which came in to help (for green businesses).

NCB, RICHARD DINES:

Described NCB, & how they might help.

How could the NCB help to spark a new wave of worker co-op dev't?

NCB was first set up by Congress to serve consumer co-ops & worker co-ops (& a few other under-served sectors). There was also a non-profit affiliate, which provides lending & TA to groups in low-income comm'ties, starting or needing help with starting co-ops.

Thx to an acquisition, they can accept deposits & do RE investment.

He is with the area of NCB called “Mission Banking”, to help meet NCB’s mission: to support new CD, & to serve low- & moderate income comm'ties. They also exist to support sust'ty. They partner w/ the rural food co-ops, “Food Co-op 500”. They are seeing an explosion of interest.

Richard encourages wc's to apply to NCB.

He welcomes the poss'ty that the US FWC approach them to create a WC equiv't of the Food Coop 500.

Labour panel: 3 people

Art, Gulf Coast Career Construction Ctr:

The building trades were grappling with chall's even before the storm: aging workforce, electrical upgrading needed; then of course the Katrina work.

How to get our skilled workforce back up to the no's we need? School syst's try to send everyone to college. The N.O. hs grad'n rate is 37%.

After the storm, local bldg trades appr'd the AFL-CIO for inv't capital. They came in with \$750K. The bldg trades dept. listened to their concerns. A high level ctee was assembled. There are now life-long training prog's. We have great craftspeople; but they're not nec'ly entrepreneurs. We need to give them entrepr'ial training.

I came back to N.O. to help rebuild the region, & the labour move't here. With no help from the elected officials, we went back to our family of unions for help & support – so they got started.

To get into their program, the state req'd that people have a 4th-5th grade level of math & reading; 60-80% of people who tried to get in, failed. They are seeking to get people's literacy & numeracy levels up. They dev'd a core curriculum.

The AFL-CIO has a national Labour College.

They will then be doing on-line training, apprenticeship.

They will be doing a 4-week training program, b/c people need more remediation.

98% of the people whom they have graduated are from the African-Amer community.

Barry:

What is really going on here: if the city cannot clean up the sewage & water system, the fed's will fine them. There is no money. The political people here are lost as to what to do; the public school system was awful b/4 Katrina; it's now worse. Kids can't read & write. It's like a city of the hopeless. I see children without hope; people do not what to do. My daily jobs is to find as many people as I can; train them & get them to our contractors. The journeymen are making at least \$14.85 / hour, with good benefits & a pension. The non-union people are not being trained. It used to be learn-as-you-go. Now things move so much faster. The public school system may be shot, but it will take a while to get a charter school system up & running.

We are in a crisis in this city; people are still suffering. Downtown may be beautiful; but where the people are things are not back. Insurance costs are out of control. What we do is we train people; that is the way this country is going to come back. We're all in the same boat; either we will be together in the boat or we'll all drown.

Is there a possibility of creating some green unionized co-ops in the N.O. area?

We are trying to do things co-operatively already.

The minim wage here is \$5.15 / hour, less in the hospitality industry. Wages are among the lowest in the country.

WHY WC'S?, OMAR FREILLA

Eventual goal is to have lots of people involved in GreenWorker; to join they must first go through the "Co-op Academy."