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CUNY School of Labor & Urban Studies  
New York, NY

International Conference for Unions and Movement Allies

# THE GREEN NEW DEAL, NET-ZERO CARBON, AND THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF PUBLIC OWNERSHIP

Conference Report  
November 2019





This report was prepared by John Treat, Sean Sweeney and Irene HongPing Shen of **Trade Unions for Energy Democracy** (TUED). The opinions expressed herein may not reflect the policies and positions of unions participating in TUED.

## About Trade Unions for Energy Democracy

TUED is a growing global network of trade unions and close allies committed to finding real solutions to the climate emergency—solutions that take the science seriously, that face facts about global energy and emissions, and that recognize the unique, historic role and capacity of labor to effect positive change. The TUED [network](#) currently spans 74 union bodies in 24 countries—including four Global Union Federations, three regional organizations, and nine national centers—as well as nearly a dozen research, policy and advocacy allies.

For more information on how unions can participate in TUED, please see:

- [What Does It Mean for Unions to "Participate" in TUED?](#)
- [Why It's Important for Unions to Support TUED](#)

**Note:** *If you are reading a printed copy of this report, you can download an electronic copy with live hyperlinks from the TUED website [here](#).*

TUED is a global  
community of  
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## Introduction and Overview

On September 28, 2019, more than 150 trade union representatives, activists and policy allies from more than a dozen countries came together in New York City for a one-day international conference: [“The Green New Deal, Net-Zero Carbon, and the Crucial Role of Public Ownership.”](#) The conference was the latest convened under the banner of [Trade Unions for Energy Democracy](#) (TUED). TUED is a global community of unions, in partnership with the [Rosa Luxemburg Foundation—New York Office](#), and the [CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies](#) (SLU). The full program for the day is available [here](#).

The conference took place against the backdrop of the massive [“Global Climate Strike”](#) actions led by young people around the world, coinciding with the UN “Climate Week” of talks in New York City. In the weeks before those actions, TUED organized a “Global Web Forum” on the theme, [Global Youth-Led and General Climate Strikes: How Are Unions Responding?](#), and subsequently compiled a [list of union statements and actions](#) in support of the strike calls. Ultimately, actions in the name of the “Global Climate Strike” [reportedly](#) saw 7.6 million people take to the streets in nearly every country on Earth, with 73 trade unions taking part.

Nearly a year earlier, activists from the [Sunrise Movement](#) had occupied US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s office in November 2018, successfully getting their demand for a “Green New Deal” (GND) before the eyes of the world. In the year since that action, the idea of a GND has shifted debates around climate protection, social justice, the energy transition, and more, especially in the global North. Various public figures—including most notably US Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and US Senator Bernie Sanders—have issued specific, ambitious policy proposals, and the GND is now an unavoidable feature of political debate.

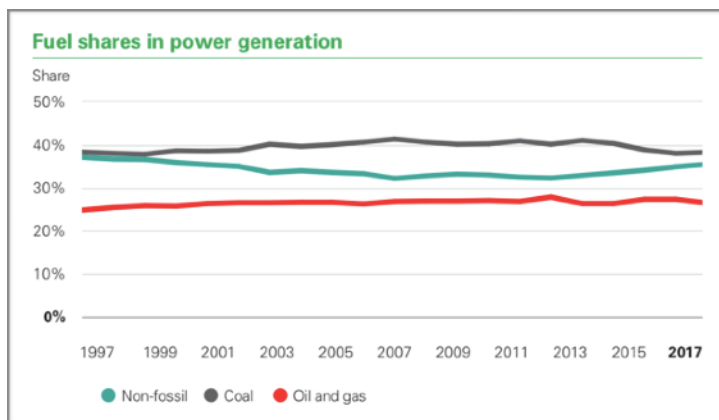


*The conference took place against the dramatic backdrop of mass action by students, youth climate activists, trade unionists and many others around the world.*

Although debates and policy demands around the “Green New Deal” rightly extend far beyond climate action—to include demands around social equity, employment, healthcare, education and more—the fact remains that delivering on those demands requires urgent action on energy and emissions. According to the latest science, as [synthesized by the International Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC), the world must reach a state of “net-zero” greenhouse gas emissions by mid-Century in order to have even a *reasonable* chance of limiting overall planetary warming to 1.5C—a rise in temperature that will already mean massive suffering for millions around the world, and significant disruption to existing societies. Furthermore, reaching net-zero in that time frame will involve, in the IPCC’s own words, “rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society.”

Contrary to headlines from the business-friendly press celebrating the latest “record low” prices for renewable energy—and the constant refrain that “the transition is inevitable”—a sober look at the data show clearly that the world has not yet even *begun* to make the kinds of changes that are necessary. As the Washington Post reported in late 2018, “[Few countries are meeting the Paris climate goals.](#)” Around the same time, the International Energy Agency (IEA) reported that global carbon emissions would reach a new high in 2018, further eroding the world’s chances of keeping overall warming within agreed limits, and prompting IEA head Fatih Birol to [declare](#), “I have very bad news. My numbers are giving me some despair.” His despair could only have been compounded several months later when the same agency [reported in May 2019](#) that deployment of new renewable power generation capacity stalled in 2018, at a time when it needs to be growing dramatically and consistently.

Meanwhile, in further evidence that the neoliberal “Green Growth” miracle has wilted on the vine, even Germany’s *Energiewende*—once held up as the poster child for a profit-driven energy transition, and still too often invoked as proof of success even by progressive voices who have simply remained blissfully uninformed—was [pronounced](#) by the country’s prestigious *Der Spiegel* magazine as a “botched job.”



“I hadn’t realised that so little progress had been made until I looked at these data.” — Spencer Dale, BP

Although the deployment of renewable energy is still growing in many places—even somewhat impressively here and there, now and then—the overall trends fall massively short of what is required. Overall investment and deployment remain far behind what is required in order to even begin to displace fossil fuels from the global energy mix to any significant degree, including even in the power sector, frequently held up as proof that “the transition is underway”—a fact that managed to surprise BP’s group chief economist Spencer Dale, who [confessed](#) in mid-2018 upon release of

the company’s *Statistical Review of World Energy* for that year: “I hadn’t realised that so little progress had been made until I looked at these data.”

TUED’s analysis of energy and emissions trends, and of the results of current, investor-focused climate policy, leave little room for doubt that the trade union movement must aggressively pivot towards a defense and embrace of public ownership of all aspects of our energy systems. The conference proceedings presented below provide ample supporting evidence, and the urgency cannot be over-stated.

## Goals of the Conference

The conference had two main goals. The first goal was to show how both public ownership and a “public goods” approach are critical to achieving “zero carbon” and the other core objectives of the Green New Deal. The second goal was to make visible key struggles around ownership and control—

including anti-privatization fights—that are taking place around the world, and how these struggles are leading to a “new internationalism” that puts both class and climate at the center of progressive politics. The full program for the day is available [here](#).

In the days before the conference, many of the presenters had also participated in a two-day TUED Strategic Retreat, also held in New York City and graciously hosted by [32BJ SEIU](#) in their boardroom. The retreat brought together trade union leaders and progressive policy leaders from more than a dozen countries—including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, South Africa, South Korea, the United Kingdom, the United States (including Puerto Rico) and Uruguay—as well as from the ITUC, and from global union federations Public Services International (PSI) and the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF).

## Key Themes and Highlights

Although we cannot do justice here to the full range of contributions and discussions over the course of the day, several key themes, observations and suggestions are worth highlighting.

### **Investor-Focused Climate Policy Is Not Delivering an Energy Transition**

At this point, the failure of climate policy has become virtually an “anchor point” for TUED’s analysis and programmatic work; the evidence has been laid out at length and explained in detail through [TUED’s Working Papers](#) and other occasional writings (for instance [here](#) and [here](#)). In summary, because overall demand for energy continues to rise faster than deployment of renewable sources, both renewables and fossil fuels are growing alongside each other, and even the fuel mix in power generation has hardly shifted. In other words, what we are witnessing is not a transition to sustainable future energy systems, but a reconfiguration of the global energy system that continues to emit ever-greater greenhouse gas emissions. The current “carrots and sticks” policy framework aimed at private investors must be replaced with a clear, pro-public and “public goods” approach. The contributions and discussions at this conference provided further confirmation that the main conclusion is not only true, but increasingly indisputable, and of increasing concern.

### **Privatization of State-Owned Electricity Utilities Has Failed, But Alternatives Exist**

As noted by **Transnational Institute’s** Daniel Chavez, the existence of real alternatives to privatized public services is increasingly demonstrated by empirical evidence; it is not merely an ideological position. Presenters and participants referenced a range of major research projects and publications released in recent years documenting in various ways and various contexts that the broad World Bank / IMF policy framework aimed at privatizing and liberalizing public services has failed, that alternatives exist, and that they can be won.

Publications such as **TNI’s** [Reclaiming Public Service: How cities and citizens are turning back privatisation](#) (2017) and **EPSU’s** [Going Public: A Decarbonised, Affordable and Democratic Energy System for Europe](#) (2019) provide invaluable empirical data about, and concrete examples of, struggles to defend and reclaim public services. At the same time, a September 2019 World Bank report, [Rethinking Power Sector Reform in the Developing World](#), acknowledges that privatization of power in the global South has fallen dramatically short of proclaimed intentions, and *just eight countries in the global South have fully privatized their electricity systems.*

## Defending Public Ownership of Energy Requires a Reform Agenda That Can Drive “De-Marketization”

Unions in **South Africa, South Korea, Mexico, Puerto Rico** and elsewhere are fighting to keep state utilities in public hands even as they try to advance the shift to publicly owned, renewable sources of power generation and democratization of the utilities themselves. **SAFTU**’s Ruth Ntlokotse emphasized that the “unbundling” of the public power utility there—which is a standard first step in electricity privatization—would undermine possibilities for cooperation and planning across the power sector.

But there was also widespread recognition that defending the current model of public ownership is not enough. Many state-owned enterprises (SOEs) have been “marketized” and “corporatized” as part of World Bank-led power sector “reform,” turning provision of electricity from a public service into a profit-making commodity. In the words of **TNI**’s Daniel Chavez, “We need to defend public ownership, but maybe we need to rethink the whole idea of public enterprise. And that’s a big challenge.”

Norwegian trade unionist and scholar Asbjørn Wahl connected the struggle for reformed public utilities to class struggle, observing that even public ownership of energy assets by neoliberal states under deregulated the markets “can hardly be compared to what public ownership meant in the post-WWII period, under much more favorable power relations in many parts of the world”—for instance, the New Deal in the US, or the building of the welfare state in Europe. “Those achievements,” he noted, “were based on a balance of power that was much more favorable to workers.” Similarly, **SUNY Albany School of Law**’s Eleanor Stein noted, “Government-owned energy is not going to be any better than the government that owns it.”

## Confidence is Rising to Reverse Electricity Privatization Where It Has Happened

The fight to take previously privatized electricity sector assets back into public control is gaining momentum. In the **United Kingdom**, Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour Party has committed to renationalizing transmission and distribution systems and to the setting up of a new National Energy Administration to oversee a radical decarbonization agenda. However, it has been slow to embrace the idea of a full reclaiming of the system to public ownership, from generation through to supply or retail. A number of UK unions support this full re-nationalization, and the 2019 annual conference of the Labour Party voted for a full reclaiming of the power sector to public ownership.

In **Australia**, the **Maritime Union of Australia** (MUA) is fighting for more jobs, better rosters and reduced hours even within an existing, privately owned offshore wind project, while also trying to organize to move beyond such projects and towards the massive, publicly funded range of projects the country needs, to accompany a “just transition” for workers in coal-fired power stations and the coal mines that supply them. As MUA’s Penny Howard poses the challenge, “How do we actually pool the wealth that’s in the system and force democratic control of it?”

In the **US**, there is growing awareness to challenge ownership of the “investor-owned utilities”—especially in the wake of the latest destructive fires in California, which have been blamed in part on cost-cutting maintenance over years.

## Defending and Reclaiming Public Energy Requires Building Union Power

Throughout the day, there was a recurring emphasis on the need to understand the struggle for climate protection and a “just transition” in terms of *class* and *power*, and to organize and build accordingly. **South African Federation of Trade Unions’** General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi warned that statements suggesting the transition to a low-carbon economy is “inevitable” or “well underway” are “very dangerous” and “serve to disarm us.” Similarly, long-time union activist and author Asbjørn Wahl cautioned that it is not a lack of “political will” or “ambition” that is responsible for the failure to make progress towards climate targets, but a *class contradiction*; as he memorably put it, “There is a hell of a lot of [political] will there—but it is not the same as ours.”

Embracing and acting on this recognition means a conscious embrace of a vibrant, forward looking, trade unionism that connects with other social movements and builds alliances with all those struggling for social, economic, racial and climate justice. It also means a willingness to be constructively critical of false solutions that maintain, or remain hostage to, the idea that private markets can produce the kinds of changes we desperately need.

## The Transition Must Take into Account the Development Needs of the Global South

Conference contributions from the global South underscored the fact that realizing a vision of truly sustainable development that can truly tackle problems of poverty, inequality and unemployment must be accomplished without inflicting irreparable damage on the ecosystems that sustain life. Speakers from the South recognized the need to find an alternative to “development as usual” – which, if left uninterrupted, will hurt the South over the longer term.

In **Latin America**, the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (**TUCA**) is “trying to challenge the hegemonic narrative” through its political program—the [Development Platform of the Americas](#) (PLADA).” In **South Africa**, unions are linking “just transition” with developmental concerns. In the words of SAFTU General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi:

*A discussion on just transition should not be separated from the debate on the imperative of development. In South Africa, the central crisis facing humanity is under-development.... A move away from fossils and carbon economy that is not taking into consideration this massive development challenge will lose credibility. Any program that will worsen this already will not enjoy popular support—in fact, it will strengthen the hand of the denialists.*

## There Is an Urgent Need for Technical, Programmatic Work

Nearly every presentation on the day provided rich, granular, concrete detail on specific technical questions of serious importance to what is required to achieve the energy transition at local, regional or national levels, and we have tried to capture and convey as much of that as possible in the proceedings that follow. But more importantly, the conference made very clear that there is an enormous amount of detailed planning work—much of it collaborative across sectors—that urgently needs to be carried out. If anything, that work is far behind schedule—two decades at least, if not three or four. The knowledge and skills of organized labor, and labor’s history of international solidarity, can and should be brought to bear in developing the detailed technical plans, identifying the supply chains and training and skills requirements, etc.

## Proposal for 2020 Mobilization: “Workers and Environment Week”

Among the many useful contributions, there was at least one suggestion for a In terms of concrete suggestions for next steps, Peter Knowlton, outgoing President of the **United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America** (UE), proposed a specific mobilization for 2020:

*We need to talk about the need to bring millions of workers into the streets for Earth Day on April 22, 2020. But we need to have a continuous series of actions, as was just done this past week, until eight days later, which is May Day 2020, which is the true workers and trade unions holiday. A week of activity between the “bookends” of Earth Day and May Day could be a wonderful opportunity to bring the labor and environmental movements together in a way we haven’t seen before.*

## Conference Organization and Support

The conference was organized by [Trade Unions for Energy Democracy](#) (TUED), with support from [Rosa Luxemburg Foundation—New York Office](#), and [CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies](#) (SLU).

The conference was also organized in partnership with: [National Nurses United \(NNU\)](#), [New York State Nurses Association \(NYSNA\)](#), [United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America \(UE\)](#), [Canadian Union of Public Employees](#), [National Union of Public and General Employees \(Canada\)](#), [Transnational Institute](#), [The Democracy Collaborative](#), [Science for the People](#), [DSA’s Ecosocialist Working Group](#), [#NationalizeGrid](#), [Our Public Power \(New York\)](#) and [New York Communities for Change](#).

## A Note on the Conference Proceedings

The proceedings captured in the following pages are distilled from many hours of sometimes very detailed presentations and intensive discussion. We have not attempted to provide a precise transcript, but to convey all of the main substance and key points of the many contributions from presenters—contributions that were variously informative, challenging, sobering, encouraging and inspiring.

Video recordings of the day are available online:

- Morning sessions (Note: Program begins around 10:15):  
<https://www.facebook.com/MurphyInstituteCUNY/videos/415055105866278/>
- Afternoon sessions (Note: First contribution by SAFTU’s Secretary General Zwelinzima Vavi is truncated; see link below for full video):  
<https://www.facebook.com/MurphyInstituteCUNY/videos/2769709256373293/>
- Zwelinzima Vavi’s special presentation (complete):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xigYYmHeQvQ>

## **Acknowledgements**

In addition to the people and organizations named above, and all of the conference presenters and participants, the TUED team would like to extend sincere gratitude to all those who helped make the conference both possible and a resounding success:

### ***CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies (SLU)***

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### ***Interpretation***

Colectivo Babilla  
Lala Peñaranda  
NY Communities for Change (for interpretation equipment)

### ***Food***

Khao'na Kitchen: <https://www.khaonakitchen.com/>

### ***Reception***

The Democracy Collaborative



## Conference Proceedings: Trade Union Representatives and Allies Share Their Experience, Perspectives and Strategies

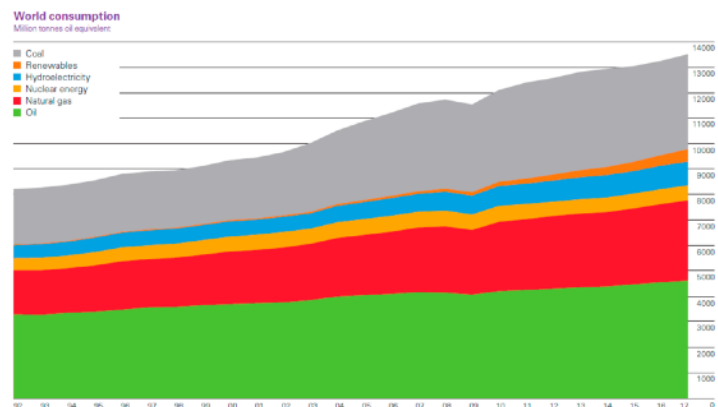
The conference began with welcoming remarks on behalf of the CUNY School for Labor and Urban Studies (SLU) from **Paula Finn**, Associate Director of SLU's [Center for Labor, Community and Public Policy](#), and Editor of SLU's journal, [New Labor Forum](#), and on behalf of the [Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung's New York Office](#) (RLS-NYC) from **Andreas Günther**, RLS-NYC Director.

The welcome was followed by statements of support and solidarity from **Bill McKibben**, founder of [350.org](#), and from **Rebecca Long-Bailey**, UK Labour Party [Member of Parliament](#) and Shadow Secretary for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Both sent their congratulations to conference participants and best wishes for a productive and inspiring day.

### Session 1: The “Net-Zero Carbon” Challenge

The opening session set the stage for the day with a joint presentation by TUED's **John Treat** and **Sean Sweeney**, outlining the overall economic and policy context in which the “Green New Deal” has emerged, the mainstream policy and its results, and the alternative approach that is both cohering and gathering momentum across the trade union movement and a growing number of environmental and policy allies.

First, TUED's **John Treat** provided an overview of global energy, emissions and investment trends. Drawing on the analysis presented through the [TUED Working Papers](#), Treat showed that the transition to a renewables-based future energy system—supposedly “inevitable” and even “well underway”—is in fact nowhere in sight. The approach to climate policy that remains anchored to “mobilizing the private sector” through a combination of “sticks” (e.g., carbon taxes) and “carrots” (subsidies, incentives, guarantees) has failed.



Global energy demand continues to grow faster than deployment of new renewable energy, so fossil fuel use continues to rise. (Source: BP)

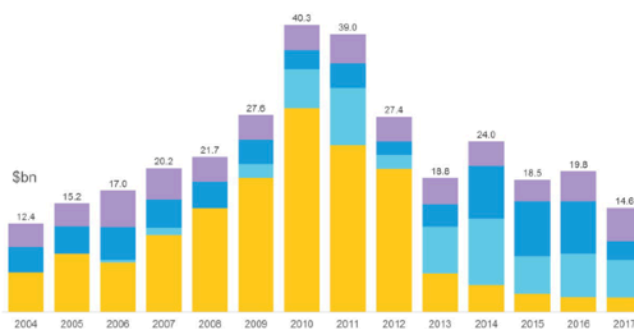
Treat reviewed recent data from the major mainstream sources showing that overall growth in energy consumption continues to outpace the rise in renewable generation. Fossil fuel use continues to expand, and emissions continue to rise. Technological developments and policy initiatives have “disrupted” many energy markets and systems, but this has only led to increasing risk for investors

and virtually all elements of energy systems, and no indication that the world is on a pathway to reach agreed climate targets.

An initial surge of investment in renewable generation in many countries, driven by generous “come one, come all” feed-in tariffs (FiTs), led to increases in capacity beyond what could be incorporated into existing systems, and exploding costs that had to be borne either by users or governments. In an effort to contain those costs and capacity, one government after another turned from FiTs to competitive bidding systems. This allowed them to contain capacity additions, and the competitive pressures drove down contract prices. But falling contract prices meant falling profit margins, and

## New Investment in Clean Energy Germany, by sector

2004 – 2017



*Investment in solar PV collapsed in Germany when “Feed-in Tariffs” were replaced with auctions. The pattern followed elsewhere.  
(Source: BloombergNEF)*

investors increasing turned elsewhere. Profit-driven climate policy has produced a situation in which profitability remains elusive, and entire systems are now saturated with risk. Investment in new renewable generation capacity has fallen to worryingly low levels, and despite falling prices and improving economies of scale, and growth in capacity additions has stalled.

The implications of this policy failure become even more evident when we consider the massive challenges involved in reaching decarbonization targets. The failure to achieve meaningful progress in decarbonizing the power sector should be alarming enough, but there are many other

major sources of emissions that must also be addressed, including for instance transport, buildings, and industry. As Treat explained, the power sector is key to decarbonizing these other sectors, since any hope of moving away from fossil fuels means widespread electrification. This means dramatically higher demand for electricity, even as the generation of that electricity must be shifted urgently away from fossil fuels.

Given the failure of mainstream policy and the massive scale and urgency of the task of decarbonization, the labor movement should pivot decisively towards an alternative grounded in public ownership and democratic control.

TUED Coordinator **Sean Sweeney** took up the argument from there. Sweeney began by highlighting the global rise of a “pro-public” narrative around energy ownership and the energy transition, noting that in just the past few years, “a pro-public narrative has emerged almost from nowhere.”

From its embrace of public and social ownership of energy in 2012, South Africa’s largest union, NUMSA, has been among unions at the forefront of this emerging narrative, as have a number of unions in Latin America, many of which are now actively pursuing an alternative vision for development of the region, known as [Development Platform of the Americas](#) (PLADA). Similarly, a commitment to public ownership of energy has been embraced to varying degrees by the UK Labour Party in its [Bringing Energy Home](#) policy platform, and by the [Trades Union Congress at its 2019 Congress](#) in Brighton. Other policy documents, research studies and initiatives in both the global North and the global South make clear that a narrative is cohering around the idea of public ownership and democratic control.

Sweeney recalled US rural electrification program as an example of the kind of massive infrastructure build that is possible under public control and through massive public finance.

Additional arguments for public ownership come from considerations of job protection and job creation, energy conservation and efficiency, and the costs of financing (when borrowing is necessary).

Sweeney highlighted the [struggle by workers at BiFab](#) in Scotland, where workers skilled in making jackets for offshore oil drilling rigs (skills that can easily be adapted to offshore wind power), have been fighting a decision by energy developer EDF to move fabrication jobs to Indonesia—for wind turbines to be deployed off the coast of Scotland. Under public ownership, those jobs could and would remain in Scotland.

On conservation, Sweeney noted the IPCC’s estimate that roughly 40% of needed emissions reductions must come from reduction in energy demand, through greater conservation and energy efficiency. But investors can’t make profit from energy conservation, so it isn’t being done under the current policy regime, which is based on deriving profits from the “build and sell” approach to electricity generation. Even the mainstream IEA [recognizes this](#): “Under existing policies, the vast majority of economically viable energy efficiency investments remain unrealized.”

Falling prices for storage technologies are also not enough, because there is still no clear pathway to profitability.

These examples make clear that the mainstream insistence on profit-driven climate policy is a major impediment to the energy transition. As a result, as even [the IEA has noted](#), just three of 26 economic sectors are on track to achieve their intended contribution to decarbonization.

The failures are thus clear, but so should be the alternative. Taking energy back under public, democratic control can free the energy transition from the imperatives of profitability. This can allow the ambitious pursuit of a massive, rapid, planned, coordinated program of decarbonization across the economy energy conservation and efficiency, and the creation of huge numbers of high-quality public sector jobs.



GMB members at BiFab in Fife, Scotland, are fighting the offshoring of wind turbine jacket fabrication jobs to Indonesia. (Photo: GMB)

## Session 2: Keeping Power Public

The next session, “**Keeping Power Public**,” looked at several struggles to defend existing public power systems while fighting for their reform, de-marketization, and democratization. The session was moderated by **Daniel Chavez** from the [Transnational Institute](#) (TNI), and included contributions from South Africa, South Korea, Mexico and Puerto Rico.

In introducing the session, Chavez offered three major points of presumed agreement among participants. First, the global project of deregulating, privatizing and marketizing electricity has failed

everywhere. Chavez noted the growing body of empirical research that has emerged in recent years raising serious questions about the entire legacy of energy liberalization, including a September 2019 report commissioned by the [European Public Services Union](#) (EPSU) and prepared by **Vera Wegmann** of the [Public Services International Research Unit](#) (PSIRU), titled [Going Public: A Decarbonised, Affordable and Democratic Energy System for Europe](#). In Chavez words, “The data shows that energy liberalization has failed to achieve its aim.”

Second, there are real alternatives to privatized public services, and this is increasingly demonstrated by empirical evidence, and not merely an ideological position. In particular, Chavez referenced a major research project several years earlier that led to publication of a book, [Alternatives to Privatization: Public Options for Essential Services in the Global South](#), which surveyed and rigorously investigated actually existing, non-private alternatives for provision of public services in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Third, Chavez argued we need to re-think public ownership. This point has been made by other researchers as well, Chavez noted, and needs attention from the trade union movement and its allies: “We need to defend public ownership but maybe we need to rethink the whole idea of public enterprise. And that’s a big challenge.”

## South Africa: Defending the Public Utility While Fighting for Socially Owned Renewables

Next, **Ruth Ntlokotse**, Second Deputy President of the [National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa](#) (NUMSA), reviewed the challenges facing that country’s state-owned utility, Eskom.



*South African Unions including NUMSA are fighting the “unbundling” of Eskom, precursor to privatization.*

Eskom generates roughly 95% of electricity in South Africa, and around 40% of electricity across the African continent. For this, Eskom relies mainly on 13 coal-fired power stations totaling roughly 37GW of capacity, one nuclear plant contributing 1.9GW, and roughly 115 “Independent Power Producers” (IPPs) totaling roughly 7.5GW.

Eskom currently faces a serious financial crisis and is unable to service all of its debt payments. Poor households are defaulting on their electricity payments, and several municipalities are failing to make payments to Eskom for the power it provides. The financial crisis has led to

serious lapses in maintenance. There has been a moratorium on training, leading to a lack of technical skills.

Power cuts resulting from these problems that hit the mining and agricultural sectors have been blamed for the 3.2% fall in GDP during the first quarter of 2019. NUMSA members are receiving retrenchment notices almost daily as a result of the power cuts.

The utility has also gone through repeated changes in management and governance, with ten CEOs over a period of ten years.

Focusing on Eskom’s debts, Ntlokotse noted that the utility currently owes more than 400 billion South African Rands (roughly 30 billion US dollars). These continue to grow, and the utility relies on state guarantees and bailouts. But NUMSA sees some of these debts as in violation of the country’s democratic principles, as they go against the best interests of the population, causing climate degradation and local pollution.

In particular, serious questions can be raised about a US\$3-billion loan from the World Bank approved in 2010, which was justified on the basis of a need to increase South African electricity generation. The same year that loan was given to Eskom, the World Bank released a report, [World Development Report 2010: Development and Climate Change](#), detailing the harmful effect climate change will have on development, and declaring that “unmitigated climate change is incompatible with sustainable development.”

Given the World Bank’s own report, Ntlokotse asked, “Why was a three-billion-dollar loan approved to complete Medupi power station, when the WB was quite aware of the impact that such a station would have?”

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*“Unbundling of the utility will turn the provision of electricity into a commodity rather than a public service. Breaking up the public utility will not generate a single Rand in additional investment. It will not resolve the debt crisis. It will not address Eskom’s ‘death spiral.’ Unbundling of Eskom, if implemented, will undermine the potential for much-needed cooperation and effective energy planning across the entire electricity sector.”*

— Ruth Ntlokotse, NUMSA

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Turning to the current debates about “solutions” to Eskom’s crisis, Ntlokotse explained that in his February 2019 “State of the Nation” address, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced, as part of the “solution,” to the crisis, the “unbundling” of the utility. Ntlokotse pointed out that “unbundling” is World Bank policy—a standard first step towards privatization for public utilities—and “precursor to predatory partnerships with private corporations keen to seize national assets and public property. The process of unbundling has also been advanced without consultation with the trade unions.

Turning to the current debates about “solutions” to Eskom’s crisis, Ntlokotse explained that in his February 2019 “State of the Nation” address, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced, as part of the “solution,” to the crisis, the “unbundling” of the utility. Ntlokotse pointed out that “unbundling” is World Bank policy—a standard first step towards privatization for public utilities—and “precursor to predatory partnerships with private corporations keen to seize national assets and public property. The process of unbundling has also been advanced without consultation with the trade unions.

Ntlokotse emphasized NUMSA’s position that the crisis facing Eskom “must not be used to further liberalize and privatize the energy sector”:

*The proposal to break Eskom into different companies will lead to greater privatization of the sector, and electricity will become expensive, and jobs will be lost. Important features of Eskom’s crisis are a result of government policy, and not the result of decisions made by Eskom alone. The government decision to convert Eskom into a publicly traded company in 2001 marks an important turning point that set the stage for neoliberal marketization....*

*Unbundling of the utility will turn the provision of electricity into a commodity rather than a public service. Breaking up the public utility will not generate a single Rand in additional investment. It will not resolve the debt crisis. It will not address Eskom’s ‘death spiral.’ Unbundling of Eskom, if implemented, will undermine the potential for much-needed cooperation and effective energy planning across the entire electricity sector.*

For these reasons, NUMSA is working in partnership with the [National Union of Mineworkers](#) (NUM) as well as TUED, TNI, and South Africa's [Alternative Information and Development Centre](#) (AIDC), under the banner of a "[New Eskom](#)," to show that "another strategy is possible":

*We are saying that Eskom must remain publicly owned, and it must be radically transformed, and the process of corporatization and marketization must be reversed. We are saying that we demand the scrapping of the Eskom debt from the World Bank. We are saying that the public should hold the South African Government, together with the World Bank, responsible for the adverse effect of the 2010 loan given to Eskom. We demand accountability to the public. We are saying that the governance of Eskom must be completely transformed.*

Finally, Ntlokotse noted that NUMSA, together with the new [South African Federation of Trade Unions](#) (SAFTU), are now in the process of preparing for possible strike action in support of these demands, including through conscientizing members.

### South Korea: Unions Support a Reform Agenda

Next, **Park Tae-hwan**, President of the [Korean Power Plant Industry Union](#), spoke about the situation in South Korea. Energy unions there are calling for the integration and reform of the six existing public power companies. But the government has endorsed the expansion of private coal power plants to replace old public ones that are being shut down.



*The Korean Power Plant Industry Union defeated a privatization push through strike action, and is now fighting for public ownership of new renewable energy and a just transition for workers.*

South Korea faced a similar situation to what is happening in South Africa now, with an attempt in 2001 to break up the national Korea Electric Power Corporation (KEPCO). The union successfully fought back, including a 30-day strike action, and defeated it. As a result, the government and public utility companies are still strong compared to many other industrially advanced countries.

The current government, which came to power two years ago, announced plans for decarbonization and denuclearization, and has declared plans for the expansion of renewable energy, to be run through a system of "renewable portfolio standards" (RPS) and renewable energy certificates (REC), through

which the renewable energy sector can be marketed to private investors. So on one hand, although the public sector is driving decarbonization in South Korea, there is also space given to the private sector.

Regarding the energy transition, South Korea is in an initial phase and the government has the initiative. Civil society organizations and government-friendly NGOs are the ones who are pushing the energy transition debate, but the main focus has been on decarbonization and denuclearization, without much attention to the question of ownership, which leaves a lot of space for the private sector to come in, and that is one of the union's main concerns.

Another problem is that with the government leading the process of energy transition, the unions are excluded. The biggest concern of unions and union members is job security; this dominates

debates and complicates efforts by union leadership to raise the debate around just transition; this is especially true among irregular workers, which form more than half of the workforce in the energy industry.

Conditions are currently not very favorable, but three unions in Korea—the power sector union, the hydro / nuclear power union, and the gas corporation union—along with the Korean Labour and Social Network on Energy, are working to drive forward the debate around just transition and public ownership of new energy.

There are many obstacles; the power unions are minority unions, so out of a force of some 8,000 workers, the power union that Tae-hwan represents has 1,600 workers, for example. The hydro / nuclear union was until fairly recently under conservative / rightwing leadership. According to Tae-hwan, these facts show the weak foundation of union power in South Korea, which makes it difficult to advocate for a “just transition.”

### **Mexico: Building on Electoral Success with a Resurgent Electrical Workers' Union**

Next, **Hector de la Cueva** from the Labor Research and Trade Union Advisory Center (CILAS) noted that after more than 30 years of rightwing, neoliberal government rule in Mexico, progressive forces dealt them a defeat last year with an electoral victory of more than 30-million votes with the election of Andrés Manuel López Obrador (“AMLO”).

The new environmental minister comes from academia and has links to the environmental movement. The new energy secretary—a woman—comes from an independent oil workers' union linked to CILAS. These examples show that opportunities exist to influence what is happening, even if, “most of the government is oriented in another direction—even some of our friends.”

De la Cueva then introduced the next speaker, representing “one of the main players in labor, political and energy issues in Mexico”—which is the Electrical Workers' Union of Mexico (SME, pronounced “ESS-may”). (The inspiring story of SME's resurgence can be read [here](#).)

SME's **Juan José Gómez Beristain** explained that, over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Mexico's energy sector has gone from private to public, then back again. The country's oil and electric industries were both private when they started; the oil industry was expropriated in 1938, and electricity in 1960, both as part of the government's nationalist project under the welfare state scheme.

With the arrival of the neoliberal regime in the 1980s, the dismantling of this welfare state commenced, and the loss of the public character of these services. In the case of electricity, it began with some modifications to secondary laws that opened a backdoor to private investment.



*Juan José Gómez Beristain explained how SME has resisted energy privatization despite ongoing anti-union attacks.*

In 1999, President Zedillo launched an effort to open the energy sector to privatization through a set of constitutional reforms, but the social mobilization led by SME and other social movement organizations defeated the effort of the then long time ruling party, the PRI.

Neoliberal energy reform went into retreat for more than 10 years. The government knew that privatization was a risky move, so they opted to undermine the social organizations that opposed it. As part of this effort, in 2009 right-wing President Calderón eliminated—by decree—of one of the two public companies of the electric sector—specifically, the one in which SME had organized:

*The government believed that our union would remain with a couple of thousand workers and eventually disappear. In fact, 28,000 of our members decided to leave, but 16,599 men and women, proud trade unionists, decided to stay and resist.... This resistance played a key role in delaying privatization for four years.*

Nevertheless, this was a major blow to the resistance against neoliberal reforms, and Calderon’s successor, President Peña Nieto, eventually succeeded in pushing through constitutional reforms to privatize the energy sector.

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— Juan José Gómez Beristain, SME

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The legal framework of the power sector was radically changed. Both generation and commercialization (i.e., retail) were opened to private ownership, while transmission and distribution were kept under government control, but with a possibility for private sector participation if the government decided it was “necessary.” Public industry was transformed into a wholesale market, the public service was transformed into a commodity.

Subsidies disappeared gradually, and users were divided into “basic” (i.e., normal households) and “qualified” (commercial; industrial) categories. The state company was divided into four parts, with a vertical, legal and accounting separation. The public company became a number of business-oriented enterprises, all competing in an open market.

In the last three years, three long-term auctions have been carried out in this new electric wholesale market, with participation by roughly 50 companies known as independent power producers (IPPs). In all, 48% of the country’s power generation is now in the hands of private companies—27% of generation that is connected to national grid system, plus another 21% that is separate.

The unexpected election in 2018 of AMLO as the new left-leaning President raised hopes of a reversal of the pro-market reforms, but these hopes have faded as his rhetoric has softened. AMLO has said that the energy reform process (i.e., privatization and liberalization) won’t be discarded, and existing contracts with private companies “can only be cancelled in the event of corruption.”

The reason for AMLO’s reluctance to challenge existing contracts, according to Beristain, is that the energy reform of 2013 is the result of 25 years of changes to the legal architecture that displaces sovereignty and the public interest, in favor of the international private financial interests. Any

challenge to these existing arrangements would invite protracted legal action that is, in Beristain’s words, “already lost.” This in part explains the erratic policies of Mexican governments vis-à-vis energy policy. According to Beristain, the fundamental problem is that the new government is trying to strengthen of the state control in the power sector, but without changing the entrenched neoliberal legal framework. This makes the task “nearly impossible”:

*Nevertheless our experience struggling over the past 10 years against two hardcore neoliberal administrations... is that there is no other way than organized resistance. Alliances with affected sectors of people, including users and indigenous people; the approach to political forces; the constant and creative mobilization; the use of social networks; political participation in legislation initiatives; the advice of experts and academics—these are all important pieces in trying to solve this puzzle.*

## Puerto Rico: Defending Public Power After Hurricanes and Political Upheaval

**Rafael Feliciano Hernández**, President of the [Teachers’ Federation of Puerto Rico](#) (FMPR), spoke about the struggle to defend and improve public power in the wake of Hurricane Maria, which claimed the lives of nearly 5,000 people and shut down the island’s power grid for months. The disgraced governor Rosselló quickly announced that the public utility, PREPA, would be privatized, as would other vital services such as health and education. In July 2019 a massive wave of protest led to the governor’s resignation.

When the island was electrified, the priority was to support industries designated by the US Government to serve the colonial industrial system, and these priorities have changed over time. The island’s power system was originally designed and built to support the petrochemical industry, then later the pharmaceutical industry. As a result, the island now has an electricity system that was designed to serve industries that don’t exist, and that the island cannot afford or maintain.

Despite this very difficult context, Hernández praised the island’s power sector union—[Unión de Trabajadores de la Industria Eléctrica y Riego](#) (UTIER)—for doing an admirable job defending PREPA. He also stressed the significance of the successful protests against governor Rosselló as context for the continuing struggle around energy:

*In Puerto Rico, we are now in a moment where we can push for a transformation of energy, but we can do it from the bottom, not from the top. The unions have an important role because they are organized, they have experience, resources, connections and contacts. And they should deepen links to other elements of society*

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*In Puerto Rico, we are now in a moment where we can push for a transformation of energy. The unions have an important role because they are organized, they have experience, resources, connections and contacts. And they should deepen links to other elements of society and grassroots groups, to expand the struggle for a pro-public approach to defending the power utility and rebuilding the island’s electricity system.*

— *Rafael Feliciano Hernández, FMPR*

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## Session 3: Reclaiming Power

The third session, **Reclaiming Power**, turned from efforts to defend public power where it exists, towards efforts to take back into public ownership and democratic control those electricity systems and assets that had previously been privatized.

Moderator Sean Sweeney opened the session by referring to a recent World Bank report, [Rethinking Energy Sector Reforms in the Developing World](#), which notes that just eight countries in the global South have fully privatized their electricity systems. Despite the authors' efforts to draw positive lessons from the report's findings, Sweeney emphasized that it clearly serves as further confirmation of the failure of neoliberal energy and climate policy.

### The UK: Trade Unions Pressing Labour for More Comprehensive Approach to Renationalization

Following Sweeney's introduction, **Samantha Mason** of the UK's [Public and Commercial Services Union](#) (PCS) spoke about her union's work around climate change. Importantly, PCS has adopted the practice of anchoring its work on climate in *climate justice*. As context, she highlighted that fully 20% of workers in the UK skip meals because they can't afford to eat, 20% go without heating, and 1 in 10 are in precarious work.

Under Jeremy Corbyn, the UK's Labour Party has made commitments to renationalizing electricity transmission and distribution systems and to the setting up of a new National Energy Administration to oversee a radical decarbonization agenda. However, it has been slow to embrace the idea of full

public ownership of the system, from generation through to supply or retail. A number of UK unions support full renationalization, and the 2019 annual conference of the Labour Party voted for a full reclaiming of the power sector to public ownership.

Mason also spoke about community energy in the UK and European contexts, where community energy organizations are often seen as prototypes for a new system of decentralized power. Such an approach has "a particular resonance in the UK—in what might be called a 'Third-Way' [i.e., "New Labour" / Blairite] energy policy." This "Third Way" narrative—"neither public nor private"—frequently took the form of "third sector,"

"voluntary" or "charitable" organizations taking over the delivery of public services, and was used under the Blair government to undermine public services without explicitly embracing privatization.

**BRINGING ENERGY HOME**

Labour's proposal for publicly owned energy networks

Foreword, Rebecca Long Bailey

The UK stands on the cusp of a Green Industrial Revolution. The Green Industrial Revolution will be as transformative as the first Industrial Revolution, but led by Labour, it will be anchored in dignity at work, social justice, equality and international solidarity. Furthermore, its central objective will be tackling the climate crisis at the scale and pace that science determines is necessary to avoid dangerous levels of global warming.

But we cannot just sit back and wait. Key to ushering in the Green Industrial Revolution, and the tremendous economic opportunities that come with it, will be the role of government in guaranteeing the right infrastructure is in place.

*The UK Labour Party has committed to public ownership of transmission and distribution; unions are pushing for full renationalization.*

Community energy remains marginal. Its development has relied on public subsidies (feed-in tariffs, or FITs), and much of it is still done through “public-private partnerships” (PPPs). At the same time, such projects create few jobs. So while such approaches are frequently seen as a way of “democratizing” energy, in fact they raise serious questions about power in society, and about who is in a position to make decisions about such programs under existing power relations.

In its publication [Bringing Energy Home](#) (pdf), Corbyn’s Labour Party foresees a new “National Energy Administration” that would, among other things, provide very specific technical support to community energy groups. But this then begs the question, why not put that investment into a program of public ownership and work to socialize and democratize participation in those public processes and structures?

As of 2016, community renewable energy capacity totaled just 141MW, whereas offshore wind currently amounts to roughly 10GW (less than 0.15%). Many of these projects are built around “behind the meter” measures (i.e., energy efficiency and conservation), and these often piggyback on public projects.

In terms of further expansion, the current government has a target of 30GW by 2030, and the [Committee on Climate Change](#), an independent UK public advisory body, talks about the need for 75GW of capacity by 2050. So community energy’s role in that context is marginal.

### **Australia: Fighting Back Against a Resurgent Right**

Next, **Penny Howard** from the [Maritime Union of Australia](#) spoke about the situation in Australia, where unions are currently debating how to counter the right’s grip on the debate, and some unions are asserting the need for a shift in policy away from market-focused approaches.

Howard explained that while Australia previously had a carbon tax, it was removed a number of years ago, and this led to demoralization of the environmental movement, as well as a retreat of the union movement from engagement around climate debates, largely because the union movement had generally supported the tax. Australia has long been a major coal exporter, and just became the world’s largest gas exporter. Deployment of renewable energy in Australia has followed the model developed in Europe and described earlier in the day.

Climate impacts are also being felt intensely in Australia, including in New South Wales, where there is a serious water crisis; Sydney’s water supply is at 50%. Queensland has seen bush fires this year, but in the rainforest, where there have never been bush fires before (and this is just the beginning of spring). In central Australia, Indigenous communities are facing the possibility of no longer being able to live in their traditional lands due to summers becoming so hot.

Maritime workers in Australia see a significant volume of work in the oil, gas and coal industries, especially around offshore platforms and coal terminals. The union has treated a large offshore wind



*Australian maritime workers are fighting for gains within the current, privately owned renewables as a means to advance deeper transformation.*

project as an opportunity to focus and develop its orientation and campaigning around climate and energy. The union has also cultivated links with student climate strikers, and has seen strong collaboration between labor and the youth strikers at recent actions.

For the May 2018 election, the Labor Party put forward strong climate targets and a “just transition” authority, but this was done with little public participation, and there was a major backlash, especially in coal areas. Many voters defected to the rightwing “One Nation” party, ultimately keeping the Labor Party from being able to form a government.

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*Can we get jobs that are actually socially useful? How do we align the investment that we need, the skills that we have, the jobs that we want with what is actually scientifically necessary? How can we do it at the enormous, extraordinary scale that we need? How do we actually pool the wealth that's in the system and force democratic control of it?*

*Of course, we do have the challenge that the system that we're in, the principles of that system, and the states that we're operating under don't actually reflect those kinds of values. Ultimately there is going to have to be an enormous transformation in all of those things to win these kinds of demands. But in the current crisis, we've got no other choice.*

— Penny Howard, MUA

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The explosion of interest in the idea of a “Green New Deal,” however, has provoked a significant shift in the discourse around climate in Australia, especially with environmental groups. The discourse has shifted towards social justice, jobs and the rights of indigenous people. Environmental groups have issued a “fantastic statement” opposing a recent anti-union law, and have also supported unions on strike, offering support for labor campaigns around fighting for good jobs in offshore wind, fighting to get better rosters and reduced hours, with some progress.

MUA's strategy has been to acknowledge that the large offshore wind project currently being built by private capital is “not the structure that we want,” but then to ask:

*How can we fight within that current structure in order to eventually move beyond it? How can we maximize the number of jobs within that project, to ensure that we can have a transition for our members who are working as seafarers in the offshore oil and gas industry, but also for the workers in the neighboring Latrobe valley who are working in the coal-fired power stations and the coalmines that supply them? And the way we're going about doing that is by getting better rosters and reduced hours of work, and it looks like we're making some progress in that way.*

Challenges remain to make sure training is in place for workers who are being redeployed, but also for women and aboriginal workers, “because there are obviously massive issues of inequality there that need to be addressed.”

MUA is pursuing all of this in cooperation with the [Electrical Trades Union of Australia](#), which has long criticized the privatization of the country's electricity system and supported public utilities, and which has recently seen success in the establishment of a public power company.

Howard noted that these developments and successes also raise questions about the government's approach and priorities:

*Why do we have only one project happening off the coast of Australia? Why don't we have a hundred? Why are our members—who are currently sitting on the beach, “eating the days off the calendar”—forced to seek work in new gas terminals, new gas pipelines, in drilling projects? They can see that the billions in money are there in the system for the development of new projects, but why are the wrong projects being built?*

Concluding, Howard noted that the current situation makes clear “the immediate significance of the demand around public ownership”:

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*Of course, we do have the challenge that the system that we're in, the principles of that system, and the states that we're operating under don't actually reflect those kinds of values. Ultimately there is going to have to be an enormous transformation in all of those things to win these kinds of demands. But in the current crisis, we've got no other choice.*



## The USA and New York State: Legal Realities for Reclaiming Power

Next, **Eleanor Stein** of the [State University of New York-Albany School of Law](#), addressed the broad outlines of a legal and legislative campaign to reclaim energy in the United States, and particularly New York State, in the wake of the privatization and liberalization laws introduced in the 1980s and 1990s.

Stein argued for the importance of immediate action given the urgency of the challenge, and that we should support whatever process is building renewable energy today, even if it is not “the model that we want ultimately,” because “we need every wind farm, we need every solar farm that is possible.”

Stein also argued that many different kinds of projects fall under “community energy.” Although some of these clearly don’t lend themselves well to advancing social justice aims and involve a loss of public, democratic control—for instance, “community choice aggregation”—there are other community-based projects that seem more in line with such aims, such as [New York City Environmental Justice Alliance](#), [UPROSE](#) and [WE ACT for Environmental Justice](#). Such groups, she said, uphold justice aims, and are building locally owned renewable energy and energy efficiency projects that can be a model for others, and that are contributing to a base of renewable energy.

Want to talk about the structure of the electricity system in the US. Although there have been some promising projects, we need an order of magnitude greater, and that can only come through public

ownership: “We need to animate the public power sector.”

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*In the case of existing public power in New York State or at the Federal level, we currently have public power entities that are not doing what we need in terms of climate change. The TVA, often held up as an example of good public power, was until recently one of the top 5 polluters in the United States, and possibly one of the top 10 in the world. So public entities have to be seen as places where we contest power and seek change: Government-owned energy is not going to be any better than the government that owns it.*

— Eleanor Stein, SUNY-Albany School of Law

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Stein noted that, in the US, most decisions about power are made at State rather than Federal level. States are responsible for regulation of generation, siting and distribution. Recalling the original “New Deal” era, Stein reminded the audience that Franklin D. Roosevelt said State regulators should be the “tribunes of the people,” rather than simply “umpires” between the power companies and the interests of the people: “That was a great model, but it has not been carried forward, obviously.” During this time,

there had been no intervention from the Federal government until 1934, with the creation of the first federal energy agency under the Federal Power Act. States retained authority over power generation, siting, distribution, and intrastate transmission.

*In the case of existing public power in New York State or at the Federal level, we currently have public power entities that are not doing what we need in terms of climate change. The TVA, often held up as an example of good public power, was until recently one of the top 5 polluters in the United States, and possibly one of the*

top 10 in the world. So public entities have to be seen as places where we contest power and seek change: Government-owned energy is not going to be any better than the government that owns it.

During the “Neoliberal Nineties,” when many other countries were privatizing their electricity systems, the US saw widespread deregulation of its already largely private power sector. In that context, bringing power back into public control in the US will require combined effort at national, state and city level.

## Reclaiming “Investor-Owned Utilities”: Lessons from the US

Next, **Johanna Bozuwa** from the [Democracy Collaborative](#), and **Thea Riofrancos** of the [Democratic Socialists of America Ecosocialist Working Group](#) spoke on struggles to reclaim and democratize “investor-owned utilities” (IOUs) in the US—an idea that is gaining political momentum, particularly in California after the 2018 wildfires were ignited by private utilities’ infrastructure in disrepair.

Bozuwa emphasized the need to be “fighting on all fronts” in order to reclaim the control over energy that the IOUs currently possess. She offered some recent examples illustrating how the interests and imperatives of the IOUs make them incompatible with the aims of environmental justice and solutions to the climate crisis:

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*If we don’t take [the IOUs] on in a “Green New Deal,” we aren’t going to get where we need to go. That’s why we’re starting to see so many communities think about how we confront this power that has been, truly, killing people in many ways when power is shut off in hot weather—or in cold weather even, as in the case of Maine.*

— Johanna Bozuwa, Democracy Collaborative

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- In **Highland Park, Michigan**—formerly a “company town” for the Ford Motor Company and now predominantly African American—DTE Energy Company physically removed the city’s streetlights over an unpaid bill that was less than the CEO’s annual salary.
- In **California**, PG&E has been found at fault for conditions contributing to the devastating wildfires across the state.
- In the **Washington, DC**, area, Dominion Energy is building a pipeline for exporting oil and gas—a project that is effectively being funded by the company’s current electrical power ratepayers.

These examples show, Bozuwa said, that the IOUs are a “major structural problem”:

*If we don’t take [the IOUs] on in a “Green New Deal,” we aren’t going to get where we need to go. That’s why we’re starting to see so many communities think about how we confront this power that has been, truly, killing people in many ways when power is shut off in hot weather—or in cold weather even, as in the case of Maine.*

For Bozuwa, the solutions we need should be pursued in terms of a “multi-scalar” ownership model that includes local, state and federal levels. The need for this can be understood on three bases. First, such a struggle can support goals of justice and creating democratic public ownership: focusing on where people are affected, and where our movements and communities actually have influence.

Second, there are technical considerations. The need for rapid, massive action dictates the need for federal / national intervention that can rapidly build large-scale renewable energy. But, Bozuwa adds, we also need *resilience*:

*Aging grid infrastructure puts growing numbers of communities at serious risk of harm in the face of disruption due to weather impacts, wildfires, etc. What we've seen in places that have been hit by storms is that our grid is old, it's decrepit—so we need resiliency right in those spaces so that people can get on the grid much faster. Creating a “blended” model can help us achieve both of those things at once.*

Third, Bozuwa argued that we “need to be fighting on all fronts” for tactical reasons:

*I hope we win next year [in the 2020 presidential elections], but if we don't have federal implementation of something like the Green New Deal, we need to take that to the municipal and state levels, and we can't stop in the meantime.*

Acting at state and municipal levels, she argued, also allows us to “prove the model,” and to demonstrate that it can be done “democratically, in a way that is rooted in justice, and fast.”

Building on Bozuwa's contribution, **Thea Riofrancos** then spoke about the embrace of the Green New Deal by the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) at its most recent convention, where the organization set a “radical, ecosocialist Green New Deal” as one of its organizational priorities. Key to this vision is public power and energy democracy, framed in terms of “Four Ds”:

- **Decommodification:** making energy a public good;
- **Democratization:** seeing ratepayers, workers and communities as the people who should make decisions over the energy system, not corporations or technocratic elites;
- **Decarbonization:** moving rapidly and aggressively to renewable sources; and,
- **Decolonization:** focusing on the disproportionate burden borne by communities of color, both within and beyond US borders.

Currently DSA has five campaigns around the country involving around 15 chapters, including several of its largest chapters. (DSA currently has about 60k members.) The ultimate goal of these

campaigns is “public, democratic ownership of the energy system and a rapid transition to renewable energy,” but currently a number of strategic and tactical angles are being pursued.



*Thea Riofrancos explains DSA-Ecosocialist Working Group's approach to mobilizing around Investor-Owned Utilities. (Photo: Aaron Lenchner)*

First of these is that activists with DSA's Ecosocialist Working Group (EWG) have been participating in hearings of the utility commissions (regulatory bodies are supposed to be independent, but in fact are largely captured by the IOUs)—in Riofrancos' words, “just showing up to those, politicizing them, mobilizing around those hearings.”

In some places, DSA is convening its own “People's Public Hearings” and town hall meetings, inviting allies (including supportive

elected officials) and “modeling what democratic deliberation over the energy system would look like, but also presenting to the public some of the facts of how awful the current regulatory infrastructure is.”

In support of these actions, DSA-  
EWG has also been protesting  
against rate increases;  
protesting energy poverty,  
inequality and environmental  
racism; building coalitions with  
community partners (including  
for instance the [George Wiley  
Center](#) in Providence, RI)—in  
general, “disseminating a  
powerful narrative about energy  
as a public good, to be invoked  
wherever a crisis hits, whether  
power outages, scandals, etc.”

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*We know that the climate crisis and the GND are historic opportunities to transform our energy systems, and make them serve the needs of people and the planet, rather than corporate greed. But we also know that the reverse is true: We can't address the climate crisis or implement a radical, transformative Green New Deal without tackling our energy system and decommodifying, democratizing, decarbonizing and decolonizing it*

— Thea Riofrancos,  
DSA Ecosocialist Working Group

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Riofrancos pointed out that  
although organizing around  
energy in the US is quite difficult  
—for a wide range of reasons

but especially that most people have simply not had a framework for thinking politically about energy—this has changed significantly just in the past year. The dramatic ways in which the impacts of recent wildfires and extreme weather events causing blackouts have differed among different groups have brought attention to how energy and climate policy are deeply connected to inequality and injustice, which the rise to prominence of the idea of a “Green New Deal” has reinforced.

The GND has also helped bring into clearer relief differences between different Democratic Party presidential candidates, for instance in the different responses between Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren on the role of the IOUs as something that must be taken on. In this way, Riofrancos said, the GND frame is helping to raise awareness of the importance of energy among the wider public, and to make clear “who our political allies are.”

Wrapping up, Riofrancos offered:

*We know that the climate crisis and the GND are historic opportunities to transform our energy systems, and make them serve the needs of people and the planet, rather than corporate greed. But we also know that the reverse is true: We can't address the climate crisis or implement a radical, transformative Green New Deal without tackling our energy system and decommodifying, democratizing, decarbonizing and decolonizing it*

In the discussion that followed the presentations, questions were raised about the use of pension funds in financing the shift to renewables, particular as some of these funds are divesting from fossil fuels, about the need for reductions in working time and job-sharing in the face of job losses.

Renowned environmental lawyer and newly appointed [Earthjustice Trustee Ruth Santiago](#) also commended the conference organizers for convening a panel of five women addressing labor and energy.

Addressing the question of automation, MUA's Howard explained that when faced with this question in the context of automation of container terminals in Australia, the MUA looked back at how the union had responded to containerization in 1973. At that time, the union waged a national strike, and ultimately won a 35-hour workweek at full-time wages—better than almost any other industry in Australia at the time. Drawing on that legacy, workers have more recently managed to save around 30% of the jobs that would have been lost due to automation of the ports, by winning further reductions to 30- or 32-hour workweeks.

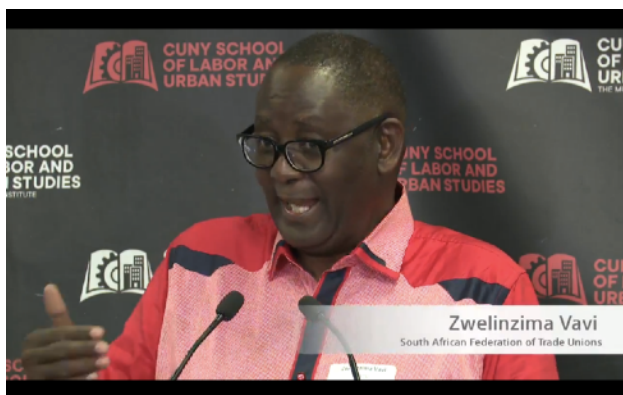
In terms of connecting campaigns for energy democracy and public power with wider struggles, and ensuring broad participation, Riofrancos emphasized the importance of showing up on picket lines to support workers in the utilities, power sector or building trades who are engaged in contract battles. She also called for rejection of the idea that “we’re all responsible” for the climate crisis, and rather to be willing to identify social forces that are driving and benefiting from the crisis, and to be willing to call out the IOUs, for instance, in the same way we do the fossil fuel companies. This can also help us develop an approach along the lines of “bargaining for the common good,” in order to reclaim control over essential services.

## Special Presentation: “Their Just Transition, and Ours”

Following a lunch break, **Zwelinzima Vavi**, General Secretary of the South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU), gave a special presentation: “**Their Just Transition—And Ours.**” (A written copy of Vavi’s prepared remarks is available [here](#).)

Vavi began by emphasizing the importance of the conference itself, calling the discussions happening among the participants “of the utmost importance for unions and their allies in the working class”:

*The threat of climate change amounts to a planetary emergency. However, when there’s a fire, the fire brigade must know where to go and what to do. After the first presentation this morning by TUED, it should be absolutely clear that the forces of capital know that there’s a fire; they hear the alarm bells ringing loud—but they are not capable of responding to the emergency. They cannot control the blaze. The current policy framework developed by the neoliberal two decades ago has been a monumental failure.*



SAFTU General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi emphasizes the need to challenge power in fighting for a Just Transition.

Vavi emphasized that the dangers of global warming were recognized at the global level thirty years ago in the late 1980s, and the first Earth Summit took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Since that time, the use of fossil fuels has *doubled*, and emissions have skyrocketed.

In many countries in the global South, including South Africa and its neighbors, the realities of climate change are already being felt. Storms, floods, droughts, and urban water shortages are becoming increasingly frequent.

Mozambique has suffered two devastating cyclones in the same year, [Idai](#), which destroyed over 90% of the city of Beira, and [Kenneth](#), the strongest storm the country had

ever seen. Zimbabwe faces a severe drought that has left much of the country reeling from water shortages, including in the capital city Harare, where [more than two million people have been left without access to water](#). According to [a report published by Stanford University](#) earlier this year, South Africa is now estimated to be between 10% and 20% poorer than it would have been without the warming caused by human activity over the past six decades. Nigeria is now 29% poorer due to the same cause, and India 30%.

Meanwhile, despite the fact that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has emphasized that a radical reduction in emissions is needed between now and 2030, simply to stay within relatively “safe” levels of warming, very few countries are honoring their commitments under the 2015 Paris Agreement, and few countries are making any serious progress towards achieving them. This raises questions about the entire approach:

*We hear much talk that suggests the success of the transition depends merely on sufficient “political will” or “ambition.” On other occasions, it is either stated or implied that the transition to a low-carbon economy is “inevitable,” or even “well underway.” This is completely false. Statements that suggest the transition is “inevitable” are therefore very dangerous. They serve to disarm us.*

On the idea of “just transition” specifically, Vavi noted that in the years since the term found its way into the preamble to the Paris Climate Agreement in late 2015, it has been the subject of much discussion and debate across the international trade union movement and beyond. Unions fought hard to get this language into the preamble, and its inclusion is a major achievement, especially given the fact that the UN climate talks have been all but captured by multinational corporations.

It is worth recalling, Vavi reminded the audience, that the concept of “just transition” has its origins in the trade union movement, and specifically in the efforts of Brooklyn’s own Tony Mazzocchi, President of the Oil Chemical and Atomic Workers Union, to negotiate a “Superfund for Workers” when a large chemical facility in New Jersey was closed down in the mid-1980s.

But the labor movement cannot allow the concept of just transition to be limited to securing a “safety net” for workers, despite how vital that aspect is. Today, the struggle for a just transition for workers must confront the fact that the world is not moving away from fossil fuels. There is no “transition” when the use of all forms of energy is still expanding: coal, oil, gas, nuclear and renewables. Vavi continued:

*When the likes of anti-union Richard Branson and other billionaires use the term “just transition,” it makes me very angry. When South Africa’s President Cyril Ramaphosa—another billionaire—refers to the need for a “just*

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*When the likes of anti-union Richard Branson and other billionaires use the term “just transition,” it makes me very angry. When South Africa’s President Cyril Ramaphosa—another billionaire—refers to the need for a “just transition,” in the same speech where he announced that the national public utility, Eskom, will be broken up or “unbundled” in order to attract private investors, we know the term has been captured, co-opted and corrupted.*

— Zwelinzima Vavi, SAFTU

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transition,” in the same speech where he announced that the national public utility, Eskom, will be broken up or “unbundled” in order to attract private investors, we know the term has been captured, co-opted and corrupted.

We—the climate movement and the trade union movement—can no longer afford to endorse the central premises of the so-called “liberal” business establishment, of the mainstream, “big green” NGOs, and of market-focused think tanks. Some in our various movements have tried that, and it did not work. We need a different approach, aimed at the working class, aimed at youth, and aimed at all those who are seeking real change. We must challenge current arrangements of power, ownership and profit.

In contrast to the “just transition” of the investors, CEOs and the governments that serve them, according to Vavi, a “just transition” for the labor movement—our “just transition,” not theirs—must be rooted in the following realities:

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*From what we have heard today, capital has failed to drive the transition to a low-carbon and truly sustainable economy. This should come as no surprise. Where changes are happening, these “transitions” are not “just;” they are profoundly unjust.*

— Zwelinzima Vavi, SAFTU

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First, discussions around “just transition” must take into account the imperatives of development for the global South, and the massive and urgent challenges around poverty, inequality and unemployment. Any call to move away from fossil fuels that ignores this reality will lose credibility. Any program of action that worsens conditions in the South will only strengthen the hand of

the climate denialists, who exist also in South Africa, and who are increasingly quoting figures like Donald Trump. Workers should not be compelled to choose between dying quickly from poverty, or slowly from continuing to work in mines that kill them and poison their communities. Workers deserve both jobs and a clean environment, and “just transition” must deliver both.

Second, the struggle for a transition to a low-carbon, sustainable future is too important to be left to investors, CEOs of multinational companies, or governments that refuse to break with the current paradigm of endless growth, profits above all, and the enforced chaos of competition in strategic sectors.

Third, securing worker protections under the current system and balance of power is like trying to open an umbrella under Niagara Falls:

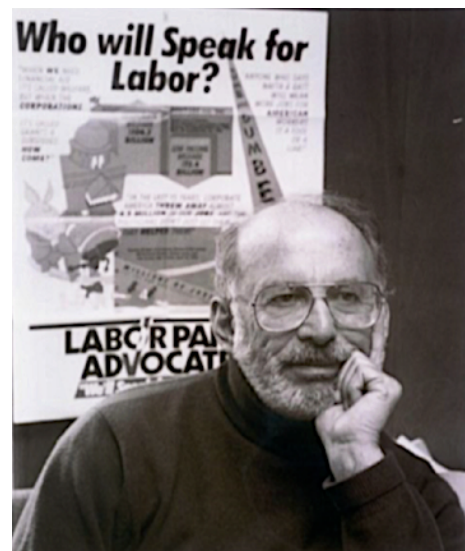
*From what we have heard today, capital has failed to drive the transition to a low-carbon and truly sustainable economy. This should come as no surprise. Where changes are happening, these “transitions” are not “just;” they are profoundly unjust.*

Fourth, acting alongside other social movements—women, youth, indigenous people and others—unions can begin by explaining that the struggle to protect the climate and our ecosystems will entail a battle for power.

Fifth, Vavi argued that the notion of a “just transition” can and must serve as an energizing focal point for organizing and mobilizing. But in order for the idea to have this power, unions should use the term “just transition” to highlight and call for a profound *socioeconomic transformation*. This is the only way to achieve “a zero-carbon world.” Energy is a public good and should not be privatized, just as with clean air, water, healthcare, education and more. Unions must then develop *transformational strategies* that are anchored in a paradigm of sharing, solidarity and sufficiency.

Finally, Vavi recalled that Tony Mazzocchi did not only see “just transition” in terms of “safety net” provisions, but as a means of raising more important questions about power—about economic decisions and priorities—to help workers imagine a different future. He also saw trade unionism as a social movement that should stand on clear principles. Other union leaders often attacked Mazzocchi for his anti-war politics and his criticisms of the oil and nuclear industries (among other things):

*In [Tony’s] own words—and I hope Richard Branson is listening: “I have been accused of being a militant. I think that’s a sad reflection of where we are. I thought we would wear proudly the fact that we are militant. I don’t intend to bow before any unjust company, unjust government or tyranny in any form; that’s my role to the last breath of my life. That’s what trade unionism is all about.”*



*OPCW’s Tony Mazzocchi was recalled by multiple speakers.*

In closing, Vavi reminded the audience that the struggle for climate protection and just transition in many countries has become a life-and-death struggle. Just as one example, trade unionists and activists in Colombia are being killed at an average rate of one per day:

*Yet we do not have a choice. We must fight to win this battle—for our sake, and for the sake of the generations to come.*

*So don't moan! Organize!*

*Don't moan! Mobilize!*

## Session 4: Policy Shifts: Transport, Buildings, & Industry

Following Vavi’s remarks, the next panel, moderated by TUED’s John Treat, took up questions around the policy shifts that are required beyond the power sector in order to reach climate targets, with specific contributions —specifically in transport, buildings and industry.

### ITF: Towards “People’s Public Transport”

**Alana Dave** from the [International Transport Workers Federation](#) (ITF) spoke first. ITF represents roughly 18.5 million transport sector workers worldwide, and has been actively working to develop both policies and campaigns calling for a massive expansion and improvement of public transport as the only real alternative to the private car, and as essential to meeting climate targets and aspirations.

Dave emphasized that massive, high-quality investment in this area could create millions of good jobs, with organizing and employment rights. But after extensive consultations with affiliates, ITF has decided that it isn’t sufficient to focus on job creation, because there is nothing guaranteed about those jobs – not the numbers, not the quality, neither the investment that will be needed to create those jobs. For ITF, the climate crisis is an opportunity to advance an alternative model of public transport—one based on democratic ownership and control:

*This is our opportunity to change and challenge the corporate model of public transport, which is the cause of many problems that our members face, as well as our communities, who don’t have access to affordable public transport. And it’s only if we address the issue of ownership can the social, environmental, economic and employment benefits of public transport be guaranteed. And it’s also only if we address the issue of ownership that we can build the democratic participation of unions and communities in public transport planning and decision-making.*

Dave explained that, in order to make this vision reality, the ITF has increasingly found it necessary to move beyond trying to tackle “bread and butter” issues in workplaces—whether public or private—

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*We are very explicit in our global program on public transport, in contesting the corporate model and market-based approach in public transport. We have seen this has created, and is unable to resolve, the crisis of public transport.*

— Alana Dave, ITF

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and to build both the *industrial* and the *political* power of transport trade unions. This means being active in the public sphere, where decision-making about the organization, control and financing of public services takes place.

In order for such organizing to be effective, the ITF recognized the need a clear, pro-public policy that deepens these connections between the

industrial and the political in public transport. Dave said the conference had reaffirmed ITF’s view that public transport is a public good, and must be seen as a public service, like energy, like education—which means it has to be run in the interests of the majority in society, and not in the interests of private profit:

We are very explicit in our global program on public transport, in contesting the corporate model and market-based approach in public transport. We have seen this has created, and is unable to resolve, the crisis of public transport.

Dave highlighted three aspects of the crisis in public transport:

- First, **public transport is not expanding fast enough to meet the needs of urban populations.** In many cities around the world, the majority of transport services are still informal, and there are still millions of people who can't access public transport, or are too poor to pay for public transport, and are walking as their form of mobility.
- Second, **public transport is not expanding fast enough to cut emissions in line with what the science tells us is required.**
- Third, **workers' terms and conditions in public transport over the past few decades have significantly deteriorated.** This is because privatization has brought competition, including between public and private operators, which causes a "race to the bottom." Informal workers in particular have no protections, no access to labor law, etc.

Reflecting on the lessons from the crisis facing public transport, Dave offered:

We know from experience that companies find ways of adapting and reorganizing themselves, and if we don't organize around a vision of public transport, then the pressure to resolve this crisis will become another market opportunity for the corporations. We're already seeing this in the way that climate financing is being used around the world to introduce new modes of public transport, but with strong private sector participation as a condition [of that financing].

We have a massive opportunity right now to change a sector which could create millions of decent jobs and transform the quality of life in cities, but that is going to require that we shift the balance of power in the sector. We need a well-developed set of policies that will give us an authoritative voice and a vision that enables us to build the social force necessary to shift the balance of power.

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Responding to that need for policies, for the past two years ITF has been developing a broad, comprehensive policy document under the title, [People's Public Transport](#), which addresses a range of issues: public ownership; public financing; worker control of technology; gender equality; climate and decarbonization; and, employment and decent work. Dave emphasized reducing emissions in a sector like transport requires a whole-economy approach, aimed at reducing emissions in other sectors, which increasingly is intertwined with transport.

*We as transport unions have a very direct interest in energy democracy and recognize that public ownership and democratic accountability are necessary to decarbonize in a planned and coordinated way, in both energy and transport.*

Dave reviewed the process through which ITF has developed its “People’s Public Transport” policy, as a way of both drawing up and building the skills and knowledge of transport workers, and to empower and build their capacity to struggle for this vision of public transport. ITF brought groups of trade unions together to talk about what they wanted in the policy, from different contexts and different countries. Continuing:

*We then worked with external organizations like TUED, PSIRU and others to develop the specific policy chapters, and we used those policy chapters to have discussions in our decision-making structures to inform our policy proposals. This is now the curriculum for our political education program in urban transport.*

Dave noted that the ITF is not treating the policy as a “set of abstract ideas removed from the immediate demands and realities of urban transport struggles today,” but rather is strategically linking demands in bargaining, campaigns, industrial disputes, etc., to its long-term vision of democratically controlled and publicly owned transport systems.

The policy is also informing the internationalism and solidarity that the ITF is building between public transport unions from industrialized and developing countries, and from different modes of urban transport, on the basis of the shared set of principles and ideas.

## UK UNISON: Challenges in Decarbonizing UK Homes; Lessons from History



*UNISON's Matthew Lay makes the case for planned, publicly driven solutions to decarbonize UK buildings.*

**Matthew Lay**, energy policy officer for the UK’s largest public-sector union, **UNISON**, spoke next about decarbonization of heating and cooling in building—something that is essential in order to reach established climate targets, and that involves confronting a number of formidable obstacles. In the UK, heating accounts for nearly 50% of energy use and 30% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. UNISON is urging the exploration of hydrogen-based technologies to address these challenges.

As Lay explains, the central dilemma involved in meeting the climate challenge is in determining how we can provide clean and affordable energy for all, and at the same time maintain good jobs and employment. For Lay, however, this is not an abstract or theoretical exercise:

*I don't come at this with a blank sheet of paper. I am a trade unionist. I'm tasked with representing workers in the energy sector who want a future, and workers who—if we can tap into their knowledge and get their support—can provide the solutions that we need to address the challenges and problems that we have—and those challenges are huge.*

Lay singled out TUED’s work as having been valuable in highlighting the failures of existing climate and energy policy.

The UK's energy system is built around a public ownership model tracing back to the years following WWII, but which was later privatized (in the 1990s). In the years after WWII, the country's Labour Government had been committed to providing to everyone "the full fruits of their labour," and that meant providing an affordable, efficient energy system as the basis for the country's rebuilding after the devastation of the war, and that would be equitable, and not based on corporate greed.

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— Matthew Lay, UNISON

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Lay urged people to read the [cabinet papers](#) produced in the years immediately following WWII, in which leading politicians of the day grappled with how to take energy back from the private sector into public hands—papers Lay described as both "inspiring" and "uplifting": "They faced a massive challenge, the country was on its knees, but they did it. They recognized how important it was to do it."

In nationalizing the UK's gas industry, for instance, the UK government took over roughly 1,000 private, cooperative and municipal gas corporations and brought them into the state:

*And they did it because they recognized we couldn't afford the luxury of everybody doing everything they wanted in different ways. So you had to essentially consolidate capital, you had to consolidate investment, in ways that could serve the majority in the most equitable way possible.*

A decade later, the UK would discover gas in the North Sea—a major development that would lead to the rise of centralized heating in homes during the 1960s, and that would ultimately play a major role in decarbonizing the UK economy (even as de-industrialization also played a significant part).

In fact, Lay pointed out, gas was so cheap at the time that it actually diverted resources away from energy efficiency—laying the groundwork for a problem the UK is now having to face. The UK has the oldest housing stock in Western Europe and it is very inefficient; an equivalent property in Sweden typically uses one third as much energy as a UK home. Such levels of energy inefficiency mean that applying new technologies is nearly pointless.

This inefficiency and the need to decarbonize heating of UK homes frames the key challenge the country now faces. According to calculations Lay has made, just doing basic retrofitting and efficiency upgrades on homes in the UK would require 120,000 workers over a 15-year period, and would cost some GBP 70 billion.

UNISON advocates using the existing infrastructure for heating. That infrastructure can be adapted to the use of hydrogen, which is being actively developed as a potential source of low-carbon (and ultimately carbon-free) heating. As a gas, hydrogen can be stored and piped. Hydrogen's carbon footprint when used as a fuel is largely dependent on how it is produced, and there are emerging

possibilities for creating it through electrolysis, which potentially opens up the possibility of its use as a carbon-free fuel.

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*We can make the economics work, the technology supports it, but it won't be deployed unless we do it in a publicly owned system—one that is able to deploy the capital required to make the changes that are necessary.... If you want individual choice all the time, you can't get to the end proposition, because there just isn't the luxury to do it. The deployment of technologies needs to be done in a way that is in the best interests of everybody.*

— Matthew Lay, UNISON

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According to Lay, hydrogen can also be blended with methane, and there are currently ongoing trials in the UK looking at blending up to 20% of methane gas with hydrogen. This on its own, if deployed across the UK would save 6 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions—equivalent to taking 2.5 million cars off the roads. There are also water heaters (boilers) already available that use methane today, but can be switched over to hydrogen in the future.

Lay compared two large-scale projects in the UK over the past 50 years—one of which has been “a disaster” while the other was a dramatic success. The “disaster” is the ongoing deployment of “smart meters,” responsibility for which was left to the energy suppliers. There are 76 of these in total, and each is putting in their own kind of smart meter. “They don't talk to each other, and some of them don't work efficiently.”

*You may have one street with 10 houses, you may have 10 different companies installing smart meters. The whole thing is crazy. The costs are running over. There's massive consumer resistance. People don't get it—they don't know why they want a smart meter fitted. It's how you don't do it. But the reality is, it's how the private sector suggests we address climate change, on a much grander scale. It makes no sense.*

Lay's contrasting example is from the discovery of North Sea gas, which created the conditions for a “potential revolution” in how to heat homes and provide cheap energy. But it was a state-owned company that carried out this revolution:

*And they did it in a way that logic dictates it should be done: house-by-house, street-by-street, with standard installation. People were supported; workers were employed; everybody got it; they knew the benefits of it. They knew there would be some inconvenience, but it was happening for rich and poor, for working class, upper class, whatever—it was done in a way that was equitable. And it worked.*

Drawing the clear lessons from these very different examples, Lay offered:

*We can make the economics work, the technology supports it, but it won't be deployed unless we do it in a publicly owned system—one that is able to deploy the capital required to make the changes that are necessary.... If you want individual choice all the time, you can't get to the end proposition, because there just isn't the luxury to do it. The deployment of technologies needs to be done in a way that is in the best interests of everybody.*

## NUMSA: Decarbonization and Development: South Africa's Twin Challenges

Next, **Sharon Modiba** from the [National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa](#) (NUMSA) spoke about the ongoing struggles by NUMSA and other unions and allies in South Africa to defend the country's state-owned utility, Eskom. South Africa's emissions are among the highest per capita in the developing world. Energy-intensive industry consumes 60% of the country's electricity, almost 90% of which is generated in coal-fired power stations through Eskom. The country has roughly 2-million homes that are not electrified.

Eskom employs roughly 48,000 workers, and given its heavy reliance on coal, "green jobs," decarbonization and moving to net-zero emissions in South Africa are seen by workers in terms of job losses, and with 29% unemployment, concerns about job retrenchments are increasing. The country faces major health problems related to coal-fired generation.

Given this context, calls to shift the economy away from carbon-intensive heavy industries is viewed by workers with skepticism:

*Our workers are telling us that the West has done well for itself. They've industrialized, they've built manufacturing industries. They are now at a very high level; we call them "first-world countries" while we are "third-world countries."*

Calls for the "unbundling" of Eskom—understood in South Africa to mean a kind of privatization, despite government rhetoric to the contrary—has raised concerns even higher—about job losses, and about the affordability of energy. The country has enormous renewable energy potential, but the reliance on heavily subsidized "independent power producers" (IPPs) has thrown the entire system into chaos. The IPPs have produced very few jobs and generate just 4.7% of the country's electricity, while consuming a quarter of public funds that are spent on electricity. According to Modiba, the cost to the government for power under the renewable IPP program is roughly four times that for power from coal.

At the same time, the national power utility has been plagued by mismanagement and corruption, which has created a situation where many people are unsure what to think about the calls for "unbundling" and privatization.

This makes even clearer the need for an integrated industrialization and decarbonization strategy. Existing plans to date "may be good on paper, but have not involved communities or labor, which leaves a high risk of leaving certain provinces behind, and creates a high likelihood of infighting among various stakeholder groups." Modiba noted that the ruling party seems divided on important questions, and sometimes even "seems to be at war with the people":

*Our workers are calling for a renewable energy sector that will be socially owned. As early as 2012, NUMSA's national congress put forward a resolution calling for socially owned renewables, where workers and communities would lead and take ownership. But the government has put a lot of money into IPPs without*



*NUMSA's Sharon Modiba explains that their workers demand the power utility, Eskom, to remain public while expanding socially owned renewables. (Photo: Aaron Lenchner)*

*getting much in return. This leaves people convinced that the government is not interested in supporting socially owned renewables. But these are ongoing discussions, and it calls for unions to work together and to call on governments to realize the potential of socially owned renewables.*

Finally, Modiba noted that the South African economy remains heavily dependant on mining, and current efforts are looking at ways to modernize the mining sector and decarbonize mining where possible, while also creating jobs to address the country's unemployment crisis. There is also need for solidarity and cooperation among countries to maximize the chances of building sustainable industries and good jobs for all.

## **UE: Building Bridges Between Labor and the Environmental Movement**

**Peter Knowlton**, President of the [United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America](#) (UE), spoke next. UE is one of just two “left unions” that survived the notorious McCarthy period, and has been at the forefront of union support for calls for a “Green New Deal” in the United States. Knowlton addressed the cynicism of many unions and union members towards talk of “green jobs” and “just transition,” and how supporters of the GND can engage with unions given this reality.

Knowlton began by thanking SAFTU's Zwelinzima Vavi for his invocation of the memory of Tony Mazzocchi, who had been part of the attempt to form a Labor Party in the United States.



*UE's Peter Knowlton calls for “massive infusion of federal and state dollars... to create millions of union jobs.”*

Knowlton reminded the room about the opposition to the Iraq war in 2003, when upwards of 10-million people marched over the weekend of February 15-16, and as many as 36-million protested over the next two months, but still failed to prevent (or even slow) the war, despite the labor movement's participation (in fact the first time the labor movement had opposed US foreign policy). Knowlton contrasted that with another example of mass action that was effective: opposition to nuclear power, where organized action essentially shut down a huge, profitable industry over the course of 10 years. Knowlton attributed the difference in outcome in part to

the fact that with nuclear power there are concrete projects that can be targeted for opposition. But the point is that there are historical examples of action around energy even in the United States where mass action has successfully, dramatically redirected the course of events.

In terms of UE's current orientation to the debates around climate policy and climate action, Knowlton noted that UE not only accepts the science, but overwhelmingly endorsed the GND at its recent conference:

*We're not afraid of the solutions, but we have some very strong concerns that come from neoliberal views that have infected the body politic, and the tradition that free-market economics govern the direction of business and enterprise—and that have governed all previous transitions. The failure of this history creates openings for us to talk about renewable public power, distribution and transportation that is not only unionized, but is organized.*

For UE, however, these concerns and mistrust of the establishment to do the right thing for workers, as evidenced by the history, do not prevent the union from making demands about how we get away from fossil fuels:

Distrust of the established order, based on the history of the neoliberal period, provides very convenient excuses for many unions to do nothing, and we need a better narrative and program for how we're going to make the Democrats and Republicans to do the right thing—but historically they haven't.

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*How did the US, coming out of the worst depression we'd ever had, create the Works Progress Administration, and put millions of people to work in decent jobs, which led to an explosive growth of the trade union movement starting in 1937 and continuing for the next 10 to 20 years?*

*How does that happen when you're in the middle of a depression? The reason is because the government can print money; it has the ability to put the resources onto the ground, into the workplaces.*

— Peter Knowlton, UE

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Like other industrial unions in the US, Canada, and around the world, UE lost tens of thousands of members and jobs in the '80s and '90s—"one of the most unjust transitions in our history":

*In the vast majority of plant closings, our members only received 60 days notice, as required by the Worker Assistance Relocation Notice Act, and we only got 2 years of unemployment—which is taxed, by the way, courtesy of Ronald Reagan—and you get a modest amount of educational assistance. Our union will not allow that to happen again.*

*And to a large degree that's what drives our union. For the first 10 years I was with our union, I probably negotiated more plant closing agreements than I did collective agreements. My wife lost two jobs. I've talked to a lot of fossil fuel unions, a lot of fossil fuel leaders, and this is one of the excuses that is used as to why there can be no just transition: They don't trust that the Republicans and the Democrats will do the right thing, and they don't think that we have the capacity and the power to force them to.*

But, Knowlton noted, the trade union movement is not monolithic, and there are some key features of our concerns dealing with job security, unionization and health and safety that speak to all trade unionists and all workers.

*We should talk about how a massive infusion of federal and state dollars is necessary to create millions of union jobs, and make sure that's a major part of the discussion, but we need more examples and better proposals for how that's going to happen—including creating industries and jobs from whole cloth, as happened in the New Deal and the Works Progress Administration.*

The challenge, Knowlton noted, is how to create decent union jobs in places where there are no alternatives to existing fossil fuel-industry jobs.

*We need to talk about the Depression, the New Deal, the Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps set up in the 1930s and 1940s, when billions and billions in today's dollars were spent, right out of a massive depression.*

How did the US, coming out of the worst depression we'd ever had, create the Works Progress Administration, and put millions of people to work in decent jobs, which led to an explosive growth of the trade union movement starting in 1937 and continuing for the next 10 to 20 years?

How does that happen when you're in the middle of a depression? The reason is because the government can print money; it has the ability to put the resources onto the ground, into the workplaces.

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*We need to give people a narrative that embraces the idea that workers should be at the center of this discussion, and we should be treated as victims, not perpetrators. We're not the enemy. The system of fossil fuel extraction, and those executives who perpetuate it, are.... Right now, the enemy is very "mushy," and all too often fossil fuel workers think we're pointing the finger at them. And we need to get that finger off of workers, because it's not their fault.*

— Peter Knowlton, UE

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As proof of the kind of shift in priority that is possible, Knowlton reminded the audience of how US industry shifted in support of the US entry into World War II: In 1941, a million cars were produced in the United States; less than 200 were produced over the next four years, "because the entire productive capacity of the country had been redirected to the war effort against fascism and Nazism."

But, Knowlton said, there are some "real disconnects" between what is needed and what is happening. For example:

*For the Western Pennsylvania Operating Engineers, right now, 30% of their members hours are involved in fracking and natural gas extraction and distribution—and that's only happened in the last 5 years. And their argument is that only 3% of Pennsylvania's energy is supplied by wind, so clearly it's not going to provide enough energy, so renewable energy isn't the solution. You have to keep fracking; you have to keep extracting natural gas. Clearly that's because of the lack of investment of government resources into renewables. It isn't because of the technology; it's because of the implementation, and the lack of infrastructure investment by the government.*

Faced with such profound disconnects, Knowlton argued that trade unions need to talk about using union power to compel the fossil fuel companies and their investors to redirect some of their profits into the transition, adding, "I don't know of a single negotiation in the United States where that's happening, but it would not be a bad demand for us to be making."

Knowlton emphasized the importance of giving fossil fuel workers priority consideration for employment in new renewable projects, and that unions should also be fighting for priority consideration to be given to frontline, indigenous and historically marginalized communities in new employment opportunities.

*We have a lot of members in North Carolina whose communities have been destroyed by coal ash dumpings, by all kinds of waste. Nobody seems to care about them. We need to make that link with those communities on this issue of preferential job treatment.*

As an example of how that can and should be done, Knowlton reminded participants of the [Comprehensive Employment and Training Act](#) (CETA) of the 1970s, a federal jobs program for weatherization, and the first apprenticeship program for women and people of color in the building trades:

*It was very successful, and [the participants] were in the unions: they were in the carpenters' union, they were in the laborers' union, and they were in the sheet metal workers' union. So we have a history and examples in this country.*

UE is also very actively talking with environmental organizations and activists about how they talk about the Green New Deal and the transition:

*We need to give people a narrative that embraces the idea that workers should be at the center of this discussion, and we should be treated as victims, not perpetrators. We're not the enemy. The system of fossil fuel extraction, and those executives who perpetuate it, are... Right now, the enemy is very "mushy," and all too often fossil fuel workers think we're pointing the finger at them. And we need to get that finger off of workers, because it's not their fault.*

Knowlton argued that the unions “need to push the environmental movement” to understand that “for the transition to be fair and just, and to happen sooner rather than later, fossil fuel workers have to receive the same pay and compensation for a considerable number of years.” Knowlton referred to Bernie Sanders’ proposed GND legislation, which proposes five years for this, “but maybe it should be longer.” And in cases where there simply are no jobs for workers to shift to in a given area, Knowlton said, those jobs need to be created, as with the WPA.



*Activists from the Sunrise Movement occupied US Speaker Nancy Pelosi's office in October 2018, sparking a new wave of interest in calls for a “Green New Deal.”*

*Our union has been working with the [Sunrise Movement](#). When we saw that they'd occupied [US House of Representatives Speaker] Nancy Pelosi's office, we figured we should give them a call and get to know those folks. We've been talking to them quite a bit, and when the [GM strike](#) started, Sunrise right away came out with support —Tweets, Facebook posts. They started talking to trade unionists about supporting the strike, talking to their members about joining the picket line. We'd like to think that we had some influence in that.*

Knowlton emphasized, “It’s really our job in the trade union movement to go to the environmental movement, and to start talking to them, and to be tough with them”:

*Our dialogue with them goes something like this, “Are you prepared to have as part of your narrative, that you will pay people \$65 an hour for the next several years” Because that’s what the workers in the oil sands make. That’s what workers in oil extraction make.*

*We need to talk about other issues that put workers at the center: the right to organize, free from employer interference; Medicare for All; robust retirement schemes (or otherwise to double the amount of Social*

Security in the US, so that we can have a better pension, since those have been basically destroyed); free public education, pre-kindergarten through graduate school; legislated vacation allotments and other social benefit advances, which make the lives of workers, our families and our communities that much better and more humane. This is a broader political discussion about public power, about nationalization, about municipal power, and about “making the left big again, like it was in the 1930s.”

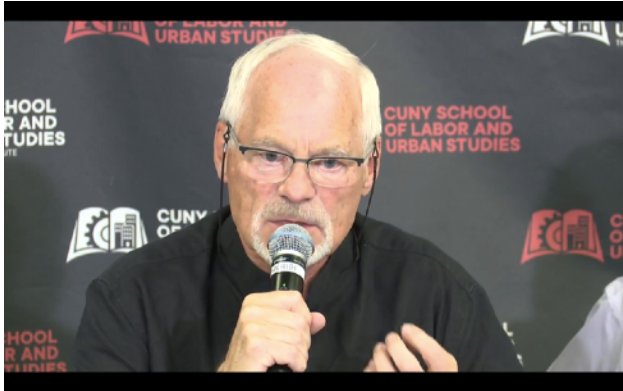
Finally, Knowlton argued, we need to begin planning for mass mobilizations in 2020:

We need to talk about the need to bring millions of workers into the streets for Earth Day on April 22, 2020. But we need to have a continuous series of actions, as was just done this past week, until eight days later, which is May Day 2020, which is the true workers and trade unions holiday. A week of activity between the “bookends” of Earth Day and May Day could be a wonderful opportunity to bring the labor and environmental movements together in a way we haven’t seen before.

## Session 5: Internationalism and a Pro-Public Future

In the final session of the day, participants took up the question of **Internationalism and a Pro-Public Future**, moderated by TUED’s **Irene HongPing Shen**. The session took up the following questions: How can we get unions and progressive forces speaking with one voice on the need for public ownership? How can efforts to shift the global narrative connect with activism on the ground?

### Trade Unions and “Political Will”: From Defense to Offense



Long-time Norwegian trade union and climate activist **Asbjørn Wahl**, now supporting TUED’s organizing work in Europe, began by laying out the significant bases that already exist for building alliances and solidarity—across generations, across borders, between North and South, and more.

Wahl emphasized the shared history of privatization and deregulation, especially during the 40-year period of the “neoliberal revolution.” But it is not only a matter of that shared experience of neoliberalism:

*We also have a history of anti-privatization fights and campaigns – where we have seen massive mobilization of broad popular movements all over the world—particularly regarding water, health services, education, public transport and others. We also have a proud history of solidarity and mutual support—in the trade union and labor movement, but also in many other popular movements. Although there are significant differences across these shared experiences, there is also much in common, and they can and should serve as a basis for building the solidarity and internationalism in these struggles that we so badly need.*

Wahl noted that, to date, energy has not been central to these struggles, but the climate crisis has moved energy to the center, and there is a growing awareness of the need to address it, and to do so urgently.

What we have learned from our fights against privatization of public services and social infrastructure, Wahl argued, is that stopping privatization is important, but not enough. It is also important—even more important, but still not enough—to take privatized services back into municipal or national control. But even further than those, it is necessary to democratize and improve public services and infrastructure—and this is what it means to have a “pro-public” approach.

*We have to go from a defensive fight to stop privatization, and even go beyond public ownership, to include also an offensive fight to democratize and improve those services—for both users and workers.*

This is necessary, Wahl argued, because the character of the state has changed dramatically during the period of neoliberalism; power relations have also shifted during the same period.

The shift in power relations also limits the room for maneuver of the state. The “deregulation” carried out during this period has meant removing the tools which politicians have available to manage and control public services. This knowledge of the history and this understanding of the state are crucial to understanding why existing climate policies have been a complete failure. The failure is a result of contradictory interests—it is the result of ongoing a class struggle. And this has profound implications for the narrative we advance around solutions to the climate crisis:

*It is not a lack of “political will” or “political ambition” that is behind the failure to make progress towards climate targets.*

*It is actually a class contradiction that is being expressed. There are*

*contradictory interests behind that failure. No matter how strong the will of the neoliberals in government is, they will not lead us to where we want to go. So we should stop saying there is a ‘lack of political will.’ There is a hell of a lot of will there—but it is not the same as ours.*

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— Asbjørn Wahl, TUED

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That has implications for what we mean by a “public goods” approach. One can imagine, for instance, what public ownership of an energy asset means if it is owned by a neoliberal state apparatus, and governed by a neoliberal government that has already deregulated the markets. This can hardly be compared to what public ownership meant in the post-WWII period, under much more favorable power relations in many parts of the world – the New Deal policies, for example in this country, and the building of the welfare state in Europe. Those achievements were based on a balance of power that was much more favorable to workers. Under those circumstances, it could make sense to talk about “political will” in order to change the policies.

But the class struggle today is characterized not only by privatization of energy and the climate crisis, but there is a full-fledged crisis in all areas of society: economic, social, political, food systems, and

more. “My view, at least,” Wahl offered, “is that there is no way we can handle these crises separately. They have to be seen together.”

For Wahl, there is no way to win this struggle other than to build power from below, in the trade union and labor movement, in all kinds of progressive popular movements. Internationalism and solidarity are necessary. And we have to create a narrative for this struggle, with this multiplicity of crises.

*This is not a matter, as is often stated in the context of the struggle against climate change, of sacrifice and giving up the advances we have won in the past. That’s not true. We have to create a narrative that says that through this fight against the climate crisis, the environmental crisis, it is a narrative of creating a better life for everybody. That is the way we have to frame this struggle.*

*Ours will be a hard struggle, with lots of confrontation. But we see increasingly that we do have the future on our side. We do have the youth on our side. We do have humanity and decency on our side. We have a world to win, and we are not allowed to fail. This Earth is ours, and we reclaim it.*

## UNITE UK: Climate Protection as Political Education

Next, **Jim Mowatt**, Head of Education for the UK’s largest union, **UNITE**, reflected on experiences in the UK, and the importance of building union power in order to be able to fight for a “just transition” under difficult circumstances.



*UNITE’s Jim Mowatt reflects on previous energy transitions in the UK, what has changed, and how unions can respond.*

The UK’s planned deindustrialization under Prime Minister Thatcher and the rapid phasing out of coal-fired power stations in the 1990s saw massive layoffs and de-unionization— “a tsunami of redundancy notices,” in Mowatt’s words. Extrapolating from union membership numbers at the beginning of that period, UNITE should have some 6.8 million members today, rather than the 1.1 million it currently has.

Mowatt was lead negotiator for energy for his union at the time, and “the privateers were willing to pay.” Extremely generous retirement packages were on offer to very large numbers of workers, and everyone took them. But,

Mowatt noted, “That’s not the situation today. We’re in a much deeper black hole today, and I don’t see that being repeated, because I don’t see the political pressures that made those companies pay those good terms for people leaving the industry.”

The profound changes in the structure of the UK’s economy, demographics, union membership, etc., make it necessary for unions to adapt. Because of the dramatic changes in the UK’s economy over the past few decades, today only 25% of working people come under collective agreements. In London, which is highly unionized, 62% of UNITE’s members do not have access to a shop steward, because so many work in small, dispersed workplaces, and the union “just has no structure to service that.” In Glasgow, 43% of adults in Glasgow are registered disabled, with a range of health problems associated with shipbuilding, asbestos, lead poisoning, etc.

One thing UNITE has done in responding and adapting to these changes is to open up the union’s resources to people who aren’t employed. This raises significant concerns—including among members—about the use of union resources to assist people who are not themselves contributing to the union’s financial base. But the union sees it as “the right thing to do,” and is committed to organizing and supporting people where they are.

The union’s work around climate and energy plays a key role in shaping the union’s new orientation, structure and strategy. Mowatt noted that TUED’s analysis and policy work has played a critical role in the commitments the TUC and Labour Party have made to public ownership, as well as in shaping UNITE’s policy. UNITE is now working to make the ideas of the GND tangible among its 800,000 members. UNITE puts 12,000 shop stewards through 5-day courses every year, and every course includes materials on climate and energy.

### TUCA: Reflections on “Just Transition” from the global South

Natalia Carrau of the [Trade Union Confederation of the Americas](#) (TUCA) spoke next. TUCA, she explained, is “trying to challenge the hegemonic narrative through our political program—the [Development Platform of the Americas](#) (PLADA)”:

*We dare to speak of the role of public investment, not only in energy but in diverse aspects of society, the need to reclaim the policy space, and the leading role that the state should take in key areas such as public services, labor relations, water and sanitation, energy, education, health, etc. We speak about the role that TNCs [transnational corporations] have in modeling life, to keep every single aspect of life inside market rationality, and trying to take them away from democratic control.*

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*I should say, ‘just transition’ is not only about ‘social dialogue,’ it’s not only about labor rights—it’s still a matter of capital vs. labor disputes, and we still believe that capital is winning, and we still believe that we should increase this fight, shifting to a more offensive strategy.*

— Natalia Carrau, TUCA

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Carrau explained that TUCA’s view regarding the environment and climate change is based on an understanding of power, and the forces that govern. For this reason, the PLADA explicitly addresses the issue of sovereignty, and “the need to call for renationalization of our common goods.” Issues around the environment in Latin America “are not limited to global warming talks,” but involve human rights, disputes regarding land, land grabbing, contamination, inequality and access to land as a human right, and impacts of transnational corporations.

TUCA’s understanding of “just transition” is expansive: “We speak of just transition as a challenge, because as long as we can’t achieve social, economic and gender justice, we won’t be able to achieve a just transition.” Carrau added:

*I should say, ‘just transition’ is not only about ‘social dialogue,’ it’s not only about labor rights—it’s still a matter of capital vs. labor disputes, and we still believe that capital is winning, and we still believe that we should increase this fight, shifting to a more offensive strategy.*

Next, Carrau addressed the importance of alliances, arguing that in order to speak with one voice, the labor movement has to be able to build strong, and long-lasting alliances: “TUCA has been



*TUCA's Natalia Carrau emphasized the importance of building power outside the COPs in order to have influence inside.*

building these alliances not only in our public actions but also in the thinking behind our statements and mindset.” Carrau offered three examples of TUCA’s work and success in this area:

First, PLADA was developed jointly with allies: the peace movement, the women’s movement, the environmental movement, and many other regional representative organizations.

Second, TUCA has recently launched a new political platform, [Jornada Continental por la democracia y Contra el Neoliberalismo](#), “as a political space that makes explicit our differences with our allies in order to build strength in the matters where we agree most.”

And these alliances, according to Carrau, have shaped TUCA’s views regarding climate change and the environment, and how these relate to food sovereignty, energy democratization, land reform, access to public and common goods, and more. As a result:

*We participate in the climate negotiations of the COPs in alliance with these movements that represent Latin America’s popular classes.... We believe we only have power on the inside if we build strong mobilization on the outside. We understand we won’t shift the path of negotiations; they are already captured by market forces. Even the UN is getting into the “multi-stakeholder” approach by signing an agreement with the World Economic Forum. We will still participate in those negotiations and try to raise our demands there, but we acknowledge that our power is still in the streets, side by side with our allies.*

Third, all of these discussions need to take account of North-South asymmetries, and the historical responsibilities of the global North regarding the right to develop of the global South. Carrau emphasized the need for this kind of solidarity from the North, “You people here have a better voice to raise that concern than what we can manage to do in the South.”

## **NUPGE: What We Share, What We Can Build On**

**Larry Brown**, President of Canada’s [National Union of Public and Government Employees](#) (NUPGE), spoke next. Brown emphasized “the things that we share and can build on” in cultivating international solidarity throughout and beyond the labor movement in order to tackle the climate emergency:

According to Brown, the first thing we share—or *should* share, if we don’t already—is a sense of absolute urgency. This is not an academic discussion, a discussion about details or statistics—they are a foundation we work on, but the discussion is one of urgency:

*Record rainfall, record storms, records winds, record fires, record number of hurricanes.... Something is changing, and it’s changing fast, and we need to be urgently responding to it.*

Second, Brown stated that we should share a sense of anger:

*The oil companies knew that if they kept on producing oil and we burned it, we were going to cause serious damage to the climate and the planet, and they could make a profit doing it, and they kept on doing it. We should not be complacent about that, we should be angry as hell.*

Third, we share a choice: we can continue to let companies profit from killing the planet, or we can substitute public control. “Public control is not the *answer*; it is the *vehicle* for an answer. If we have public control then we can control the answer; if we let the companies to continue to make profit, they are going to retain the control.”

Brown noted that we also share an increasingly aggressive response from the powers that be. For instance, Brown pointed out that, in Canada, one of the provincial governments is spending US\$30 million per year—of public money—to fight environmentalists. But we also share a rising awareness and passion around the world:

*We’ve seen in recent weeks that the passion and concern of young people about the future is shared by many others around the world, and the trade union movement needs to work with young people, and to link its power, influence and abilities to the passion of young people—realizing that we don’t always have to lead, sometimes we have to follow people who are already ahead of us.*

### **NYSNA: Bringing Members Along: “We Have the Power!”**

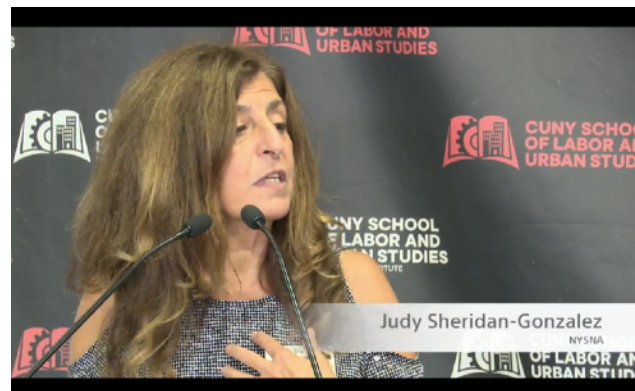
The final speaker of the day was **Judy Sheridan-Gonzalez**, President of the [New York State Nurses Association](#) (NYSNA). For Sheridan-Gonzalez, the challenge is how to get unions and progressive forces to embrace and demand public ownership of energy, and to “make sure that we speak with one voice around it.”

Sheridan-Gonzalez emphasized the importance of bringing the rank-and-file members along not only with the science around climate, but also with the analysis of energy and emissions that informs the call for public ownership. Unless the membership is brought along, progressive trade union leaders are vulnerable to attack.

In terms of the beliefs and attitudes of rank-and-file members, Sheridan-Gonzalez noted that, at least in the US, there is still a great deal of faith in the private sector: that it is more efficient, cleaner, more accountable, and less wasteful. And this is true not only in relation to energy, but also to water, healthcare, education, etc. There is still a very real and pressing need, therefore, to counter the myths around privatization. She also pointed out that, in the US, many people are unfamiliar even with the term “neoliberal” and think this refers to the “left wing of the Democratic Party.”

Despite these challenges, Sheridan-Gonzalez remains a firm believer in the power of the labor movement and its many allies, and brought the conference to a rousing close by reminding everyone:

*We have the power to take the power to own the power!*





*The Green New Deal, Net-Zero Carbon,  
and the Crucial Role of Public Ownership*

